

Hi, I'm Kashni; and I'm Erid

I'm Luanne

Carl, nice to meet you

Hi – this is us: Tom, Danielle and Ryland

Hi, my name is Kim

we all have two moms...

here are our stories.

come with us on a fun-filled
journey, we hope that you'll
enjoy reading ...

(These are real beings called human, but it is not their real names, it is story names for them, chosen by them, and we had lots of fun deciding this!)

the experiences of CHILDREN GROWING UP IN SAME-GENDERED FAMILIES

(narrated) BY

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DECLARATION

“I declare that the thesis which I hereby submit
for the degree

philosophiae doctor

in

educational psychology

at the university of Pretoria, is my own work
and has not previously been submitted by me for
a degree at this or any other tertiary
institution.”

CARIEN LUBBE

signed on the _____ day

of _____ 2005,

Pretoria, South Africa.

for maycel

"writing often leads the reader to imagine odd interpretations of meaning, takes us down unusual corridors toward understanding, helps us hear faint and unexpected echoes and resonances, and brings us to imagine relationships anew or differently. writing opens up lived worlds for reflection and transformation"

[ely, vinz, downing & anzul, 1997:381].

the secret, as to what we are, whom we love, what we feel with regard to people who love us,, those experiences that remains hidden for so long, are one of the few things in the world that can open windows for us on to what is new and unknown, that can awaken us from our sleeping dreaming state, for the contemplation of universes that otherwise we should never have known.

[adapted from proust, the captive, in sedgwick, 1990:67]

"life can be very easy when love is your way of life"

[ruiz 1997:127]

my deepest gratitude to...

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¹ All the illustrations in this thesis were created and hand-painted by Chrissie Els.

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- § Die gesinne: elke bevoorregte ouerpaar en kind/
The families: every blessed parent and child...
Your openness, courage and willingness to give of your time and to share your lives with me, humbled me and made me proud to witness and present some parts of your lives to the rest of the world.
- § En laaste, omdat dit my deurentyd omring en dra, en daarom die fondament is waarop ek, soms rebellerend staan...
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ABSTRACT

Traditional views regarding families are being challenged by new family arrangements. In this study I have explored the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, in order to inform our current understanding of how children experience the social constructedness of same-gendered families. I have utilised a narrative research design in order to present and re-present the children's *own* meaning-making about being a child in a same-gendered family. I also inquired into the ways in which they negotiate the heteronormativity of society. In order to situate the broader contextual factors of heteronormativity I constructed a narrative tale, which was then developed throughout the thesis as part of the presentation to create a *multivoiced, dialogical and reflexive text*. From a holistic analysis of the created data, narratives were written which gives a unique and individual account of the experiences of each child that I had engaged with. Grounded in these narratives five concepts emerged, that formed my conceptualisation of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. The main findings suggest that the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families in this study are (1) that they experience different levels (or ways) of **okayness**, namely a level of okayness regarding having same-gender parents and a level of okayness to **disclose** or not to disclose their family structure, (2) children in same-gendered families are **aware** of others' okayness or open-mindedness regarding same-gendered families, (3) children in same-gendered families at times show the need for **openness** in their relationships with others and (4), children in same-gendered families receive **support** from their parents, siblings, significant others, friends, class mates and other children also growing up in same-gendered families. Finally, I have also explored the interconnectedness between okayness, disclosure, awareness, openness and support and constructed a conceptual framework that serve as a theoretical forestructure against which the findings, interpretations and narratives can be viewed.

Key words:

Same-gendered families

Gay and/ or lesbian families

Children of same-gender parents

Experiences

Narrative

Okayness

Openness

Disclosure

Support

Awareness

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BEFORE DAWN...SITUATING MYSELF IN THIS STUDY...

Everything starts with a dream. All that is good in life begins with a dream.

IMAGINE LIVING YOUR LIFE WITHOUT JUDGING OTHERS...YOU DON'T HAVE A NEED TO BE RIGHT, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO MAKE ANYONE ELSE WRONG...IMAGINE LIVING YOUR LIFE WITHOUT THE FEAR OF BEING JUDGED BY OTHERS. YOU NO LONGER RULE YOUR BEHAVIOUR ACCORDING TO WHAT OTHERS MAY THINK ABOUT YOU. YOU ARE NO LONGER RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYONE'S OPINION...IMAGINE, TO WALK IN THIS WORLD WITH YOUR HEART COMPLETELY OPEN... (RUIZ, 1997:125).

This is my dream: to celebrate diversity and appreciate and enjoy everyone's uniqueness while simultaneously being conscious of our interconnectedness as beings on this planet – beings whom we call "human".

Why do I begin this thesis by writing about myself? Why do I invoke part of my story? (Kate Evans, 2002:8)² These few pages in which I write about myself only constitute a very small part of my story. In such a short space, I could not do justice to all the extraordinary events of the past four years – all my relationships and experiences, not only as a researcher, practitioner and lecturer/teacher, but also as a woman, daughter, sister, friend and committed life partner. But it is these relationships and experiences – in the context of a process of continuous growth – that have helped me to form my own distinctive identity and discover my unique "voice". Nevertheless, I am telling a story that reveals something of my history, particularly in relationship to my cultural and social positioning. I share these things about myself because I want to be explicit that it is from this standpoint that I embark on writing about my research project (my own insertion).

² I feel a special personal connection with some authors because so many of my thoughts resonate with what they say. I have therefore chosen to present them by using their first names and surnames when I first introduce them in my text. All the words in italics in this paragraph are those of Kate Evans.

I am placing myself in this research as a being who is human and who is deeply interested in the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. The world constructs me as white, I perform a female gender, I continuously explore my masculinity and femininity, and I happen to have a life partner that is of the same gender as I am.

So why am I so interested in the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?

Ever since the age of about 25, I have from time to time considered the possibility of having a child. In the discussions that followed between my partner and me, she told me that she would like to talk to children from same-gendered families so that she could hear at first-hand how they experienced having same-gender parents who live as gay people in a committed and monogamous relationship. Thus, for example, when such children walk in the school grounds during break, what do the other children say to them or ask them? And if they want to bring their friends home for sleepovers, what (if anything) happens?

While she and I were thinking intently about my longing for a child and all the consequences that such an event would have for me, her and the child, I was in the process of working on another topic for my PhD. Then, in May 2003, I had the privilege of attending a conference about qualitative methodology in Banff, Canada. Banff is a breathtakingly beautiful place and it had a magical effect on me in more ways than one. For one, it helped me to birth a completely new thesis topic. This new topic came to me in the form of an intuitive realisation. While in Banff, attending the fourth Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference, I sensed in a moment of intuitive realisation that this present thesis was the doctoral work that I really wanted to do. It resonated harmoniously in my mind, body and soul, and I just knew (in that intuitive way) that this was right for me, certainly academically, but in other ways as well. Small and large things began to speak to me: the phenomenology of Max von Maanen, and the collaborative research of Sharalyn Jordan. But my most profound and intense realisation occurred while I was attending Jean Clandinin's workshop on Monday, 5 May 2003. My new realisation

made me sensitive to a certain beauty in the title of the workshop. It was called: "Experience and story".

During the eight hours of that workshop, everything changed. I experienced a whole range of emotions during that time: excitement, joy, a feeling (somehow) of recognition and familiarity with what was being presented, and a profound and authentic intuitive knowing that what she was speaking about was meant for me. I also experienced fear – fear about the consequences of giving up my previous topic, relief at having given up that topic (even if it was at that stage only in my mind), and courage because I knew that I would have to start all over again. I cried that day as well. But my tears were tears of relief, joy, excitement, and a great longing for... home. In spite of this roller coaster of emotions, I knew for certain on that day that I would have to change the topic of my thesis – no matter what the consequences.

May 5, 2003. It was such an intense day. That moment of final certainty and realisation was so intense that I can still remember when I recorded it in my conference book. My decision immediately created some other concerns. I had arranged to meet various academics in Grand Rapids and Chicago to discuss my work on my first doctoral topic. What should I do? I decided that I would nevertheless go ahead with those meetings, and in the end that proved to be the right decision. Those meetings proved to be invaluable because the knowledge and experience that I gained from the consequent journeys and consultations have ever since stood me in good stead in my lectures, in my therapeutic work and in my life in general.

Nevertheless I was still confused. I remember the long walks that I took through the streets of Chicago. The springtime tulips were in bloom and my thoughts tumbled over one another as I tried to determine the way ahead. But even then, in spite of my inner turmoil, I was strengthened by an inner sense of *authenticity* – of knowing that I had made the right decision because I had been true to myself. That strengthened me. But what exactly would my new topic be? I remember standing outside the planetarium that looks over Chicago's famous horizon of skyscrapers

and ceaselessly speculating about what my new topic might be. When I finally got home to South Africa, I suffered from a few days of jet lag that kept me awake at night. I would lie awake at two or three o' clock in the morning: thinking, thinking... It was during one such nightly interval that it suddenly dawned on me. I suddenly knew! *I wanted to explore the experiences of children who have same-gender parents.* I was so relieved. But now, although one problem was solved, others lay ahead. For one thing, I had to defend my new proposal before my supervisor, the dean, my close colleagues, other colleagues, strangers, students, and the whole Faculty.

In spite of these obstacles, I was so encouraged and energised by Jean Clandinin's methodological position that I could feel courage rising within me. I was now ready to embark on a research theme that truly interested *me*. And I was also ready to establish my own individual research identity. I found then that I simply did not care about any prejudice or discrimination that would arise as a consequence of the process. When people warned me about possible negative consequences, I could just smile and say (something like): "This is what I have to do. This is me. I can make this research a part of myself because this is who I am. And don't get me wrong! I regard my sexuality as only a small part of my identity."

Jean's wise words rang in my mind. She had said that it is often an apparently insignificant story that we do not attend to and that we ignore that sometimes becomes the most important story in our lives. Yes, my story of me being gay was profoundly significant for me, and now even more so because I also longed to become a mother.

As I later focused on the experiences of the children who consented to become my research partners, I needed to remind myself that this research was not about me. It was about them and the experiences they underwent in their lives. I therefore tried to immerse myself in their worlds and see the world through their eyes – and through the eyes of other people. Sometimes it felt strange to me to hear them proclaiming their heterosexuality, sometimes emphatically, sometimes defensively and at other times merely as a matter of fact. Sometimes such declarations were

unexpected, and I realised that although I shared a common humanity with them, I was also different from them. I was "other" to them, just as they were "other" to me. The constant, inescapable interplay of "us" and "them".

In the end, my vulnerability is kindled by the necessity of having to locate myself in this research. Because I am involved with others (my partner, parents and siblings), I am also responsible to them. Even so, I cannot distance myself from this research. And although the various families involved are involved, interested and supportive, research (in the end) mirrors the researcher and all her connections and therefore reflexivity is required by the whole process.

It was only during the research process that I really started to make sense of the social constructedness of "gayness" – of the way in which Western civilisation over the past 1400 years has constructed and maintained polarities, dichotomies and binary modes of thought as fundamental explanatory categories that claim to be universal and a priori – but which are not. Sexual categories have in fact become a social agreement. People whose sexual orientation makes them prefer partners of the same gender create a consensual reality that enables them to understand the whole phenomenon of being gay as something potentially positive, creative, life-affirming and moral – rather than the opposite. This construction of gayness as a personal and group identity provides the only alternative to the negative construction of same-gender sexual orientations that stigmatise and exclude gay people. But the construction of a gay identity as something healthy, creative, life-affirming, moral and (dare one say it?) normal is a fragile flower upon which the harsh winds of prejudice blow from all directions. Whether it will survive or not only history will tell.

It is my hope that humanity might one day be able to rise above the madness and cruelty of past centuries. If we ever achieve that, it will be because we have relinquished self-righteous judgements and because we no longer *automatically* project our own hypocritical, socially constructed and self-limiting beliefs onto others – especially onto others who are different from ourselves. What is relevant in this regard are the self-limiting beliefs that gay people themselves have created or

those that have been created by others who mindlessly maintain the prejudice or belief that is “wrong” or “sinful” to physically love a person who is of the same gender as oneself.

In place of such limiting beliefs and prejudices, I propose the thesis that a union between two human beings is ultimately a union between two souls. If this is accepted, and if we hope to progress as a society and as a species beyond the patriarchal savagery of our past, we need a paradigm of what it means to be human that not only fundamentally affirms the importance of the body and the goodness of sexuality but that also incorporates other values such as compassion, truth, honesty, respect, care, authenticity, peace and nurturing. All these are aspects of a paradigm of humanity filled with love that is inclusive rather than exclusive and that expresses a more noble ideal of humanity than the institutionalised brutalities and pseudo-certainties of centuries past.

The soul is after all the highest feeling of love you can imagine. This is the soul's desire. This is its purpose... Every action taken by human beings is based in love or fear... Every single free choice you ever undertake arises out of one of the only two possible thoughts there are: a thought of love or a thought of fear. Fear is the energy which contracts, closes down, draws in, runs, hides, hoards, harms. Love is the energy which expands, opens up, sends out, stays, reveals, shares, heals (Walsch, 1995:19,83).

I believe that I entered into a contract with my Creator a long time ago and that I decided to come to Earth and to be born into this life I have chosen for myself. Two facets of the life that was presented to me and that I chose before I was born involved my choice of my present life partner, and the longing for a child. This influenced me to choose to do research into same-gendered families. And so, for me, the seed of this thesis was planted a long time ago. As I contemplate the lives of the children who are growing up in same-gendered families, I realise that I was led to this point where I am standing today. I feel as though I am standing on top of a high hill and looking down on my life and on the various journeys that brought me to the place where I am standing today. What an exciting place this is to be.

Bubble One

Sunrise

Visual pointers to Bubble One...

- What is the focus of my inquiry? What do I want to know? And why do I think that what I want to know is important? p.3
 - Guiding questions of the inquiry p.9
- Assumptions of the study p.10
- How do I intend to find out what the experiences of children growing up in same-gender families are? Here is an explanation of my method of inquiry. p.11
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Bubble One

Sunrise

What is the focus of my inquiry? What do I want to know? And why do I think that what I want to know is important?

One of the most central and enduring social institutions among human beings is the family. Families are considered by many to be a foundational institution in society, and the nuclear family is traditionally regarded in Western culture as the best place in which to have and rear children (Dalton & Bielby, 2000:36). Although having the kind of loving and caring parents that the ideal nuclear family presupposes is an undeniable condition for the development of psychological and psychosocial well-being, advances and changes in globalised culture compel us to take cognisance of the wide variety of ways in which families are formed and in which children grow up. In modern times, families are appearing in sometimes dramatically different forms that challenge society's traditional views. Such new family arrangements are forcing us to redefine what we understand by family (Dunne, 2000; Gottfried & Gottfried, 1994).

We observe at the outset of the 21st century that people are choosing to live their lives and rear their children in associations that only fifty years ago would not have been regarded as families. Each of these new family forms challenges the traditions of the past (Plummer, 2003:5). In addition, other societal factors such as working mothers, adoption, divorce and HIV/AIDS have all played a part in influencing the ways in which non-traditional family forms have developed. One such non-traditional family form that has challenged society's traditional notion of what a family means is the same-gendered family.¹

¹ See terminology section in this Bubble for what is meant by a *same-gendered family*.

Walsch (1998:28,36-37) is of the opinion that because people in Western societies have become excessively individualistic, they tend to forfeit the richness and resources that strong affiliations to a group allegedly confer. But Walsch does acknowledge that this tendency is being mitigated by an increasingly widespread awareness of the value of community and all its benefits. By creating community networks and by nurturing extended family ties, we create safety nets and support for ourselves that exceed those that a single traditional Western nuclear family could offer on its own. While no one would contest the statement that all children need protection, safety, guidance and care, the 21st century compels us to confront the questions: Do children necessarily have to be cared for only by their biological parents? Is it not a fact that grandparents, older children, tribal elders and other members of the extended family also possess wisdom and knowledge that enriches and empowers children? An even more radical question might be: Are our children not more capable of teaching *each other* the moral values of love, compassion and care? Walters (2000:61) asks: "What are the real value(s) behind family? Community and care? Or is it just an empty institution?". These are the questions that we need to ask ourselves. And it is in these questions that the present study is situated.

Although members of the gay community² have in the past usually been associated with a childless lifestyle, more and more gay people are opting for motherhood and fatherhood by creating families of their own or by continuing to live with their children as divorced parents after they have entered into gay relationships. But the very concept of "lesbian mother" or "gay father" means that any study of same-gendered families cannot be considered apart from sexuality. The same-gendered family is sexualised in the sense that the concept itself implicitly evokes the sexuality of the parents concerned as well as the dichotomy between homosexuality and heterosexuality. When we write about same-gendered families, it can be done in such a way that "takes the category for granted, as if it is unproblematic" (Fine,

² The usage of "gay" to mean "homosexual" is favoured by homosexual individuals with reference to themselves. It still has an informal feel to it but is now well established and in widespread general use (Thompson, 1995:561,2). In many instances it is used in application to male homosexuals and "lesbian" is used when discussing female homosexuals. This however, can be restricting, although it helps in clarification. In this study the word "gay" will be given preference and can refer to both male and female homosexual individuals. When referring specifically to females the word "lesbian" is used.

Weis, Weseen and Wong, 2000:112). While Fine et al. (2000) discuss “race” and “racism” and point out that because it might be prejudicial to take “race” seriously as a category, I apply a similar caveat to gayness. Their concerns resonated with me and I decided to explore the constructs of “gay”, “homosexuality” and “sexuality” in a similar fashion. In the literature gay communities are still considered to be “sexual minorities” (Chung, 2001:33) because of prejudice, social oppression and discrimination that is directed against them (Oswald, 2002:374). The point made by Fine et al. may be framed in the following questions: By writing about minorities, do we not (re)inscribe their fixed and essentialist positionality? If we problematise their positionality theoretically while knowing full well how profoundly it impacts on the daily lives of countless millions of people, do we not disregard the enormous power that heteronormative discourses exert in individual lives and communities? Even though being gay is a social construction, how can we destabilise the notion theoretically while at the same time recognising its centrality to so many human lives and communities?

These considerations confronted me with the challenges of my role as a researcher and theoretician. The challenges were: (1) How would I use the opportunity and responsibility to situate same-gendered families in the broader gay community? (2) To what extent would I be able to do justice to same-gendered families in and through my research? In this research I have not only kept same-gendered families as the central theme of my study and research; I have also confronted in a continuous way the complexity of how families are socially constructed.

The traditional nuclear family (which is widely accepted to mean a legally married, two-parent heterosexual couple) has for a long time been the norm and benchmark against which all other kinds of couples or family arrangements have been measured and judged in Western society. Jackson and Scott (2004:236) are of the opinion that the sexual world that children eventually learn about, and come to participate in, continues to be ordered by institutionalised heterosexuality. This is also true in South Africa, which is a strongly traditional and family-based society

with a culture in which the traditional family is prominent, powerful, visual and valued.

Even though this is the case, there have, as I have noted above, been significant changes in many modern Westernised or semi-Westernised societies. A far greater openness and acceptance are at the present time evident in popular culture as it is reflected in mass media. Thus, for example, a number of popular television dramas have focused on lesbian or gay characters. There are also indications that some sections of communities have become more accepting of and open to the existence of same-gendered families, and significant legal rulings have been made in favour of same-gender families (De Bruin, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Sullivan, 2003; Truter, 2003; Underhill, 2003). This is a new trend that has only emerged in the past few decades (and more especially in the last decade or two). The fact that the prevailing discourses of heteronormativity have become increasingly fractured suggests to me the extent of the tensions and contradictions that society continues to face. Not least of these is the changing structure of what contemporary people regard as the family.

In spite of a greater acceptance of sexual diversity in many quarters, the heterosexual couple remains enshrined as the normative form of adult sexual relationships. As Walters (2000:61) notes: "It is hard to believe that the structure of exclusion and discrimination that surround gay life will not in some way impact gay family life." Significant societal biases remain evident in the media in newspaper accounts of legal debates, television debates on moral and religious issues pertaining to the family, the portrayal of families in school textbooks, articles in popular magazines, and legal questions such as the debate that surrounds the sanctioning of marriage between same-gender couples and the use of the word "marriage" to portray such unions (Ellis, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Khan, 2002; Knowler & Donaldson, 2002; McCafferty, 2001; McGill, 2002; Mphaki, 2003; Powers, 1998; Wallis, 2003). But descriptions of "societal attitudes" simply cannot capture the complex and content-specific aspects of everyday thought and practice, the practical reasoning and the gut reactions that inform everyday conduct (Jackson &

Scott, 2004:237). A study carried out by OUT LGBT Wellbeing (the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Organisation) in Pretoria, South Africa, revealed for example that 37% of a sample of lesbian, gay or bisexual people had experienced verbal harassment or abuse because of their sexual orientation while 15% have been asked to leave their faith/religious community because of their sexual orientation (Polders & Wells, 2004:8). Because the traditional family structure is widely accepted to mean a family with totally heterosexual parents, most researchers and investigators agree that same-gendered families are still stigmatised by society (Barrett, 1997; Coyle & Kitzinger, 2002; Dunphy, 2000; Kershaw, 2000; Paechter, 2000; Richardson & Seidman, 2002).

I therefore maintain in this study that stigma still attaches to non-heterosexual identities because of heteronormativity, discrimination and homophobia, and that this stigma consequently devolves on same-gendered families. Because such generally assumed and widely unchallenged belief systems about the ideal family create a dominant narrative of what a family is or should be, a perception is created that same-gendered families are different, “other” and “alternative”. This study presupposes the theoretical assumption that the dominant discourse/narratives in society assume a normative status for the heterosexual family both in the world of science and in everyday life.

I have assumed for the purposes of this study that children growing up in same-gendered families are aware of this discrimination and stigmatisation. As they participate in the activities of their schools and churches, and as they watch television or surf the Internet, they become aware of – and form their own perceptions of – what a family is or should be. Because of the heteronormativity of Western society,³ one of the major challenges for every child is the integration of their family experience with that of the wider society outside the home. Tasker and Golombok (1997:77) note that a major challenge for every child and his or her family is the integration of family experience with the expectations and values of

³ Heteronormativity is probably evident in most countries and societies in the world. However, in this study I will focus on the westernised cultural and structural forces that shaped homo- and heterosexuality.

the wider society outside their home. Although this is a universal dilemma, integration is more difficult to achieve when a family's divergence from prevailing norms within the wider social group is greater than average.

Even though research into same-gendered families has increased over the past few years, a limited number of qualitative studies have investigated in-depth the experiences of children of same-gender parents. Much of the impetus for research into gay parenthood has arisen from the consequences of custody hearings in which judicial concerns for the welfare of the children have been expressed. It is therefore not surprising that most of the available literature on these studies reflects the impact that gay parents have on their children and more specifically the influence that they have on their children's gender identity and sexual orientation, personal development, social relations, and the extent to which they (the children) may be bullied or teased by others (Anderssen, Amlie & Ytterøy, 2002; Fitzgerald, 1999; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 2000; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Finding research performed specifically from the children's perspective is ambiguous because although many studies do indeed focus more on the children concerned rather than on parenting, the evidence for such children's perceptions was derived largely from interviews with their parents (Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Patterson, 1992; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristofferson & Breaways, 2002). Some research does however include findings that are derived from standardised psychometric assessment strategies conducted with children (Dundas & Kaufman, 2000; Patterson, 1992; Tasker, 1999). More and more studies include interviews and other forms of data collection from the perspectives of children such as, for example, their school experiences (Ray & Gregory, 2001), analysis (from the perspective of adulthood) of the experience of growing up with a lesbian mother (Paechter, 2000), stigmatisation, self-esteem and coping (Gershon, Tschann & Jemerin, 1999), and acceptance of a lesbian mother (Van Voorhis & McClain, 1996).

This study will focus on the children, and will present and represent their unique experiences of growing up in a family with same-gender parents in a dominantly heterosexual world. Little is known about the ways in which children in same-

gendered families function within the predominantly heterosexual society, what makes such functioning possible, and what makes such functioning easy or difficult to manage. In this study I will explore the processes of negotiation between individual children and those members of society with whom these children come into contact, the factors that these children use in their negotiations, and the specific behaviours that such children engage in to encourage or prevent particular situations. I will also use this study to investigate and describe the experiences of children who grow up in a family with same-gender parents from the perspectives of the children themselves.

The purpose of this study then is to explain the ways in which children in same-gender families negotiate their own personal experience narrative within the dominant narrative of society in order to inform our current understanding of how children experience the social construction of same-gendered families. I shall therefore use the following key questions to drive the inquiry:

- ♀♀ What are the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?
- ♀♀ How do children growing up in same-gendered families negotiate their personal experience narratives within the dominant narrative of society?

The aim of this study is not to investigate the sexual orientation or sexuality of the parents or of the children; it is to focus on how they reconcile their construction of the world with the prevalent heteronormative view that society holds about a family. My aim is to explore how these children interpret, understand and define same-gendered families within the dominant narrative of society. I do not assume that the child's experiences in the home and family differ much from that of a heterosexual family. I am mainly interested in how they negotiate their personal and community relationships outside of their homes. If the children encounter problems or experience difficulties because they are growing up in a same-gendered family, then an investigation of their stories should provide insight into how they resolve problems such as stereotyping and stigmatisation. If (conversely) they find it easy to negotiate relationships that pertain to their family structure, an

investigation of their stories should provide insight into how they manage and resolve the discrimination and stereotyping that gay people experience at the hands of society. I will then be able to describe same-gendered families in terms of the advantages, richness and diversity that they confer on both same-gender parents and their children, and in this way enlarge the scope of heteronormative family theory.

Assumptions of the study

I believe that to be gay is a special gift, and that the gay lifestyle can enhance one's engagement with the world and contribute to the diversity and uniqueness of what it means to be a human being in this world.

I view a person with a gay orientation or preference as a healthy, normal individual with essentially the same dreams, passions, hopes, fears, ambitions, aspirations and the possibility of creating a spiritual richness in being alive as anyone else. I place the highest value on growth, well-being, hope and happiness. In short, we each have the capacity to be authentic versions of ourselves.

Because of historically negative constructions of homosexual people, living the life of a gay person is not always easy. My working assumption is therefore that every person with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual needs to reconcile his or her sexual orientation somehow with the heteronormativity of society. In the same way that gay people need to do this, so the children of same-gender parents need to engage in such a process of reconciliation and negotiation.

I do not assume that experiences that children with same-gender parents have in their homes and family lives differ in any qualitative way from those of children from heterosexually gendered families. The difference lies (and it is this in which I am especially interested) in the necessity of their having to negotiate their relationships in their landscape *outside* their homes. In this study I assume that only the heterosexual family model is regarded as normative in the dominant discourses

and narratives of our society *in everyday life* – and that they are also therefore dominant in the same-gendered families that I interviewed.

How do I intend to find out what the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families are? Here is an explanation of my method of inquiry.

What kind of study am I planning?

The particular methodology that has allowed me to discover and do justice to the perceptions and complexity of my research partners' understandings,⁴ and that has also allowed me to present and represent their stories in a way that answers my questions about the experiences and social significance of growing up in a same-gendered family, has been the utilisation of a generic qualitative study with a narrative research design.

Narrative research attempts to understand and represent experiences through the stories that individuals live and tell (Creswell, 2002:525). The narrative inquirer tells and retells, lives and relives, presents and re-presents the stories that make up people's lives, individually and socially, in order to answer questions of meaning, experience and social significance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:71,187).

The goals of narrative inquiry, according to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998:72), are: (1) to assist us to understand the inner or subjective world of people and how they think about their own experience, situation, problems and life in general, (2) to obtain insight into the individual that clarifies what had previously been meaningless or incomprehensible and that suggests previously unobserved connections, (3) to convey to a reader the feeling of what it must be like to meet the person concerned, (4) to effectively portray the social and historical world in which the person is living, and (5) to illuminate the causes and meanings of events, experiences and conditions in the person's life. I have used the narratives that

⁴ I view the research participants as partners in this research because they emphasise through language the collaborative quality of my inquiry. See Bubble Three for more detail.

reveal their everyday interpretations to present a reflexive and interpretive understanding of their experiences. While I have focused on their personal experiences, people's narratives reflect not only their *own* meaning-making, but also the themes of the society or culture in which they live. All my research partners' personal narratives must therefore be understood against the backdrop of society's construction of what lesbian and gay families mean (Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams, 2003:8).

Narrative research is by its very nature full of loose ends and seeming contradictions (Riessman, 2002a:697). It also lacks the relatively fixed and traditional interpretative framework that a researcher would use to analyse and interpret findings. Another compromise that I had to make when I chose a narrative design is that I had to accept the process of working in an *emergent* design. Unlike quantitative research methodologies that begin with well-defined hypotheses which are then tested by fairly rigid research designs, qualitative narrative research always leads one in new directions as it unfolds. Discontinuous and fragmentary texts are a typical feature of narrative research. These texts need to be read and reread as one strives towards coherent and consistent interpretation. Even after one has captured the research partners' stories in writing, the texts one is left with are never comprehensive enough to represent the research partner's whole life. In this sense they are fragmentary.

The narrative approach implies an acceptance of pluralism, relativism, and the validity of individual subjectivity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998:2). All these factors are themes and motifs in postmodern and poststructuralist thought. They also relate to my research paradigm because I immediately found myself identifying with the qualitative *interpretivist* paradigm. After some reflection I realised that the *social constructionist* view could also give me valuable insight because interpretations cannot be disentangled from the social context in which they arise. I believe that the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families reveal how they co-construct their social reality, and that this reality is itself socially constructed and situated within a specific social, historical and political

context (Bevan & Bevan, 1999; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). As I wrote up my research, I realised ever more strongly the extent to which I was drawing on the *poststructuralist* paradigm by focusing on multiple voices and pluralist assumptions. The writing process required me to reflect on the multiple realities contained in the narratives, to engage with the ambiguities that this kind of research entails, and to recognise the effects that these factors were having on my research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:171). I soon realised, as I continued to incorporate aspects of postmodernism, feminism and post-structuralism into my operative paradigm, that I was engaged in constructing a complex methodological hybrid that was composed of elements that are typical of apparently different paradigms. After months of reflection and contemplation, I positioned myself mainly in the social constructionist paradigm while acknowledging the strong influence of post-structuralism on my thinking. In addition, I have incorporated points of view from other non-positivist paradigms because I found that they were valuable for the way in which I analysed current literature, conducted the analysis, and for aiding my reflection on the conduct of my research. This complex hybrid reveals to some extent the complexity on which I have based my study and research.

What is my approach to analysis and interpretation?

After contemplating different strategies for analysis, I utilised a holistic analysis to construct descriptive and explanatory accounts of the subjective experiences of the children growing up in same-gendered families. My use of the bare transcriptions as a matrix from which to construct the narratives reveals my analysis because this process required me to make sense of what my research partners had said in the form of a more polished story. The narratives are also an interpretive document in the sense that they represent my own way of making sense of the children's experiences.

After that I proceeded to a more interpretive phase of the research. In this phase, I confronted the data (narratives) with analytical questions that enabled me to frame and focus the experiences of children in same-gendered families. I utilised these grounded narratives as an interpretive tool to develop "interpretive themes".

Following this process I developed a framework in which the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families were conceptualised.

The guiding framework for this study

I did not begin work on this thesis with a specific theoretical or conceptual framework (in the sense of a specific theory or point of view) against which I proposed to frame the data. My reason for doing this was that I wanted to be able to go into the field with an open mind about what I would hear. I wanted to be able to hear the stories of the children and their parents and siblings with my mind uncontaminated or distorted by predetermined conceptual biases and preconceptions. Because I needed to be as open as possible to whatever arose from my research partners (the children), I had to place myself in a frame of mind in which I would be open to literally anything that the children and their parents might tell me. In other words I had not made up my mind about what I would hear. In a phenomenological sense, I was in a state of bare attention to the subjective realities of the children involved in this study. And because I had no preconceived theoretical constructs about the experiences of these children who were growing up in same-gendered families, I hoped to be able to discover more about them and their subjective realities. Any predetermining framework of questions, for example, would have made my inquiries too specific, too leading and ultimately too limiting. I wanted to create a forum in which the children felt safe to disclose. If I had approached the inquiry with specific opinions and points of view in mind before the inquiry actually began, I would have deprived my data of the richness, diversity and uniqueness that I sought from the interviews. The narrative method and an open-ended interpretive framework allowed me to pursue my inquiries without the distorting effect of strongly established prior hypotheses.

Although I had reviewed the relevant literature in depth, I had not by any means made up my mind that this or that person's representation or theory would guide my investigations. I stayed open to whatever new and unfamiliar or old and familiar data might come to my attention during the research process. There were

times when such openness to whatever might happen certainly exhausted me because I was continually confronted by so many ideas, formulations, fields of inquiry, opinions and philosophies: radical lesbianism, postmodern feminist writing, queer theory, positive psychology, symbolic interactionism, interpretive interactionism – and many more. But I never chose one author or authority's opinions above another's because no one's approach was so comprehensive that it would have allowed me to capture the essence of the subjective realities of the children who were growing up in same-gendered families.

How will I take care of my research partners? (Ethical considerations)

While the practical consequences of the ethical dimensions of this study are discussed in detail throughout Bubble Three, I wish to mention here that I made use of the following principles to ensure that my inquiry and procedures complied with widely accepted ethical standards for this kind of research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Mason, 2002; Mouton, 2001; University of Pretoria, 2003). The principles that I used to guide me:

- The principle of *voluntary participation*. This means that the research partners could withdraw at any time from the research programme. The research partner might also, for example, refuse to answer any question. Research partners were also interviewed at reasonable times and by prior arrangement (appointment).
- The principle of *informed consent*. This means that the research partners were at all times fully informed about the research process and purposes, and that they freely consented to participate in the research. I kept my research partners informed by means of an ongoing dialogue between myself and the research partners throughout the duration of the inquiry process.
- The principle of *safety in participation*. This means that research partners were never placed in situations in which they might be at risk or harmed.
- The principle of *privacy*. This principle incorporates the principles of *confidentiality* and *anonymity*: The identity of all my research partners as well as the information gathered were given under conditions of anonymity and

confidentiality. I explained to all research partners how pseudonyms would be used and how all data created would be stored in such a form that it would remain anonymous and impenetrable to anyone seeking to identify them.

- The principle of *trust*. This principle is especially important because trust develops gradually when one is doing interpretive research, conducting interviews over a period of time, and utilising the other in-depth data collection methods that are associated with such methods. I was careful not to exploit this trust for personal gain or benefit by deceiving research partners or betraying the confidences of research partners in my research process or its published outcomes.

I also complied with the highest possible professional ethical standards when creating data, analysing field texts or data, and when interpreting and presenting findings. This included the implementation of appropriate referencing techniques and the rejection of any form of plagiarism. Since I am a qualified educational psychologist, I adhere to the ethical guidelines of the governing body for Psychology in South Africa, namely the Health Professions Council of South Africa. These same ethical guidelines guided my research in all its stages.

Caring for research partners is perhaps the most important of the ethical guidelines. Research is not merely a set of techniques. It is also a well considered, ethically grounded process that enhances values such as trust, respect, empathy and dignity as these come into play between the researcher and the researched.

Specific comments on potential risks and pitfalls for the research partners

Since I was engaged in research into a deeply controversial topic, I remained intensely aware throughout the whole process of any possible risk and harm that might affect the research partners. In research such as this, the research partner is exposed to personal risks because in-depth data collection may bring to light hidden or subconscious thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. This paradoxically might constitute one of the main *advantages* of participation to the researcher if

thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of this kind are dealt with in an adequate, helping and appropriate way by the researcher and by significant others.

There is, apart from such personal considerations, a possible contextual risk noted by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:385) that I need to examine at this point. The risks involved arose out of the fact that – quite apart from my reflection process – I needed to give the research partner and his/her parents an opportunity to think about the possible ramifications of involvement. It is fairly obvious that in controversial research such as this, searching questions might be asked in the context of family and friends, school peers and so on. It could also happen that certain people might become suspicious for reasons of their own and draw attention to issues that the research partner had initially been unaware of – issues that might cause research partners to feel exposed. And even if the child and family did not feel personally exposed or vulnerable, their participation in my research might have led them to feel so. I therefore discussed with the families concerned, strategies that we could use through the process, and I also discussed the vital issue of closure with them. Closure was extremely important both for the families and for me. We all needed to realise that my regular visits and active involvement would at some stage decrease in frequency and eventually cease because the goals and purpose of my research required that this should happen. It could well have been that an intimate working relationship had developed between me and the research partners because narrative inquiry is a form of inquiry that is based on relationships and it cannot but influence the lives of everyone concerned (including of course the researcher). It is for this reason that the termination of this working relationship has to be discussed and understood right at the beginning of the relationship between researcher and research partners.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:387) state that when one intends merely to assess a situation and the assessment then leads to a change in the situation, one is already in ethically problematic territory, especially when one is dealing with areas of deep personal experience (as I most certainly was). Although the initial agreement might have established that the interview would focus on a specific personal topic, it might happen, and indeed it often does happen, that the interview might well take

on a life of its own. Such an interview will then become almost like a psychotherapy session and the participant will begin to disclose thoughts and feelings that he or she had not previously admitted to having – even to himself or herself. The interviewer must therefore be extremely cautious and ensure that the interviewee feels comfortable with the level of disclosure and exploration in any given discussion. Mason (2002:67) warns that one should not try to turn an interview into a therapeutic encounter because this may not be the “best” moral choice – or even a sound intellectual option.

As I engaged with children, I reflected on what sound ethical practice in research with children might imply. There are different points of view, but I headed the opinion of Bergen (1994:199), who advocates that the researcher must assume the role of an empathic listener and be open to the “real” emotions and feelings of participants. Great value is placed in this procedure on personal interaction and identification with the individual’s experience. While the rationale behind such a method is that it could produce research that is richer in insights, the corresponding caution is that the researcher should obviously be meticulous in refraining from deceiving, exploiting or manipulating research participants in pursuit of his or her own agenda.

I therefore formed the determination constantly to examine, reflect upon and assess my actions and my role throughout the duration of the research process. It is Mason (2002:7) who calls this activity *active reflexivity*. Because a researcher cannot be neutral, objective or detached, she or he should seek to understand her/his role in the research process, and this is what I was determined to do. I realised that I would have to climb out of the “ivory tower”, become involved with the people who would participate in my research, and communicate with them as equals whenever possible. I therefore aimed from the outset to eliminate as many barriers as I could and thereby open the field to the generation, reception and interpretation of truly authentic data.

Good qualitative research consciously grapples with the entwined issues of power and responsibility in relationships with individuals or groups that are often more lasting and intimate than is commonly the case with quantitative research projects (Rogers, 2003:59).

Benefits and advantages to the research partners

For the research partners my research was an opportunity to relate their experiences and perceptions and to share their personal stories and perceptions with a researcher trained in the rigor of Western Psychology. As I also intended to expand our knowledge in the area of my research and I hoped also to exert a beneficial influence on the way in which practitioners and educators view same-gendered families, the families involved in my research had an opportunity to contribute to this process. I also desired to prove in my research the validity of a methodology that focuses on extracting valid conclusions and useful knowledge from the stories of participant individuals. I realised then that a personal exploration of their own experiences might prove to be beneficial and even empowering for the participants concerned.

Note on Terminology

“Same-gendered family”

This refers to a family constituted by two gay parents of the same gender (two females or two males), who are involved in an intimate and committed relationship. While “gender” in this sense refers to the biological sex of the parent, I acknowledge that “gender” is socially constructed. It is because of the effect of this construction that I refer to such families as “same-gendered” families and not “same-gender” families. Such families are also widely referred to as lesbian or gay families, or same-sex families.

In the text I sometimes refer to *children growing up in a family with same-gender parents, or children with or of same-gender parents, or merely same-gender parents or*

same-gender households which then indicate the same-gendered family. These terms are therefore used interchangeably.

“Two mothers”

There is a difference between the **role** of a mother and the **gender** of mother in my text. “Mother” in English is both a **noun** (the way in which I use it when referring to “two mothers”) and a **verb** (to mother someone) (Thompson, 1995:886; personal e-mail correspondence with R.K. Loveday, 17 April 2005).

Throughout my research, I describe the two lesbian women who are their same-gender parents as “two mothers” – although the roles that these women adopted in the lives of their children often varied considerably. As with any conventional (non-same-gender) parents, each parent acts out different roles in the lives of their children. Although I touch on this phenomenon in greater detail in Bubbles Four and Five, I would simply like to note here that one does not *necessarily* have to belong to a particular gender in order either to “mother” or “father” in child-rearing. This is precisely the reason why same-gender parents *can* be successful – and why the same-gendered family is a valid and viable “alternative” family structure.

“Experience”

(Refer also to Bubble Three for an extended discussion of what this word means in this research.)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Thompson, 1995:474) describes “experience” as “an event regarded as affecting one, the fact or process of being so affected”. This is similar to what is understood by the German word *Erlebnis*, which refers to experience as something one has: an event or adventure connected with an individual. *Erfahrung*, somewhat differently, denotes “experience” as something that one undergoes so that subjectivity is drawn into an “event” of meaning. Experience so understood is integrative, unfolding, dynamic and hence singular (Schwandt, 2001:86). In the Concise Oxford Dictionary, experience is also explained as a verb as “to have experience of, to undergo, to feel or be affected by”. It is this latter sense in which I am interested: the *subjectivity* and process of being *affected* by

what the children of same-gender parents *undergo*. In the end, it is experience that constitutes our life worlds because “in each experience there is something there, but there is also something which is only potential. And all potentialities of all our experience constitute, so to say, a world” (Valdés, 1991:453).

“Personal experience narrative”

This means the experiences of everyday life as they are internalised in the subjective consciousness of individuals. This meaning originates from the phenomenological and ethnomethodological tradition (Creswell, 2002; Plummer, 1995; Schwandt, 2001). In this research, this term refers to the daily experiences of the children growing up in same-gendered families. These experiences collectively constitute their personal stories.

The type of narrative research method that I use in this study is that of the “personal narrative”. It is in these personal narratives that the personal experiences of individuals in particular social settings are explored. The opposite of personal experience is impersonal knowledge. Impersonal knowledge is derived from personal knowing when what is personal and immediate has been transformed through intellectual generalisation and categorisation into what may be described as “universal facts” or “objective knowledge”. Such knowledge (it is claimed) is not dependent on a particular person or on the social practices and understanding of a particular knower (Creswell, 2002; Plummer, 1995; Riessman, 1993).

“Dominant narrative”

This term is derived from the “master narrative” or “grand narrative”, a term made famous by Lyotard (Boje, 2000:14). Part of the stated agenda of postmodernism is to shatter the grand narrative into many small stories and replace any linear, mono-voiced grand narrative of the past with an open, polysemous (containing many meanings), and multivocal web of little stories. For me personally, the dominant narrative in this study is the dominant heteronormative discourse that stereotypes and stigmatises the gay community.

“Narratives” and “stories”

Narratives are defined in various ways. Although they have been called “stories”, they also refer to other forms of discourse (Bruner, 1986; Mottier, 2000). Some researchers do not regard a story and a narrative to be the same thing (Becker, 1999; Lemon, 2001). I define *stories* as accounts of incidents, events, thoughts and feelings, and *narratives* as the end process of the activity that a researcher engages in when that researcher imbues the “raw” data of a story with structure, organisation and rhetorical coherence – but always in a way that is consistent with the personal truth of the person or people from whom the raw data was originally collected. By this definition, narratives are *ex post factum* – they are in a sense a retrospective explanation or making-sense of stories that might otherwise be largely incomprehensible or incoherent because of their discursiveness or lack of organisation (Boje, 2000:3,4). It is by means of narrative that experience is reorganised and reconstructed for both the original tellers and for possible audiences (Cortazzi, 1993:1). A narrative has a “beginning, middle and end”. In the structuralist tradition of narrative research, a narrative “represents a connected succession of happenings” (Lieblich et al., 1998:2). I also utilise “life history” and “life story” approaches, which focus on individual subjective definitions and experiences of life. They relate what is private and public, and what is personal and social (Schwandt, 2001:17).

“Negotiate”

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Thompson, 1995:912), to negotiate means, firstly, to confer with others in order to reach a compromise or agreement, or to arrive at some settlement (Merriam-Webster Online, 2003); secondly, it means to arrange or bring about (a result, for example); thirdly, it means to find a way over, through, etc. (e.g. through a difficulty, challenge).

Negotiation for me also contains a strong element of “reconciliation”. It means in addition “to harmonise, or make compatible” (Thompson, 1995:1148), “to make consistent or congruous, or to restore harmony” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2003).

The negotiation performed by the children of same-gender parents does not mean that they are attempting to accept the dominant discourse of society in an uncritical or unthinking way. It implies the acceptance of an equality of status of both heterosexual and homosexual discourses – a position from which they can become capable of reconciling these two worlds. “Negotiation” in this research describes the process of how the children who were my research partners “confer with others” in the transactions between themselves and their peers, close friends and significant others.

“Society”

We may regard *society* as a continuous work in progress that requires all responsible citizens to maintain its status in the way that they maintain their own and other consensual identities. Society is the totality of how ordinary individuals define themselves as people who are involved in social networks (Katovich & Maines, 2003:294,304).

According to Katovich and Maines (2003:289), society can be regarded as something that exists in situations. Whatever exists among human beings exists in a process that is comprised of people who behave and act in concert to create situational objectives. The innumerable elements of any given society are shaped by people who engage in collective action in “situations”. It follows therefore that society is always dynamic, flexible, changeable and transient rather than certain, monolithic, static, rigid, enduring and unchanging. If one accepts this definition, society is characterised by various degrees of uncertainty. This uncertainty creates a demand (in a healthy society) for a constant revisioning and reinterpretation of dominant discourses, “facts” and knowledge – however prestigious and privileged they are or may have been in the past.

It is social acts and gestures that create society (Katovich & Maines, 2003:289). I focus in the present study on various forms of hegemony or relations of domination that exist in society that remain largely invisible (but are no less potent for being so). These forms of hegemony or relations of domination are kept in place, not by

coercion but by the consent or unthinking acquiescence on the part of those who are dominated (During, 1993:5).

“Sexual preference” and “sexual orientation”

While *sexual orientation* in the traditional sense is usually associated with the belief that everyone is born with an innate sexual identity, *sexual preference* indicates that a person has made a *choice* about her or his sexual identity. Sexual preference is usually used by radical feminist approaches as opposed to the more “traditional” term “sexual orientation”. This term (and its accompanying attitudes) became popular in the 1960s and 1970s when it used to make a statement about one’s political choice (Coyle & Kitzinger, 2002; Creith, 1996). In this study I use the terms interchangeably because I prefer to use the term as a particular author uses it when describing or commenting upon that author’s point of view. I personally would prefer to use the term “preference” – but not because I do not regard sexual identity as innate and not because I do not believe that one’s sexual identity expresses a deliberate political choice (as understood by the feminists who have defined it in this way). For me, the term *sexual preference* indicates that sexual identity is but one aspect of any person’s total identity as a human being. One chooses a “soul mate” or life partner, and sometimes that person happens to be a person of the same gender as oneself. But in order to remain in line with the more conventional usage, I opted mainly for “sexual orientation” in the interpretation chapters because most authors in the literature I reviewed prefer the term “sexual orientation”.

“Coming out”

“Coming out”, the process of disclosing or revealing one’s own sexual orientation or preference, comes from the (originally) American phrase “coming out of the closet” (Plummer, 1995; Richardson & Seidman, 2002; Sedgwick, 1990; Sullivan, 2003). It usually refers to the complex process of moving from an assumed heterosexual (and confused and conflicted) identity to a strong, positive and keen sense of identity as a gay person. But “coming out” has been so widely used that it has entered the English language in its own right simply to mean “disclose”. Thus it no longer refers exclusively to sexuality, but may include, for example, people who

“come out” in terms of belonging to a certain religion or a positive HIV status. In current practice, any person who asserts a positive identity that is based on self-acceptance, pride and visibility has come out of the closet. The term also implies a refusal to hide some condition, experience or past action that might be disagreeable to others and so provoke criticism, opposition or open antagonism. Dunphy (2000:118) notes that life experiences, innate character traits and the processes of social formation often place people involuntarily in various “closets” (British and American English: cupboards). The closet is therefore a place in which to hide something disagreeable and shameful. This may even be something as central to one’s identity as one’s innate sexual orientation. “Coming out” is not a one-off event or moment, but rather a lifelong process.

In the context of this study, “coming out” refers to the disclosure of *the family structure* by children of same-gender couples. For me the children’s process of disclosing that their parents are gay (as they reveal it directly, reveal it by implication, or as they reveal it when they tell me or others that that they have two mothers) is a process parallel to that which gay people undergo when they come out about their sexual orientation. It is also sometimes as fraught with emotion and other difficulties as is the gay experience of coming out. These children also, for example, often have to choose to “come out” about their family structure.

“Being okay”, “okay” and “okayness”

While a reader might wonder at my use of these phrases and their variant forms because of their informality or designation as colloquialisms in most dictionaries, I use them in this thesis in a deliberate and conscious way that imbues these terms with more depth and meanings that go beyond their everyday colloquial use.

“Okay” was the preferred term used in his psychological theory and practice by Thomas A. Harris in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Harris, 1973), as part of transactional analysis, a psychological approach that was developed mainly by Eric Berne (Thompson & Rudolph, 1992). Harris described four life attitudes that people use to summarise their feelings of self-worth and their perception of the worth (or

lack of worth) of others in personal interactions (transactions). He described four life positions which he variously designated as: "I'm OK – You're OK", "I'm OK – You're not OK", "I'm not OK – You're OK", "I'm not OK – You're not OK". The concept of "OK" represents an introjected conviction of being empowered, of being authentic, of having good human relationships, of being capable of solving problems constructively, and of being responsible (Harris, 1973).

In ordinary everyday usage, "okay" expresses agreement, acquiescence, being alright or satisfactory. It may also indicate approval, agreement or sanctioning (Merriam-Webster Online, 2005; Thompson, 1995; personal e-mail correspondence with R.K. Loveday, April 8, 2005).

In this thesis, *being okay/okay*, and thus also the term of *okayness*, imply the capacity of the children to be in emotional, cognitive and even spiritual congruence with the fact that they have two lesbian women (mothers) as parents. This would then also imply that they are in harmony with this fact of their lives, that they acknowledge it and that they do *not* deny it. *Being* refers to "to be", to exist, thus a state of being or a state of existing. *Being okay* thus indicates that there exists in the children a generalised feeling and frame of mind that in turn indicates an inner awareness of, contentment with and acceptance of the fact that they have two lesbian mothers.

These terms also indicate the nuances of being *satisfied* with, *content* with, *at ease* with, *at peace* with, and *alright* with having two mothers, which taken together might also indicate *acceptance* of having two lesbian mothers. Acceptance in psychological terms is a complex and deep process that is usually achieved after a prolonged contemplation of different factors (Kübler-Ross, 1986). The synonyms in the first sentence of this paragraph, may be regarded as referring to internal processes of being okay.

The terms *acceptability*, *adaptation* and *adjustment* also imply the existence of external processes that are associated with social approval and social acceptability. While these processes are important and certainly play a role in the any conviction of

okayness, they do not capture the particular meaning of what *being okay* implies (as it is used in this research).

After much consideration of possible alternatives, I could find no terms more apt or suitable for conveying the acceptance of their same-gender parents on the part of the children than what is conveyed in the terms *being okay* and *okayness*. To me these words signal an authentic and fundamental awareness, feeling and belief that the children in this study have an **unfolding** experience and an intuitive **knowing** that their same-gender lesbian mothers are okay *in every way*. This then is the way in which I use these terms in this thesis.

"Housekeeping" – or what to expect as you navigate this thesis



You will encounter "bubbles"...

My thesis consists of what I have called "Bubbles" rather than traditional chapters. I use the metaphor of a bubble to indicate that our current understandings are only the understandings of a moment in time and space, that the construction of knowledge is temporary and transient, that such constructions can only last for a limited time and that they can never be fully captured, stabilised or pinned down in a way that makes them rigid, stable, enduring, unalterable and privileged. This metaphor therefore incorporates postmodern, post-structuralist, feminist and gay beliefs and assumptions about the nature of our perceived and consensual realities.

The Concise Oxford dictionary also defines a bubble as "a thin sphere of liquid enclosing air" (Thompson, 1995:167). Just as this thin "skin" of the bubble separates liquid from air, so metaphorically do my Bubbles. You will find that I have enclosed in each Bubble various (air) pockets of knowledge. Thus even though the different Bubbles are thematically different from and physically separate from each other,

they are probably not always as definite as chapters, which the same dictionary defines as “a *main* division in a book” (Thompson, 1995:220) [my emphasis].

Because bubbles have the capacity to reflect light, I extend the meaning of my bubble metaphor to indicate how my extended *reflection* has constructed an understanding of the experiences of children who are growing up in same-gendered families. In addition, light reflected through a prism in a particular way arranges itself into the colours that we call a “rainbow”. It is significant for me that the rainbow (in its diversity of colours) is the universal global “symbol” of gay people. It is also incidentally a metaphor that South Africans have adopted. We call ourselves “the rainbow nation”, because the rainbow is a symbol and celebration of our national, cultural and ethical diversity.

You will encounter a “*green story line*”...

This choice of format that I made entails issues of the kind of representation and presentation that one finds in qualitative research. It also underlines a shift away from theory, data and interpretation towards *language* and *presentation* as central elements in research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:167-9). In terms of this paradigm, the researcher is regarded as an “author” because she or he cannot remain outside of the construction of her or his study. Authorship, style and text production are all central issues in research that have a significance that exceeds any superficial notions of “writing up results”. Gergen and Gergen (2000:1029) use the term *literary styling* to indicate that the researcher (or inquirer’s) description in qualitative research might take the form of fiction, poetry or autobiographical discursiveness. The deployment of stylized representations, particularly the replacement of traditional realist discourse with forms of writing cast in opposition to “truth telling”, signals to the reader that the writing does not function as a map of the world, but as an interpretive activity that address a community of interlocutors. It therefore offers the qualitative writer a greater expressive range and an opportunity to reach audiences outside the academy. In the perspective of postmodernist ideals, authorship is about increasing the opportunities for different readings. The reader

becomes significant and assumes a more active and less predictable position in which interesting readings may be divorced from the possible intentions of the author. This is, in part, the purpose of the “green story line” or narrative tale which encloses the more formal academic writing. It is intentionally designed to present a multivoiced, dialogical and reflexive text.

Because this inquiry and this journey are intensely personal, I reflect on *my* role and identity, and *my* voice and positionality as researcher. In pursuance of this, I continually ask myself questions. Some of these are questions that I have found in books; some are asked by colleagues, and some have arisen within me as the journey progressed. Reflexivity is about confronting and embracing key issues of re-presentation, style, self, voice, vulnerabilities, researcher privilege, researcher self-disclosure, to name but a few. Reflexivity is also about responsibility and respect. It is in my attempts to explore and analyse the depth and complexity of research decisions at all stages of the research inquiry, that I reveal my awareness of my own role in creating the research. These writings of mine represent an "effort to include many voices and to offer various levels of knowing and thinking through which a reader can make their own sense" (Lather & Smithies, 1997:xiv). I do not want to be a researcher who is a "disembodied, 'objective' knower" who "listens as the expert" (Lieblich & Josselson, 1994:xiii). I am deeply aware of my own personal presence in the writing. By utilising the skill and appreciating the value of reflexivity, I situate myself among many voices that appear in the text (Lather & Smithies, 1997:xiii-xiv).

Some of these voices become fictional characters in this thesis as personifications of key constructs and/ or meanings found in the academic literature. The reader will therefore encounter King Heterosexuality, Sir Queer, The Prince of the Kingdom (the king's gay son), Queen Academia, The Book of Fables, and other devices. King Heterosexuality, Sir Queer and the Prince feature strongly in Bubble Two, while Queen Academia becomes more prominent in Bubbles Three to Seven.

The conversations that take place between Carien (me, the researcher) and Queen Academia embody my exploration of the reflexivity that I have just discussed. They also serve to guide the reader through important transitions in each Bubble. I identified a potential in constructing a text that would allow for *multiple interpretations* in the multiple layers (“layeredness”) of the thesis. The reader is given an opportunity to join the “fellow listeners” in the Great Hall of the King Heterosexuality’s Castle. The act of writing became a tool that allowed me to have a dialogue with the reader. It also allowed me to be transparent about the inner conversations with myself – mostly through my conversations with “Queen Academia”.



You will encounter “ribbons”...

Bubble Five is tied together with three ribbons. These ribbons are symbolically representative of the interpretive themes that developed out of this study. In Bubbles Two and Three, the reader will encounter “links in a string of ribbons that reflect” that particular Bubble because these links symbolically represent the different sections that comprise each Bubble as a whole. The ribbons in Bubble Five, however, represent independent themes that are given prominence by the use of the “ribbon” device.

The outline of this thesis

In [this Bubble](#), the study is contextualised and the rationale is explained. A brief introductory outlook on the research design was given. Relevant terminology was discussed, and the ethical considerations and necessary guidelines to situate the reader in the structure of the thesis were also provided.

In [Bubble Two](#), I review and discuss the relevant scholarship that influenced and is relevant to my study. I also discuss the contextual background in which the study is situated.

Bubble Three is dedicated to a full explanation and justification of my research methodology. I discuss and explain the process of how I engaged with the practicalities of the field work. I would like once again to emphasise that the analysis and interpretation phases are at times interchangeable and interrelated because of the distinctive nature of qualitative research and because of the interpretative methodology that I used to answer the research question. Methodological postscripts therefore also appear after the interpretations have been offered at the end of **Bubble Six**.

In **Bubble Four**, I present the personal narratives of each child who was interviewed. The main focus of this Bubble is “to present the voices of others in a more or less unmediated way” (without the interference of academic interruption) (Lather & Smithies, 1997:126).

Bubbles Five and Six present the interpretive themes that emerged from the analysis of the data, as well as a conceptualisation of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families.

In **Bubble Seven**, I conclude this study by focusing on the criteria for quality that I have maintained throughout the research. I also offer a final summarised view of my findings and that relate this to suggestions that might inform and direct further research in this field.

let the adventure BEGIN!

Bubble Two

Discovering &
exploring the landscape
of literature

Visual pointers to Bubble Two...

1st link p.34 “The story”



- The homo- and heterosexual binary p.37
- Homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity p.38
- Discourses of deviance & sin; illness, and sexuality as a divider and oppressor p.41
- The coming out story p.43
- The lesbian legacy p.45
- Deconstructing sexuality: Foucault p.49, Queer Theory p.51

2nd link p.55 Families



- The “ideal” traditional family vs. queering the family p.57
- What is the family: postmodern interpretations p.61
- The sexual and gender dimorphism of families p.64
- Different representations of same-gendered families in research literature p.67
- (Pre)conceptual framework of constructing same-gendered families p.70
- Private live and public debates; kinship; a care perspective on families p.74

3rd link p.78 Children



- Voices from the literature p.79
- General; overview of research on same-gendered families p.84
- Disclosure: the possible risks & are these fears grounded? p.91,92
- How do families negotiate the perceived stigma of their “otherness” as families? p.94
- What does it mean to be a child of a same-gender couple in South Africa? p.99
- Reflecting on Bubble Two p.103

Bubble Two

Discovering and exploring the landscape of literature

THE FIRST LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE TWO

The story of homosexuality, of gayness, 'otherness',
queerness and beyond...

and so **the voice** said, "before we embark on this journey of experience, before we let these children speak again, there are some things that you ought to know..."

"If we want to understand how same-gendered families and the children in same-gendered families have to negotiate their position in the world, we first need to understand how life in Western bourgeois society is dominated by a social discourse of "straightness". We need to examine the children's personal narratives in the context of society's construction of same-gendered families. I will therefore now retreat into the background, and let Carien unpack the constructed and hegemonic categories that organise a Western-influenced society."

Carien:

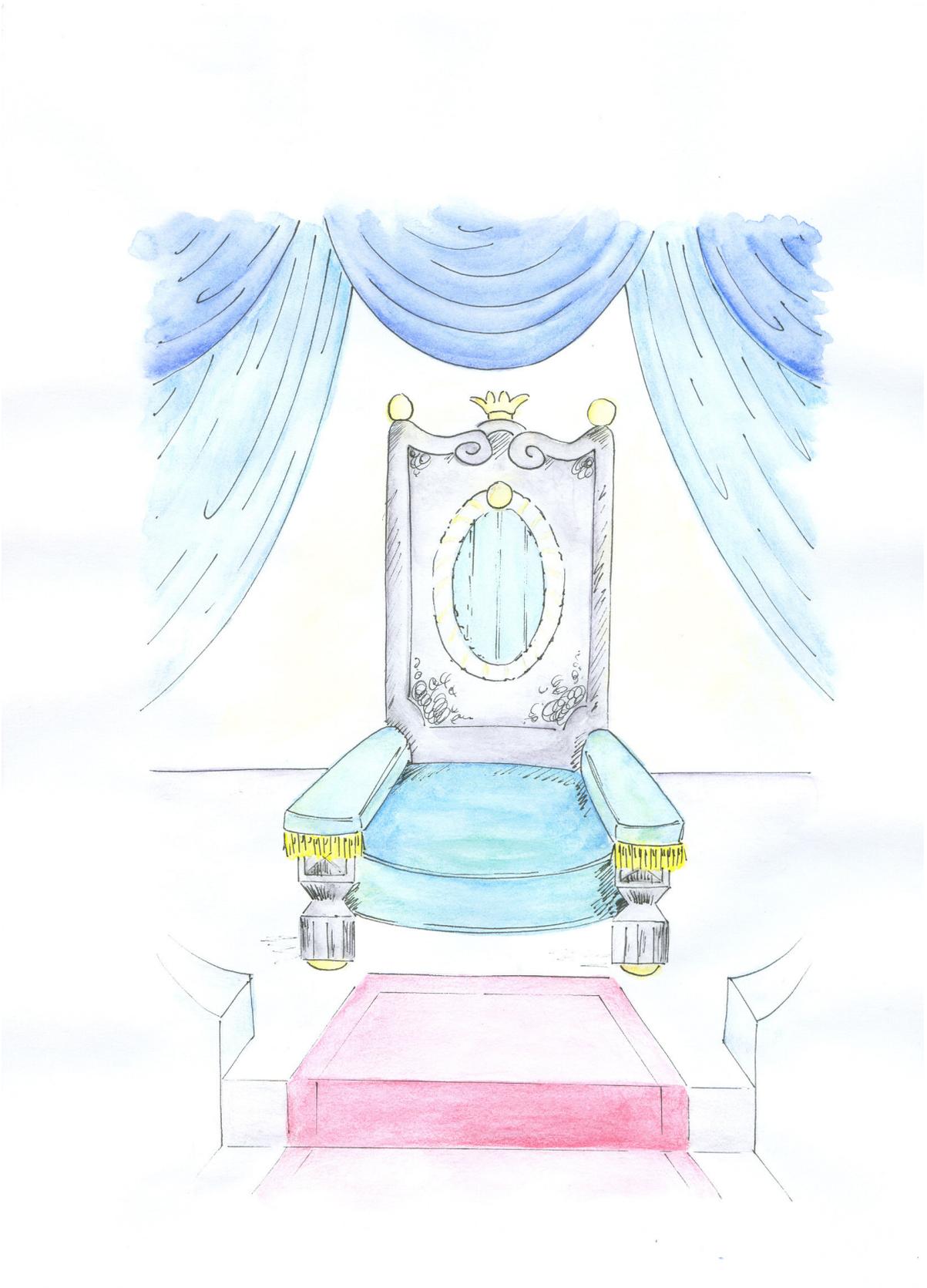
Caution: Parental guidance is advised. This story contains sensitive images and concepts of a sexual nature.

Setting the scene: This is a story of the reign of King Heterosexuality, a king whose rule has been taken for granted in every country of the world for as long as anyone can remember. As happens in any kingdom, the King has a council of trusted and loyal advisors whose duty it is to make laws to safeguard the state against any kind of opposition to the King's rule. Who is this opposition?

In the first place, they are made up of people who question the King's rule. These are instigators— instigators who are forever asking questions. To combat their influence, the King's advisors devised a plan called "Operation safety in binaries" as a means of preventing and controlling dissent. This measure forces everyone in society to think only in terms of dichotomies and only to live in terms of the discourses of heteronormativity.

This strange state of affairs did not happen overnight. It took quite some time for the King and his advisors to get everyone to accept it. But now, once again, it has come under attack. A fierce opponent of this royal policy has appeared! But little is known of this opponent. All that the King's spies can tell him are that this brutal opponent is Queering the Silence...

But let me not rush straight into the story. First let me tell you how the King managed in the first place to establish his heteronormative rule.



The King believed that he would be remembered forever if he could but change history. In order to do this, he decided to create something for future generations that would be both different and radical. The King decided that he wanted his memorial to be in the Field of Sexualities, so he ordered Sexual Categories to be constructed. Whereas other societies such as that of the Ancient Greeks had established categories of active-passive and dominant-subordinate to reflect social relations, the King decided to establish naturalised and individualised categories such as man-woman and homosexual-heterosexual.¹ He selected a group of experts as advisors – some men and a few women – and ordered them to work diligently behind the scenes so that they could be instrumental in fulfilling his wish.

These sexual categories reflect deeply held assumptions in Western thought. Because Western thought has throughout its history been dualistic in its most basic epistemological assumptions, people influenced by these assumptions tend to perceive reality in terms of binaries such as male/female, hetero/homo, black/white, dominant/subordinate, and public/private. These categories for defining particular kinds of relationships and practices are culturally and historically specific and have not operated in all cultures at all times. This does not mean that same-gender relations do not have a long, rich history. But the rigidly binary terms that are used to frame social and personal understandings of same-gender relations are characteristic of Western thought. As Norton (2002:¶2) states: “The absence of language does not indicate the absence of conceptual thought.”

Long, long ago, in the second half of the 19th century, a concept was created in Europe. In terms of this concept, there are people who can be labelled “homosexual” because of their sexual orientation – and such people exist in a category that is distinct from “heterosexual”. To be precise, in 1868, Karl M. Kertbeny² introduced the term into the Western-influenced society for the first time, while, in 1880, the word “heterosexual” was used for the first time in printed form

¹ I do not want referencing to interfere in the “green storyline” in this paragraph. So here is the reference: Roseneil (2002)

² Born as Karl-Maria Benkert (1824-1882)

(Richardson & Seidman, 2002; Sullivan, 2003). At this point, I must add that the King's experts initially made a mistake, and how the way in which they corrected it can only be described as something short of a miracle. When the term "heterosexuality" was used by the medical specialist, James Kiernan, in 1892, he used it to describe the "sexual perversion" of individuals who engage in non-procreative sex with the opposite sex for "pleasure alone" (Dunphy, 2000:6). This was definitely NOT what the King had intended! His whole intention was that his experts should legitimate and establish heterosexuality as the *only* valid form of sexual association – not link it to any form of "sexual perversion". Thus, by the end of the 20th century, people in the West and in Western-influenced societies had become widely accustomed to using only these two categories of sexual labelling to describe the sexual orientation of human beings and manifestations of sexual desire. Listen to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has to say in her justly famous book, *Epistemology of the closet* (1990):

What was new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarised identity full of implications (Sedgwick, 1990:3).

The main consequence of the hegemony of this binary model of sexuality is that heterosexuality became privileged (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Dunphy, 2000; Epstein, O'Flynn & Telford, 2002; Esterberg, 2002; Puri, 2002). This was just what the King wanted! For Clunis and Green (2000:62), "heterosexism" refers to the assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual. Since the invention, dissemination and widespread acceptance of these binary labels, heterosexuality has been considered to be the outcome of a normal and healthy psychosexual development – whereas homosexuality has been considered to be a pathological deviation from that supposed norm.

The King's rule of the "straightness" of Westernised society exists on three levels (Jenness & Richman, 2002:408): the level of the individual (homophobia), the level of the institutional or structural (heterosexism), and the level of the cultural (heteronormativity). *Homophobia* refers to negative attitudes towards, a dislike of, a fear of, and even a hatred of homosexual people. *Heterosexism* links the privileged

status of heterosexual discourse and personal anti-homosexual bias(es) to cultural discourses in institutions such as the law, religion, family and the economy. On a structural level, heterosexism maintains these forms of prejudice in the structures and institutions of society and provides a pretext to those who wish to discriminate, chastise, and even perpetrate violence against those who deviate from conventional sexualities, identities or practices. This kind of heterosexist pretext is particularly valued by those who wish to exercise their discrimination in punitive official, institutional and legal ways. It also provides criminal or inadequately socialised elements in the proletariat of welfare societies with informal pretexts (“motives” in police jargon) for committing horrendous crimes against gay people and their families. Heterosexist assumptions are evident in the acts, canons and dogmas of most forms of contemporary religions when they (for example) view and treat homosexuality as problematic. Heterosexist thinking is also evident in laws that are designed to legalise marriage only between people of the opposite sex. Sullivan (2003:51) also views heterosexuality as a complex matrix of discourses and institutions that have become normalised in culture. The effect of heterosexism creates a collective cultural delusion that traps uncritical minds into imagining that heterosexual relationships, lifestyles and identities are natural, ahistorical and universal.

On a cultural level, *heteronormativity* emphasises the “correctness” of heterosexual dogmas and traditional family forms while at the same time censoring, punishing, medicalising and rendering homosexuality invisible in all of its manifestations. Heteronormativity indicates how heterosexuality dominates in frequently unconsciously or in conspicuous ways. Puri (2002:432) explains that this normativity of heterosexuality – the fact that all of us are unquestioningly assumed to be “straight” (until proved otherwise) – becomes visible in subtle forms of discrimination, indifference or in unwarranted assumptions. One often encounters such unwarranted assumptions in conversations where references to marriage and relationships are predicated on the universal validity of opposite sex relationships. Thus someone may remark to a woman: “Are you married?” or “What does your husband do?” Janet Wright (2001:279) uses the term “heterosexual supremacy” to

describe our largely heterosexual-supremacist societies in which the male/female bond is idealised as “naturally” spiritually, physically, emotionally and intellectually superior to any other variant sexually orientated relationship. Heterosexuality is unthinkingly “idealised” or “privileged” because it is taken for granted by most people that heterosexuality is “right”, “natural” and universal. In addition, the laws, institutions and values of Western-influenced societies are predicated on these erroneous assumptions about heterosexuality. Heterosexual supremacy entrenches forms of gendered and patriarchal society on human beings who do not fit neatly into those categories (Clunis & Green, 2000; Dunphy, 2000; Epstein, O’Flynn & Telford, 2002).

The heterosexual/homosexual binary created well-defined insider and outsider groups, which I will later show are not mutually exclusive. The opposite group, the outsiders, the “others”, who have been constructed as homosexuals, are regarded as a threat to society’s well-established set of symbols which provide meaning and order for most of its members. Homosexuality is a social “taboo” to the eyes of many people because gay people do not live in families; they often cannot or prefer not to have children; they defy the neat categories of the two-gender system; they live in defiance of the morality to which most people defer in heterosexist society, and they violate the “natural order” of things that most people take for granted. Since there are no known contemporary societies in which homosexuality is accepted as the widespread form of sexual orientation, hostility to homosexuality is linked (if only unconsciously) to fears about threats to social order (Plummer, 1998:87-89). One of the most effective means that the King and his advisors used to persecute homosexual people was to lock them up in psychiatric institutions, to inflict judicial punishments on them, to imprison them, to silence them in various ways, to make them invisible, to incarcerate them in “private” clinics and hospitals and to marginalize them by ensuring that they all remained out of sight in millions of so-called “closets”. Heterosexuality was publicly declared to be the privileged and dominant discourse of society. Institutionalised forms of social organisation such as the state, education and religion were used as instruments to reinforce this state policy (Klesse, 2002; Plummer, 1998; Puri, 2002; Sedgwick, 1990).

The King's advisors began to implement their plans with increasing ferocity. Here is what they had planned to achieve. Gay people would be closeted through a discourse of *deviance*. Homosexual acts (not a category of persons) would be punishable by law. Because this stipulation means that *anyone* in principle is capable of committing this crime, such a representation of homosexuality cannot be linked to an innate sexual identity (Sullivan, 2003:4). Although surviving historical documents mostly indicate that it was men who were accused and convicted of this "crime", there are also records of a few cases in which women were tried and convicted for "acting like a man", or committing a "crime against nature"³ (Duggan, 2003; Sullivan, 2003). Alongside the discourse of deviance, a *religious* discourse that defines all undifferentiated non-procreative sexual acts as sin, was established. This discourse that have been embedded in society since the Constantinian accommodation of the Roman Church to pagan Roman culture in the 4th century CE.

Medical analyses of various forms of non-procreative sex as categorisable perversions and deviations also began to replace earlier religious discourses. Ulrich's work between 1864 and 1879 paved the way for the development of the notion of homosexuality as an illness, a pathology, and an "unnatural" aberration that required medical scrutiny. In 1886, Richard von Krafft-Ebing classified all possible forms of non-procreative sex, not a sin, but as a disease, an illness (Sullivan, 2003:7). While this transition from dogmatic religious opinion to proto-scientific medical discourse might have appeared to some to represent the triumph of science over the superstitions of religion, this science simply reflected how deeply entrenched the idea was that homosexuality is "unnatural", "perverted", and a "disorder". While the design of the pieces on the board was changing, the game remained essentially the same.

From the 1910s onwards, sexologists (as they were later to be known) began to develop an ideal that marriage for heterosexual couples might be legitimately

³ The 1477 Trail, for example, of Katherina Hetzeldorfer. It is said that she had a long-term relationship with her female household, acted like a husband, made sexual advances to other women, wore men's clothes - and therefore transgressed gender norms (Duggan, 2003:75).

predicated on the pleasure that they might derive from mutual sexual intimacy. In the early years of the 20th century this new discourse of *sexuality* targeted the gender of the object choice of one's sexual desire and orientation (Creith, 1996; Sedgwick, 1990). To be gay now meant and implied that one lived as a sexual being (King, 2004:123). Gayness and sexuality became equated. By the 1950s, this definition of marital heterosexuality was firmly entrenched in Westernised societies. It rapidly gained an ascendancy that was supported by the power, prestige and influence of the media and by evolving as social, legal and political institutions and policies. The power of the media first became evident in the glamour of the Hollywood film industry, the nascent television industry, and in women's magazines which, although they were not as glossy as they are now, exerted a tremendous influence over generations of younger women in the 20th century. **It seemed as though the King's plans were becoming a successful instrument of his policy.** Sexuality was used to control and oppress, and a sexual hierarchy came into existence that consequently acted as a new form of social control. **But the King made sure that heterosexual people were not under any significant pressure to analyse and question their sexual preference or orientation** (Creith, 1996; Richardson & Seidman, 2002).

But neither the King nor his advisors foresaw a revolution that was looming on the horizon. It was during the decade of the 1960s that the residual morality and inhibitions of the Victorian era were seriously challenged. It was during this "permissive" decade that the revolutionary idea that *women* might also legitimately expect satisfaction and pleasure from sexual acts was not only hypothesised, but actively lived out by an increasingly large and vocal sector of the post-war "Baby Boomers" who were reaching their twenties during that decade. The sixties also saw the appearance of activities such as "swinging" and group sex. Topics that were previously regarded as deeply private started to be discussed more and more openly and in more and more public forums such as the media. The women's liberation movement paved the way for lesbian feminism and gay liberation politics that flared up in the United States and the United Kingdom in the late 1960s. These movements were made topical and relevant by a changing social climate that

increasingly emphasised human rights, especially those of women, ethnic minorities and previously colonised people (Corber & Valocchi, 2003; Creith, 1996; Dunphy, 2000; Palmer, 1993; Zimmerman, 1992). **From now on the King's advisors could only look on in impotent rage and frustration. But here – in essence – is what happened.**

Increasing urbanisation after World War II meant that many people who moved away from their families and home communities were for the first time able to enjoy some degree of personal autonomy in their private and public lives. By the same token, those who were homosexual were able (if they had the courage) to “come out” and enjoy the freedom of a developing homosexual subculture (Gevisser, 1994:18). Homophile organisations began, very tentatively, to emerge in the 1960s and claim a public voice for homosexuals. The all-important Stonewall Riot of 1969 marked the beginning of a gay liberation movement that spread rapidly and idealistically in the United States, Britain, Australia and other countries.

A new modernist tale emerged: the “coming out” story. Lesbian and gay coming out stories were never heard before the late 1960s and 1970s because, before that time, there was nothing to come out to except public disgrace, humiliation and punishment. While there have probably always been a minority of fortunate gay people who have managed to find personal accommodations in their private lives against all the odds, it was during this period that gay people could at last “come out” to a new kind of subculture. While gay people could honour and celebrate their gayness before the mid-1960s, this occurred mainly in isolation – either to oneself alone, to a solitary lover, or somewhere in a deeply disguised and secretive homosexual underworld (Plummer, 1995:120, 121). The stories that emerged from the 1970s were “liberating” coming out tales of some degree of triumph over terrible odds. These narratives were in dramatic contrast to the pathological and forensic accounts that we possess from the 19th century and earlier. They represented an attempt to assert a positive identity that was based on self-acceptance, pride and even (most courageous of all) visibility, and many of them

resonated with a new sense of belonging and community (Dunphy, 2000:118). Coming out now represented “a broken silence” (Creith, 1996:44).

As coming out became an ideal in the gay subculture, newly “liberated” lesbians and gay men and their social movements started to appear to “document and celebrate the lives of people with homoerotic expression” (Adam, 2002:16). **In this era of globalisation, it is important for us to note important differences that still exist in the King’s country.** Different regions have different records when it comes to human rights, of which gay rights are an important branch. The Nordic or Scandinavian countries, for example, have been leaders in the toleration of homosexuality and developing ideas of sexual freedom. Their political and welfare systems are also not as gender-biased as is that of (say) the United Kingdom (Löfström, 1998; Lützen, 1998). **A country of particular interest** is that of South Africa, where the discourse of sexuality was also rigidly controlled by the apartheid system. While the history of black male homosexuality was openly acknowledged in the mine compounds, incidents of white middle-class and upper middle-class homosexual encounters were intensely scrutinised by the state⁴ (Elder, 1995; Gevisser & Cameron, 1994). However, in every country where political, social and political conditions permitted it, there were groups of influential people and their supporters (both straight and gay) who campaigned ceaselessly for the state to grant fundamental human rights to homosexual people. There were also those who campaigned for a more extreme position. These people desired “to free the homosexual in everyone”, to overthrow “compulsory heterosexuality” – thereby abolishing the boundaries between the homosexual and heterosexual (Plummer, 2003; Sullivan, 2003; Walters, 2000). Assimilationist politics and radical politics were both features of the gay liberation movement of those revolutionary years. As homosexuals ceaselessly demanded equal rights and protection as a minority group, and even eventually began to obtain some of these rights, homosexuals in the more enlightened countries of the globe began to enjoy some of the benefits of

⁴ It is not the intention of this thesis to go into a detailed history of South African homosexuality. An excellent resource to consult is that of Gevisser, M. & Cameron, E. (Eds). 1994. *Defiant desire*. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

freedom and legal rights and to witness the growth of more confidence in lesbian and gay communities as they slowly create their own institutions and traditions.

Which brings us to the **lesbian legacy**...

If we focus now on the emergence and development of the “lesbian” as a socially and personally acknowledged reality of the 20th century, we can see that women have been repeatedly sexualised, desexualised and then resexualised throughout recorded history in accordance with social and historical preconceptions. In the Victorian times, lesbianism was not even publicly admitted. It only emerged in tandem with the growing realisation that women in general have sexual needs and desires, and that they are not merely the passive and male-dependent creatures that they were assumed to be in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Dunphy, 2000:19), and of course in the centuries prior to those. But of course lesbians have always found ways of enjoying rich and cultured lives and personal relationships under the most difficult circumstances precisely because official public denial of sexual element or passion in lesbian relationships was so rigid that it also served as a useful screen behind which lesbians and indeed women of all kinds of sexual orientation could lead their lives. What nowadays might be regarded as lesbian relationships were in the 19th century regarded as “romantic friendships” to which no stigma was attached and which were fully compatible with the outer and visible arrangements of heterosexual marriage (Plummer, 1998; Sullivan, 2003). Because lesbian identities emerged much later than their gay male identities (which began to be vigorously researched and defined from the latter half of the 19th century onwards), they were less visible because their “identity” could be subsumed under categories such as “romantic friendship” or “Sapphic love” – which was idealised by a society steeped in classical learning as non-sexual. The same kind of cover operated effectively for men until the public were made aware of the sexual nature of male “special friendships” by the trial of Oscar Wilde at the end of the 19th century. Thereafter homosexual men had to be very careful indeed as they were subjected to an increasingly hostile scrutiny by a public that was pruriently

obsessed by sexuality. Fortunately (or unfortunately) for lesbians, there was never any female equivalent of the Oscar Wilde trial.

Lesbian identities developed alongside the dominant discourses that determined gender roles, with the implication (at least) that lesbianism is incompatible with motherhood. The existence of lesbian motherhood presents a challenge to the dominant ideologies of gender and family because it is negatively constructed by hostile critics as a threat. Radical lesbian feminists argue that to be lesbian is to repudiate the very category of *woman* because this category is a foundational concept in the discourse that equates women with motherhood and the inequality inherent in patriarchy and heterosexuality (Creith, 1996; Dunphy, 2000; Palmer, 1993; Zimmerman, 1992). “She is a disrupter of heterosexuality, a presence standing outside the conventions of patriarchy, a hole in the fabric of gender dualism” (Zimmerman, 1992:4). Zimmerman states that there is a long tradition that became more and more visible from the beginning of the 20th century in which lesbians portrayed themselves as radicals, outlaws, and transgressors against “Man’s law”. Such radical movements proclaim that the lesbian expresses “the rage of all women”, that it brings to light the “monster” that lurks within patriarchy, and that it is “threat” to male supremacist institutions and an “attack on hetero-relations” (Zimmerman, 1992:4).

In the 1970s, developing parallel to the gay (male) liberation, lesbianism was desexualised by lesbian feminists who asserted that the adoption of lesbian identity should be regarded as a political strategy that offers lesbians a positive lesbian identity within a close-knit community of women. Probably one of the strongest proponents of this position was Adrienne Rich (1980:632), who stated that lesbianism is a potential *political* position for all women. Politically inclined lesbians (thus defined) made no claims about women’s “innate” sexuality. Instead they emphasised women’s ability to choose their sexual orientation in situations where sexuality becomes a voluntary act of sexual reorientation. This position entails that a women’s sexuality becomes a sexuality without any ontological basis and that it is defined in opposition to “male” sexuality. In this view, lesbians are regarded as

being “naturally” feminists while feminists are regarded as being “naturally” lesbians (Andermahr, 1992; Creith, 1996; Kitzinger, 1987; Maher & Pusch, 1995; Palmer, 1993).

In South Africa, the women’s organisations of the 1950s and 1960s focused primarily on the rights and condition of women in the workplace and on the anti-apartheid struggle and its priorities. It neither addressed itself to issues of sexuality, nor did it situate itself within a feminist ideology. This means that that lesbians in South Africa have historically found it more difficult than gay men to find their own distinctive “space” and subculture. In spite of these difficulties, we have evidence that lesbian communities existed throughout this period – mostly in the form of small cliques of friends (Gevisser, 1994:22). During the 1970s, the gay subculture of both men and women underwent an expansion, mostly because developments in media improved communication and this meant that homosexuals of both genders were able to follow (to some extent) ideological and political trends in the United States and United Kingdom. I say “to some extent” because the censorship laws of South Africa under successive apartheid governments prevented all but the most innocuous texts from entering the country.

The worldwide AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s saw the development of new forms of political activism on a collective level and in communities that strengthened association and communality among gay people of both genders and among those who were most severely affected (initially, gay men). What has followed in the wake of the AIDS pandemic and discussions about safer sex is a resexualisation that reaffirms the existence of woman-to-woman sexual acts. But the old categories were forever superseded (Creith, 1996:45).

Lesbianism, once an act of passion between women, has now become a complex metaphor. Once defined by idiosyncratic sexual acts and private modes of self-understanding, lesbianism has now become a profoundly complex symbol that anchors a wide range of concerns, pleasures and anxieties (Plummer, 1995:141). As Zimmerman (1992:9) notes, “lesbian” is positioned as a metaphor among the radical

dispositions of dominant systems and discourses. The representation of lesbians as belonging to a single, homogenous group has also been questioned (Palmer, 1993:17). While sexual differences or proclivities between or among lesbians may be few, all other forms of difference (which are numerous) are important determining factors in the construction of self-identity. These differences include factors such as race, class, origins, employment status, age, religion and physical abilities, and while we may struggle against these differences within our “individual spaces”, they have a material and social reality that cannot simply be denied or wished away. It may well be the case that lesbian space could more easily be defined by difference than similarity (Zimmerman, 1992:12).

Stronger and stronger voices of resistance began to be heard... Some came from the distant wise observers while others came from different communities and different academic disciplines. Many voices even passed unheard in the great concatenation of social forces and movements that became ever more visible in parades, film festivals, television, printed media – and even in the spectre of some gay couples that lived openly together. And so the kingdom began to witness strange and troubling sights. Nothing anywhere seemed to be exactly the way that it had been previously. It was as though a spell had been cast on the land. It seemed apparent that people were beginning to reason independently of the King’s edicts, and groups of people were observed to be gathering together secretly or in public. Provinces emerged all over the country... Among these were the province of Structuralism, the province of Poststructuralism, the province of Social Constructionism, the province of Radical Feminism, and the province of Queer Theory. What was interesting was that these provinces had no clear boundaries. Some people even began to think that Postmodernism was taking over the world because so many disciplines and paradigms began to be defined in terms of overlapping boundaries and common interests. Boundaries became “soft” rather than “hard”. Fluidity became a distinguishing feature of the times. Some scholars began to declare that they had seen clearly from the beginning that social

construction and discursive⁵ practices determined all literature, research and scientific practice. If we are to understand the developments that took place in the history of the reign of King Heterosexuality, we need to pay attention to some of the developments in the *Book of Fables* (which deals with academic disciplines).

Now the King's secret began to crumble... Prominent scholars in all these provinces criticised the construction of the theories and interpretations that we unthinkingly use in society, and attempted to demonstrate their underlying inconsistency and fragmentation. One such prominent figure in the Province that has overlapping boundaries between Structuralism and Poststructuralism was Michel Foucault (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2002:148-150). Michel Foucault was a leading French scholar who was particularly interested in the "knowledge" of human beings and the various "powers" that act on human beings. His best-known statement is perhaps "Knowledge is Power". Because knowledge and power work primarily through language, Foucault focused throughout his work on one of the central concepts of the social sciences, namely the categorisation of people into normal and abnormal. He also emphasised that society's assumptions about abnormal people, madness, illness, criminality and perverted sexuality varies greatly in different times and in different epochs. The exclusion of abnormal people does not make these people dispensable to culture because what is "normal" cannot be defined except in contrast to what is "abnormal". Thus it is only through "abnormality" that "normality" can ever be known (Fillingham, 1993:5,17).

For Foucault the category "homosexual" is a product of the work of social control by scientists, jurists, psychiatrists, psychologists and sexologists, all of whom defined this category in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Corber & Valocchi, 2003:4). Here is one of his widely quoted statements:

In... the 19th century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology... The homosexual was now a species (Foucault, 1980, in Sullivan, 2003:4).

⁵ Discursive practices entail a focus on language, although this is beyond the scope of the thesis to elaborate extensively on how language shapes and construct sexualities.

The discourse practices construct “the homosexual” as different from the “straight” man or woman. It is in these discursive contexts that homosexuality is produced, created and recreated, and repeatedly offered as a constructed reality that forms an “unaccepted” part of society (King, 2004:123).

Foucault argues that we are all enmeshed in relations of power and that we are affected by the discourses about sexuality in complex ways. Power is not something that one group or group possesses in order to control another. Power is productive rather than simply oppressive. Power comprises a network of relationships among people who (in some minimal sense at least) are free to act and to resist. He does not deny the reality of domination but for him it is not the whole story; power can be positive and liberating as well as negative. Although power is unevenly distributed and concentrated in various social institutions, it does not operate unidirectional or hierarchical but can be circular and local (Corber & Valocchi, 2003; Dunphy, 2000; Fillingham, 1993; Mottier, 1998; Reddy, 2003; Sullivan, 2003).

Power in the Foucauldian account is discursive in nature and operates by means of the internalisation of norms. The subject is constituted in meaning systems, normative structures, and culturally prescribed taxonomies that circulate in society. Individuals internalise the norms generated by the discourses of sexuality while they participate in social institutions such as schools, clinics, prisons, churches, mental hospitals, and the mass media. As people internalise these discourses, they become self-regulating subjects, or subjects who “police” their own behaviour so that they will appear to be “normal”. As Plummer (2003:99) states: “We construct social worlds of the normal, and we use these to locate ourselves and our sense of the deviant or the aberrant.” One of Foucault’s most valuable contributions is the concept of “reverse” discourses. As we challenge stereotypes and labels – such as when, for example, lesbians and male homosexuals challenge discourses that define same-gender sexual attraction as “perversion”, we engage with the dominant discourses of the society in which we live. As soon as we do so, we are obliged to invent new labels and identities that may empower us in one way but that may also

limit and regulate us in other ways. In essence, according to Foucault, we *participate* in dominant systems of regulation as soon as we try to change them.

Although power relations and discourses may change, we can never escape from them. Resistance is a continuous process because although discourses are products of power, they in turn generate the power from which they derive their validity (Mottier, 1998:117). Power can never be completely overthrown. It can only be resisted or reversed because it can never be possessed. It can only be exercised. Power implies more than domination and repression. It can also be positive, productive and creative when it offers possibilities for action.

And so a deconstructive reading of heterosexuality and homosexuality entered the Book of Fables in this kingdom, and it changed the landscape forever...

A deconstructive reading of heterosexuality as something that is represented as natural and original (in the sense of being a primal condition), and discrete and essential, reveals that heterosexuality is logically dependent on its so-called opposite (homosexuality) for its identity. In other words, heterosexuality (and what is “natural”) logically includes what it excludes – homosexuality (and what is “unnatural”). It is at this point that Foucault’s work on power enables us to make a decisive point. Because power is circulated and never fixed, homosexuality *enables* heterosexuality to occupy a privileged position. It enables heterosexuality to function as the social norm from which homosexuality deviates. Heterosexuality therefore depends on homosexuality for its coherence and stability (Ingraham, 2002; Sullivan, 2003). The work of Foucault and queer theory enable us to describe sexuality as a regime of knowledge and power that structures the economic, political and social life of modern societies.

As if this was not enough, this powerful opponent, Sir Queer, emerged to threaten the peace and order of society, those routine mundane lives of ordinary people who just “live out coherent, defined and relatively unchanging sexual identities, fundamentally organised by the available positions of homo and heterosexuality, and also bisexuality that reiterates them” (Johnson, 2004:187).

Sir Queer and his attendant Meanings were out to cause discomfort because of the fluidity with which the term “queer” is used. This fluidity works to disrupt and alter understandings of sexual minorities and the way in which they see themselves and are regarded by society. Queer theory rejects the idea of “homosexuality” as a stable or autonomous category. It regards “homosexuality” as a logical necessary and supplementary term that stabilises heterosexuality by functioning as its binary opposite. It emphasises the existence of heterosexuality and interrupts silent assumptions about heterosexuality as a normative practice. The use of the word “queer” as opposed to “gay”, “lesbian” or “bisexual” decisively disrupts the notion of sexual identity as fixed and immutable. In other words, we use the word “queer” deliberately to complicate the apparently stable binary of “gay” and “straight”, and this causes a re-figuring of identities that contain unstable, and always multiple and partial positions (Butler, 1990; Corber & Valocchi, 2003; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004).

Because of the predominantly binary structure of Western thought, intermediate categories such as bisexuality and transgenderism, and non-fixed variations of homosexuality such as cross-dressing, transsexuality, female-to-male transfers who identify themselves as lesbian, and even sadomasochism, have been widely ignored. This serves to emphasise that sexual categories are *social constructions* that open up new ways of thinking about a wide range of subcultural practices and identities, and that force researchers to rethink and reconsider the stratification of sexuality (Corber & Valocchi, 2003; Richardson & Seidman, 2002; Roseneil, 2002). A change from the perception that homosexuality is a discourse of deviance and illness to the perception that homosexuality is a discourse of gender and sexuality that is socially constructed, challenges many of the dominant meanings of homosexuality.

If we take Foucault’s analysis of power to its logical conclusion, we can see that the consolidation of the binary organisation of sexuality reified and further entrenched the category “homosexual”. The history of the gay liberation movement further illustrates the complexity of the nature of discursive power: despite the fact that it

shifted relations of power to some extent, it did not effect homosexuals' liberation from oppression. It inevitably created the need for further struggles that continue even now (Corber & Valocchi, 2003; Sullivan, 2003). Plummer (1998:85) also observes that the liberationists themselves became key definers of the homosexual role, thereby casting themselves as the primary regulators of their supposedly liberating definitions. Plummer adds that liberating social movements are never just that. By creating their own orthodoxies, they create a necessity for the regulation of the behaviour of people who have been "liberated" by their definitions.

Academic interruption:

This is something from which my study cannot escape. By merely using words and terms such as "gay families", "lesbian parents" and "children raised in same-gendered families", I circumscribe and entrench "homosexuality" by labelling and by categorisation. I would therefore prefer to follow in Plummer's example by saying that I am not studying "homosexuals", but "homosexual categories" or "homosexualities" (Plummer, 1998:85). This flows from the research done by Kinsey (Esterberg, 2001:218), who was the first to advocate the need to view homosexuality as existing on a seven-point continuum, where 0 means "exclusively heterosexual" and 6 means "exclusively homosexual". Kinsey's research has shown that human sexual experience can be more accurately represented by metaphors of flux, change and diversity. This in turn has contributed to the notion of "homosexualities" rather than "homosexuality".

Queer theory also suggested that it is impossible to classify sexualities into fixed sexual categories and that sexuality is often ambiguous, identifications are fluctuating, and sexuality is "strategically performed" (Butler, 1994; Reddy, 2003). This does not imply that it is possible to write or do research without setting up binaries. Epstein, O'Flynn and Telford (2002), and Johnson (2004), argue that most people live around the dichotomy of homo/heterosexuality. In spite of a significant increase in "toleration" of homosexual practices and identities over the past few years in many mostly First World, Western-influenced countries, homosexuality's habitual propensity to operate in terms of binaries has remained intact and that the

outside/inside dichotomy still prevails in the minds of most homosexual people. Johnson (2004) does not predict a “movement of incorporation or a disintegration of boundaries”, but rather representations of assertions of difference and rigidity, of “specialisation, of separating out, of producing defined and singular beings” (Johnson, 2004:186). Critics of queer theory such as Dunphy therefore argue that while queer theorists may *claim* they are opening up new possibilities for a politics of diversity, the reality is that their formulations depend on the validity (or otherwise) of an extreme subjectivism that reflects bourgeois individualism and that consequently defeats the aims of the collective struggle of lesbian and gay movements (Dunphy, 2000:138-139). She emphasises that queer scholars may well have forgotten the trauma that still attaches to coming out as gay in any society, while Klesse (2002:269) maintains that same-gender relations are increasingly tolerated but that, unlike respect, tolerance is an attitude that is based on disapproval and granted from a position of unequal power.

(We are now entering a space where the boundary of the story being told becomes blurred because I have no choice but to enter into and becoming part of the landscape of the King’s rule.)

The contribution of queer scholars is that they succeeded in raising an awareness of the fractured lines and tensions within sexual categories, a view that permits a more complex understanding of homosexuality and heterosexuality. For me, deconstructing the presumed opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality is vitally important because it enables us to acknowledge that experience, meaning and identity are all constructed. Only by seeing this can we begin to imagine alternative ways of thinking and of living. I agree with Esterberg (2002) that sexuality is a far more complex phenomenon than we had previously recognised.

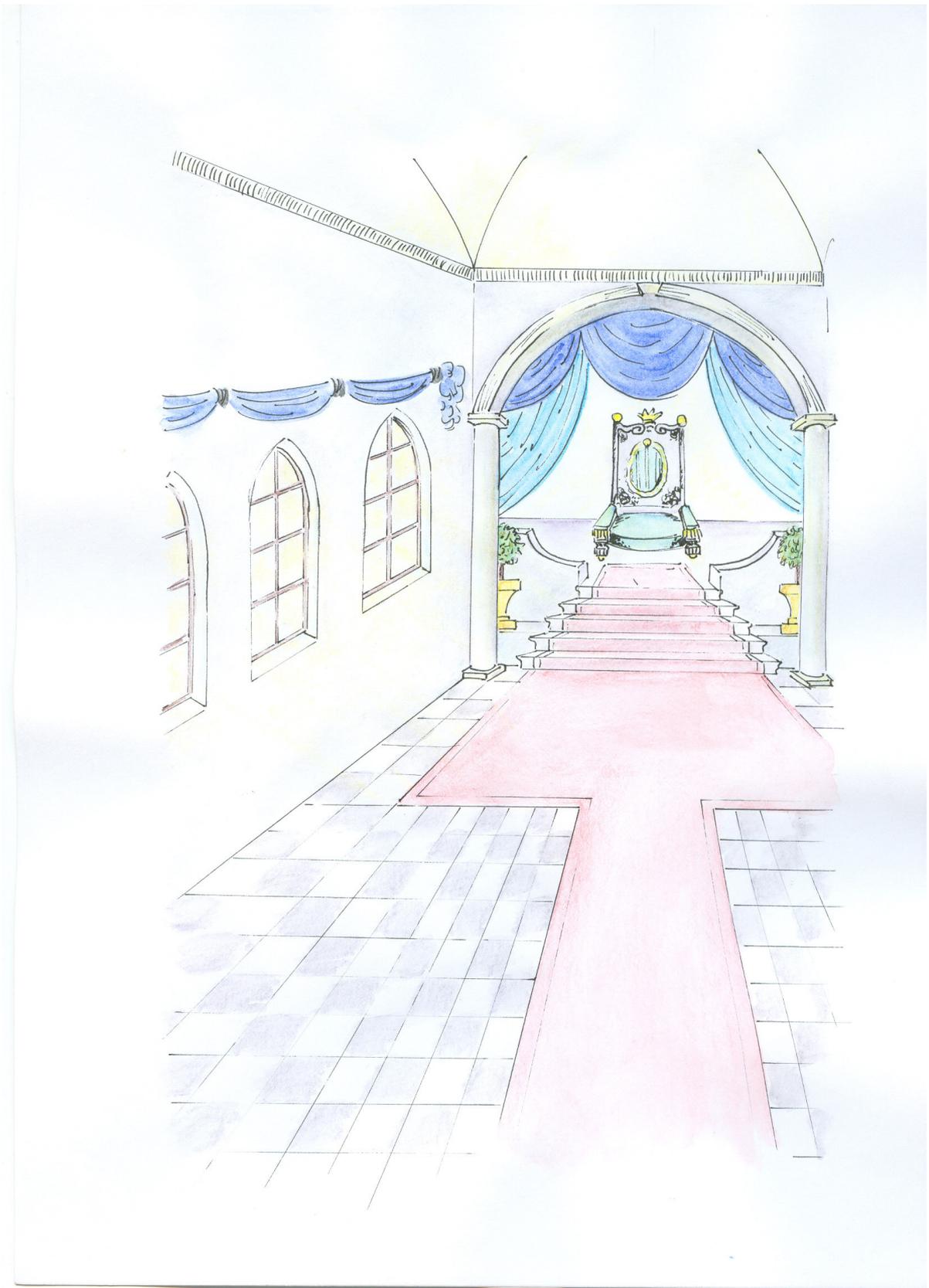
And then one beautiful morning, the inevitable happened. Sir Queer met the Prince of the Kingdom, and the moment they laid eyes on each other, it was as though the Universe stood still... And the rest is history...

THE SECOND LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE TWO

Situating families in the world of research

When King Heterosexuality heard what was happening, he became frantically alarmed. He commanded all his messengers, spies and bureaucrats to gather together immediately in his Royal Presence (all wise councillors had long since been abolished), and he ordered them to perform some Research. He wanted them to find out what had happened to that core of society which is called the family. Why? Because the King's only son and heir, the Prince, had announced that he wanted to marry Sir Queer – and they had jointly announced that they wanted to have a family... A family? A family? His son and another man? What madness!

And so the King waited impatiently for the research to be completed. As soon as it was completed, the Research Report was brought to him. Grimly, King Heterosexuality took his seat on his throne and commanded his Chamberlain to read the Research Report aloud to everyone assembled in the Great Hall of his Castle.



Carien:

I understand that an important question has arisen. This question is: “Why is research into families so important?”

The family is perhaps the most timeless, central and enduring of all social institutions. Because of this, the concept *family* is often taken for granted and not subjected to the critical scrutiny that it requires. It should therefore be helpful for me to relay some of the views of feminist scholars who argue that the family is an *ideologically* based concept, experience and institution. All the practical, material and ideological premises that we use in defining the concept *family* depend on the cultural assumptions about families and gendered relations within families themselves (Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Gabb, 2001).

My personal position is that same-gendered families present new challenges to the privatised nuclear family. Same-gendered families raise suspicions and engender scepticism in some quarters because any departure from the “traditional” family system and structure raises uncomfortable questions such as “What is a parent?”, “What is a family?”, “What is a father and what is a mother?” Same-gendered families challenge dominant notions not only of gender but also of sexuality. The categories “lesbian mother” and “gay father” might seem to imply that a parent's *sexual* orientation is the most important factor in a gay person's parenting skills. King (2004:123) argues that people assume that to be gay means being sexual. Thus, I agree with Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004:151) that the queer family is “hyper-sexualised”. Bernstein and Reimann (2001:5) argue that it is in gay parenting that we will experience the heteronormativity – and therefore the opposition – of society most powerfully. This happens because our modern Western social construction of sexuality masks a very real groundswell of opposition to the homo/hetero dichotomy and the maintenance of strict sexual borders that such a dichotomy requires. Although its opposition to any blurring of sexual boundaries is usually unspoken and ironically silent, heterosexuality remains the ever-present and influential sub-text of modern sexual discourse. When homosexuality comes “out of the closet”, this coming out is reflected in a specific

domain of written and spoken discourse. In contrast to this, the social construction of heterosexuality is hidden, and it establishes a normative and “natural” sexual identity at the expense of homosexuality. Heterosexuality remains foundational, normative and original, as opposed to the enduring problematic *other*, homosexuality, that usually maintains the silence (Johnson, 2004:188). While the normativity of heterosexual families remains silent, it is usually homosexuality that conspires to maintain the silence.

In such circumstances, it seems incontrovertible to assert that the “married, two-parent heterosexual couple” is the norm against which all other kinds of couples are measured, evaluated and judged. The view that same-gender couples are significantly different from and inferior to hetero-gender couples, is still widely prevalent in Westernised society and in the relatively few countries in which such family arrangements are permitted. These generally assumed and usually unchallenged belief systems create a dominant narrative of what a family is or should be – a narrative that maintains that heterosexuality is the only rightly sanctioned mode of intimate relationships and family life. This dominant narrative creates a perception that the same-gendered family is different and something “other” or alternative.

Because most families convey strong heterosexual messages, they provide many opportunities for their children to receive positive reinforcement, approval and validation for their heterosexual orientation. This is also true of South Africa which is traditionally a strongly family-based society with a culture in which the traditional family is prominent, powerful, visually present and valued. Most parents encourage the dating of opposite-gendered individuals, marriage and eventually children – especially as adolescence and sexual maturity approach (Hunter & Mallon, 2000:230-231). Even the knowledge and values that are socially constructed in educational settings are constructed along heterosexual lines and are bound up with the organisation and regulation of the heterosexual family. According to Epstein, O' Flynn and Telford (2002:272), myths of “happy heterosexuality” are abound at every stage of childhood development – from the

playhouse of the nursery school to the dating games of senior primary and secondary schools and universities. Children come to understand the hetero/homosexuality is a natural dichotomy that “proves” that heterosexuality is a normal and desirable end in itself. Heterosexual behaviour and language are integrated and imposed to such a degree within the school culture that they have come to constitute a norm that reflects what is “natural”.

But heterosexist "nuclear" family concepts and language do not describe the reality of family connections in many other minority groups (Clunis & Green, 2000:42). Sullivan (2003:49) and Dunphy (2000:81) note that heterosexual women who are on welfare, and single mothers and/or women of colour who do not fit the ideal image of heterosexual femininity, are also often perceived as something other than “normal”. Bernstein and Reimann (2001:4) argue that being different from the “ideal white, bourgeois, native-born family” continues to be interpreted as the primary cause of a groups’ social problems (such groups would include, at the most obvious level, immigrant families and families of colour) and of “society’s ills” in general. Invisibility and heteronormative assumptions play out differently for birthmothers and co-mothers of a same-gendered family. Thus, for example, when a child and his/her two mothers are in public settings such as department stores or visits to doctors, the role of the “second” mother becomes “unintelligible” to many strangers or observers and thus requires legitimation and explanation (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001:10).

Heterosexuality and its accompanying destiny in straight nuclear families are still assumed as a desirable norm for “ordinary” people, although this singular view cannot be taken for granted anymore in the realm of academic scholarship (Zimmerman, 1992:13). Queer scholars argue that gay individuals and families are moving “beyond the closet” and that we are entering a post-gay era (Roseneil, 2002:38). Ellis and Murphy (1994:65) state that challenges and alternatives to traditional views about “appropriate” gender roles and relationships are increasing in psychological practice and theory and that there is a growing accumulation of data that confirms psychological similarities among different types of couples.

Reflexive heterosexual identities are becoming increasingly widespread, and all over the Western world heterorelations have a significantly less sure hold on the general population across the generations. Sasha Roseneil (2002:34) remarks that at the beginning of the 21st century, there are few families that do not include at least some members who diverge from traditional, normative, heterorelational practice, whether as divorcees, unmarried mothers and fathers, singles, lesbians, gay men or bisexuals. She argues that we are experiencing the “queering of the family”, as the constituted meaning of family faces radical challenges and more and more kinship groups have come to terms with the diverse sexual practices and living arrangements chosen by their own family members. Valerie Lehr (1999:145) holds a similar view, namely that the married, co-resident heterosexual couple with children no longer occupy the centre ground in Western societies and cannot be taken for granted as the basic unit in society. Processes of individualisation and the weakening of the bonds of tradition are increasingly releasing individuals from traditional heterosexual scripts and from the patterns of heterorelationality which accompany them. Postmodern living arrangements are diverse, fluid and unresolved; they are constantly chosen and re-chosen, and heterorelations are no longer as hegemonic as they once were.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (in Roseneil, 2002:32-33) also share the view that individualisation, de-traditionalisation and self-reflexivity are opening up new possibilities and increasing expectations in heterosexual relationships, which nowadays are characterised far more by processes of negotiation and negotiated commitments. Such processes are replacing the traditional obligations that blood ties alone required people to fulfil in the 19th century and before. It is this self-reflexivity that Mottier (1998:114) utilises to broaden Foucault’s critique of sexology by arguing that sexological discourse can also be a “reflexive resource for the active shaping of the sexual self”. This reflexivity means that sexuality is the locus not only of disciplinary power/knowledge mechanisms, but also of liberating practices of self-fashioning. If this is so, I propose that in spite of being situated as “other” in the dominant heteronormative discourse, same-gendered families comprise individuals who actively shape their own lives and experiences.

What queer scholarship contributes to the richness of our understanding of families and the way in which individuals and society function resides in its description of a far richer understanding of the world in which we live. It is no longer possible to maintain one privileged view in the world of scholarship at least, and we as researchers, scientists and scholars should give an accurate account of the diversity and plurality that we encounter in ways that people live their lives. Being confronted with the notion that sexualities are fluid and open, and that we can move beyond the fixed fundamental categories of homo/hetero binaries, challenges each of us to be self-reflexive and to actively shape and reshape our lives. Whether or not this is practically possible for everyone, I do not know. But it certainly calls for a more flexible approach to parenting and the view that we take of families. The complexity that we detect in understanding “family” is further evidence of postmodernist influences in the world in which we live in. Absolute meaning has collapsed in many sectors of society because society itself offers more choice, fragmentation and diversity (Kidd, 1999:12). Even though societies have always been ambiguous, variable, conflicted and changing, conservative notions of “the family”, of what it really means to be “a man”, “a woman”, and “the truth” about our sexuality, are all ideas that have been seriously interrogated in modern times. Whereas we once spoke exclusively of “men and women”, a postmodernist sensibility would speak of masculinities, femininities and genders (Plummer, 2003:19).

No universally accepted definition of what is meant by “family” exists. Families are not “things” that are done to us, they are happenings, practices and processes - we “do” the family though acting in life. We create or make families through our choices and actions in life. The postmodern approach to family is characterised by choice, freedom, diversity, ambivalence and fluidity. Postmodern interpretations of the family argue that it is no longer possible to claim that any one type of family is “better”, more “natural”, or more “normal” than another. This latter kind of thinking is a residue of modernist and conservative thought in which social actors searched for fixed meanings about life and ready-made truths according to which life could (and should) be lived (Kidd, 1999:13). This kind of thinking negate a core

issue, that family revolves around relationships, and relationships cannot be prescribed or structured and cannot be lived within fixed guidelines.

Plummer (2003:8) explains that most of us live simultaneously in traditional, modern and postmodern worlds. Old stories remain side by side with the new, because for every new story, a rival one may be adduced from the past, and stories about “new” family configurations are countered by tales of “family values” and the inevitability and normality of heteronormativity. There will always be opposition to whatever is new and non-traditional. There will always be “someone who is going to say no to the queer, ‘Don’t touch me’. Don't touch me because you’re sick and you’ll contaminate me, ..., or you’ll contaminate Western civilisation” (Dinshaw, 1999:173). Many prefer to cling to what they falsely idealise as a simpler and kinder past because they feel anxious and insecure. They try to preserve their distinctive identity as a person or group in contemporary societies that are changing with bewildering rapidity. Such nostalgic and authoritative voices can be heard emanating from religious fundamentalists of every kind, whether they be the fundamentalists of the religious right from the “Bible Belt” of the United States or Muslim fundamentalists from the Middle Eastern countries. In Western countries, people regret what they regard as a threat to the alleged sanctity of the nuclear family by opposing the legalisation of gay marriages (Kirkpatrick, 2004; Lacayo, 2004). Even in South Africa, homosexual identities have been condemned (McGill, 2002; Prins, 2003; Whisson, 2003). Stephanie Coontz (1992:2) explains that people often yearn for an idealised romantic past that never existed in the first place, or for the kind of happy and devoted family that was alleged to have existed in a world now lost. This kind of family is actually a sentimental delusion that forms part of the happily-ever-after mythology that middle-class people hark back to in plain contradiction of the record of what actually happened. Such pious hopes demonstrate how many of our “memories” of how families were in the past function primarily as mythical stories that are useful for morale building and family cohesiveness and exclusivity. “Families have always been in flux and often in crisis; they have never lived up to nostalgic notions about ‘the way things used to be’ ” (Coontz, 1992:2).

When I consider the words of Lévi-Strauss (1978:20) that the “more civilisation becomes homogenised, the more internal lines of separation become apparent, and what is gained on one level is immediately lost on another... I don’t see how mankind can really live without some internal diversity”, I realise that even though we live in a world influenced by postmodern ideas, we cannot realistically hope that the recent increases in harmony, tolerance and open-mindedness will remain as permanent features of society. I personally still long for a greater acceptance of diversity, compassion and gracefulness. My consolation is that my humble opinion resonates with one of the most outspoken and intelligent contemporary exponents of humanism, that of Ken Plummer (2003:146). Plummer writes:

Of course people will not agree with each other, but they may learn to engage in dialogues... People may become willing to award each other some respect... If we can learn how to talk and how to listen, we may sense that in the end there are some common values that hold humanity together.

This is what I am interested in. My intention is to explore how children of same-gender parents live in the postmodern world, and how they negotiate the world inside and outside their families. I shall not assume that the child’s experiences of home and family life differ from those of a heterosexual family. I am primarily interested in negotiating relationships in their own “landscapes” outside of their homes. For the purposes of this study, I presuppose the theoretical argument that a dominant discourse/narrative in society assumes a normative status of a heterosexual family *in everyday life* for those families that I interviewed.

We utilise our experience to construct our reality, and children growing up with lesbian mothers certainly have experiences that shape their reality. Johnson and O’Connor (2001:7) state that “parenting is universal... But the day-to-day experiences that our family encounter can be unique. The homophobia that surrounds us affects our families in subtle and not so subtle ways.” The scarcity of positive images and the abundance of negative stereotypes, as well as the invisibility of same-gendered families in the institutions outside the family, all combine to create a sense of difference, uniqueness, and secrecy (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Wright, 2001). The children growing up in same-gender families are simultaneously members of gay

and straight communities. Little is known about the ways in which children in same-gendered families function within predominantly heterosexual (“straight”) communities, what makes such functioning possible, and what makes it easy or difficult to manage.

Let me return for a while to how same-gendered families contradict in practice the sexual and gender dimorphism upon which the traditional family is based. What lesbian families or their male counterparts succeed in achieving is to transfer the traditional focus away from *gender*⁶ in parenting and families. In addition, the development of reproductive technologies in the past few decades has challenged gender divisions by allowing potential parents to enjoy the advantages of *reproduction* without engaging in any sexual activity at all with a member of the opposite sex. This has given same-gender couples opportunities to procreate within the bonds of same-gender relationships (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Lützen, 1998; Plummer, 2003). Because of this pioneering work, *parenting* has also been freed from the bonds of gender and sexual activity undertaken for purposes of procreation. The lesbian couple as a family challenges the normative conceptions of the traditional model of the two-parent (hetero-gender) family because it is socially and legally constructed from a biological model of reproduction. Giddens (1991:2) has given us the (rather odd) term “plastic sexuality” by which he means that human sexuality has been liberated to follow whatever paths are right and “natural” to individuals (whatever their sexual orientation or preferences may be), and that intimate relationships between men and women have been freed from the exigencies of reproduction. He stated that “pure relationships” of emotional equality are emerging between men and women, and that lesbians and gay men have been “pioneers” in experimenting with “pure relationships” and “plastic sexuality”.

⁶ Implicit in this conceptualisation of gender relations is that male and female, masculinity and femininity are oppositional and mutually exclusive categories. In our postmodern world gender categories are also being contested. One of the most influential writers is Judith Butler. Her central argument is that gender is constructed and performed.

The same-gendered family offers a more egalitarian view of parenthood that one can see, for example, in shared parenting with lesbians. Gender difference still shape roles and functions in the family among many heterosexual couples. While Jackson and Scott (2004:240) confirm the view that while the egalitarian ideals pioneered by homosexual couples have had an influence on heterosexual couples in formal relationships and that such ideals have even become embedded within contemporary discourses, asymmetrical relationships are still widely prevalent among men and women in marriage relationships. The fact that lesbians are more likely to share parenting equally and challenge traditional conservative gender arrangements seems to imply that gender is primarily a function of the division of labour (Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Malone & Cleary, 2002; Patterson, 1995). This is not to deny that some lesbian parents replicate heterosexual (male/female) role divisions – a practice that Dunne (2000:134) calls “theoretical heterosexism”. Some lesbian couples do indeed play out traditional roles of provider and nurturer/caregiver. But that is a choice that has to be respected.

For some queer scholars, same-gendered families offer a post-patriarchal vision of what families could be like if people were willing to abandon centuries of conditioning and accept a gender-neutral discourse that is sympathetic to the kind of feminist legal reform that discards the categories of “mother” and “father” and collapses them into the more generic concept of “parent” (Dunne, 2000:12). The cultural change towards a more egalitarian model of parenting is evident in same-gendered families as same-gender parental couples find solutions to problems such as how to make time for the children as well as time to earn a living. Because they are same-gender parents, couples have to consciously negotiate agreed definitions of boundaries, meanings, and the attributes of parenthood that they wish to implement in their lives and families. Lesbian parents and their children transgress the normative status of heterosexuality in relation to reproduction and the organisation of parenting roles. Activities that are usually traditionally dichotomised between mother and father are redefined or incorporated. In the end these transgressive modalities offer more opportunities for cooperation and creativity, and in doing so they demonstrate the viability of non-heterosexual

parenting models. It is indeed the absence of gender differences that permit a reconstruction of the cultural values of family and parenting (Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Walters, 2000).

Parenting can be understood and analysed culturally in terms of gender. The argument of Judith Butler (1990) is that if gender is a *performance* and connected within a heterosexual matrix, and if gender performances can be imitated in ways that are not necessarily linked to fixed gendered identities grounded in nature, bodies or heterosexuality, then *parenting can also be defined in terms of a performance*. As I have argued above, we “do” the family through performing various acts in life, just as we “do” or perform gender. And just as gender is constructed, so also are families constructed. I therefore argue that both *parenting* and *family* are constructed and performed. Gender and parenting should be regarded as fluid variables that shift and change to suit different contexts at different times. What are the implications of this for parenting? They offer people who want to be parents the possibility of choosing, forming and performing their own individual identities as parents in a way that brings their unique abilities, strengths, skills and talents into play. It challenges society to disregard the stigmas of the past. Is it inherently important if the mother of a family changes a light bulb or services the car? Or the father cooks, minds the children, and takes care of the garden? Or indeed if all these functions are efficiently performed in a same-gendered family in which the children are loved, nurtured, cared for and protected? What we can learn from this is that parental roles, duties and functions can be performed in a wide variety of ways that are not linked to gender stereotypes. It also makes it clear that if people are willing to relinquish their traditional dogmas and stereotypes about gender and sexuality, structural variables, such as the gender composition of families and the division of parental performances, are less important than process variables such as the quality of relationships and the quality of care given to the children (Clarke, 2000; Dunne, 2000; Malone & Cleary, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

Before we analyse the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, we need to be aware of the plurality of views that have a bearing on my analysis of the research findings. So please be patient while I describe how same-gendered families are differently represented in the research literature.

In general, most of the research that describes how children in same-gender households fare suggests that such families produce gender-syntonic and well-adjusted children. Some research even suggests that many of the children growing up in same-gendered families possess attributes that make them superior in terms of their adaptive and social skills. The research in general repeatedly emphasises as a theoretical proposition that same-gendered families are either equal to or superior to heterosexual families in areas of parenting, social support and individual member adjustment (Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Malone & Cleary, 2002; Patterson, 2000).

It is possible that researchers from this theoretical proposition are attempting to give same-gendered families due credit for being equal to and even better than heterosexual families so that they become eligible for normalisation in society (as an alternative to heterosexual families), and so that current social prejudices and legal obstacles to their establishment in society might eventually be relaxed. One might caution at this point that any normalisation process will inevitably effect an internalisation and therefore a re-idealisation of the traditional notion of the family (the ideal of the heterosexual family). This “reverse” discourse that is set into motion by the production of power is evident in the literature. There one sees how the opposing viewpoints of the “otherness” (the confrontation or transformation viewpoint) and “sameness” (the assimilation viewpoint) of homosexualities are in constant tension.

Scholars such as Clarke (2002a, 2002b), Coyle and Kritzinger (2002) and Stacey and Biblarz (2001) repeatedly question the claim that there are no significant differences between children brought up in heterosexual and homosexual families. Their cautionary stance is founded on the suggestion that such claims are based upon a

“highly defensive” conceptual framework that has been evoked by heterosexist ideology. The implication is that such “defensive” findings are created to counter the homophobia that still flourishes in cultures and societies throughout the world – homophobia that feeds on cultural stereotypes. The corollary is that research that has assimilation as a covert goal will fail to emphasise any differences between same-gendered and “traditional” families. In the face of such negative prognostications, one should not overlook the fact that the research that has been done might indeed point towards valid conclusions.

The danger of assimilation is that it can lead to decontextualisation and desexualisation and that this will effect but a minimum transformation in the field of sexualities. Victoria Clarke (Clarke, 2002a:108-112; Clarke, 2002b:217-218) assesses the political costs and benefits of assimilation representations that “normalise” same-gendered families. As far as she is concerned, the political benefits are that researchers might succeed in making same-gendered families seem more sympathetic (acceptable) to families to potentially hostile or ignorant heterosexuals, and that this might make them “safe” and viable in the long run. In her opinion, the drawback of such defences of same-gendered families is that they may serve to reinforce heterosexual and gender-biased norms rather than to transform, deconstruct or resist them. What happens in such cases is that gay images merely become assimilated while core underlying values that support the heteronormative values of society remain unchallenged. Savin-Williams and Esterberg (2000:209) confirm such a point of view when they argue that the emphasis on *similarities* between lesbian and gay parents and heterosexual parents does not, ultimately, serve lesbian and gay parents or their children. The “sameness” or assimilation discourse is fundamentally defensive, and apologises or ignores points of potential conflict rather than celebrating diversity and uniqueness.

Another position is to accept that a continuous tension exists between confrontation and accommodation, and between political advocacy and social understanding. Debates between these opposing discourses have been evident from the early beginnings of the nascent gay movements of the 1960s in America and Britain.

These debates invariably centre on whether “we are just like everyone else, except who we sleep with, or if we are indeed on the margins: the centre versus the margin, the normative versus the deviant, the straight versus the queer, assimilation versus transformation” (Nardi, 2002:47). As Zimmerman (1992:4) suggests, “lesbian” is positioned as a metaphor that acts as a radical critique of dominant systems and discourses. The radical and social constructions of same-gendered families challenge socio-political system and institutions, they are less defensive and apologetic, and they acknowledge and celebrate being different from the “norm”. Even some queer theorists insist that homosexuality must always remain outside the mainstream because homosexuals anyway exist outside society – and they want it to stay that way. These theorists critique what it means to be a “good citizen” by pushing the boundaries of normativity (Plummer, 2003; Sullivan, 2003; Walters, 2000).

The debates surrounding the legalisation of gay marriages certainly draw attention to these pluralist views. For some gay people, gay marriages (and the resultant legalisation of the co-adoption and co-parenting of children) represent the last struggle for equal opportunities in the fight against discrimination. Gay marriages and their consequences send a message to straight society that says: “We are just like you with the same needs and longings and appropriate roles” (Lützen, 1998:241). For other gay people, the family is a most potent symbol and cornerstone of heterosexual privilege, and if one is “truly” gay, one will oppose these traditional institutions. In the latter view, gay and lesbian marriages *reinforce* heterocentric models of living together, they merge models of parenting and partnering (Walters, 2000:55), and they serve to marginalize the unmarried (Plummer, 2003:44).

Another viewpoint argues that relationships and not marriage should at the present time be the most significant form of intimacy amongst gays – and many straights. In modern Western-orientated societies, relationships and parenthood are currently being continuously separated because of the high incidence of divorce and because reproduction and sexuality have become separated. While relationships and sexuality have become private affairs, parenthood is still a public affair. Lützen

(1998:238) is of the opinion that registered partnerships have been legalised in countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands because marriage for so many people has become an empty institution. The fact that many of these states sanction same-gender relationships, but not same-gender parenthood, reinforces the traditional heteronormative dogma that a child should grow up with a father and a mother. Others argue that a “registered partnership” is not equal to “marriage”, particularly in legal and economic terms because the institution of marriage confers extensive financial and social benefits (Halvorsen, 1998; Lacayo, 2004; Singh, 1995).

I agree with Altman (2002:415) that the advantage (for researchers) of such a plurality of viewpoints is that they create opportunities for researchers (1) to investigate whether the different modes and structures that lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people pioneer for themselves are able successfully to accommodate their romantic, sexual and friendship relations, and (2) to examine the values that inform marriages and families in different societies.

As I reflect on the ways in which discourses of sameness and difference can shape and construct same-gender parenting *and* same-gendered families, I follow the analytical framework presented by Victoria Clarke (2000b:211-216). This analytical framework focuses on four dimensions of difference that inform lesbian parenting. I extrapolate it to same-gendered families in general and implicitly accept her constructionist point of view that assumes that concepts, categories and ideas do not *reflect* the world as it is – but that they (instead) *make* the world what it is (Clarke, 2002b:211). From a constructionist point of view, “truth” is contingent upon social processes. But I will discuss this in more detail in Bubble Three. The four dimensions are four different positions from which to view and construct same-gendered families. Underlying these positions is the predominantly binary thinking of western society. I visualise these four dimensions as follows:

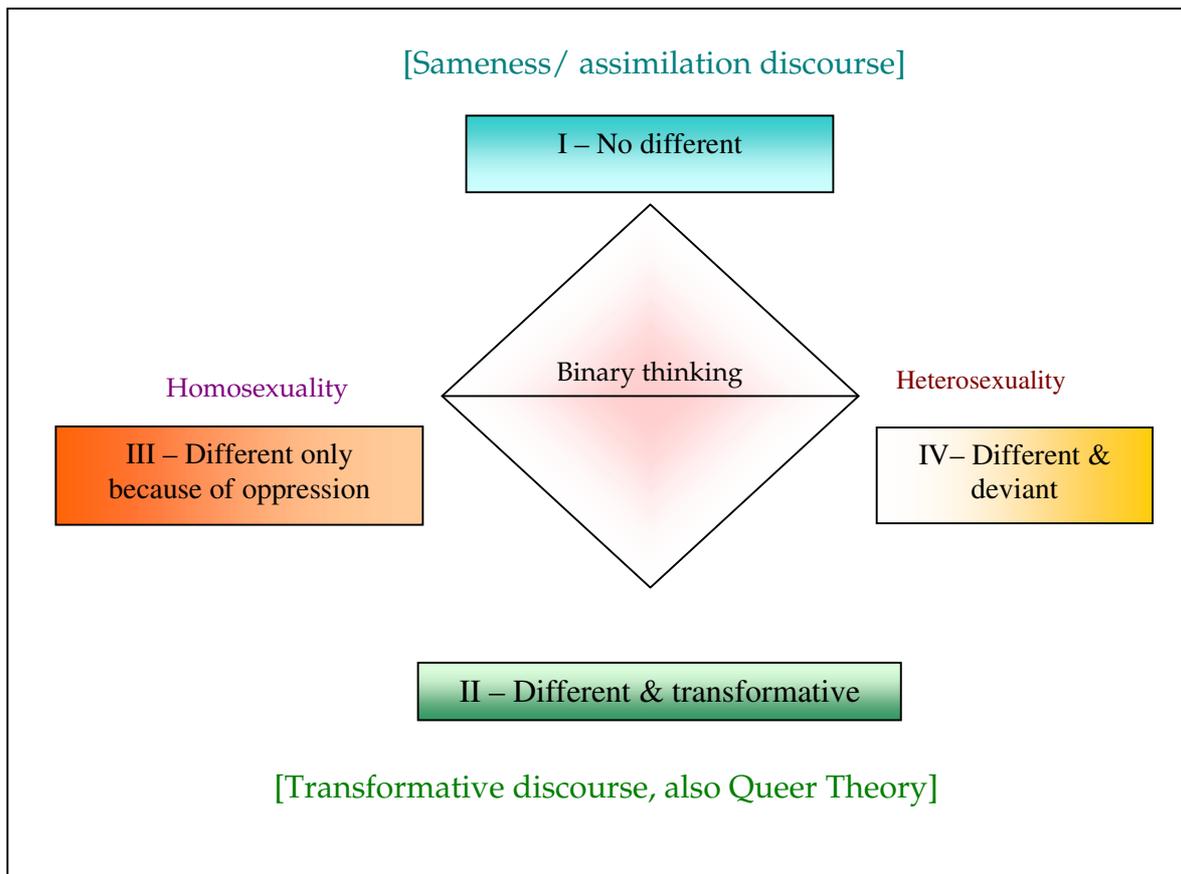


Figure 2.1: (Pre)conceptual framework of constructing same-gendered families, adapted from Clarke (2002b)

Dimension I: No different

Same-gendered families are seen as “no different”. The basic assumption is that sexuality or sexual identity is but one small part or minor aspect of all human personalities. Similarities between heterosexuality and homosexuality are emphasised on an individual and family level. Negative stereotyping is challenged and acceptance of same-gendered families is encouraged because same-gendered families reflect part of the rich diversity of humanity. This dimension forms part of the assimilation discourse that I have discussed in the above section.

In this construction of homosexuality as equal to heterosexuality, heterosexuality is once again established as the norm. This dimension therefore ignores the power and structures that support and privileges heterosexuality (Clarke, 2002b:211-212).

Dimension II: Different and transformative

This dimension is inspired mainly by lesbian feminist work that celebrates lesbian difference. These analysts reject the emphasis on similarities and focus on lesbian parenting as “a living statement of the concept of difference” (Goodman, in Clarke, 2002b:214). They honour lesbian parenting and never apologise for it because in their view it offers a unique opportunity to birth and raise children in a revolutionary way that contributes to social transformation instead of assimilation into the mainstream of “heteromotherhood”. Even for radical lesbian feminists, parenting is a political act because they regard it as an act of rebellion against and repudiation of patriarchal models. Nevertheless, this dimension challenges lesbian parenting to move beyond “equality” by exploring new ways of parenting. This dimension is characteristic of anti-essentialist or transformative discourse, and is placed in the figure opposite the sameness/assimilation discourse.

The downside of this dimension is that “research” can be used to service political goals. It may neglect to engage in a fight for the liberation of same-gender parents and fail to draw attention to the invisibility of lesbians in liberal discourse (Clarke, 2002b:215).

Dimension III: Different only because of oppression

This dimension’s basic assumption is that the differences of same-gendered families are not chosen but are imposed by society by means of oppression. In this dimension, there is an underlying acceptance that same-gendered and heterosexual families are inherently the same because life in same-gendered families is just as “varied, challenging, comforting, amusing, frustrating and rewarding” as life in any other kind of family (Nelson in Clarke, 2002b:215). Heteronormativity and homophobia are the main sources of systemic difference that challenge same-gendered families. It is thus assumed that once these societal forces are reformed, same-gendered families will be normalised. This dimension synthesises ideas from liberalism and radical feminism, namely the liberal emphasis on sameness and radical feminist ideas about specific forms of oppression that same-gender parents endure. Research in this domain prefers to use the idiosyncratic voices of same-

gendered families in (for example) narrative research because of the richness, depth and immediacy that narrative research provides if one compares it to the lack of such elements in statistical data (Clarke, 2002b:216).

This dimension ignores the possibility that same-gender parents might *choose* to be different and disregard any of the positive qualities that are associated with marginality.

Dimension IV: Different and deviant

This dimension is associated with work done by anti-lesbian/anti-gay psychologists and other scholars who entertain strong fundamentalist moral beliefs. They typically argue that there are numerous differences between same-gendered and heterosexual families that are indicative of gay/lesbian pathology and deviance (Cameron & Cameron, 1997; Cameron, 1999; Cameron, Cameron & Landess, 2001). They construct these alleged differences as a source of danger and a threat to societal values and stability (Clarke, 2002b:213-214).

I have placed Dimension III and IV opposite each other in the figure because they reflect in my mind the dichotomies between homosexuality and heterosexuality.

This preconceptual framework constitutes the foundation upon which this study is based. It is an open framework which permits the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families to be investigated. For me it is important to situate the different positions or perspectives on same-gendered families into these four dimensions because they provide a framework in which to analyse relevant literature, as well as a point of reference from which to reflect upon data creation, analysis and the interpretation processes. These dimensions, especially the first three, are present and assumed throughout this study.

My dear King and fellow listeners, I have looked at the construction of families in society, and have contemplated the assimilation and transformative frameworks in which gay and lesbian literature can be analysed. It is now vital for me to reflect on the relationship between private lives and public debates, that is, the relationship between the individual and society.

Carien directs everyone who is present to turn and look towards the back of the Great Hall. All the people who have gathered in the Great Hall turn around and look towards the stage at the back. There they see a symbolic dance, ever-present and subliminal, being performed... This dance is both private and public. It is the dance that takes place between private lives and public debates...

Ken Plummer (2003:69,70) states that what appears to be personal is in reality connected to, structured by, and/or regulated through the public sphere. The most personal events and the most private activities of family lives are ultimately engulfed in legislation that regulates marriage, divorce, child care and so forth. Personal lives are thus connected with what is public and political in ways that might sometimes be difficult to discern.

Plummer uses the concept of “intimate citizenship” to hint at worlds in the making – worlds in which a public language of “intimate troubles” is emerging around issues of intimacy in the private lives of individuals. Intimate citizenship looks at “the decisions people have to make over *the control (or not)* over one’s body, feelings, relationships; *access (or not)* to representations, relationships, public spaces, etc.; and *social grounded choices (or not)* about identities, gender experiences and erotic experiences. It does not imply one model, one pattern or one way” (Plummer’s emphases). He regards these as sensitising concepts that are open and evocative (Plummer, 2003:14). Private and personal decisions connect human beings with public debates. For him, the 21st century is inviting us, as never before, to consider the great variety of possible ways in which we may live out our lives. Some of the new critical discourses that are developing are new forms of publicly recognised “family” life. These include same-gendered families – a topic that has

generated intense public debate about how to live a personal and intimate life in a postmodern and global world (Plummer, 2001, 2003).

Same-gendered families are exemplars of the increasingly rich and diverse forms that modern Western societies are allowing to emerge. The forms that I wish to discuss here are ways of living together that are based on mutual support. The very concepts of kinship and family are becoming increasingly contested. Some families in our time no longer have a deep need to be based on links created by biology and blood. Many new personal stories have emerged around “families we choose or create” rather than “blood/biological families”. Kath Weston (1995:94-96) explains that same-gendered families are more than just biologically tied. Instead they define kinship in terms of those people who will “be there” for them. Weston states that this happened mainly because some gays were cut off from their biological kin once they had come out. Gays and lesbians contend that same-gendered families are every bit as legitimate as other forms of kinship because their family relationships have lasted. Stability, strength and commitment are used to identify and determine who or what counts as “family”. Plummer (1995:154) also supports this by saying that gays may create mutual networks of support, care and friendship that are as strong as those of heterosexual families (and perhaps even stronger) because they are chosen rather than simply given. Another way of “creating” families (these are called families-by-choice) is when lesbians and gay men adopt children or “create” children through artificial insemination. Some gays and lesbians marry heterosexual spouses and raise families, and then only decide or realise at a later stage that a gay or lesbian relationship is what they would really prefer. Gays and lesbians may be uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters or grandparents. While the lives of lesbians and gays are connected to “family” in every direction, stories about this diversity have rarely, and then only recently, been told.

I would like to reflect upon the concept of *care* that Valerie Lehr (1999) introduced as she contemplated in depth some of the functions that families perform in our society. For Lehr, one of the main functions of a family is to provide care for infants,

dependants and young children. She notes that this usually happens in a gender-specific way. If (in contrast to what happens now) the responsibility of providing care is not seen as a family responsibility but as a social concern, we will have to evaluate individuals and society in new ways. In a society with different moral boundaries, we would have to refrain from asking, "Am I (or are we) living in accordance with the moral precepts of my/our society and with universal moral precepts?", and would instead have to ask, "How am I/we best fulfilling my/our caring responsibilities?" (Lehr, 1999:147). This latter question implies that our evaluation of our caring requires that we consider not just our own actions, but how others for whom we are caring receive and experience these actions. She calls this "responsiveness" and says that it is a central component of the practice of caring. *Responsiveness* suggests a different way of understanding the needs of others: it requires that we consider the other's position in terms of how that other expresses it.

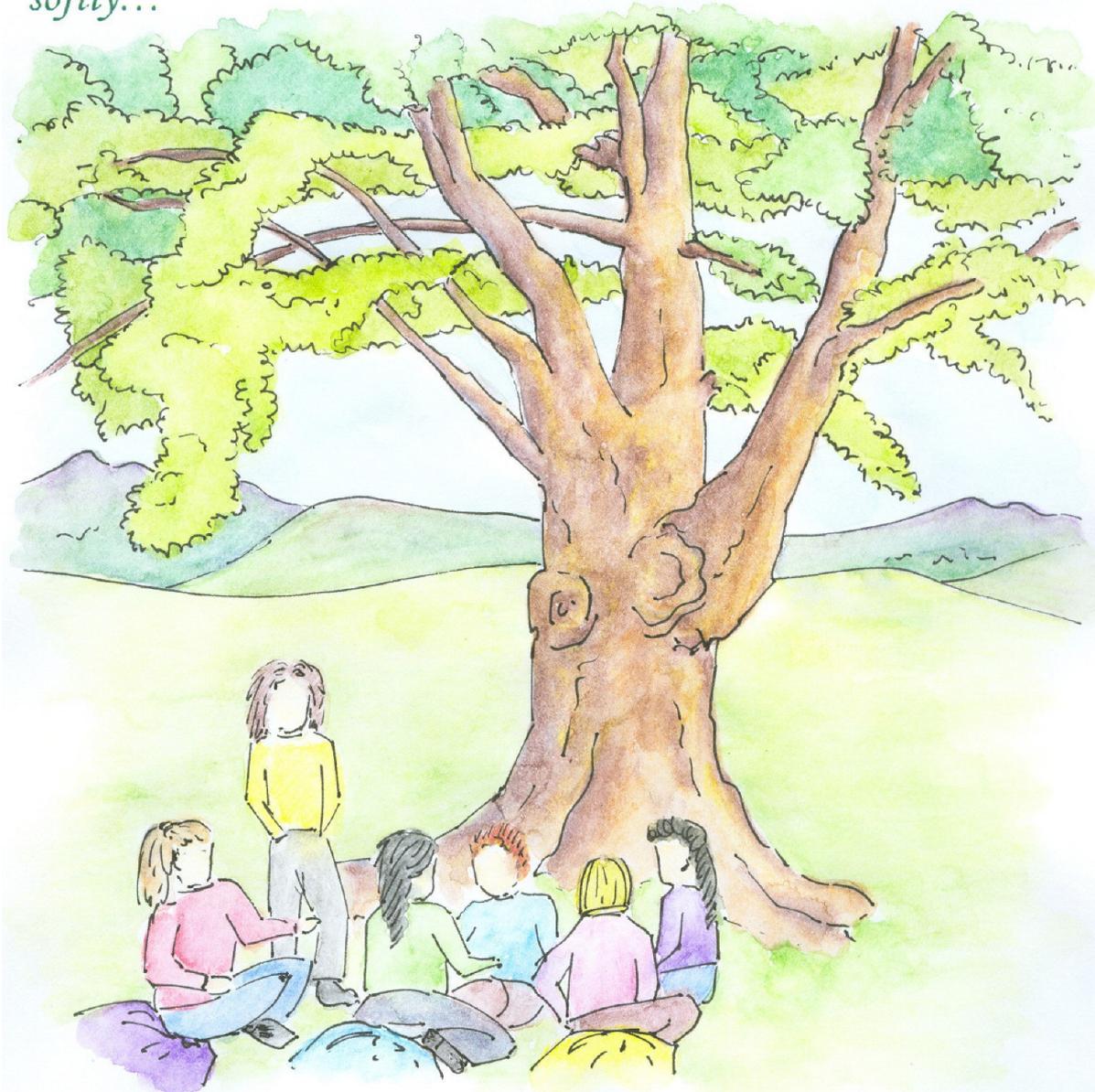
Her argument for care as a fundamental form of self-assessment encourages us to adopt a more empathetic form of engagement with others. It enhances and reinforces values of care, compassion and understanding so that we engage with others from a position of acceptance of pluralism and diversity. It also encourages a more compassionate way of living, of acceptance (and not mere tolerance), and an absence of springing to judgement. She states that although individuals need to construct moral ideals for themselves, an acceptance of cultural pluralism helps individuals to examine and re-examine their values. Moral decision making and political decision making entail a complex process of critical reflection, action and interaction with others. Simplistic, two-dimensional and authoritarian/patriarchal precepts no longer serve as adequate solutions to complex social problems (Lehr, 1999:149). In Lehr's view, same-gendered families create a counter narrative that opposes the dominant ideology that only one type of family is normative, that only certain approved forms of family are capable of meeting the caring needs and producing individuals who are capable of performing moral actions within a democratic society.

And so a profound and weighty silence fell upon all who had gathered in the Great Hall. Slowly, thoughtfully, one by one, they left the Great Hall and the Castle, and each one pondered what had been said...

THE THIRD LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE TWO

Critical analysis of research on same-gendered families

And so, in this land, far, far away, high upon a hill, with fertile valleys and streams below, a few people gather in a circle under a great Elm tree. The sun breaks splendidly through the clouds and its light sparkles among the leaves. Gentle breezes cool the brows and lift the hair of those who have gathered here. For a long time they are silent, and then one of them starts to speak slowly and softly...



Carien: I would like to share what I have with you and hear your thoughts on what feels to me like a very personal quest. I wrote this the other day - to my unborn child:

What am I going to do to you? Into what kind of world will I bring you into life? Will you be able to say proudly that you have two mommies? Or will you not even need to feel proud? Perhaps having two moms will just be matter-of-fact for you? How I wish for that.

When I look at some of my friends and see that they are not allowed even to declare their love, or the fact that they live together with their life partners, because they are teachers and nurses and they are afraid of losing their jobs, afraid of what others might think, I think: If not even these people are allowed to be out, how will people react to you? Will my choice to give you life and my longing for you confer on you outsider status and the possibility of forever feeling different and, yes, even being different? Will kids tease you? Or will they think that it is cool?

But perhaps, as so many of my friends have told me, you will bring a gift into this world - you and all the other kids who are growing up in same-gender households...

Betty: " 'Cause the prejudice of others can't stop me from being who I am, and who you are going to be..." (Berzon, 1992:61).

Kath: I can understand your concern and agree with you. Let me put it this way. "The thing is, as they get older and go out into the world, they're going to realise that their family's different. Substantially different. How will they handle that? How will we help them handle that?... From a child's perspective, the context is going to be defined by having different parents. And she didn't choose it. She just has it. 'How can you knowingly saddle a child with the stigma of gay or lesbian parents', ask heterosexual critics, invoking cultural notions of childhood innocence. This is an argument that would deny children to the poor, the racially oppressed,

and members of all other groups not assigned to the mythical mainstream of society..." (Weston, 1991:195).

Roberta and Dianne: "As with most lesbians mothers, there is a small part of us that worries and has doubts about the effect that our lifestyle will have on our children. At the same time, intellectually, we realise that our children will turn out to be just as good or just as rotten as children being raised in a traditional family" (Abbitt & Bennett, 1992:94).

Laura: The first Lesbians Choosing Children Conference I attended back in the early 1980s (still) stands out in my mind. (Let me share some of what I can remember). "One after another, women stood up and asked if they had a right as lesbians to bring children into their families. It was one thing, they reasoned, for them to suffer the pain of prejudice for a choice they themselves had made, but it was quite another to involve a child. About halfway through one workshop, an irate woman finally took the floor. She said that as a lesbian mother of two and as a Jew, she was horrified by the discussion. Would any of us ... tolerate this kind of talk about ethnic minorities? Since Jewish children face discrimination at some point in their lives, should Jewish women consider simply not bringing them into the world? ... It's not the same, some said, we've chosen this lifestyle. Thus the tiresome debate about choice or biological imperative threatened to take over the proceedings ... Soon the conversation took other runs: Was the choice to have children a matter really of rights? Was it any more selfish a choice for lesbians than for any others? Was selfishness in this instance really a bad thing – wasn't it better for children to be wanted and chosen than not?" And there I was, sitting "lost in memories of my own childhood, thinking about the ways feeling different has shaped me. It had often been painful, but it was also the core of my being, ultimately the richest source of my strength" ... But I became "far more interested in how parents can help kids flourish in the face of life's difficulties ... How do parents help their children not only thrive but develop strength in response to bigotry? How and when do they try to shield their children from pain, to actively advocate for them, to hold back and let them find their own way of dealing, to be present and bear

witness to their suffering? What do the travails that children face stir up for their parents who have gone through, and are most often still in the midst of, their own processes of grappling with homophobia? ... There is another worry that plagues many lesbian and gay parents: what if a child is the vehicle through which homophobia enters family life? ... What if they hide all the gay literature when friends come over, or implore you not to hold hands in public, or say they hate you because you're a lesbian?" (Benkov, 1994:189,190).

Neville: "A lesbian parent once said to me of her nine year old son, 'Oh, it's not an issue. He understands and it's not a problem.' I think she's very wrong; that she's wishing away problems she and her son are going to have to face. I think that her kid and ... all the children of gay and lesbian parents will have to deal with a whole lot of homophobia and gay-bashing. And I think that we have to do – probably all we can do – to help our children cope with society's prejudice is to educate other people about gay parenting" (John, 1994:343).

Roberta and Dianne: We always believed "...that if we have a positive attitude about our lesbianism and impart it to our children before they reach the age where peer pressure moulds their thinking, that they too will have positive attitudes and will be better equipped to handle some of the problems that may lie ahead. This doesn't mean that we will be surprised if at some point in the future one or more of our children withdraw from us emotionally and think that we are awful. Looking back at our own adolescence and speaking with others has made us realise that most children have to find fault with their parents at some level so that they can become separate individuals in their own right... But now fifteen years on our worst fears never realised, not even close. Except for the usual dilemmas of adolescence, our children's teenage years were pleasurable, for them and for us" (Abbitt & Bennett, 1992:95,96& 100).

Phylis: "And so I want to create a world, like every parent, where my children will have a happy, well-adjusted, successful life, and part of that is creating an

environment where they're not going to be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation" (Burke, 1993:129).

Suzanne and Elizabeth: "By providing a healthy understanding of lesbian relationships and letting your child experience the love between you and another woman, you can do some little bit to counterbalance mainstream propaganda and give your child something approaching a free choice. Rearing a child in a non-sexist non-homophobic household can be a most challenging and valuable experience. It is wonderful to be able to offer a child some of the wisdom and freedom that most of us have attained only in adulthood and with tremendous struggle at that" (Johnson & O'Connor, 2001:101).

Ullah: "And because of your own journey to identity, your child will always know that s/he has choices, instead of growing up assuming heterosexuality is the only way ... I see a new rainbow generation that is colour-blind and liberal. Imagine those men and *womyn* in twenty years time; they might roll their eyeballs at the very mention of kd lang or the Vagina Monologues, but at least they'll have been educated" (Kelly, 2002:45).

Cassandra: "As one of the parents that I interviewed said: 'It's got to be obvious that when people put this much effort and thought and planning into producing a family these kids are going to be loved and cared for and valued' " (Wilson, 2000:35).

Carien: Indeed, deciding whether to have a child or not is a quest and a journey that takes a lot of thought, and reflection, and the moulding of ideas and dreams and hopes and concerns over and over again. As I analyse available literature on the benefits and strengths of children growing up in same-gender households, I am filled with hope. So I hope that you, my unborn child, will grow up ...

to develop an appreciation of differences and different ways of living;⁷ to respect, empathise with and tolerate environments full of diversity, to celebrate how others live;⁸ to treat homosexuality as a normal variation in sexuality and lifestyle and that you will therefore be more likely to consider the possibility of having gay relationships. I will allow you the opportunity to explore your sexuality so that you can confirm either your hetero- or homo-identity.⁹ I hope that this will help you to learn not to worry so much about what other people will think, and that you will have the potential for being more self-reliant and self-confident.¹⁰ We as a family are challenging the norms set by society and therefore you will have to be aware to take responsibility for yourself and your choices, to accept your own sexuality, adopt an empathetic and tolerant attitude and consider other points of view.¹¹ I hope that you will benefit from your personal experience of diversity within a community and may therefore be less restricted in your outlook and more able to appreciate a society full of diversity.¹² I hope that we can provide you with the opportunity to experience flexible interpretations of gendered behaviour, that you can observe and experience female role models that can be strong, independent and nurturing¹³ and give you the freedom to engage in egalitarian personal and intimate relationships; that you will come to understand that families are not based only on biological relationships but perhaps more so on love, self-definition and choice.¹⁴ I hope that you will grow up in openness and acceptance¹⁵ and that our family will be characterised by love, honesty, openness, emotional closeness, good communication, shared values and goals, emotional support, respect for each other and humour.¹⁶

⁷ Hare, 1994; Koepke, Hare & Moran, 1992

⁸ Laird, 1994; Patterson, 1992

⁹ Golombok & Tasker, 1996

¹⁰ Pennington, 1987

¹¹ Hare, 1994; Harris & Turner, 1985/6

¹² Tasker & Golombok, 1997

¹³ Pennington, 1987

¹⁴ Allen, 1997

¹⁵ Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Golombok, 1999

¹⁶ Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993

Joan: Yes, as I said: “Given the fact that such children often do grow up in a social context in which homosexuality is seen as deviant and subject to contempt, in which lesbians risk enormous oppression and even violence, it is remarkable that they appear to grow and thrive as well as children with heterosexual parents. In fact, as the research demonstrates, such children may have some advantages. Little attention has been focused on the remarkable strengths of gay parents and their children, their extraordinary resilience in the face of pervasive homophobia. The professional research and clinical literature has focused scarcely any attention on the exploration of gay and lesbian social and cultural life, on their everyday personal and familial experiences, on relationships with family and community, and on their work lives. Most of the available studies note the negative effects of homophobia, which is an important endeavour, nevertheless – outcomes that support the vision and strength of these individuals and families” (Laird, 1996:563).

Queen Academia: But Carien, since you are undertaking this scientific research, what about the experiences of the children? Have the children’s viewpoints ever been represented? What do we know already about the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families? On what road has the research taken us?

Carien:

Because of the sparse documentation of lesbian and gay history in South Africa, I have had to rely on the vast literature that emanates from the northern hemisphere, especially that of the United States and the United Kingdom. Please bear with me while I present you with an overview of current literature before I will focus on the specific “country” of South Africa.

When I critically analysed the literature on same-gendered families, one of the first things I observed was the theme of development – how research on same-gendered families between the 1980s and today has developed. The earliest research began by comparing¹⁷ gay and non-gay families, and this is still a current theme in some

¹⁷ Peculiar aspects were researched in the early 1980s, such as the difference in make-up of lesbian versus straight mothers, truck-playing by the children (Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray & Smith, 1986) and breastfeeding patterns (Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy, 1981).

more recent research.¹⁸ From the late 1990s and early 2000s, researchers that analysed the literature began to argue for a non-defensive approach to the study of all kinds of same-gendered families. Until the late 1990s most findings suggested that lesbian and gay parents do not produce children who are inferior (or even slightly different) from the children of other parents. Rare, small differences between gay and non-gay parents were reported in such a way that they favoured gay parents because they portrayed them as being somewhat more nurturing and tolerant, and their children in turn as being more tolerant, empathic and less aggressive.¹⁹

It seems as though more recent studies are coming to terms with the realities of the postmodern family condition. These studies begin with a pluralist premise concerning the legitimacy and dignity of diverse family structures and they ask whether or not and how gay and lesbian families differ – rather than deviate – from non-gay families. These studies attend as much to the differences among same-gendered families as to the differences that make them dissimilar to non-gays, and they explore the particular benefits as well as the burdens that such families bestow on their members.²⁰ One may therefore conclude that most researchers now engage in the assimilation and transformation debates that centre around the “sameness” or “otherness” of same-gendered families. This tension between “sameness” and “otherness” has been introduced by studies conducted from a more social constructionist and critical perspective.²¹

Another theme that became evident in my analysis was that a great deal of the literature focused on problematic issues of sampling, possible biases in selecting a minority group, and issues of representivity and generalisability. The comparative

¹⁸ Flaks, Ficher, Masterpaqua & Joseph, 1995; Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; Gottman, 1989; Green et al., 1986; Huggins, 1989; Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy, 1981; Koekpe, Hare & Moran, 1992; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 1992

¹⁹ Demo & Allen, 1996; Laird, 1994; Tasker & Golombok, 1995

²⁰ Patterson, 1994b; Savin-Williams & Esterberg, 2000; Stacey, 1998; Weston, 1991

²¹ Anderssen, Amlie & Ytterøy, 2002; Baetens & Brewaeys, 2001; Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe & Mikach, 1995; Clarke, 2002b; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001

research sometimes failed to distinguish between single heterosexual parents and “single” gay male or lesbians who were actually in a partnership.²²

The earliest research – almost without exception – commented on the incongruence between parenthood and being gay. A lot of emphasis was placed on the apparent dichotomies (at that time) of “father”, “mother”, “parent” versus “gay”. A discourse about “protecting the child” that stemmed from the political and legal climate of the times in which the research was carried out became evident. Most parents at this time behaved in a discreet manner and were what we would nowadays call “closeted” because of fear of engendering prejudice and discrimination. Such parents explained that they would do anything to help their children to deal with a homophobic world. They recommended precautions such as being careful about not openly showing affection for their partners, not exhibiting literature, art or any form of home decoration that might be interpreted as lesbian-orientated, and encouraging their children to refer to their partner as “aunt” so that friends who were brought to the house would feel more comfortable.²³

The discourse of protection occurred alongside a legal discourse that provided the main impetus for research into gay parenthood and same-gendered families. The legal concerns for the welfare of the children centred around the availability of a father figure to act as a role model in the case of lesbian parents; the possibility – described as a “mythical belief”²⁴ – that gay parents might molest their own or somebody else’s children; an alleged lack of stability in this type of parental relationship that exceeded rates of instability among same-gender couples; the possible impact of a gay parent’s sexual orientation on a child (this research was specifically directed at establishing what influence, if any, the parent’s own sexual orientation might have on the child’s own gender identity and sexual orientation,

²² Anderssen, Amlie & Ytterøy, 2002; Fitzgerald, 1999; Parks, 1998; Tasker, 1999

²³ Bozett, 1987; Cramer, 1986; Demo & Allen, 1996; Hare & Richards, 1993; Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993; Pennington, 1987; Stacey, 1998

²⁴ Barret & Robinson, 2000; Causey & Duran-Aydintug, 1997; Lynch & Murray, 2000; Patterson, 2000; Patterson & Redding, 1996

personal development and social relations). Most of the available literature therefore reflects the findings of research into issues of gay parenthood.²⁵

The research into gay parenthood investigated the [quality of the relationship](#) between the partners;²⁶ between the parents and their children;²⁷ the degree of social and emotional support that same-gender parents exhibit for each other,²⁸ and the emotional health of the birth mother.²⁹

Another topic of investigation was the [division of labour/household chores](#). These research findings concluded that household roles are not based on stereotyped heterosexual marital roles, but on the time and talents of the parents involved. Same-gender parents create their own methods or rules that govern how they relate to one another, and how they present themselves to others and children.³⁰ This research relates to [child-rearing practices, discipline and parental style](#).³¹

Other research focused on the [co-mother](#) or the social mother, on what and how she is named, her attachment to the children, and (once again) the division of household chores, discipline and parenting style, and on how questions from doctors and schools would be handled.³² The difference in the research between the 1980s and the late 1990s becomes evident in how the co-mother is named. Kirkpatrick et al. (1981:546), for example, mention that the co-mother is seen as “an

²⁵ Allen, 1997; Anderssen, Amlie & Ytterøy, 2002; Barret & Robinson, 1990; Bozett, 1981a; Bozett, 1987; Cramer, 1986; Di Lapi, 1989; Fitzgerald, 1999; Fowler, 1995; Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; Hare, 1994; Hare & Richards, 1993; Kershaw, 2000; Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; McIntyre, 1994; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 1997; Patterson, 2000; Patterson & D’Augelli, 1998; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Stacey, 1998; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Stacey & Davenport, 2002; Victor & Fish, 1995

²⁶ Bos, Van Balen & Van den Boom, 2003; Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reed, Sparks, & Bishop, 1996; Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens & Golding, 2003; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999; Koepke et al., 1992; Laird, 1996; Levy, 1992; Oswald, 2002; Patterson, 2000; Pies, 1990

²⁷ Green et al., 1986; Golombok et al., 2003; Tasker, 2002; Pies, 1987; Wind, 1999

²⁸ Hare, 1994; Levy, 1992

²⁹ Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997

³⁰ Chan, Brooks, Raboy & Patterson, 1998; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Lynch, 2000; McCandish, in Bozett, 1987; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 1995; Patterson, 2000; Pies, 1990; Stacey, 1998

³¹ Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe & Mikach, 1995; Gordon, 1990; Green et al., 1986; Harris & Turner, 1985; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Segal-Sklar, 1995; Tasker, 2002; Tourini & Coyle, 2002

³² Dunne, 2000; Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reeds, Sparks & Bishop, 1999; Green et al., 1986; McCandish, 1987; Muzio, 1999; Wilson, 2000

aunt”, or adult friend, or big sister, whilst Laird (1996), Mitchell (1998) and Lynch (2000) discuss how many of the children explain their “two-mom family” to their friends in a much more open manner, although some children still find this difficult to do. There was also research on the motivation for and the expectations that parents entertain with regard to pregnancy and parenthood, the decision making process, and value of children for gay parents.³³

Some of the research explored the awareness of the parents of the [heteronormativity of society](#) and their status as a minority group.³⁴ These same themes usually coincide with research into how parents [come out to their children](#).³⁵

One may sum up the available research by saying that the studies concluded that same-gender relationships were characterised by mutual commitment, emotional and physical intimacies that are similar or analogous to those that heterosexual couples with children experience.³⁶ One may also conclude that “the sexual orientation of the mother does not in itself influence the quality of parenting or the psychological well-being of the child...”.³⁷

Research done specifically from the perspective of the children is questionable because evidence of the children’s perceptions was largely derived from interviews with the parents.³⁸ Some of this research also included findings that are derived from utilising standardised psychometric assessment strategies with the children.³⁹ More and more studies included interviews and other forms of data collection from

³³ Bos et al., 2003; Gartrell et al., 1996; Pies, 1987; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000b; Tourini & Coyle, 2002

³⁴ Benkov, 1994; DiLapi, 1989; Fitzgerald, 1999; Gartrell et al., 1996; Gottman, 1989; Green et al., 1986; Koepke et al., 1992; Krestan, 1987; Laird, 1996; Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993; Lynch, 2000; Lynch & Murray, 2000; Mitchell, 1998; Patterson, 1994a; Pennington, 1987; Pies, 1987; Sears, 1994; Stacey, 1998; Victor & Fish, 1995

³⁵ Benkov, 1994; Bozett, 1987; Gottmann, 1989; Hare, 1994; Levy, 1992; Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993; Lynch & Murray, 2000; Patterson, 1994a; Pies, 1990; Sears, 1994; Stevens, Perry, Burston, Golombok & Golding, 2003; Wind, 1999

³⁶ Tasker & Golombok, 1995; Patterson, 1992; Patterson, 1995

³⁷ MacCallum & Golombok, 2004:10

³⁸ Costello, 1997; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Patterson, 1992; Tasker & Golombok, 1997a; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristofferson & Brewaeys, 2002

³⁹ Dundas & Kaufman, 2000; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Patterson, 1992; Tasker, 1999

children. Among these were interviews that dealt with (for example) school experiences,⁴⁰ analyses of the experience of growing up with a lesbian mother from the perspective of adulthood,⁴¹ and acceptance of the parent's sexual orientation.⁴² A large quantity of the literature discussed the [gender development](#) of children with gay parents, and elaborated on [gender identity, gender roles and the children's sexual orientation](#).⁴³ Aspects of the children's [psychological health and development](#), such as those that relate to self-esteem and coping,⁴⁴ were also investigated. A noteworthy finding by Patterson (1994a:168) showed that the children of gay parents expressed more anger and fear in stressful situations as well as a stronger sense of happiness than did the children of straight parents. She attributed this difference either to an increased ability to acknowledge positive and negative feelings, or, alternatively, to the experience of greater degrees of stress in their everyday lives than that experienced by the children of straight parents.

MacCallum and Golombok (2004:10) noted that the growing number of what they call "father-absent families",⁴⁵ and the changing social climate that has led to a greater degree of acceptance of non-traditional family forms, influenced some of their previous findings. Most significant of these was that children in father-absent families at the age of six perceived themselves to be less cognitively and physically competent than children from father-present homes, but that this finding no longer appeared in children who were 12 years of age, when it was found that school adjustment and self-esteem were similar among children across family types. They also found that boys raised without a father demonstrated more feminine characteristics, although no fewer masculine ones when assessed in terms of gender role orientation (as measured on a Children's Sex Role Inventory's femininity and

⁴⁰ Ray & Gregory, 2001

⁴¹ Paechter, 2000

⁴² Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe & Mikach, 1995; Dundas & Kaufman, 2000; Gottman, 1989; Paechter, 2000; Tasker, 2002; Van Voorhis & McClain, 1996; Wind, 1999

⁴³ Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Dundas & Kaufman, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1999; Gottman, 1989; Green et al., 1986; Patterson, 1992, 1994b, 2000; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Sears, 1994; Tasker & Golombok, 1995; Victor & Fish, 1995

⁴⁴ Fitzgerald, 1999; Gershon, Tschann & Jemerin, 1999; Golombok et al., 2003; Huggins, 1989; Laird, 1996; Patterson, 1994a; Victor & Fish, 1995

⁴⁵ MacCullum and Golombok (2004) researched families in which the parents are both lesbians. They refer to these families in their article as "father-absent" families.

masculinity scale). Their findings suggested that the absence of a father in itself does not necessarily result in psychological disadvantages for children (Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004).

A prominent theme in the literature dealt with the [social adjustment, social competence and social relationships](#) of children with gay parents, and especially [the influence of the heteronormativity of society](#). These studies focused on the fear of [teasing, harassment and stigmatisation by their peers](#) and feelings of being different⁴⁶. There was also mention of the parents' awareness of the stigma and their consequent concern for their children's well being.⁴⁷

Most reviewers found little or no empirical evidence to support the conclusion that children who are raised by lesbian and gay parents have any deficits as the result of living in same-gendered families.⁴⁸ As Savin-Williams and Esterberg (2000:209) state: "There is no difference between children who are raised by lesbian or gay versus heterosexual parents regarding gender identity, sex-role behaviour, sexual orientation, likelihood of being sexually abused, self-concept, intelligence, personality characteristics, behaviour problems, peer relations, reaction to father absence, parental separation and divorce, general adjustment and accomplishment of developmental tasks". Anderssen, Amlie and Ytteroy (2002:336) included research from Scandinavian countries that found that there was also no difference with regard to emotional functioning, sexual preference, gender role behaviour, behavioural adjustment, gender identity and cognitive functioning – although the children raised in same-gendered families were more likely to be teased about their mother's sexual orientation and were more likely to be teased about being gay themselves. MacCallum and Golombok (2004:10), in contrast, found that there was

⁴⁶ Fitzgerald, 1999; Gershon, Tschann & Jemerin, 1999; Golombok et al., 2003; Gottman, 1989; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 1992; Patterson, 1994b; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Pennington, 1987; Sears, 1994; Tasker & Golombok, 1995; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Victor & Fish, 1995; Wind, 1999

⁴⁷ Bailey et al., 1995; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Gartrell et al., 1996; Gottman, 1989; Hare, 1994; Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993; Stevens et al., 2003; Tasker, 2002; Tourini & Coyle, 2002; Vanfraussen et al., 2002

⁴⁸ Anderssen, Amlie & Ytteroy, 2002; Baetens & Brewaeys, 2001; Bailey et al., 1995; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Gershon et al., 1999; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Golombok et al., 2003; Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Patterson, 1997; Patterson, Hurt & Mason, 1998; Pennington, 1987; Tasker, 1999

no evidence to support the finding that children of lesbian mothers would experience more teasing or bullying and more difficulties in their relationships with their peers.

Although this is not directly related to my study, a new emphasis that began to emerge from the late 1990s onwards was a focus on **families created by donor insemination**.⁴⁹ Themes of this research include the role and level of involvement of the donor, the impact of father-absent families from infancy on children,⁵⁰ and the psychological adjustment and family structure.⁵¹ Baetens and Brewaeys (2001:515) concluded once again that the emotional, behavioural and psychological development of children of same-gender parents was very similar to that of children raised in heterosexual families.

What is important for this study is to analyse literature that focuses on how children manage these potential difficulties, and on how they disclose or “come out” to others on behalf of their families or their same-gender parents.

Queen Academia: Yes, that’s maybe a good idea. I was wondering, what are the risks of disclosure or coming out for the children?

Carien:

Children tend to experience a community’s disapproval of their parent’s relationship as a disapproval of themselves as well. The sexuality of a gay person, and the emphasis therefore on a parent’s sexuality, becomes associated with a feeling of vulnerability (Hancock, 2000:93). For most children, growing up in same-gendered families remains an issue when it comes to communicating such information to their friends, especially during their school years. Because they wonder how their friends or classmates might react, they constantly have to make choices about whom to it might be safe to tell and whom it would not be safe to tell.

⁴⁹ Bos et al., 2003; Donovan, 2000; Dundas & Kaufman, 2000; Mitchell, 1998; Stevens et al., 2003; Tasker, 2002; Tourini & Coyle, 2002; Vanfraussen et al., 2002

⁵⁰ Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004

⁵¹ Chan, Raboy & Patterson, 1998

Some children are “torn between” a desire not to make a fuss about the “situation”, and a realisation that if one is going to tell people, one needs to do it carefully, as this statement of Paechter (2000) clearly demonstrates:

My stance is now more implicit than explicit... I want to treat my mother's lesbianism as ordinary rather than exotic, although having an out gay or lesbian parent is clearly not common amongst my generation (Paechter, 2000:404).

Research on possible stigmatisation by peers and possible bullying revealed that these children are either teased about the mother's relationship or some aspect of her identity, or else that they themselves are subjected to homophobic bullying (allegations – whether true or not – about the child's own sexual orientation). It is not unusual for some children, especially adolescents, to experience persecution because of their membership in such families (Bozett, 1980, 1987, 1989; Golombok, 1999; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Gottman (1989:186) stated that the children felt pressured to exercise caution in disclosing information about their parents' lifestyle, and feared not only for themselves but for their parents as well (in matters such as, for example, custody or job security). Children in same-gendered families therefore also often share responsibility for maintaining secrecy about the adults' relationship in the community.

“But are these fears grounded?” someone in the group asks.

Carieen answers:

Although disclosure seems to be difficult because of fear of rejection and consequent stigmatisation, rejection is in fact rare. It appears that incidents of gays being collectively rejected are more common than are incidents of individual rejection. One can detect collective rejection in the subtle and sometimes explicit images that society portrays. Societal attitudes in general can be deduced from the very little willingness or from a total absence of willingness – either within or outside of the gay/lesbian community – to admit that same-gendered families may be a viable family form. There are no time-honoured and widely recognised rituals or ceremonies that officially recognise the status of same-gender parents, marriage itself is not a legal option in most countries, and the larger community seems

mostly hostile and rejecting. The fact that the children of same-gender parents may sometimes receive support from others who express sympathy for their alleged plight or from those who perceive them as being unwilling or unfortunate members in such families, points to an underlying discourse of shame and suffering (Bozett, 1987; Johnson & O'Connor, 2001). Although socially approved terms have not always been available to define the couple relationship or name the role of the co-parent (Laird, 1996), they are emerging (Chan, Raboy & Patterson, 1998; Wilson, 2000).

Some authors argue that what is decisive in such instances is more an *awareness* of a perceived stigma or threat of homophobia and/or censure from society than the reality of the stigma itself. This line of research therefore focuses on the fear itself rather than on actual occurrences of homophobia (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wright, 2001). Others may argue that a “perceived” threat is as real as an actual threat, and they mention examples such as gay bashings and murders (Greene, 2000; Patterson, 2000), or the fact that families remain invisible to schools and other social institutions (Casper, Schultz & Wickens, 1992; Victor & Fish, 1995). With few exceptions, schools are not required to talk about same-gendered families or display positive role models or images of these families. Since same-gendered families are mainly absent from the curriculum in schools, they are consequently absent from the consciousness of both teachers and learners, and this maintains the erroneous assumption that all parental couples are heterosexual. This in turn can serve as a justification for same-gendered families to remain closeted. Gay parents themselves have different views about the degree of “outness” that is required: “You do not have to, and should not, lie about your relationship to anyone. You do not have to broadcast it either” (Johnson & O'Connor, 2001:102). One might oppose this to: “To hide it [one’s sexual orientation] is to give yourself the message that you are ashamed and that there is some cause for shame. To hide it is likely to give them (the children) the same message. And it is not such a good feeling to have a parent who is ashamed” (Clark, in Bozett, 1987:13).

Queen Academia: I remember that you mentioned that something that also intrigues you is the question of “**How do families negotiate this perceived stigma of their ‘otherness’ as families?**”. Are there any indications about this in the scientific literature?

Carien:

Parents and children from same-gendered families may at times strategise about peer and family relationships, whether they do so consciously or unconsciously. Two researchers, namely Griffin (1991) and Bozett (1980, 1987), have been prominent in this area of research.

Griffin (1991:190-196), who has done research with gay and lesbian teachers, has identified four identity management strategies. Even though the research’s findings cannot be generalised to children because it was performed on adults, Paechter (2000:399) states that her own experience and the literature in this area suggest that the strategies used by children of same-gender parents to manage the identity of their families parallel those of gay and lesbian teachers. If we isolate the essential features of these strategies, we may speculate that children growing up in same-gendered families might well use them on occasions as well. They are: (1) *Passing*. This is when one deliberately leads others to believe that one’s parents are heterosexual, for example when one changes the gender in conversations or makes up stories about an other-gender parent. (2) *Covering*. This is when one censors what one is saying without actually lying. Thus a child might be careful not to mention names or genders in stories or anecdotes. (3) *Implicitly coming out*. This is based on the assumption that people know although they do not explicitly give any indication that they know. (4) *Explicitly coming out*. This is direct disclosure in which the speaker uses gay terminology that is so explicitly that there can be no ambiguity.

Bozett (1980:176-178) identified the following four types of disclosure that gay fathers employ to disclose their sexuality to their children. *Direct or verbal disclosure* that happens either spontaneously or in an external, social condition that may serve

as a motivating force (an example would be entering into a relationship with someone of the same gender after a divorce). *Indirect disclosure* means that the father does not tell people or his children directly, but that he behaves as a gay man by, for example, holding hands or dining out in gay restaurants. While the last two strategies happen less frequently, they do occur. *Accidental disclosure* happens when the parents meet someone in a particular gay social context and they had not known about each other person's sexual orientation before. *Secondary disclosure* occurs when someone else discloses one's sexual orientation (an example may be that the heterosexual parent discloses gay parents to friends, grandparents or the children).

In addition to this, Bozett (1987:40-42) did research the children of gay fathers and identified four social control strategies that children use to manage their public image. These are specific behaviours that children employ so that they will be perceived by others as they want to be perceived.

The first social control strategy is *boundary control*, which has three facets: (1) control by the child of the father's (parent's) behaviour (behavioural or verbal control in order to control the parent's expression of his/her homosexuality by, for example, not holding hands, or not bringing a co-parent to school/party of friends); (2) control by the child of their own behaviour (refusing to be seen with the father in public, not inviting the parent or co-parent to school functions); (3) controlling others vis-à-vis the father (not bringing certain friends home so that they will be prevented from encountering the parent and partner).

The function of these boundary control strategies is to keep the boundary of the father's expression of his homosexuality within the limits set by the child. By controlling the father, the self and others in relation to the father, the child controls others' perceptions of himself or herself so that others see him/her as not being gay. Children use these strategies because they help them to avoid the embarrassment they might feel because of their father's gayness. The first two strategies inform the gay father about where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour have been drawn by

their children. For me, a function of boundary control is an indication of how children protect themselves from discrimination and from perceptions of possible discrimination or teasing by peers. It may also function as a form of discretion in the presence of others who might not be as comfortable or familiar with same-gendered families as the children of gay parents might themselves be.

Tasker and Golombok (1997:84) explored how children maintain a boundary between their home and school life, and suggest that the *visibility* of the parent's lesbian identity is a major determinant in how comfortable they are in allowing their friends to meet their families. The children in her study felt concerned about visible indicators such as books, posters or even affectionate behaviour between the two parents, and reported that they felt concerned that their parents might be "obvious" to their visiting friends. They expressed a wish for their mothers to be more discreet. Tasker and Golombok (1997:85) also found that the mothers themselves were sensitive to the possibility that their openness might lead to prejudice against and difficulties for their children. Johnson and O'Connor (2001:99) are of the opinion that parents should be especially sensitive to their children during adolescence and that they should therefore "tone down" visible signs of being gay in front of their parents. In my opinion, this does not mean that parents should lie or deny who they are, but rather that they should support their children in the realisation that there are more important things in life than fitting in with the crowd.

The second social control strategy is *nondisclosure*. Unless children believe that it is *safe* to tell others, they will avoid telling others that their father is gay. Nondisclosure may take forms such as referring to the father's partner as an "uncle" or a "housemate", or hiding artefacts such as gay newspapers or magazines when friends visit. Children believe that not telling others prevents "identity contamination" (the possibility that others may think they too are gay), that it helps to maintain relationships (i.e. their friendships or romantic involvements), and that it keeps them from becoming social outcasts. For me, the function of nondisclosure is protection by means of a silence that hides the truth and therefore avoids any

possible consequences that would eventuate should peers realise or find out about parental sexual orientation.

The third and final social control strategy is *disclosure*. Telling others is a highly selective process because, as Bozett (1987:42) explains, closure of information channels is (almost always) impossible because people of all ages love to gossip and relay what they may regard as sensational news. These children make very sure about who they tell “because you have to be sure they won’t tell somebody else”. Bozett (1987:42) also mentions the important fact that many of these children attribute exceptional decoding capacity to others. That is to say, they assume that others are able to discern that their parents are gay when they meet them for the first time and so they prepare contacts well before they meet the parents. Paechter (2000:403) also observes this immense sensitivity on the part of children about whom they feel it might be “safe” to tell. As Gottman (1989:186) explains, most children chose friends so that the friends that fit into their family – rather than attempt to make their family fit their friends. Another issue that is important in “coming out” about one’s gay parents is what one should say and what one might expect as a result of how one’s associates might react such disclosures (Paechter, 2000:403). Feeling different from their friends and deciding what to tell their friends were major concerns for some children in the study undertaken by Tasker and Golombok (1997:79). While some of the children in the study disclosed directly, others were merely unassertive about their parent’s lifestyle. Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen and Brewaeys (2002:243) support this finding. The children in their study had not discussed their parents with their friends. Their friends simply came to their homes or noticed their two mothers at school. These researchers found that it was easier for the children to talk about their two mothers than it was to explain or tell their friends that their mothers were “lesbian” or “homosexual”.

Johnson and O’Connor (2001:77) remark that the level of the *parental* comfort with their own family configuration helps assists or hinders their children if they want to be “out” as a family. When children are open, unashamed and nonchalant about having two mothers, people often respond positively to this. The presumption of

heterosexuality in our society is so strong. For same-gender parents, coming out and being out challenges this presumption. They also concluded that gay people's fear of a negative response is often unrealistic. While people may initially be surprised, allowing others to deal with this "new" information might lead to a new and healthy openness. New and positive reactions and acceptance of disclosure by those to whom disclosure is made facilitates the development of helpful experiences of affirmation within a family structure. Such experiences inevitably support a child's awareness of different family forms and of the fact that having two moms or two dads is (or should be) a natural part of social living. The role of the non-gay parent in circumstances of divorce is also important because if the non-gay parent is accepting of the gay parent's sexual orientation, the child will be less confused and will thus be in a position to maintain stable and guilt-free relationships with both parents (Cramer, 1986:506).

In research conducted by Ray and Gregory (2001:30) into the school experiences of children of same-gender parents, the researchers found that the children often felt disempowered, fearful and isolated. When the children called upon adult assistance (teachers) to help them to resist and possibly neutralise the culture of homophobia, the teacher's responses were most often described as non-existent or ineffectual. In extreme cases, some teachers even joined in making homophobic remarks. Some of the methods that children used to overcome such difficulties were to form groups of support and to focus on the advantages of having same-gender parents. While some children ignored teasing, others responded with violence. It is noteworthy that secondary school children especially engaged in self-protecting behaviours to avoid being teased or bullied. Such behaviours included, for example, hiding their parent's sexuality or "stretching the truth". They selected very carefully those whom they felt they could trust. Paechter (2000:401) also mentions that the children of same-gender parents may feel the need to defend their parents against anyone – including members of the extended family who are outspoken in their disapproval.

Derlega and Grzelak (in Buhrmester & Prager, 1995:30) identified five broad functions of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure serves a function to the extent that it

gives some benefit to, or addresses some basic concern of, the discloser because when they exercise self-disclosure, they (a) receive social validation, (b) gain social control, (c) achieve self-clarification, (d) exercise self-expression, and (e) enhance relationship development. One reason why people might self-disclose is because it gives them an opportunity to obtain feedback about their attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions. Social validation through self-disclosure entails social approval whereas evaluative reactions from a listener can provide a sense of social acceptance and value. To gain social approval, people disclose selected information so that they can *manage* other people's impressions by concealing aspects of themselves that do not conform to the image they wish to present. Underlying self-presentational concerns give rise to this desire to regulate self-disclosing interactions in ways to control one's image. A combination of cognitive and sociocultural determinants lead to self impression management, especially during adolescence when there is heightened concern about social approval (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995:31). Adolescents view and evaluate themselves by means of a broader system of social conventions and a "generalised other". The social construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality means that heterosexuality is the ideal of this "generalised other", as discussed in The First Link of this Bubble.

Someone in the group asks, "Carien, since you yourself live and work in South Africa, can you tell us **what does it mean to be a child of a same-gender couple in South Africa?**"

Carien:

Although lesbian and gay voices are no longer silent in South Africa, a relatively new (lesbian and gay) voice that is starting to speak out is that of the same-gendered family. Although they once lived at the margins, same-gendered families

are also emerging as part of a “collective”⁵² gay community. In South Africa in particular, the terms of the new Constitution give gay people permission to advocate their right to establish life partnerships, become eligible to adopt children, keep custody of their own children in divorce proceedings, and, more recently, be able to establish co-parenting. In spite of this, real-life attitudes towards gay and lesbian people are not so easy to change as the Constitution and resulting legislation (Cameron-Ellis, 1999; Knoesen, 2004; Singh, 1995). Acceptance and understanding that is characterised neither by silence nor by open judgement and condemnation will naturally grow slowly after two millennia of bigotry, persecution and discrimination because these negative attitudes are deeply embedded in the societal matrix. The South African society still exhibits signs of a culture of discrimination and judgement. Because of the legacy of South Africa's historically race-determined and neo-colonial system of capitalism in which “great men” dominate history textbooks, the points of view of workers, women, LGBT people, and of people from lower socio-economic strata were seldom and rarely heard (Bozzoli, 1987:xiv). This has however changed over the course of the last decade in particular. A whole range of ideological assumptions underlies the perception of even the simplest social interpretations. Many of these assumptions have their roots in the cultural and historical forces which shape and control the South African society, and also in conscious attempts by people to interpret and understand the world around them. Such assumptions may include assumptions about religion, ideologies of ethnicity, nationalism, and various forms of class or community consciousness. South Africa has a long history of deliberate disruptions of family life that were in the past sanctioned by law. In our time, eurocentric and patriarchal definitions of the family are being replaced by more inclusive definitions which take into account (among other factors) the role of culture,

⁵² Some authors question the existence of a gay community (Gevisser & Cameron, 1994:16). Lesbian and gay historiography is now split between “essentialists” and “constructionists”. The former group believe that there is an essentialist gay consciousness linking all gay people. The latter group believes that sexuality is determined by specific cultural, historical and social contexts. This ‘constructionist’ perspective understands that it is impossible to identify a single, cohesive ‘gay’ identity. This is because they ask this question. “When a white man calls himself gay and a black man calls himself gay, or a white woman and an Indian or Coloured woman calls herself gay, do we mean the same things... Is there a line of consciousness that leads from middle-class white homosexuals who called themselves ‘queer’ in the 1950s through to the hip young blacks who now call themselves ‘queer’, with a new subversive edge in the 1990s?”

gender, history, sexual orientation, autonomy and religion in determining family relationships (Knoesen, 2003:¶2).

Scientific literature on gay parenting and children's views remain scarce in the South African literature. Until the late 1980s and early 1990s homosexuality was regarded as deviant and criminal behaviour, and same-gender parents were believed to have a negative and even a corrupting influence on children's development (Botha, 1992; Botha, 2000; Van Niekerk, 1989). From the beginning of the 1990s (and in tandem with the political changes in our country), reviews and commentaries that dealt with custody cases and the right to adoption began to appear in law journals (Bonthuys, 1994; Clark, 1998; De Vos, 1994; Jordaan, 1998; Mosikatsana, 1996; Pantazis, 1996; Singh, 1995; Van der Linde, 1995). A literature keyword search retrieved on 20 July 2004 of the keywords "gay/lesbian/homosexual/parent" on relevant databases [e.g. Eric, PsychInfo, Nexus, ISAP, SA National Bibliography] gave 25 references that have appeared since the year 2000. Five master degree dissertations have been completed in this field, of which only one focused on parenting⁵³ (Botha, 2000). The remaining 20 references were to magazine articles in popular magazines, such as "Sarie", "Huisgenoot", "Drum", "Femina" and "Rooi Rose". Some articles on donor insemination have been published recently, although also in popular magazines (Fulton, 2004; Underhill, 2003; Von Geusau, 2003). Relevant literature indigenous to South Africa is indeed hard to find.

A few groundbreaking legal cases are breaking new ground for same-gender parents and their children. In 1993, even before the Equality Clause of the Constitution appeared, a court ruled that a divorced mother could not be denied

⁵³ What was also interesting to note was the assumption and hypotheses of the study of Botha (2000:4). *The assumption is made that homosexual parental commitments/ relationships have an other and possible negative influence on the adolescent.*

Original Afrikaans: "...die aanname word gemaak dat homoseksuele ouerlike verbintenis 'n anderssoortige en moontlik negatiewe invloed op die adolessent het..."

The hypotheses: *If the adolescent of a homosexual parent is exposed to the parent, it will have a negative influence on the child.*

Original Afrikaans:

"Indien die adolessent van die homoseksuele ouer aan die ouer blootgetel word, sal dit 'n negatiewe invloed op hom/haar hê."

access to her children because of her lesbian relationship (Isaack, 2003:¶2). In April 1998 a lesbian mother won custody of her child after the child had been removed by the Department of Social Services and placed in the care of its grandparents (Powers, 1998:3). In November 1998, a male gay couple were awarded custody of a child that they had fostered since birth (Oliver, 1998:3). In September 2002, the Child Care Act and Guardianship Act were formally changed after the groundbreaking case of De Vos and Du Toit, who jointly adopted two children. Another important judgement followed in November 2002 when a lesbian couple were together recognised as their twins' lawful parents (Cole, 2002:1). This case was also taken to the Constitutional Court which declared the Children's Status Act to be unconstitutional. This act deals with the legitimisation of children conceived by artificial insemination. Up to that point, it only made provision for "a woman" and "her husband" to be registered as the parents of their children (Ellis, 2003:9). The judge appointed to write up the judgement for this case noted that changes in the legislation that regulates relationships between gays and lesbians were also necessary. Although gay people could now legally be parents, they still could not be legally married (Mphaki, 2003:21). In the reactions that followed these cases, the discriminatory attitudes of many religious leaders was strongly apparent (Jackson, 2003; Mphaki, 2003; Whisson, 2003), reinforcing my belief that a normative heterosexist culture still prevails in the minds of many South Africans. A question that would be valuable to consider is: "What is the consciousness of children growing up in same-gendered families within a society that is shaped by such cultural forces?"

At the end of 2004 an internationally groundbreaking court order ruled that the Constitution should be amended so that it would include marriages between two people of the same-gender, although after a mere three weeks the Department of Home Affairs approached the Constitutional Court to appeal against this ruling (De Bruin, 2004; Jackson, 2004). The Supreme Court of Appeals declared the **common law** prohibition of same-gender marriages unconstitutional. However, the **Marriage Act** of 1961 remains unchanged as it specifies vows that are taken by husband and wife. The various reactions to this ruling reflected some of the discourses that

inform arguments against same-gender marriages. There are mainly four arguments against same-gender marriages that can be identified (Knoesen, 2003:¶3). Firstly, the discourse of procreation is used to assert that *marriage* is created for the purpose of procreation. This is no longer relevant because heterosexual people may marry even if one or both partners are unable to procreate. The change in the regulations of the Human Tissue Act recognises the right of a single women (irrespective of sexual orientation) to receive donor insemination for the purposes of having and raising children. This discourse of procreation is sometimes integrated with religious groups' objections to same-gender relationships and marriage. The second discourse that Knoesen (2003:¶6) mentions is the religious and moral discourse, which is probably the most deeply entrenched discourse that runs through our society, with views both for and against.

The other two discourses refer to the disintegration of the family and the alleged ill effects that same-gender parenting will have on children (Knoesen, 2003:¶7-8). Families throughout history have taken different forms and they continue to develop. As I suggested above, the *quality* of relationships in families is more important than the *form* or *structure* of the family. With a high divorce rate that prevails in traditional heterosexual marriages, this narrow definition of what a family entails is also under pressure. The argument that same-gender parents will exert an injurious effect on their children was also used against the validity and the legality of inter-racial marriages (in South Africa), and it could also be logically extended to families of low socio-economic status. While it may be true that children from families of low socio-economic status may be materially and even emotionally disadvantaged, neither state nor society has the right to remove these children from their parents. As I have argued in this chapter, research over the past twenty to thirty years has shown that having homosexual or heterosexual parents makes no significant difference to a child's psychological and emotional well-being.

[My dear Queen Academia and fellow listeners, to conclude:](#) Bubble Two (in three parts or links) is concerned with the exploration of the relevant literature for this study. The First Link provided a critical overview of the historical development of

homosexuality and heterosexuality in terms of dichotomies. It examined the different discourses of homosexuality, provided a synopsis of the liberation movement and the “coming out” stories of gay individuals, with a particular focus on the lesbian movement. This link also provided a background to queer theory and emphasised the discursive power of language from a Foucauldian perspective.

The Second Link provided an overview of research on families from the perspective of the heteronormativity of the family versus an opposite perspective of “queering” the family. Attention was given to postmodern influences on the family, and to the relationship between family, gender and reproduction. The tension between assimilation and transformative debates was introduced to provide the background against which research findings could be read and analysed. The interconnectedness between family life, generally regarded as a private institution, and public debates was examined, as well as the function of the kind of kinship and care that rethinks the role of families in a society.

The Third Link provided an analysis of the literature that deals more specifically with the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. It started with a general overview before proceeding to an overview of research specifically carried out from the point of view of children growing up in same-gender families. It also focused on the disclosure experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. A brief contextual discussion of the South African context was also provided. A dual story-line also entered the discussion in the Third Link. Apart from me analysing the literature and doing research, I began to wonder how it would be and what it would mean if I brought a child into this world.

And so, in the end, as the group fell silent again, Carien thought to herself: I wonder about the children...? How do the children feel...? What do they think...? How do they perceive their family and their parents...? And how do they perceive the "outside" world? What messages do they receive from newspapers, television, cinema, their schools, teachers, community organisations, the gay and straight communities, their peers, and their close friends...? What experiences do these children have, and how do they negotiate these experiences, how do they experience these experiences...?

And so Carien decided to find some families, and talk to their children, and listen to them closely so that they could tell their stories and share them with the world. So she stood up, and followed her heart...

Bubble Three

Journey of the Inquiry

Visual pointers to Bubble Three...

1st link p.109
“Research partners”



- Finding, contacting and meeting my research partners (participants) p.109
- Data creation p.121
- Reflecting on the process of interviewing p.126
- Ethical care and technical aspects p.135
- Further technicalities p.140
- Preliminary thoughts on the nature of the iterative process p.143

2nd link p.145
“The plan”



- My paradigmatic perspective p.145
- Narrative research design; What do I understand by narrative research? p.152
- What does this study mean by experience? p.162
- Dimensions of narrative research p.164
- Critical methodological issues in narrative research p.165
- The writing process p.171

3rd link p.174
“Analysis”



- Initial data-analysis p.174
- Exploring in-depth (Holistic analysis) p.176
- Writing as analysis: writing narratives p.177
- An interpretive phase narratives p.183; grounded narratives p.184

Bubble Three

Journey of the Inquiry

And so, on my journey of inquiry, I met people who, for a brief moment in time, shared moments of their lives and welcomed me into their space. They allowed me to share their joy, their pain and their sorrow. Above all, they told me their stories. This then is what happened on that part of my journey...



THE FIRST LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE THREE

Go forth now. Go forth and question. Ask and listen. The world is just beginning to open up to you. Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world. For the person who is willing to ask and listen, the world will always be new. The skilled questioner and the attentive listener know how to enter into another's experience (Patton, 1990:278).

Queen Academia: How did you find these people? Perhaps you could clarify this for the audience and tell us more about your “sampling” process because that is the word that most of the audience are familiar with! And while you are at it, please explain the “methodological aspects” of your writing-up journey so that I will not need to interrupt you with unnecessary questions.

Carien: Let me answer your question by telling you who my research partners¹ are, and **how I found them, contacted them and met them**. That is where I will begin.

After I had read literature on purposive sampling (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Morse & Richards, 2002; TerreBlanche & Durrheim, 1999; Sherman & Reid, 1994), I initially thought that the process of selecting my research partners would be fairly straightforward. Even though I knew from the outset that this particular sampling technique might be more complex than other sampling strategies used, I had not expected to encounter so many uncertainties and imponderables in my selection process. Not even excellent advice from seasoned researchers on how to generate a sampling grid seemed to make the process any easier for me. In fact, it seemed to exert the opposite effect.

But, then, perhaps because the process *is* actually so easy, I merely *felt* that it was difficult because I was looking for difficulties where none existed. I might also have

¹ I view the research participants as partners in this research because they emphasise through language the collaborative quality of my inquiry. I will at times use the terms participants and research partners interchangeably.

been expecting the process to be difficult because it is merely different from the other selection processes with which I am more familiar. In the initial stages of conceptualising this inquiry, I considered several criteria for selecting my research partners. I shall now describe them below.

One of my most important criteria for the selection of participant(s) was *accessibility*. This meant that I would prefer a participant who was more accessible over one who was less accessible. Accessibility was from the beginning one of my most decisive criteria for selecting research partners. Accessibility for me meant that I was being introduced to a family by someone who was known to and trusted by them. This turned out to be enormously helpful and important to the families as well (network sampling).

Accessibility for me also meant that I could be assured of predetermined levels of reliability and convenience when it came to coordinating times and places for meetings with my research families. This was necessary for maintaining the momentum of the research relationship. In practice it meant that the families concerned all lived within a reasonable distance from where I worked and/or lived and that they were able and willing to make time available for regular meetings.

Another selection criterion that I applied was what I have called the *quality* of the participants' experiences. "Quality" in this context included the ability of research partners to reflect and report on their experiences. This enabled me to obtain information that was sufficiently layered and detailed to build an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. My purpose was to assemble a certain number of information-rich case studies.

For logistical reasons and for a desirable quality of the data creation, I gave preference to the Pretoria region (Gauteng, South Africa) and its immediate environment when searching for suitable research partners. This had the effect of narrowing the geographical and demographical variables to an urban context. In

addition, research partners could be either Afrikaans- or English-speaking² because these are the two languages in which I am fluent.

I preferred to work with parents of female gender, therefore all of my research partners were lesbian mothers. While I could just as well have based my research on male couples living as same-gender parents, I intentionally chose female couples for the purpose of this inquiry. The basis for this decision was mainly personal preference.

The decisions I took were also influenced by the increasing openness and visibility of same-gender relationships and families in South Africa in the fairly short historical period prior to and contemporary with my research. Gay couples started to adopt children in openly gay relationships in the decade of the 1990s (Jordaan, 1998; Singh, 1995), while the Human Tissue Act that made donor-insemination for lesbians legally possible was amended in 2000 (Underhill, 2003:75). Before this amendment, donor-insemination was not legally possible for any unmarried women.³ Under these circumstances, I made the assumption that same-gendered families who were open and “out” about their situation were a relatively new phenomenon. I therefore focused mainly on same-gender couples that included previously married mothers who had older children from heterosexual marriages or same-gender couples that had adopted older children because such families would be in possession of the kind of information that I was seeking for my research.

² My research partners were Afrikaans* and/ or English speaking. Three of them spoke English as their mother tongue (although their father was Afrikaans), and we therefore conducted the interviews in English. With another research partner, I conducted the interviews in both Afrikaans and English because this gave the participant the opportunity to speak in either or both languages (whichever he preferred might prefer). I decided on this because he attends an English-medium school, both his mothers are Afrikaans, and their home language is mostly Afrikaans. The remaining four research partners' interviews were conducted in Afrikaans.

*Afrikaans is a native language that is spoken in South Africa. It originated in part from the Dutch spoken by travellers and Settlers from the Netherlands from the 1600s. It has been transformed and affected by other European and Oriental languages.

³ See Underhill, 2003.

I initially chose to work with adolescents because, firstly, they have reached that developmental stage in which the capacity for abstract thought is better developed and because they have the language skills to describe their experiences and the capacity to reflect on their experiences. I also realised that I would be able to engage with adolescents more easily and directly, in contrast to younger children who require a more circuitous and indirect approach. Secondly, I chose to work with adolescents because adolescence is as a developmental phase that is characterised by a heightened awareness of social relationships with friends and peers. This means that pressures to conform to their peers are far stronger among adolescents than they are among pre-adolescent children, and that acceptance by their peers and by society at large is also more important to adolescents (Levine & Moreland, 1995; Ray & Gregory, 2001; Wind, 1999).

But when I connected with my first family, I was immediately confronted by a dilemma that was occasioned by the selection criterion that I have just described above (the preference for adolescent research partners). The children in the family were a girl of 15 years and a boy of 11. My question was simply, “Should I include the boy of 11 years or not?” As I contemplated the boundaries of adolescence, I became aware of how enriching it might be to understand my projected research questions from the point of view of siblings – and how such an understanding might add colour, depth and a degree of illuminating complexity to my data. To my surprise I found that the younger child concerned was in fact just as capable of sharing and articulating his experiences as the older child. I therefore decided to include both children as research partners.

As mentioned earlier that I thought that the process of finding families would be uncomplicated. Almost every person I spoke to during the research proposal phase made careful inquiries as to how I proposed to find families of the kind that I needed to interview – and then told me that they personally knew same-gendered families. In spite of this encouraging information, I quickly learned that even though I might be introduced in a friendly way to a same-gendered family, I should not assume that they would be willing to cooperate as research partners in my

research. What happened was that some same-gender couples had children who were far too young even to be considered while others preferred to remain silent about their status. These difficulties made my search for cooperative willing research partners more arduous than I thought it would be. My situation finds a parallel in the research conducted by Warren (2002:87) who claims that one of the greatest problems is to identify *willing* participants.

I attempted to get into touch with families in various ways. I telephoned the minister of the Reformed Church in Pretoria, as well as a few psychologists that some of my colleagues or I knew. I also talked to friends and colleagues. While networking with various experts in the field of LGBT⁴ studies I was invited to become part of a study group at OUT LGBT Wellbeing, the LGBT organisation of Pretoria. While part of that group, I was introduced to a family by one of the group. In addition, each family I worked with was able to give me at least one reference to another family. In the end, some of these families consented to participate. In this way, my network sampling became a reality.

This kind of network sampling (sometimes called “snowball sampling”) worked exceptionally well for me if one considers that this sampling technique is often used where access to persons is difficult or problematic because of the sensitivity of the topic or because potential participants are stigmatised (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:104). I also pursued a method of opportunistic sampling – sometimes called coincidental or emergent sampling (Patton, 2002:240) because the researcher follows up on leads obtained during fieldwork or takes advantage of the unexpected. Thus, for example, a friend whom I had not seen for years became one of my research partners.

Snowballing and opportunistic sampling are types of purposeful sampling that are widely used in qualitative research in full knowledge of the fact that the participant sample thereby obtained does not represent the wider population, but that it simply

⁴ LGBT: the acronym for **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual** and **Transgender** people and studies.

represents itself (Cohen et al., 2000:102). Merriam (1998:61) explains that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that because the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight, he or she must select a sample from which the most can be learned. Because I wanted to collect rich, in-depth field texts so that I could gain insight into the participant children and how they function in their families and in the larger society in which they move, richness of data were also taken into consideration. Researchers do this so that they can increase the range of their data and so maximise the identification of patterns and themes that occur in the particular context under study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993:82). In narrative research, participants are chosen, not because they are representative of a population, but because of their distinctive characteristics. This approach is, of course, congruent with the aims of qualitative research which does not attempt the kind of generalisation of findings that one strives to obtain in quantitative research.

My initial purpose was to find one or possibly two families to whom I would have easy access, and with whom I would be able to spend some time. As it turned out, the first family with whom I made contact was on the brink of moving to a town in another province, and we only had four weeks in which to complete the interviews. The parental couple participated in the interviews in spite of their imminent move and shared some of the experiences of their children. I decided then to use this data as pilot data, to utilise the opportunity that it gave me to refine my interviewing schedule, and to experiment with different forms of data creation. The two children of the family also shared some fascinating stories with me. And so I was most grateful to all of them that – despite their need to prepare themselves for their departure – they made time to see me. This gave me an opportunity to gather enough data to use in this initial stage, and I subsequently included their data in full in my research.

Extract from my research diary

20 Jan 2004

How did you make contact with K and E?

A friend of mine was studying with a friend who was involved romantically with the brother of one of the mom's. They made contact for me and the two moms agreed that I could phone them. I phoned the one mom (Z) and she said I must phone the other one (A) as her schedule is the busiest and Z's is very flexible. So I phoned the other mom (A) and I caught her in traffic whilst driving - but she agreed wholeheartedly (so it sounded) and gave me directions to their home. I was a bit anxious going to their home for the first time. I was early so I drove around the neighbourhood. It was a neighbourhood I was not familiar with and it surprised me to see how the beautiful old homes that had been restored, how well kept the beautiful gardens were, and even the odd neglected houses in between. As I approached their house that was built high up on a hill, I could hear laughter and talk from inside but there was no doorbell. I looked through the open door into an empty space, which I now know was their sitting room. There were boxes lying all around because they were packing (although I did not realise that then). All I saw were these high beautiful ceilings and a fireplace and some interesting paintings, and a piano - and then I wondered if they had remembered.

My partner had asked me before I went if I had confirmed and I had said that it was not necessary. But was this assumption a mistake? I knocked on the open door and one of the moms entered frowning. She had beautiful black hair, cut short in a bob. "You must be the researcher," she said. She then invited me in, but immediately turned and retreated back into the kitchen. I followed her and was met there by a woman with short hair and lots of energy. The family were all having dinner. She introduced Z and the kids. They were a beautiful young girl (definitely a teenager), and a young boy who was a bit shy, but who had the most beautiful hazel-brown eyes.

Mom A apologised to me, and Z immediately asked if I wanted to join them for dinner. Although I had already eaten, the food smelled divine. So after a few moments of coaxing from their side, I agreed. The girl then stood up and fetched me a plate and I was invited to help myself. I remember Z suggesting that I use some ginger for the small bout of flu that I said I was experiencing. The food was delicious. But what struck me most was the *hospitality* of the family. There they all were. The children were sitting happily around the table and there was such visible respect and openness among all of them. I was introduced as a woman who is studying children who have gay parents - "You know, it means that they have two lesbian mummies as parents."

What a wonderful evening it was! Our time was filled with conversation and wine. I spent two hours there. At 22:15 I had to excuse myself because I was really becoming tired and overwhelmed with all the info they were giving me. How I regret that "early" departure now because the next time the parents and I met again, that indefinable

"magic" was lost and I have not since been able to regain it. Hopefully I *will* regain it. Perhaps a short while from now because I have made plans to meet them all again.

But that is how I met them. I was irritated with myself for not having contacting them earlier because now they were moving in four weeks' time. But I consoled myself with the fact that there was a reason for that... I managed to see them three times before they left!

They referred me to another family. I have already spoken to and even met one of the moms, but she seems a bit defensive. Perhaps she is unwilling to involve her children? I do not know. It will be sad if I were to lose them. But maybe I can incorporate them as a referral group and then include that piece of the story...

26 Jan 2004

Today I learned one of my most important life lessons from Irma. It makes such enormous sense to me and I have incorporated it as a part of my life. She said: "Whoever will be there will be the right person. Whoever will cross your path will cross it at the right time and the right place - and they will present you with an opportunity. Whether the opportunity is the one that you had hoped for, or whether it will turn out the way you wanted it to turn out, that remains to be seen, and will depend on how you will deal with and handle the situation. But it will be a God-sent event. It will be the Universe calling you into action."

And so it has turned out. From the cancellation on Saturday - with my gut feeling telling me that that the mother wasn't ready and not interested in opening up her private space to a stranger - until today (Monday's) sudden and unexpected e-mail from T.*

(* This e-mail led me to my third family.)

The first family's departure compelled me to contact my second family who were known to close friends of mine. I consider this family a "negative case" because it presented me with a challenging situation. What I mean by this is that my research partner talked little about her experiences of having two mothers, always answering my probes with a "I don't think about that", or "My friends and I don't talk about our parents", or "I can't remember". I struggled to get clarity on whether this was *really* how she felt, or whether it was just too early in the process for her to share deeper personal information. I sense now that I did not trust her and she did

not trust me at that stage. Because our relationship developed rather slowly, I felt motivated at that time to begin to look for more research partners.

Unfortunately, my contacts and resources at this time yielded no positive results because some families that I phoned cancelled their appointments while others postponed their decision on whether they would cooperate or not until some later time. The South African holiday season certainly did not help matters, and my anxiety increased as I was left hanging with a research project with too few partners.

But nothing happens without a reason. This holiday period gave me time for concentrated reading and for looking at my first interviews with the benefit of distance in time and therefore to confront some of my own assumptions, fears and challenges more reflectively. In the following year, I was ready to continue with the data collection process with renewed energy and passion during the months of February, March and April (2004). By April, I began to get a sense that I was approaching a data saturation point even though I felt that it was imperative that I should continue to follow up various leads with certain families in case I should need this additional data later in the study. I therefore interviewed another three families after I had completed my series of interviews with the first two families. It was a decided advantage that there were *three* children in one of these last three families.

So, my dear Queen Academia, I found eight children in five families with which to illustrate and explore the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. Here are some demographic details for those who are interested in some of the specifics: the ages of the children ranged from 9 to 18 years; two children belong to the racial group referred to as “Coloureds” (in South Africa), and the other six would be regarded as belonging to the racial group identifiable as “white”. Although I used no formal instrument to measure their socio-economic status, one family belonged to a low-income group, another (one) belonged to a high-income group, and the remaining three families lived in neighbourhoods that one would

associate with middle-income families. Two children had been adopted. All the others had been born in the context of heterosexual relationships (marriage) from which all the mothers in this sample had removed themselves by means of divorce prior to my contact with them and their families. Two couples had been together for 15 years; one couple for 12 years, and another couple for one year. One mother has recently met her new partner, and although they were not then living together, they are beginning to share their lives in various ways. Thus, for example, the second mother is taking on some of the “family tasks” such as driving the child to various appointments in the city. I decided to include this child’s story as she had grown up since a relatively young age with same-gender parents (two mothers in one household).

I contacted each family in turn by telephoning them and introducing myself. I informed the research partners how I had obtained their names and how I had introduced my research project to them. I conveyed to each of the families that I was aware that it might be difficult to talk about this topic because of its sensitive nature, and that cooperation in the research would require a commitment by each family member to attend a number of scheduled meetings. I invited them for coffee or arranged a first meeting to give them more information that would help them to decide whether they wanted to participate or not. Most families were keen and enthusiastic and quickly set an appointment to meet me. My own disclosure about my personal orientation and domestic situation to the families facilitated openness and eagerness to engage in discussions of the topic under investigation. One mother for example said, *It was reassuring because I did not want someone coming in here telling me again that we are wrong.* Others were put at ease when I mentioned someone familiar to the family (*When I heard you mentioned X’s (friend’s) name, I really felt more comfortable*), while others asked more questions over the phone before agreeing to a meeting. One parent cancelled the first contact session. When I telephoned her again, she had moved to another city. She did however bring me into contact with another family who did eventually participate.

My goal for the first session with each family was just an initial discussion about the rationale and methodology for the research and some of the key ethical considerations such as confidentiality, issues that I considered to be fundamentally important to all concerned. Without fail, the parents started sharing their stories spontaneously and these stories (recollections of experiences, explanations of various kinds, anecdotes and opinions) were extremely rich in circumstantial detail. I did not capture these first contacts on audio tape because I had not expected that these initial conversations would be so rich and valuable and so I did not have any equipment with me. In addition, some of the parents did not want to be tape-recorded.

So I used these first sessions to present a brief summary of my research proposal and explained my assumptions and ethical concerns. I quickly realised that my research partners were far more interested in sharing their stories and opinions than in the “mechanics” of research. Even so, I was amazed at the trust the parents showed in me. Consent forms were signed by the parents and the children (an example of the form I used is included as Addendum A). Warren (2002:87) makes an important statement when he says that the researcher’s understanding of what “consent” means and the understanding of the participant may not be congruent from the beginning, or that it may shift or change over time. This insight proved helpful at various times, especially when the children asked repetitive questions such as Ryland’s “Will mom also get a different name?” or Kim’s “What are you going to do with this?”. These kind of events also occurred at various times *after* all the interviews had been concluded and therefore reinforced in my own mind the need for the researcher to remain open and aware of the process and to understand the ways in which it may develop. It also made me realise the importance of providing continuous reassurance.

At one stage in my research I wondered what motivated these families to participate. The parents usually said that they had decided to become involved in order to help other gay families and to advance research in this area. They also cited (in some cases) the need for personal fulfilment that would arise out of the process

and some asserted that friends or family were not usually interested in the deeper emotional processes that are implicated in establishing a same-gendered family. It might be assumed that the children were decisively influenced by their parents' motivation. I sensed the difficulty that some of them had in trying to understand why the process was so intense. I assume that they had initially imagined that the study would be of the magnitude and intensity of a long homework assignment or perhaps the writing of a book. It also became evident to me that the children found the writing of recollections in diary form rather arduous and irksome. They did however respond eagerly to verbal prompts and they cooperated with enthusiasm. The ability to share and reflect on personal experiences varied from one child to another. It is interesting to note, in the context of relationship building, that some of the participant children needed more time to develop their trust in me before they were willing to share their more intimate experiences. Other participant children, in contrast, were more ready to share emotional issues from the beginning of our meetings.

Warren (2002:90) also notes the eagerness that research partners usually demonstrate, and my personal experiences resonated with those of Vijay Reddy (2000:336) when she wrote: "The participants also seemed pleased to tell their stories. Many saw in me an attentive and interested listener, even if it was for research purposes".

However constructive the process outcomes, I admit that the willingness of families to participate creates a certain degree of bias in the research because the question of why some families are not willing to participate remains unanswered. The importance of willingness was also brought home to me during the process of member checking when I found that I needed to delete certain information that were so personal for the children that I would therefore not be able to include them in the final text. I wish therefore to make it absolutely clear that I can only present the reported experiences of these children – but that these reported experiences also serve to enhance our understanding of what it means to grow up in a same-gendered family.

Queen Academia, I would like to share with you what happened during my process of data creation. I encountered quite a difference between my initial ideas about **data creation** until the stage where I engaged in real interaction with the **research partners**. At the beginning of my research I thought of using different strategies such as diaries,⁵ personal letters⁶ and family stories,⁷ but I came to realise that the successful implementation of these strategies was vastly dependant on the individual child involved. Instead, my participation in face-to-face conversations allowed for spaces and times in which my research partners and I could relate to one another as individuals who were equally responsible for the co-creation of a “reality”.

I attempted to incorporate some of the methods mentioned in the paragraph above. I explained to the children how one could keep a diary by demonstrating diary techniques to them. I did the same with regard to the writing of letters. After three months of pursuing these methods unsuccessfully, I decided that I would not push or pursue these methods any further. The boys especially resisted any form of writing from the outset. While some enjoyed drawing pictures and seemed very comfortable with that, they preferred that I should ask the questions and suggest topics for discussion. One girl wrote a small part of her life story and in that way shared with me what she experienced when her biological parents divorced. While I sometimes specifically asked for family traditions or family stories in interviews, this information was often spontaneously shared by the research partners.

⁵ The writing of journals and diaries.

Since some of the journal content will be made available to the researcher, this knowledge influences the participants' way of sharing. The content that is to be made public for purposes of research should only be used with the participant's consent (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:102-103).

⁶ Letters as field texts

In the times between the visits (shadowing) or interview times, the researcher and participant might use “letters” as another way of generating field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:106).

⁷ Family stories and stories of families

These may be stories that are handed down through the generations. They often contain inspirational accounts of how we occupy an honourable part in the lineage of our blood family from ancient times. In these stories we emphasise the “myths” that have sustained us and our people. As Stone (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:113) note: “The family's first concern is itself, but its second realm of concern is its relation to the world.”

Some research partners showed me treasured family artefacts.⁸ After a few initial interviews, I made the decision to stop trying to control the natural flow of research relationship building and instead merely to immerse myself in the unique dynamics that presented themselves whenever I met each family or one particular research partner in that family. I must confess that I felt enormously relieved when I went over some of the notes that I had made during the Banff workshop in May 2003⁹ and re-read Jean Clandinin's words which explain that the process of testing and deciding among the different processes of data creation is "not as clean as it looks".

The data that I have collected has been drawn mainly from in-depth interviews¹⁰ because this is one of the most powerful ways of capturing the voices¹¹ of research partners in a detail-rich format. In addition, I have also selectively incorporated the following elements into the fabric of the interviews:

- Time lines.¹² These might include when and where research partners were born; some details about the family background of research partners, such as brothers or sisters; information about extended family members or other significant others, including (where relevant) their place and date of birth;

⁸ Photographs and other persona and family and social artefacts

Many of us collect a variety of materials as we compose our lives. We may collect and save photographs or other artefacts that are significant reminders of people and events which have represent the "great moments" in our lives – or of special places or events. Each photograph marks a special memory around which we construct stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:114).

⁹ Clandinin, D.J. Workshop notes: Experience and story. *The fourth conference on advances in qualitative methodology*. Banff, Canada, 4 May 2003.

¹⁰ Unstructured, interactive interviews (in-depth interviews)

This type of interview offers the participant an opportunity to tell his or her story with minimal interruption by the researcher. Unstructured interviews are most appropriately used in studies where the researcher seeks to learn primarily from participants what matters (Morse & Richards, 2002:91,93). The role of the researcher is to listen and let the participant tell her/his story. The researcher can ask questions about whatever is not clear, preferably during a second interview. Unplanned unanticipated questions may be used, as well as probes for clarification.

¹¹ Voice is an acknowledgement that you have something to say. It conveys the meaning that resides in an individual and it enables that individual to participate in research. "Finding your voice" relates to something else: who will be heard and who will be silenced (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:423-424). It is no longer only "a voice from nowhere" – a purely academic voice, even though researchers have become more aware of how they express themselves and their participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:183).

¹² Time lines as part of "annals and chronicles"

Annals are like chronicles but their focus is more on stories (the root of "annal" comes from the Latin word for year, i.e. annum. They may contain memories, events, and stories. These memories and stories can serve to provoke discussion between the participant and the researcher. "Chronicles" are regarded as the story of a sequence of events that occurs in serial time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:112).

significant “highs and lows” in their educational milieus, and data about their sporting, recreational, social and other activities.

- Collages. These are pictures that they drew to express their interests, aspirations and dreams.
- Personal artefacts. These were often spontaneously shared. Examples are the research partner’s name as it would appear in Chinese characters, and photograph albums.
- Other personal writings such as a life story.

My research diary, in both hand-written and electronic form, became a valuable source and resource since it contains my field notes about occurrences in the interviews that were not recorded on audio tape, and my observations about the interviews that took place. From April 2004 onwards, I began to structure my notes in terms of my daily schedule and other logistical considerations and methodological requirements. I also began to include a personal section about my growing insights and reflections (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:327). While I mostly wrote rapidly and intuitively, the above considerations helped me to keep me attentive to methodological requirements and the significance of whatever interpretations occurred to me during the process.

As I have mentioned before, the meetings with my research partners usually started out as casual conversations¹³ and evolved into in-depth interviews as I asked more questions on progressively deeper personal levels or as the children began to share more intimate and personal experiences. Even with parents, what sometimes started out as simple conversations over dinner or coffee sometimes evolved into

¹³ Informal conversations

Although conventionally used for discourse and conversation analysis, I made use of informal conversations as a data-generating strategy to enhance the development of the various relationships. In addition, I used this technique to elicit deeper meanings and noteworthy experiences apart from those that had been presented in an interview. Morse and Richards (2002:95) have indicated that the spontaneity and informal atmosphere might bring new information to light. These authors state that informal conversations mean a face-to-face encounter that is characterised by equality among participants and the flexibility to allow participants to choose their own formats and topics. They are conducted in a situation of mutual trust, and in an atmosphere of listening and caring for the experience described by the other. The informal conversations were taped and transcribed. I reflected upon issues of memory and perception of these conversations in my research diary.

the sharing of the intensely personal meanings that they ascribe to their daily lives or conversations about the construction of gayness and coming out, and other intensely relevant topics. I treated the interviews ultimately as “interactive conversations” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Olesen, 2000).

I have also interwoven some of these conversations with the parents into the experiences that the children reported wherever I felt that by doing so I could enrich the stories and make them more representative of the family’s experience as a whole. This raises what might be an ethical dilemma which I need to report here. Some elements of these stories do not reflect exactly what the children spontaneously shared with me and are therefore used sparingly as a literary device, the intention of which is to report and convey the child’s story indirectly. These expressions therefore occur in the text as the parents’ words. I have incorporated these “interviews” or meetings with the parents as data-creation strategies because although they are artificial in one sense, they authentically support the children’s experiences as they were reported to me. I therefore regard this strategy as a creative “artifice” that reflects the truth of events as I encountered them or as they were reported to me.

I do not regard this strategy as embodying any kind of “artistic” truth (although I respect that kind of truth for what it is in its own context). My purpose was not therefore to create fiction (as commonly understood), but merely to use what I *already* knew to be true from numerous contacts with my research partners to create a more coherent and condensed form of their truth in another more refined and polished format. I am certain that I have accurately and carefully re-told their stories from all the disparate elements that inevitably accumulate over many contact sessions, occasions and interviews. To me the difference between exact reportage or even selective reportage in an academic narrative and what I have produced here is the difference between showing someone all the loose pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and showing them the whole picture that is made when all the pieces are assembled. Such a strategy does involve a process of selection and interpretation, and one might therefore say that there were many bits of another

jigsaw puzzle that I discarded as I assembled the final picture that I have presented in this research.

My purpose in co-creating or retelling the stories of my research partners was to make their stories more vivid, immediate and comprehensible while eliminating the interference caused by the inadequacies of human communication. I also utilised this method of co-creating supportive data to show how the viewpoints of the parents could clarify the children's viewpoints by expanding on them, confirming them, differing from them and adding to them. By omitting events and details which were superfluous because they had already been reported (repetition) or because they were incoherently expressed (incompleteness), I have attempted to present a readily comprehensible picture. In doing so, I claim that I have added nothing new or untrue to the intention of what my research partners were reporting, but only that I have eliminated those elements that would have rendered the text unreadable or unbalanced.

This kind of co-creation of a product that reflects the truth that the researcher perceives is a variant form of normal academic reportage from research data in qualitative research. The difference is that whereas I have used one kind of semi-literary method to report my narratives and their meaning, other qualitative researchers (in my opinion) report just as selectively by using another kind of semi-literary method (the literary "persona" of a ponderous and weighty academic who writes in the style that has been hallowed by countless tomes of quantitative truth). While my reportage and construction may appear to be more "literary" in style and theirs may appear to be more "objective" and "scientific", my contention is that both styles are useful vehicles for reporting the truth as the researcher has understood it. Their differences are, in my opinion, merely stylistic because both techniques of qualitative research involve fundamental procedures of ethical data collection, organisation of data, analysis of data and, finally, a considered reportage of data and conclusions. The form that the final reportage takes requires the researcher to make a considered choice about the style and manner in which he or she will present the data and conclusions. All qualitative research needs to be

presented in the format of a certain style. Although my style is a metaphor of a literary product (often associated with art), I have taken great care to ensure that the truth, opinions and conclusions that it conveys are no less reliable and dependable than qualitative research that is written up in the style that is a metaphor of “scientific” or “objective” quantitative research. Both may be said to be styles although the latter is a widely accepted convention in qualitative research, and both are useful as vehicles for conveying truth and advancing knowledge. I agree that the extent to which each particular style is more dependable in terms of the trustworthiness, confirmability and dependability of the research is a debatable issue and could become a topic for a great deal of research. But my opinion is that the conscious and careful use of this method of qualitative research definitely opens up the possibility of richer and more detailed descriptions of the lives of individuals, which in turn can help us to achieve a clearer understanding of our research partners and thus accomplish the aims of our research.

Queen Academia, in reflecting on the process of interviewing I came to realise that the most significant organising principle for me in this research is the recurrent theme of *relationships*. This may sound simple, but my experience has been that relationships is a theme or topic that is inexhaustible because it remains a topic of perennial human interest throughout all ages and phases of collective and personal human culture and civilisation and because it contains countless layers of significance, meaning and emotion and so reveals to us innumerable valuable human possibilities and potential.

In the relationships that I was building with the children and families who became my research partners, what made an enormous impact on me and decisively affected the process were factors such as the extent to which I got along with them, the extent to which the child trusted or began to trust me, whether or not I missed cues, and the extent to which the child would speak by becoming silent, talkative or voluble. As Brigitte Smit (2004:1) notes: “Who interviews, matters!” The researcher critically influences the quality of the knowledge that is constructed because the interviewer remains the main instrument for creating and generating knowledge

(Kvale, 1996:117). Interviews are a form of jointly produced discourse in which the interviewer is always implicated in the construction of the phenomena analysed: her mode of interviewing, her relationship to her participants, her method of transcription and her analysis and interpretation are all crucial. The inquiry also elicits much more of a person's life than the narrowly specific and particular situations experienced by the participants (Mishler, 1986:99). Janice Morse (1994:225-226) is of the opinion that qualitative research is only as good as the researcher who, through skills, patience and wisdom, obtains whatever information is necessary to produce a qualitative study that is rich in detail during data creation and fieldwork.

I really had to work to acquire the skill of "not-knowing" in order to truly understand the depth of what is meant and *implied* by socially constructed meanings; to understand that I construct knowledge through my questions and the manner in which I listen to answers and how I react to these, and how the children react to my questions or comments. In spite of my curiosity and attempts to be somewhat self-effacing and non-dogmatic, I observed myself being too controlling on some occasions and rather too accommodating at other times. I realised that I would have to reinforce my professional skill of interacting patiently and with great circumspection in order to establish relationships, to trust and to allow the children and their parents to trust me, to simply *be there with them* – while never forcing my own topics, agendas or the mechanics of the interviewing process onto them.

I need to admit here that in the beginning I probably exerted too much pressure (however benign it may have been) in my quest to obtain results and to extract extensive and "deep" answers, and in so doing I probably did not give myself or my research partners enough time to become thoroughly comfortable in the research process. As I listened to my first interviews and reflected on them with experienced researchers, friends and colleagues, I came to realise how my accustomed *therapeutic* style of interviewing also played an enormous role in the research interviews. Some of my colleagues advised me to probe more deeply and to take the words of the children and reflect these back to them. They also showed

me where my probing had not been effective and those occasions when the children had ignored me and gone on with their own stories. Other colleagues advised me that as mistakes are inevitable, I should try to relax more and focus on the children or else I would become too self-conscious and that this would be unhelpful. In addition, I took refuge in the opinions of Ellis and Berger (2002) on how interview styles differ. Carolyn Ellis writes about the differences between their (Leigh Berger and her) styles and says:

I am reminded that we all have to find a comfortable interactive style in interviews that emphasises relationship and communication (Ellis & Berger, 2002:867).

I have a very empathetic way of interviewing in the research situation because I prefer to reflect on what is happening during a conversation and empathise with the people that I interview. Because I respect children as human beings, I want to create a space in which they can feel safe to disclose themselves to me, especially in matters that might be shame-provoking, troubling or controversial. I thus practised many of the skills that I learned as a therapist in the research situation by allowing people to give me information to which I listened in a reflective mode without too much probing, without taking on the persona of an investigator, and without searching for deeper layers from which to extract the information that I might have needed. I believe that I am skilful in using this kind of unthreatening and gentle approach as I reflect on words and accommodate the client's or interviewee's pain, embarrassment and anxiety. I also believe that one needs to have a vision of what it is that one is investigating so that deeper layers of meaning will eventually become accessible to all involved. It seems that my accustomed empathetic style (so effective in the therapeutic situation) at times blocked my need to be decisively interrogative in interviews because I found that it was not always easy for me to elicit the data that I needed from my research partners.

My professionally therapeutic style thus sometimes prevented me from obtaining optimal results as quickly as I might have. I realised that empathy had become such a part of my personal therapeutic manner that I was inevitably perhaps *too* empathetic on many occasions, too "there" for the interviewees and for what they

were saying to elicit their frame of reference as clearly as I would have liked to have done in the time available. This “being there for another” thus sometimes proved to be an obstacle because I found that I sometimes wanted to intervene and take on the role of a teacher or guide in the research situation by proving an alternative point of view, especially when confronted by religious beliefs. Sometimes I felt a need to provide them with easily readable literature on religious questions (especially), and a need to share some of the other children’s stories, and even to use examples from literature so that they would come to realise that they were not alone.

However, I felt intuitively that I should not actively interfere or intervene too much, that it was often not the “right time” and “right place” for doing so, and that it would possibly jeopardise the trust and openness that I was trying to build up with the various children. I found it extremely challenging in my persona as a researcher to endure and accept in silence the homophobic responses that arose in the interviews and not take them personally. It was simply not permissible for me as a researcher to allow my own assumptions and self-talk to interfere with trying to capture the authentic viewpoints of the children. These problems and difficulties are often present in the interviewing process and in the underlying stream of non-behavioural and even unconscious manifestations that occur in relationships.

“Consistently admitting ambiguity, this is what gives social science its distinctive hallmark” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:288). This is exactly how I felt. Were my unwittingly therapeutic attitudes and habits in the beginning necessarily a hindrance to the data-creation process? My answer would be: Yes and no. There were times when I was quite aware that I was not probing the children’s responses in an attempt to elicit their hidden messages. But I was doing it because I was engaged in a process of allowing them to establish their trust in me and let them find their own way of presenting whatever information they wished to disclose. In addition, I was aware of my own unique style, my own humanity (my “Dasein”). I felt that my manner of proceeding was consonant with who I was and I could not disown it without being false to myself and whatever good I hoped to achieve by

doing this research. This reflection process also revealed to me some of my own insecurities about the interviewing process.

Through self-reflection, constant conversations with myself in my diary (“memos”), my partner, with friends, and with close colleagues who are experts in research methodology, I tried to explore my own story, my biases and assumptions, and my beliefs and viewpoints because these were making an impact on my interviewing technique: on how I framed the questions, how I was listening, on how I interpreted their answers, and consequently how I would analyse and interpret the data. The phrase used by Patti Lather’s (in Lather & Smithies, 1997:xiv), namely “getting out of the way and getting in the way”, took on a deeply personal meaning for me because I could see that my subjectivity could become an obstacle – especially in the earliest interviews. I therefore continued to explore my own story and assumptions without ever forgetting the cautionary advice of Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:291) that “freeing oneself from [one’s own] preconceptions is, of course, a pious hope rather than an achievable goal”.

At other stages of the process, I felt that my literature readings were clouding my openness, my questions and my listening. I would sometimes catch myself during an interview trying to confirm or disconfirm some of the previous research outcomes. I also realised that it is a part of the iterative process of interviewing to analyse, read and integrate disparate aspects of the research process and to make sense of what is happening. There were times when I decided to stop reading for a while on a specific topic, and other times when I would immerse myself in that very same topic, whether it was LGTB psychology and parenting, heteronormativity and queer theory, or research methodology.

The research process is a learning process and I have learned along the way to start the interviews by engaging in “small talk” and to listen to what is most interesting to the research partners at that moment, and not by going in too deep, too quickly. I prefer to stay focused on whatever input the research partner may offer. While this is happening, I restrain myself from interrupting their train of thoughts and merely

reflect their words back to them. Even though this restraint requires me to suspend the introduction or discussion of any of my own research programme at those times, my own research questions and interests always remain clearly focused (but unarticulated) in my thoughts. And even though I am totally involved in reflecting back to them their own concerns, worries, hopes, doubts, anticipation and fears, my ultimate purpose (the research programme) remains clear in my mind. I thus provide whatever feedback or information they might need to answer their questions and reassure them about the research, and together we explore whatever feelings the prospect of becoming involved in and cooperating with my research programme arouses in their minds.

As the process developed I sometimes wrote down a few pertinent questions that I could use for probing. These questions did not constitute an interview schedule but were more in the nature of questions that I could use (when the appropriate moment should arise) to help my research partners to open up and disclose the information that I was seeking. Eventually, after later interviews, I began to summarise themes or record questions that I felt needed further probing or exploration. Throughout this process I had to discipline myself not to worry about obtaining the information that I knew was right there and focus instead on listening with full attention to the child. Part of the discipline of interviewing requires the interviewer not to force the pace and so cause a research partner to clam up or take fright. In addition, one of the advantages of my situation was that my research partners were committed to a series of interviews. Because of this advantage, I did not need to worry if I suddenly remembered or thought of an important question that I felt I should have asked but had not because I always knew that there would in all probability be another occasion on which to pursue the question. As Plummer (1983:97) states: "Never worry about getting it all at that moment" – although one is always aware that the moment, the "vibe" and the atmosphere are never quite the same from one encounter to the next (even though all encounters may be helpful and productive in their own way). Another factor that I had to bear in mind is that I might induce some lack of trust and confidence in the child if I should miss an important cue. Even so, one should not become obsessive about such possibilities

because one's silences sometimes serve the purpose of the research in the sense that they often reduce the degree of pressure on the child. One thus needs to balance all the positives and negatives of each situation and trust in the basic viability of the professional interviewing process – and also trust one's instincts and common sense. I presume that that is part of what we mean when we talk about the "art" of interviewing.

I believe I had established an effective rapport with my research partners because the repeated contacts I had with my research partners enabled me to establish a sound basis for deeper levels of intimacy and trust so that the research partner and I could discuss various sensitive issues that he or she would never normally discuss with an outsider – or even perhaps (in some cases) with his or her close friends. Adler and Adler (2002:523) mention two different approaches to follow when interviewing sensitive topics. One is *the one-off relationship*. This is well suited to sensitive topics because participants will have less fear and therefore presumably be more forthcoming if they believe that they will never cross paths with the researcher again. The other is that of *the prolonged engagement*. My personal preference is for the latter because I believe that trust develops over time and that one should give oneself enough time to get to know the research partners as people and human beings in unique situations, to empathise with them, to reflect their feelings, and to demonstrate an authentic care and interest in them before probing for the research information that one is seeking. The practice of postmodern and feminist ethnographers suggests that when participants and researchers *share* information, the interview context is more relaxed and comfortable and the hierarchical gap between researchers and participants is diminished (Adler & Adler, 2002:528). An example from my study is the rapport that built up between me and Luanne. This happened because as we played guitar together, listened to music together and watched extracts from videos and DVDs together on a number of different occasions, communication between us started to become more and more relaxed and opened up. Adler and Adler (2002:528) also state that *a less structured atmosphere* enhances rapport with the research partners.

In order therefore to create an authentic research relationship, I consciously cultivated towards my research partners an attitude of authentic respect for them as individuals as well as sensitivity to whatever might be important to them – whether what was important to them was something pleasant or unpleasant or whether it was grounded in fantasy or illusion. By this I mean that I simply accepted them (in each case) as they were, without any desire to impose my own agenda on them. If I managed to obtain useful information and disclosures from them later in the process, it was, I believe, because I had deliberately invested so much time and effort in getting to know and appreciate the realities of their unique situations *before* I ever reached a point where I felt that I could probe for the information that I needed in a way that would not diminish their trust and faith in me. Because I had an ever-present desire not to harm my young research partners in any way at all, I prepared their parents by making it plain to them that negative thoughts and feelings might be awakened and aroused by the research process. In anticipation that this might happen (although I was doing everything to minimise such possibilities), I continually checked with each set of parents whether they were able to detect or discern any signs of negativity or adverse reaction in my research partners. I also asked each set of parents to advise me right in the beginning about how I should approach their children. I especially sought the parent's advice about family-appropriate vocabulary. I asked them whether I should refer to them as "gay moms", "a mom that loves another mom", "a mom that loves a woman" or whether I should use the circumlocution: "having two moms".

The realities of the balance of power in the research situation were also somewhat novel to me. I remembered how strange it was in the beginning for me to have to telephone various families with requests because I was used to families or parents telephoning *me* since that is the normal procedure in my practice as an educational psychologist. Since I was acutely aware that my gayness could be a factor that would crucially affect their response one way or another, I considered anew on each occasion how I should introduce this crucial information. As it turned out, I became well aware of how they perceived me through their comments and questions about my own relationship and my personal feelings towards having children. Some

parents asked for advice about discipline and parenting (these questions were more impersonal in tone), and others inquired about how their children were coping and whether they should be concerned about anything (these questions were more personal). I asked some of the children directly what they had thought when they heard that I was coming, and some of the children asked me questions about the research process. Some of the children did not want the meetings to end; others wondered whether their mother and I would become friends. But, as more and more telephone calls and text messages passed to and fro, I could sense that a trusting relationship was being established between them and me.

Relationships are at the heart of this kind of research, and it is during the research process that we begin to experience those flashes of subtle and intuitive awareness and sudden (or gradual) realisations that constitute the raw data for both research partners and researcher. Over a period of time we also begin to experience confidence in the authenticity and benignity of the research process. There is a kind of solidity that develops in relationships because we construct our research from the very beginning on sound ethical foundations and because we remain loyal to a higher morality than that which is reflected in the slick clichés and platitudes of conventional morality and religion. It is never easy to achieve this or maintain this. Sometimes our research calls us to confront, defy and transcend the instincts that control the mass of humanity or the well-established prejudices of our society. Our experience of moral reality should be deepened by the power and demands of the relationships that we form, and these cannot but influence the course of our research. As researchers we have a certain responsibility, and a need to cultivate response-ability in what we do. As researchers, “we leave footprints” (Cox, 2003¹⁴). As Jean Clandinin said (2003¹⁵), we become friends with our participants, and, when it’s all over, we cannot simply say “It’s done, I’m leaving.” We must face the fact that our engagement with others (and their kindness and generosity to us in

¹⁴ Cox, S.M. 2003. Walking the talk: researcher responsibilities and response-ability in community-based research. *Paper delivered at the fourth Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference*. Banff, Canada, 3 May 2003.

¹⁵ Clandinin, D.J. Workshop notes: Experience and story. *Workshop presented at the fourth Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference*. Banff, Canada, 4 May 2003.

permitting us to interact with them) continually creates the possibility of long-term relationships that require an ethics of care, of ongoing negotiation and, above all, a need and sincere desire to honour the lives of the research partners.

Perhaps now is the appropriate time to share the details of how I implemented **ethical care** and some of the **technical aspects** involved...

I selected pseudonyms for each of my research partners in consultation with them in order to protect their identity and privacy. Although two of the children were not particularly bothered by this, I nevertheless urged them to provide me with alternative names. Furthermore, wherever a specific statement might indicate a unique context that could reveal the identity of the research partner or the parents, indications are given in footnotes that alert the reader to any changes that have been made, or the original text has been “blocked out” in black. I also considered fictionalising details about the composition of each family and the precise relationships of siblings to each other because I thought that such details might also provide clues to family and personal identities. But this proved to be too difficult because the individuals in each family are so inseparably and meaningfully intertwined in their constructions of reality that it would have been impossible to convey the unique experiences of each individual and family if I had separated the research partners from one another.

I do think that the actual process of recording of the interviews affected the quality of the interview. It certainly did at times affect my comfort level during the interviews. Thus, for example, I decided not to record the session of one meeting and I found that it actually worked out well, and both the child and I had a very good session. Even after I thought that I had basically completed her story for the purposes of my research, I visited her again to help her tune her newly purchased guitar, and in that meeting spontaneous disclosure and conversation began to flow once again. I also noticed that some of the other children would stare with wide-open eyes at the tape recorder until I concealed it with (say) a book, whereupon they became more relaxed after a while. Sometimes during an interview I would

wonder whether I was getting a good quality recording or not. When I later listened to the tapes, I wished that I had been more attentive. An advantage of having a series of research engagements is that they gave me the opportunity to rewind and pick up on nuances that I had missed in an earlier listening. On the basis of these new insights, I was able to go back to the research participant and probe him or her more deeply on whatever point or particular topic I had missed earlier on in the process.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the evenings. We usually commenced at 19h00, but I occasionally visited the families in the mornings or afternoons when that was more convenient for all concerned. All of the interviews were conducted at the children's homes. The shortest meeting was approximately 45 minutes long, and the longest went on for three hours. I did not keep meticulous notes of the amount of time that I spent with each family, but the average interview lasted from between 45 minutes and an hour. Sometimes I interviewed the parents and children simultaneously, but at other times I spoke to the parents alone first before speaking to the child. With one particular family, I spoke to the parents at the first interview although I was only briefly introduced to the children. After that initial interview, I used to meet the children alone. At the end of every final meeting with a family, I gave each family and child or children something appropriate as a token of my appreciation. Such tokens included books and files, biltong baskets, chocolates, flowers or wine.

I realised later that having the parents present in the interviews (on those occasions when they were) influenced the data I had created from my interviews with them to a greater or lesser extent. Even though, in each case, I sensed that an open relationship existed between the parents and their children, I only realised this after I had analysed the data and encountered an incongruity between what the child (Kim) had said when the parents were present and what Kim had said when they were absent. I then reread the transcripts of my interviews with all the other children in those cases where the parents had been present, but could find nothing as explicit as I found in the case of Kim. I then realised that the influence of the

parents might not have been limited only to *what* the children said (content), but that it might also have influenced the *manner* in which the children had said things (their self-presentation), or what they were willing to share in front of their parents (sensitive disclosures). In spite of this, I did see every child alone on at least one occasion, and that these “private” interviews would have provided each of them with opportunities to say whatever they would have said if the parents had not been present (as in the case of Kim).

This remains an important consideration because I had assumed in the beginning that the children would be as willing to disclose events and experiences in front of their parents as they might with me alone because in all cases a good relationship existed between the parents and their children. What I had left out of consideration is that no matter how good the relationship between parents and children, a child will always present a certain persona to the parents that is based on parental expectations and on unique family assumptions, and that each developmental stage requires its own kind of privacy if the child is to develop fully. This does not mean that the child is necessarily hiding important information from the parents, but merely that – even from a very young age – every child engages in various modes of self-presentation in order to harmonise with parental expectations and assumptions.

The time schedule of my actual contact with the families is presented in the following table (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Time schedule of contact sessions

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting with...</i>
10 November 2003	Family 1, parents (& Kashni & Erid), session 1, introduction
15 November 2003	Family 2, parents (& Luanne), session 1, introduction
18 November 2003	Family 1, Kashni session 1; Erid session 1
25 November 2003	Family 2, Luanne, session 1
27 November 2003	Family 1, Kashni, session 2
2 December 2003	Family 2, Luanne, session 2
3 December 2003	Family 1, Kashni, session 3; Erid session 2
7 January 2004	Family 2, Luanne, session 3
4 February 2004	Family 3, Carl and parents, session 1
9 February 2004	Family 2, Luanne, session 4
16 February 2004	Family 3, Carl alone, session 2
8 March 2004	Family 3, Carl & parents, session 3
9 March 2004	Family 4, parents, session 1
11 March 2004	Family 4, Tom, Danielle & Ryland, session 1
17 March 2004	Family 4, Danielle, session 2; Ryland, session 2
23 March 2004	Family 2, parents, session 2
24 March 2004	Family 5, Kim & mother, session 1
25 March 2004	Family 2, Luanne, session 5
25 March 2004	Family 4, Danielle, session 3; Ryland, session 3; Tom, session 2
29 March 2004	Family 3, parents of Carl, session 4
1 April 2004	Family 2, Luanne, session 6
1 April 2004	Family 5, Kim, session 2
2 April 2004	Family 4, parents, session 2
7 April 2004	Family 2, Luanne, session 7
December 2004 – January 2005	Member validation (member checking)

Some contact sessions were taped and transcribed, whilst others are field texts written from my recollections of what happened (I call these latter “memory sessions”). In some of the sessions we engaged in very little verbal exchanges because we were busy with other tasks such as, for example, drawing time lines or making collages. As indicated in Table 3.2, I have 16 transcribed interviews and one memory session with the children alone. With regard to my contact sessions with the parents: I have one transcription (in which only relevant pieces of conversation have been transcribed) and six memory sessions. There are another three sessions that comprise recordings and transcriptions of sessions when both parents and children were present, as well as one transcribed session and one memory session of various siblings together.

Table 3.2: Outline of contact sessions with the families

	<i>Interviews with children</i>			<i>Interviews with parents</i>		<i>Combined (parent & child)</i>	<i>Combined (siblings)</i>
Family 1	Child 1	Kashni	2t	Parents 1	1m & 1t		
	Child 2	Erid	2t				
Family 2	Child 3	Luanne	5t & 1m	Parents 2	2m		
Family 3*	Child 4	Carl	1t	Parents 3	1m	2t	
Family 4	Child 5	Tom	1t	Parents 4	2m		1t**
	Child 6	Danielle	2t				1t, 1m **
	Child 7	Ryland	2t				1t, 1m **
Family 5	Child 8	Kim	1t	Parent 5		1t	
	Total		16t, 1		6m, 1t	3t	1t, 1m **

t = transcribed

m = memory

*Carl and his parents were always together, except for one meeting in which I talked to him alone.

** Although this is indicated separately, I regard it as one session because all the children were present at the same meeting.

Some further technicalities: the **management of the data created** (methodological aspects of transcription)

Some of the recorded interviews or sessions were transcribed in detail and some were only selectively transcribed. Thus, for example, the sessions that were devoted to making collages or time lines related to the tasks in hand, and therefore did not follow any narrative line. In those sessions we spoke about what we were doing in a rather general way and was transcribed in terms of themes such as *Talk about subject choices, Talk about marks, Talk about the dog*. Goodson and Sikes (2001:34) refer to these as “summary transcripts”. All discussions that related to the theme of my research or that pertained to the research question were transcribed. All the original tapes were safely and securely stored and they could easily be accessed by me at any stage of the research. Thus if I found that I wanted to listen to an audio recording because I wanted to focus on one particular child, I could easily do so. I used a different procedure with regard to the sessions that were not taped. These I typed up afterwards or wrote into my diary before typing them on my computer because such a format makes the information more manageable as data sets. Throughout the process, I made personal notes in my diary, after which I transferred all the relevant sections and pieces from these primary diary notes into my standardised electronic format.

I noticed during these processes that making my own transcriptions helped me to become familiar with the data. This was especially helpful when I was preparing myself for a subsequent interview because the notes helped me to recall the atmosphere and events of previous contact sessions as well as the communication style and personality of the child I had been interviewing. A research assistant helped me to transcribe some of the interviews. I carefully and thoroughly reviewed each of these transcriptions and made whatever alterations were necessary. Occasional inaccuracies crept into the transcriptions made by the research assistant because some parts of the recordings were of a poor quality. This poor quality could be attributed (in part at least) to the fact that people engaging in ordinary conversation often do not speak clearly or slowly enough to produce high-

quality recordings. Fortunately I could remember what had been said and could correct the transcriptions. My research assistant saved me a lot of time and tedium by helping me with the transcriptions. In addition, she also benefited from the process because the transcribing process helped her to get to know the children. This proved to be an advantage for both of us because we could then reflect together on various issues that arose when I needed another point of view.¹⁶ We spent a lot of time in transcription and correction. It took me between seven and eight hours to transcribe a one-hour interview, depending on the quality of the recording, and between four and five hours to thoroughly revise my assistant's transcriptions.

I regard transcripts essentially as recorded conversations. They served as an aid to capture the details of what was being said and they provided me with cues for remembering significant moments of interpersonal communication and emotion-laden exchanges or revelations. I am aware of the limitations of a verbatim transcript as data because data become (re)constructed in the process of transcription. A recording obviously captures only what is *said* – and none of the nuances of body language, the visible dynamics between the interlocutors, any kind of emotional charge, or the actual atmosphere. It obviously therefore cannot be a perfect, total and faithful representation of an interview (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:33). It is especially important to remember that the *emotional* content of the interview is rarely evident in a transcript (unless specific indications are included), and the researcher must be clear about what he or she understands a transcript to be. Is it viewed as “a recorded conversation, a phenomenological experience, a literary text, a dialogue or a narrative?” (Poland, 2002:636).

Wherever I thought it appropriate, I made notes on body language and other non-verbal communication. Even so, I was amazed at how much I could recall of the atmosphere, the non-verbal language, facial expressions and so forth whenever I subsequently studied the data (transcripts). Because nonverbal and interpersonal

¹⁶ The assistant signed a confidentiality agreement.

forms of communication (such as nods, smiles, frowns, styles of dress, physical setting and other factors that affect the tone and atmosphere of the interview such as pauses, sighs, laughter, tone of voice) cannot be accurately conveyed by a transcript, there is always so much more in a live session than can ever be recorded. I also paid attention to whatever experiences were conveyed by words during the discussions – but not to the language per se because I was not attempting any kind of linguistic analyses of the conversations themselves (conversational analysis). Occasionally I did include purely linguistic indicators in cases where they indicated the presence of a message underlying the literal spoken words. Thus, for example, where the research partners were speaking about how difficult it was to disclose their situation to their peers, I included their “ums” and the “ahs” because the frequency of such hesitations indicate levels of uncertainty and emotional discomfort. Otherwise I omitted indications of the kind of silences, tones and stammering that are a “normal” feature of daily speech.

Poland (2002:633) notes that verbal interactions are based on a kind of logic that is different from the logic of prose because verbal interactions are supported by all kinds of supporting circumstances that are absent in pure stylistic prose. A transcription of a quite coherent conversation might therefore look remarkably disjointed and even incoherent when the words of such a conversation are committed to the printed page. Since satisfactory and rational conversations can appear to be startlingly incoherent and inarticulate when they have been transcribed, one needs at least to warn the research partners about this oddity before they examine any transcription in which they have taken part. I remember how inarticulate the “talk” seemed when I examined for the first time the transcripts of my first research project. Poland (2002:634) argues that when participants are made to appear less articulate than they really are when quotations are extensively used in the final report also raises certain ethical implications – even though there might never been any intention of undermining research participants in any way. Poland suggests that the “tidying up” of quotations might be important and desirable when the researcher is writing material up for publication. He is of the opinion that this should preferably be done after analysis and only by the

researcher. This should ensure that what is removed or even slightly altered does not appreciably alter the meaning of what the person said.

An added complication with which I had to work is that many of the conversations were not conducted in English. Thus in many cases what I present as verbatim quotations are often in fact translations. Although translation places us at yet one more remove from the original live interview, I took the translated versions to my research partners and to critical readers for verification as part of my effort to be as faithful as possible to the original meanings. I feel confident in the trustworthiness of what I have been doing because the accuracy of what I have reported in this research has been confirmed by the duration and thoroughness of my prolonged engagement and interactions with my research partners.

However desirable prolonged engagement may be, one has to stop at a certain point and consider whether or not one has had conducted a sufficient number of interviews. I would like to answer this question by mentioning some **preliminary thoughts on the nature of the iterative process of data creation, analysis and interpretation** because they constitute the underlying methodological assumptions of this inquiry. Ongoing inductive analysis is the most prominent feature of qualitative methodology. Analysis begins when one has accumulated a subset of the data that allows the salient aspects of the phenomenon under study to begin to emerge. Pursuing relevant persons, settings or documents that will further help to illuminate the phenomenon that is being studied will follow this initial step (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:46). As I conducted the interviews, I started to construct an initial analysis and to complete the transcripts simultaneously. I read the new transcripts with the preliminary themes in mind while simultaneously reflecting on the literature that I was concurrently reading. After I had completed most of the sessions, I felt that I was ready to start constructing a more in-depth analysis and I therefore concluded the contact sessions. When I was doing that, I had a feeling that I might have to go back to the same families for further data or that I would link up with new families in the future for the same purpose. Even so, I was aware that the process of data *creation* had to end at some specified point so

that time and energy could be devoted solely to data *analysis*. My feelings however remained ambivalent until I had written parts of the following section in my research diary and allowed some time to elapse:

The number of participants is usually small to allow for and enhance “depth” of understanding into one individual’s perception and experience. Qualitative and especially narrative research values the subjective, emic and idiographic (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:23). The question of when sufficient data has been collected has been widely debated and becomes clearer when one contemplates the following extracts:

- *when saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood* (Morse, 1994:230)
- *one samples until data is redundant to that which has already been collected (data saturation) and saturation is for the context and time of the specific inquiry* (Smit, 2004:2)
- *based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon* (Patton, 1990:186)
- *unfortunately for those with a low tolerance for ambiguity, there is no answer* (Merriam, 1998:64)

I contemplated this issue of how many people I should interview and when enough would be enough. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:381) gave a rough estimate of six to eight data sources when they are based on several hours of interviewing (this suggestion satisfied the residual quantitative positivist part of me). I also came to rely strongly what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:292) recommend: one should focus on *complementary* data, and not necessarily on more data to provide better arguments. I then felt satisfied with my decision to remain with my selected research partners and interview them extensively. As mentioned, I could sense that fewer sessions were needed with the older children, especially those who were verbally more fluent (such as Kim in Family 5).

Queen Academia: What was your plan of inquiry...? How did you find out about the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?

THE SECOND LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE THREE

Carien: My plan of inquiry (the research design) cannot be isolated from my **paradigmatic perspective** on the world of research. Jennifer Mason (2002:59) indicates that when one defines ones paradigmatic perspective as a researcher, the interplay between ontological and epistemological assumptions, metatheoretical underpinnings, the research question and methodology becomes of crucial importance. How we think the social world is constituted, or what we think it is (our ontology), shapes how we think what we can know about it. Conversely, how we look (our epistemology and the methods we use) shapes what we can see. Our thought process about epistemological and ontological concerns has to be combined with a grounded, strategic and practical consideration of the methods we choose and use. Because this research is a part of me and has emanated from me, I cannot somehow be removed from it. Everything I write and research is coloured by my personal epistemology and ontology, and this in turn influences my methodology.

In this research, because I am exploring the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, I found myself immediately identifying with the *qualitative interpretivist paradigm*. I wanted to explore and understand the experiences of the children so that I could record and interpret their voices. From an interpretive view I could present and represent the children's narratives in such a way that the reader would obtain some slight degree of insight into the lives of these children. I felt an urge not to touch the stories, to let the raw details (as they have revealed themselves to me and in the words that the research partners reported their experiences to me) to stand alone so that any reader would be in a position to make his or her own interpretations and sense of what he or she read.

After reflection, I felt that utilising only an interpretivist perspective could introduce a one-sided view because I also wanted to know what the children's stories might tell us about the discourses that are constructed in society, and

whether or not they are aware of and frame their families as being the “same” as, or “different” from, or “other” than other families. I realised that the social constructionist view could also provide valuable insights because interpretations cannot be disentangled from the social context in which they arise. Constructionists assume that individuals actively construe their own social realities and that the researcher is able to understand these by interacting with the interviewee. I believe that the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families can be regarded as a co-construction that reveals their interpretation of a social reality that (in turn) is socially constructed and situated within and against the backdrop of a social and political context (Bevan & Bevan, 1999; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

As I explored my own assumption of perceiving same-gendered families as *different only because of oppression* (Clarke, 2002b:212), I appropriated the insights of queer theory, which examines whether or not history has deliberately silenced and/or misrepresented people who have a gay sexual orientation/ preference. Queer theory, together with a lesbian feminist approach, emphasises the inequalities of past constructions of gender and sexuality, and postulates the inability of mere academic research to represent the world of lived experiences fully. Queer theory also critically deconstructs the concept of a homosexual “minority” (Butler, 1990; Gamson, 2000; Olesen, 2000). The proponents of queer theory, as with critical theory, devoted their efforts to designing a pedagogy of resistance within communities of difference so that gays could take back their “voice” and reclaim their own narratives (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000:1056). This however could not be the main focus of my study because I was not seeking to implement emancipatory changes that would remedy the inequalities in society.

From the beginning I had no intention of incorporating what I considered to be a “political perspective” in my representation of the children’s voices because I did not want their voices to be part of the power equations of society. But as I contemplated various postmodern positions, I realised that a negation of power is almost impossible. My very commitment to be aware of my own power, my own voice and the voices of the children, my commitment to how I could and would

represent the stories of children growing up in same-gendered families, and my commitment to my ownership and my role as a researcher, automatically propelled me into a postmodern, feminist and poststructuralist domain (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Evans, 2002; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Olesen, 2000).

I became interested in what one *needs* – in terms of competencies, attitudes, skills, and so on – if one wishes to be in a position to be able to narrate the lives of others, and I thought long and hard about how to present the voices of others in a more or less unmediated way (Lather & Smithies, 1997:126,127). I wanted it to be plainly evident that I respected the people involved by finding a less intrusive way of doing research. I wanted to find a method that would make me aware of how I would interpret, select and narrate. I then considered the role of the researcher and authorship and of how I look at the evaluations, thoughts and feelings that I have as a researcher. I realised that research is a cautious and slow process of working with inclusions and exclusions of representations and readings, of being aware of whose voices are privileged and whose are silenced (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:168, 185,189), of working with pluralism and polyvocality (Gergen & Davis, 2003:247). I wanted to provide a space in which I would emerge as a palpable presence who encourages dialogue with the reader by indicating pertinent problems and imperfections in the text, thereby creating an open text.

I came to realise that I was drawing on the poststructuralist paradigm by focusing on multiple voices and pluralism, by contemplating multiple realities and by engaging with the ambiguity of research, recognising the effects of the ambiguities of research and taking them into account as I write up my research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:171). Poststructuralism asks questions about language, power and meaning (Lather & Smithies, 1997:126). While I have not focused primarily on language as the central activity of my study, I am aware of my responsibility in creating text and realise that even *transcriptions* of interviews are already interpretations, that “we can speak only what we have language for” (Lye, 1997:¶2), and that “text structures our interpretation of the world” (Jones, 2005:¶2). My careful consideration of the local, fragmented and ambivalent as opposed to “grand

narratives” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:196), and my deconstruction of heterosexuality and homosexuality in Bubble Two served to affirm my affiliation to certain poststructuralist themes. I realise that I have attempted to deal with power issues by collaborating with my research partners, by calling them “partners”, by working to build up good and lasting relationships with them, by establishing and maintaining trust in those relationships, and by treating the interviews as “interactive conversations” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Olesen, 2000). While I have kept the issues relating to power in mind as I have created my data, I also bear it in mind in all areas of my research such as in the analysis, interpretation, presentation and representation of each of the children whom I interviewed. The existence of a multiplicity of “truths” (Daiute & Fine, 2003:64) implies that I make no claim that my text represents some privileged truth that is beyond critical scrutiny. I do suggest that there are no authoritative discourse to which all other knowledge must be subordinated exists, that because all perceptions are provisional, all texts are therefore provisional. In my view, the knowledge and meaning that we derive from what we engage is more like construction than finding or discovering (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Schwandt, 2000).

I soon realised that I was constructing a complex hybrid between seemingly different paradigms and approaches as I continued to incorporate aspects of postmodernism, feminism and post-structuralism into my operative paradigm and approach. This led to question what my central focus would be. Trying to make sense of my ontological and epistemological premises confronted me with the challenges of the “messy, uncertain age” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:23) that qualitative research is entering in the 21st century. Lincoln and Guba (2000:167) comforted me by saying that “there is great potential for interweaving of viewpoints, for the incorporation of multiple perspectives and for borrowing in bricolage, where it is useful or richness enhancing or theoretically heuristic.” After months of reflection and contemplation, I positioned myself mainly in the social constructionist paradigm while acknowledging the strong influence of post-structuralism on my thinking. In addition, I am incorporating perspectives from other non-positivist paradigms because these viewpoints are valuable for the way

in which I conduct critical analysis, for the position from which I analyse current literature, and for aiding my reflection on the conduct of my research. This is part of the complexity on which my study and research is based.

I have therefore come to the conclusion that the fundamental purpose of my study is to describe the children's experiences as an aid to understanding (*verstehen*). The social constructionist paradigm is concerned with discovering and understanding meanings as they are experienced by those who are the subjects of research, and with comprehending *their* views and constructions of the world rather than those of the researcher. Participants' experiences are explored in terms of their subjective experiences (their perceptions, views and feelings) as these are mediated by their continuous interaction with the "reality" of their everyday lives – the context in which they operate, their relationships, and their frames of reference. While the interpretive nature of qualitative research attempts to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them, the way in which people experience the world is a product of both the world-as-it-is and by the unique manner in which people process their own experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:124,157).

From an ontological point of view, there are multiple realities, and this multiplicity makes each individual's perceptions of reality valid. Because human reality is mutually and socially constructed and presented, we always encounter a diversity of interpretations in the world. Because each human being processes reality from a constellation of different viewpoints, it is inevitable that no two people will experience the world in the same way (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:124). In my attempt to understand and interpret the experiences of these children, I am assuming that each human being experiences the world through the prism of multiple realities, and that no two realities can ever be exactly similar or even equivalent. A relativist ontology denies that the world "out there" is fixed in terms of human experience, although it may assume a complexity of causality of a world made up of structures and objects that have a causal relationship with one another (Willig, 2001:13). For practical purposes, we assume the existence of a "fixed"

empirical or physical universe and reality, even though such a stance has long since been undermined in the field of quantum physics. But since we *need* to make assumptions that will allow us to function in the “real” world, we give our consent to various ad hoc assumptions about the macro-physical world in which we experience our outer reality. We do this because we need to understand timetables, catch trains, flick switches, and perform that multitude of tasks that comprise our consensual “outer” reality.

But the social and inner personal worlds that human beings create for themselves do not function quite so simplistically and smoothly precisely because human beings *do* create multiple realities which they experience as perfectly “real” and valid. This is what makes human beings so interesting and so complex, because we all generate our own reality, we live in a “world” that is constantly changing and in which meanings are always being negotiated. Our social world and our inner personal reality is always being interpreted and re-interpreted. It cannot be otherwise because our social and personal reality is constructed by us (whether consciously or unconsciously) by the multiplicity of shifting meanings that make up our different realities (Mason, 2002; Schwandt, 2000). I have therefore adopted an approach that enables me to produce (in cooperation with my research partners, supervisor and critical readers) reconstructed understandings of the experiences of children who are growing up in same-gendered families.

My epistemological view is that knowledge (in the sense of an *understanding* of one’s reality) is relative, plural and subjective and that the researcher and the research partners co-create this understanding. This does not imply that the researcher is the one who “knows”. I see quite clearly that the individual who has permitted me the privilege of conducting research into her or his private reality is the “knower” and (quite obviously) the expert on her or his life. It is possible to obtain knowledge of another person’s inner reality by carefully and systematically examining the views, meanings, experiences, accounts, actions and events that occur in that person’s life. Such understandings are co-created by both the researcher and the participant. Both their voices will be discernible in the

conclusions because there is no single interpretive truth that is entirely valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:23). As I said above, the “truth” is always subjective and personal. What is crucial therefore is to find one’s voice because one can be blinded by one’s advocacy. The converse of this is that one should not be so self-conscious or critical of oneself and others that there is no space for other voices to be heard and incorporated.

I have attempted to be reflexive¹⁷ about my process, my views, about the data and my interpretation, because everything that we communicate is an interpreted representation of a perceived world. These notions of the presence of multiple voices, the plural nature of reality and the multiplicity of human views, are also informed and influenced by postmodern thought.

Plummer (2001:12) states that we are experiencing the gradual birth of a more provisional world in which there is an increased sensitivity to diversities, differences and differentiations. In contrast to Plummer’s optimistic point of view, we could point out recent socio-political movements throughout the world, such as the changes in the United States of America, that indicate that the opposite may well be happening (Lather, 2003:¶2). In spite of this, I find myself espousing a definitively postmodern worldview because I find myself in agreement with many of the arguments and methods that are proposed by some postmodernist thinkers. The first of these views is that they respect the existence of a plurality of perspectives as against the dogmatic assumption that there is one single truth that emanates from a single privileged discourse or authority. The second of these views is that they focus on what is local and the contextualised rather than on grand narratives. The third view is that they emphasise flux and openness, as opposed to continuity and restraint.

¹⁷ It is through reflexivity that the researcher’s construction of what is explored becomes more visible (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:2,4,150). Being reflexive is a specific part of reflective research. It indicates reflection on different levels, and the consideration of more than one theme simultaneously. I am using the two concepts of reflective/reflexive together whilst Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:4-7) distinguish between the two.

The guiding methodological strategies that correlate with the above ontological and epistemological frameworks are interactional, interpretive and qualitative in nature. The ontology of constructionism supports this point of view in that it regards people's *subjective* experiences as being real, valid and therefore unconditionally important. I believe that people's experiences can best be understood by interacting with them and by listening to them. These activities comprise the nucleus of my methodological assumptions as I have sought answers to my research questions.

Qualitative methods aim to discover and understand how people construct meaning out of the way in which they perceive their lives. Qualitative methods are sensitive to the diversity that forms of expression take because they incorporate ways of listening to and considering "exceptions". Qualitative methods allow meanings to be heard without interference or coercion. Because they are also open-ended and flexible, they facilitate the emergence of new and unanticipated categories of meaning and experience. The particular methodology that allowed me to discover and do justice to the perceptions and complexity of my research partners' understandings has been the narrative research design. In essence, I attempted to answer my intellectual questions in terms of the perspectives of my research partners. Inevitably, I filtered what they had perceived and conveyed to me through the prism of my own intellectual understanding and perceptual apparatus. My "answers" to my own intellectual questions are therefore framed both in terms of the perspectives and experiences of my research partners and narrators, and in terms of my own understanding and willingness to be open to the private world of my research partners.

What do I understand by **narrative research/ narrative inquiry**?¹⁸ A large number of definitions of narrative research and narrative methodologies exist. After studying all these definitions, I realised that there was no single *correct* way of doing narrative inquiry. What I therefore present here is an overview of those definitions that I found answered best to my needs. I have used these approaches to

¹⁸ I use the terms "narrative research" and "narrative inquiry" interchangeably.

frame my own approach to narrative inquiry because they reflect the ontological and epistemological assumptions that I have made my own.

To a large extent, people make sense of their experience and communicate their experience to others in the form of *stories* (McLeod, 2001:104). *Narrative* is the human activity of making our varied experiences meaningful and coherent to ourselves or another in terms of our personal assumptions and beliefs by relating our perceptions to ourselves or to another person (Polkinghorne, 1988:1). Whether this other “person” is an actual person, a diary, an audio tape, or some other object or being (seen or unseen), narration – on whatever level – helps us to *objectify* our experiences which, until we articulate or narrate them, remain purely personal or interiorised. Narration helps to give definition and clarity to thoughts that – until they are articulated – often remain inchoate, vague or nebulous. This is especially true of thoughts that unduly disturb or excite us or thoughts that remain partially defined (but emotionally charged) on the periphery of our consciousness. Narrative inquiry thus attempts to understand and represent experiences through the stories that individuals live and tell (Creswell, 2002:525). The narrative inquirer tells and retells, lives and relives, presents and re-presents the stories that make up people’s lives, individually and socially, in order to answer questions of meaning, experience and social significance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:71,187).

The narrative approach implies an acceptance of pluralism, relativism, and the validity of individual subjectivity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998:2). All these factors are themes and motifs in postmodern and poststructuralist thought. Lieblich and Josselson (1994:xii) also maintain that the subjective-reflective nature of the narrative coincides with the feminist ideology that advocates a compassionate and non-authoritarian understanding of “the other”, although they contest the simplistic notion that narrative is a purely feminist domain. Feminist interpretation has shown how the “stories women tell about their lives may be constrained by the narrative forms – and the forms of living – that our culture currently legitimates” (Ochberg, 1994:116). Narratives always and inevitably exist within a circumscribed discursive space, constituted by the social world. The way

we understand, talk and write about the world is socially constructed (Freeman, 1993:198). I have used this mode of understanding to inform my selection of research partners, my data creation process, and the processes through which I went to establish a relationship with my research partners. It also helped me to act in a way that enabled me to build trust in my research partners as I made a safe and containing space in which these children of same-gender parents – my research partners – could share their day-to-day stories and experiences. Cortazzi remarks:

“it is not the unmediated world of the others but the world between ourselves and the others. Our results are deeply marked by this betweenness and there is no way, epistemologically, to overcome its implications (Cortazzi, 1993:21).

I have therefore utilised my own generic qualitative study with a narrative research design. In my study I aim to understand the experiences of children growing up in families with same-gender parents: how they think and feel about their lives in relation to the heteronormative image of family life that society constantly projects. I have accessed and explored the *reported* experiences of the children of same-gender parents. These reported experiences include first-person accounts, interpretations, memories, thoughts, ideas, opinions, understandings, emotions, feelings, perceptions, behaviour, practices, actions, activities, conversations, interactions, secrets, inner-self monologues, and so on (Mason, 2002:53). I have used these narratives that reveal their everyday interpretations to present a reflexive and interpretive understanding of their experiences. While I have focused on their personal experiences, I have borne in mind the caveat of Josselson, Lieblich and McAdams (2003:8). They say that people’s narratives reflect not only their *own* meaning-making, but also the themes of the society or culture in which they live. All my research partners’ personal narratives must therefore be understood against the backdrop of society’s construction of lesbian and gay families.

The goals of narrative inquiry, according to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998:72), are: (1) to assist us to understand the inner or subjective world of people and how they think about their own experience, situation, problems and life in general, (2) to provide “insight” into the individual that clarifies what has previously been meaningless or incomprehensible and that suggests previously

unseen connections, (3) to convey to a reader the feeling of what it must be like to meet the person concerned, (4) to effectively portray the social and historical world in which the person is living, and (5) to illuminate the causes and meanings of the events, experiences and conditions of the person's life.

Another reason why I selected a narrative research design is that it captures the kind of everyday, ordinary data that is familiar to the narrator (Riessman, 1993:2). One of the "clearest channels" for learning about the inner world of individuals is through verbal accounts and stories that individuals narrate about their lives and their experienced reality (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998:8). Additional data-creation techniques are therefore intended to enhance the verbal accounts and to produce stories about the experiences of children in same-gendered families.

Narrative research is full of loose ends and seeming contradictions (Riessman, 2002a:697). It also lacks the relatively fixed and traditional interpretative framework that a researcher uses to analyse and interpret findings. Another compromise that I made in choosing a narrative design is that I had to accept the process of working in an *emergent* design. Unlike research methodologies that begin with well-defined hypotheses and are then tested by fairly rigid research designs, qualitative narrative research is always leading one in new directions as it continually changes and unfolds. In qualitative research, one cannot reason one's way towards a causal hypothesis that will serve the experimental design. Instead, one aims to come to arrive at a provisional interpretation through exploration and description. It is also open-ended in the sense that traditional notions of distance and objectivity become distorted. I continuously reminded myself that I should strive for coherence, consistency, comprehensiveness and simplicity (Rosenwald, 2003:140,141).

Discontinuous and fragmentary texts are a typical feature of narrative research. These texts need to be read and reread as one strives towards coherent and consistent interpretation. Even after one has captured the research partners' stories in writing, the texts one is left with are never comprehensive enough to represent the research partner's whole life. Throughout the process of refining, creating and

co-creating these texts, I had to give careful consideration to questions of power and authority as I accepted my own contribution towards the construction (i.e. the co-creation) of the narratives (Daiute & Fine, 2003:68). I had to constantly guard against falling into what Daiute and Fine (2003), and Silverman (1993:6), call the trap of “romanticism”.¹⁹ The relativity, subjectivity and multiple levels of meaning that qualitative research texts contain also present one with challenges that are unique to qualitative research.

To emphasise but one aspect of qualitative research: participants’ stories do not mirror a world “out there”. They do not aspire the empirical certainties of quantitative research. Instead they are constructed, provisional, creatively authored, often frankly rhetorical, and replete with assumptions and interpretations. Just as quantitative research has its own characteristic advantages *and* disadvantages, the advantages of qualitative research reside precisely in its subjectivity – its rootedness in time, place and personal experience – that stories are both encouraged and valued for their descriptive and interpretative potential (Riessman, 1993:5). Narrative construction uses experience as data and its utility and effectiveness is dependent on the quality of the interactions between the research participants and the researcher. Robinson and Hawpe (1986:111) claim that “it is in reflecting on experience that we construct stories; experience does not automatically assume narrative form”. Creswell (2002:528) points out that since we cannot directly convey experiences, no matter how well they are narrated, the researcher has to interpret the constructions wherewith research partners make sense of their world. My research partners’ experiences are shaped by my (the researcher’s) construction of the narrated events. One of my ontological assumptions in this research is that children have to be given appropriate opportunities to relate the events that they have experienced, and that they will construct the reality behind these stories.

¹⁹ “Romanticism” (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Silverman, 1993): This is where the researcher sets out faithfully to record the “experiences” of (usually) a disadvantaged group. This record may become distorted if it is not contextualised with a cultural sensitivity that reveals how such experiences can be shaped by given forms of representation.

The researcher as author also assumes the power of the researcher as the constructor. In the end, it is I who decide what to tell and how to tell it, and what stories I wish to relate about my research partners, about myself as the researcher, and as a methodologist writing for other researchers. Narrative research is inevitably therefore a highly selective *constructive* act on my part. Jacques Derrida argues (in a somewhat extreme formulation) that all is text – all is construction. Our conceptions have no points of contact with the world. What the speaker intends to say is already inscribed in the structure of language (Valdés, 1991:23). Although these poststructural notions have been criticised, both favourably and negatively, I will, for the purpose of this thesis, not elaborate on these critiques. I do however see myself identifying and acknowledging a poststructural, postmodern and social constructionist view of experience as a cultural construction. This does not imply that I deny the value of people's accounts of their everyday experiences around a certain topic, accounts through which they make sense of themselves and the social world in which they are thus revealed. For Blumer (in Plummer, 1991:237), individual experience reveals the individual's actions as a human agent and as a participant in social life. And this is precisely what I mean by framing experience as a cultural construction: the individual's experience should be framed or located within a historically specific social and cultural context.

This suggests to me that my exploration of the personal experience narratives of these children in a heteronormative society can indeed be illuminated by an exploration of their personal stories in a social world. A sociological approach would imply that narratives are constructed to illuminate the dynamic interaction between an individual agency and the social structure (Reddy, 2000:52). The personal story that is set in a social matrix is regarded as plausible and valid by Clandinin and Connelly's who cite the work of Dewey (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They adduce Dewey's notion of interaction which suggests that to experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in four ways: *inward* and *outward*, and *backward* and *forward*. The first mode (inward) implies the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral

dispositions and so forth, while the existential conditions and the environment indicate the outward mode.

Because participants' stories are situated not only in particular interactions but also in social, cultural and institutional discourses, they need to be taken into account when we interpret them and unravel the multiple meanings that are facilitated by narrative analysis. Some institutional and cultural narratives are so powerful and dominant that they cannot be side-stepped. As far as May (2003:23) is concerned, the narratives of motherhood, marriage and family are just such narratives. She maintains that counter-narratives can be constructed by means of dialogue with and negotiation between different cultural narratives of family. For her, these narratives can be challenged, but never entirely ignored (May, 2003:2).

The interpretive function of narratives is used in the construction of individual stories. These individual stories can simultaneously be subjected to a social constructionist process and this will help us to appreciate the social role that stories perform. The interpretive function of a narrative (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003:260) entails a focus on the meaning that people attribute to their day-to-day lives. It is by means of this meaning-making process that people make sense of their personal and social worlds – and (in the case of qualitative research) the particular experiences, events and states that are of interest to the researcher. The researcher utilises this interpretive function intensively to make sense of another person's world. This results in a double hermeneutic as "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; ... and the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2003:51).

The constructed nature of narratives actively entails constructing the world through narratives and through being open, sensitive and receptive to the stories told by others and by ourselves. Narratives are social constructions developed in everyday social interactions; they are shared meanings that make sense in the world as we experience it. Narratives allow us to construct meaningful connections between our actions. We create narratives which then become central to our personal

understanding of ourselves (Murray, 2003:112). This ties up with Plummer's suggestions about the social conditions that facilitate the emergence of new stories. He suggests that stories "can be told when they can be heard" (Plummer, 1995:119, 120). Plummer is concerned with the social (and political) role that stories play, and he has investigated the kind of stories that are told, how they are told, and why they are told. This is also echoed by the Personal Narratives Group (Riessman, 2002b:235), which investigated power relations in the production of personal narratives. They investigate the reasons why a narrative has been written and told, and they assert that the context in which the story is told is always multi-layered because it represents the historical moment of the telling.

Individual stories may thus influence collective understanding. Stories provide a means of bringing other voices to the centre stage of the public discourse, a process that can imbue narratives with political meanings. The stories related in this thesis could, for example, be used as a tool to illuminate the experiences of children growing up in families whose very existence resonates with highly controversial social, political and religious meanings, even in a country (such as South Africa) whose Constitution and Bill of Rights explicitly defends the rights of gay people to lead normal lives and to enjoy the advantages of ordinary social and family life. Stories provide us with an effective (alternative) way of making connections between the lives and stories of individuals and a wider understanding of human and social phenomena (Reddy, 2000:51).

In this research I use the interpretive function of narratives to explore how the children of same-gender parents make sense of their experiences and how they construct their subjective experiences in the world in which they live. But as the social world is "always already interpreted" and constructed in a particular social setting (Mason, 2003:192), the constructed nature of narratives is already embedded in the perceptions of and interpretations formed by the children. This is inevitable because the meaning of their family structure and interactions are constructed in a specific social context that propagates the dominant narrative of the "ideal" family in so many different ways and contexts.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994:425) postulate that our responsibility as researchers extends beyond those with whom we work into a larger context that includes the research community. They also contend that just as we serve the self by serving the community, we also serve the community by constructing research texts that serve the self. This has indeed been my experience and privilege. I have found that by serving these parents and the community of families with whom I am involved, I also serve myself by developing personally, socially and spiritually as a result of my work with them. Donawa (1998:¶4) elaborates on this by saying: “I become the person I am in action with specific others. We know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others. To understand an idea means understanding a person in his/her social circumstances.” This simply emphasises the importance of social context and the fact that interpretation needs to be performed with reference to social discourses.

Collaboration is central to narrative research because of the emphasis that is placed on listening and attending to the participant’s point of view. I have drawn extensively on postmodernist and feminist theory to make sense of my own and of other people’s daily lived experiences (Evans, 2002; Josselson, 1992; Reinhard & Chase, 2002). For Kelly (1999:398) experience can only be understood within the context of the social, linguistic and historical features that give it shape. On the other hand, we have a great deal to learn from other people’s subjective interpretations or accounts. What I want to emphasise is that the personal and social cannot be divided. Donawa (1998:¶5) remarks that narrative is always a process that connects the individual to the environment that he or she shapes and by which he or she is shaped. In the words of Mills (in Plummer, 2001:6): “A life is lived in a particular time, place and under particular circumstances, an individual live within a context.”

In my analysis of the relatedness of personal stories embedded in social stories, I have relied to some extent on the work of Kenyon and Randall (1997:15-17;28-30). They state that we not only have a life story, but that we *are* stories. Experience may thus be mediated by means of stories. Stories are cognitive because they contain

ideas. They are affective because they involve emotions. And they are volitional because they involve activity or behaviour. Our thoughts, feelings and actions, and even our personal identity, can be understood as a story. And because these elements are fundamental basic to whom we are as human beings, a story may be viewed as an ontological metaphor.

Kenyon and Randall distinguish among four interrelated dimensions of life stories. In the first place, a *structural* story incorporates social policy and power relations in society. These cultural constraints can effectively silence personal stories or voices. In the second place, there is the *social* story which incorporates the social meanings that are associated with storytelling. In the third place, we have the *interpersonal* story. This deals with relationships of intimacy, family and love. Lastly, there is the dimension of personal meaning that generates the *personal* story. I define the personal story as what happens in the daily lives of people. My research presents a structural story in Bubble Two that highlights the main structural processes that inform and structure the binaries that exist between homo- and heterosexuality. In Bubble Four, I present a combination of interpersonal and personal stories in order to illuminate the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, even though the personal stories take place within the context of relationships.

Stories ultimately deal with what is personal and what is meaningful. But what is meant by “personal” and “meaningful”? Kenyon and Randall adduce the existentialist axiom that human beings live in situations or contexts – and that human beings are always going beyond themselves by attempting to attribute significance to those situations. From this point of view, the challenge for ourselves, both personally, as researchers and as practitioners, is to guide people to find their own direction. Personal storytelling can make it possible for people to make sense of their experience and therefore to accept and own their lives at a very fundamental level. We *become* the stories that we tell ourselves. Thus say Kenyon and Randall (Kenyon & Randall, 1997:17).

What I have come to realise is that there exists a distinctive relationship between experience and narrative. “Experience is the stories people live” sums up this position in a few eloquent words (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:414). These two authors have explored the possibility of studying – and not only using – experience only as a contextual given. They assume that experience is both temporal and storied, that people convey something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, in storied form. Stories therefore are the vehicles that allow us to come closest to the experience of others as they relate their experiences. We should not forget that stories arise out of a matrix of personal and social history. People *live* their stories. It is in the telling of them that they reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Rapmund and Moore (2002:22,23) also hold the view that human beings are interpreting beings who make sense of experiences through narrative or stories that are socially constructed by means of language. The function of narratives is to order experience, to give coherence and meaning to events, and to provide a sense of history and of the future. They explain people to themselves and to others, and they create identities and influence how people manage their lives.

Queen Academia: But what does this study mean by *experience*?

Carien: This is an important question which I found extraordinarily hard to answer and write about. Of course, I knew intuitively exactly what it meant and what I was looking for as I tried to define “experience”. I even relied on my knowledge of German to help me to clarify my understanding.

As mentioned earlier, The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Thompson, 1995:474) describes experience as “an event regarded as affecting one, the fact or process of being so affected”. This is similar to what is understood by the German word *Erlebnis*, which refers to experience as something one has: an event or adventure connected with an individual. *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, denotes experience as something that one undergoes so that subjectivity is drawn into an “event” of meaning. Experience so understood is integrative, unfolding, dynamic and hence singular (Schwandt, 2001:86). In the Concise Oxford Dictionary it is also explained

as a verb, namely “to have experience of, to undergo, to feel or be affected by”. It is the latter part in which I am interested: the *subjectivity* and process of being *affected* by what the children of same-gender parents *undergo*. In the end, it is experience that makes up our life-worlds because “in each experience there is something there, but there is also something which is only potential. And all potentialities of all our experience constitute, so to say, a world” (Valdés, 1991:453).

Gadamer (in Schwandt, 2001:85) argues that experience also has a “processual, historical and dynamic character”, and that it is anticipatory and open. Experience is not an object that one can eventually validate as knowledge of the kind that one encounters in the empirical sciences. For Gadamer and other researchers in philosophical hermeneutics and deconstructionism, we can talk about knowing *within* experience because of the historicity of experience. The discourse established through historical processes positions participants and in turn produces experiences. In terms of this approach, individuals are not regarded as *having* experiences, but as “subjects” who are constituted *through* experience (Scott, 1998:60). Scott quotes the redefinition, as he calls it, of Teres de Lauretis, namely that

experience is the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, originating in oneself) those relations – material, economic and interpersonal – which are in fact social, and, in a larger perspective, historical (Scott, 1998:61).

I take cognisance of social and historical factors by accepting that research partners’ experiences are all situated in significant moments in time that they recall and reconstruct. Once I have assembled a sufficient number of these pieces to obtain a coherent picture of their personal reality – a reality that I have co-constructed with them even by just being a sympathetic and containing listener and recorder, I may inquire after pertinent features of the larger picture (the material, economic, interpersonal, social and historical) which, as De Lauretis notes, is as much mediated through subjective construction as is our personal reality. Plummer also observes that stories that are told and heard when the time is right (Plummer,

1995:120). But this research is not directed at elucidating the historical and wider social dimensions of my research partners, except where such constructions may be pertinent to the personal and interpersonal dimensions of the children's experiences which anyway occur in a historical dimension (particular times, particular places). While I acknowledge that all these realities are constructed, my training as a therapist and psychologist has led me to focus more intensely on personal and family dimensions.

Another important emphasis that one finds in postmodernism and post-structuralism is that experience cannot be represented as it is actually lived. Because language and speech create experience, experience is discursively determined. Inquirers add another layer to this discursiveness through the very act of researching and writing about what they have researched because these activities continuously create and transform the experience they seek to describe and map. If one accepts these premises of postmodernism and post-structuralism, as I do, what we are left with in the last analysis are only *inscriptions* or *retellings* of experience (Schwandt, 2001:85).

Queen Academia: But Carien, this is all very well. But tell us more about the narratives. I have heard everything that you have heard about plot, character, temporality and so on. What are your views about this? What other approaches to narrative could you have followed if you had not accepted the interpretive and constructive function that narratives play?

Carien: Rather than identifying a set of distinctive features that always characterise narrative, I prefer to talk about **dimensions** because these are always relevant to a narrative and because many such dimensions are listed in the literature (Cortazzi, 1993; Mishler, 1986; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 1993; Roberts, 2002; Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). These different elements or dimensions of narrative are best evaluated and described by analysing the different styles or approaches to narrative, even though there are considerable variations in how researchers use the concept *personal narrative* and therefore in the methodological

assumptions that are present in the analysis. Despite these differences, there are interchangeable and overlapping features in all approaches that evoke the role of the researcher as a *bricoleur*. Authors such as Cortazzi (1993), Riessman (1993), Roberts (2002) and Smith (2003), broadly distinguish narrative styles in terms of a linguistic/sociolinguistic/structural tradition, a psychological, a literary, and an anthropological tradition.

The *sociological and sociolinguistic (structural) approach* to narrative focuses in essence on the sequence of events and always identifies a beginning, middle and end. Stemming from conversational analysis, proponents of this school have proposed that human beings possess an intuitive awareness of certain rules that govern participation in any conversation. Although *literary analysis* has focused primarily on novels and short stories, the dynamic and sequential element of “plot” are central to this narrative tradition, but are these days basic to most narrative styles. The *psychological tradition* emphasises the constructive nature of memory processes and argues that most tellers are largely unaware of the crucial role that their own interpretation plays in their narratives. The *anthropological tradition* studies narratives in terms of the cultural patterning that customs, beliefs, values, performance and social contexts exert on narration. I have touched on some aspects of these approaches in my construction of the narratives,²⁰ but, as I have noted above, this is because of the overlapping and interchangeable features that are common to all of the approaches.

But, my dear Queen Academia, another crucial dimension of working in a narrative design is to consider how **critical methodological issues** influence how the narrative is constructed, written, read, interpreted and understood. Therefore, critical issues that need to be considered and reflected on are:

- truths
- memory
- representation and voice

²⁰ See p. 180 of this Bubble.

- the research relationship and
- being a reflective researcher.

Narrative research aims to understand how individuals experience their social circumstances, and does not aim to present “the facts” or to provide explanations or “the **truth**”. Riessman (2002b:235) quotes the Personal Narratives Group:

When talking about their lives, people sometimes forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past “as it actually was”, aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences... Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and the world views that inform them.

A personal narrative is not meant to be read as an exact and quantitatively precise record of what happened, nor is it a mirror of any world “out there”. The reading *itself* is located in discourses because narratives are “laced with social discourses and power relations” (Riessman, 1993:65). People interpret the past in stories rather than produce the past as it was (Riessman, 2002b:256,257). A rethinking of the relationship between past and present is therefore necessary: past events are constantly being selectively edited and re-focused in terms of the current world view of the narrator. This implies that the chronological, linear and sequential modes of narrative time can be challenged in a way that results in a pluralistic unity of future, past and present. This conclusion is similar to those of those post-structuralists who regard time as a cultural and social construction, and who believe that “human time exists only through narrative expression” (Valdés, 1991:19). In their view, the kind of exact and precise recall that reveals a neutral, fixed and absolutely truthful (“objectively scientific”) past simply does not exist.

People's narratives and their efforts to make sense of their experiences are inextricably implicated in time because everyone states their views, perceptions, thoughts and feelings in terms of particular moments of time and in terms of representations of space. This obviously raises the question of how accurately we, as human beings, are able to represent our experiences and our interpretations of

those experiences – given the highly subjective nature of time and space perceptions. We might thus ask whether such experiences are actually “true” in the traditional logical-positivistic sense of the word, or whether they approximate in some way to “truth” in terms of an evaluator’s paradigms – bearing in mind that there are many different philosophical understandings of what “truth” is.

Polkinghorn (1988:158) makes it clear that a narrative approach assumes a particular understanding of what knowledge and truth mean. The narrative approach does not aim to arrive at the kind of truth or certainty that would be the goal of (say) the chemist or the botanist. Instead it seeks to create narratives that manifest all the signs and appearance of being true, real, authentic, convincing and coherent in the context in which they exist. Unlike the laws of the hard macro sciences or the axiomatically derived truths of mathematics, a story is open-ended and subject to interpretation, and the reader can take from (or “read into it”) whatever strikes her or him at the moment(s) of engagement with the story. Thus the *same* story can be used differently in various situations because different elements from it can be applied and emphasised in different contexts. Narratives do not produce the kind of knowledge that can serve to predict future outcomes (as do some kinds of knowledge in the sciences). Neither can they be used to control human experience because they are never normative in intention. Instead, they produce knowledge that deepens, enlarges, enriches and illuminates our understanding of human existence. A narrative is a subjective account from a perspective that is influenced by the passage of time and the flux of human emotions and intentions (Polkinghorne, 1988:159). Narratives create knowledge as a consequence of the interactions that take place between researcher and research partners. Such knowledge is also exploratory and tentative because it describes the lives of individuals and leads to a thorough understanding of the experiences and the meanings that people ascribe to these experiences.

If we question the basis upon which we decide that some of our perceptions are real and others are not, we come to realise that we regard “facts” as those perceptions that we can verify by a process of consensual validation. This is reflected in the

different kinds of truth that Samuel (2003:3) lists. Thus, for example, factual or forensic truth is observable and can be corroborated through reliable, objective, impartial and replicable processes. A healing or restorative truth (such as that of the narratives that were heard by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) acknowledges the context and experience of human beings and their contribution to their cause by means of narrative, and it aims to restore the dignity of the victims concerned. In this study I utilise a *personal or narrative truth* by means of which meaning is given to multi-layered life experiences. Such truth gives us insights into the past and present through the filter of the participants' and researcher's perceptions. Reddy (2000:43) asserts that one needs to consider the conditions in which a narrative were created and the relationships that produced it in order to understand what is communicates. The researcher should identify biases, silences and exaggerations and suggest ways of understanding what these may mean. In addition, I also utilise a *dialogue or social truth* by means of which I arrive at "truth" through interaction and discussion in the data analysis phase of this research.

Truth is also arrived at by means of **memory**. Epistemological claims are based solely on how situations were experienced or remembered by the participants and in the manner in which things and events presented themselves to those who experienced them. I make no claim that these narratives represent "the objective reality" (Smith, 2003:47). Memory entails the primary experience of the world out there, or pathic sensing, and not the rational and empirical realities are the goal of the "hard" sciences. Kruger calls this "gnostic sensing" (Kruger, 1988:33). Because each human life comprises a unique and forever unrepeatable series of experiences, events can never repeat themselves in exactly the very same way – either to oneself or to anyone else. No matter how precious or important a situation, once it has happened, it has utterly gone. While some form of abstract representation may remain, and some sequence or random memory of details of the experience, the concreteness of the situation in all its continuity and its actual *presence* is lost forever (Ochs & Capps, 2001:41). People can construct events by engaging in a dialogue in which they relive the past and reconstruct it in the present. Sometimes people may selectively cover up personal failures and embarrassments in their telling of the

narrative. The teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or “world” and recapitulates what happened to her or him in order to make a point. We may therefore conclude that memory is constructed, and that part of the aim of qualitative research is to understand how people view their lives and how researchers engage with people’s perceptions of particular moments in time and space. It is the children’s memory of their experiences and my memory of what they said that I am working with in this research. Because it is their recollections of what happened, what they felt and what they thought that I have taken into account, I will talk about *reported* experiences.

Other critical issues that I as a narrative inquirer need to consider are the **relationship** between my research partners and me, and the elements of **representation** and **voice**. These elements are vital to an understanding of what being a **reflective researcher** means and they are related to the tentativeness of epistemological issues that I have already discussed. Riessman (2002b:220) proclaims that “we cannot give voice, but we hear voices that we record and interpret”. I have reflected deeply on the process of the representation of hearing, recording and interpreting voice and the positioning of the researcher (Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Kong, Mahoney & Plummer, 2002; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Mason, 2002; Riessman, 2002a & b; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

As the researcher, I am in a position of power and privilege because I can record, document and interpret. Knowledge grounded in experience, in dialogue, is always relative to a specific standpoint or perspective that causes the knowledge to be invested with power (Donawa, 1998:¶4). I continuously consider my own positional stance and role in the production of the narrative in a careful and reflective manner because an unconscious or deliberate personal agenda can negatively influence the research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:149) remind us that we need to imagine ourselves in conversation with an audience as we create research texts. Writing is inescapably bound up with the self, with power and with values. In qualitative research, writing displays a certain kind of “reality” at the same time that it

constructs reality. Questions such as “Whose voice is represented in the final product?”, “How open is the text to other readings?”, “How are we situated in the personal narratives we collect and analyse?” and “What multiple interpretations would it be open to?” are essential if we are to clarify these interpretive issues for readers (Kong, Mahoney & Plummer, 2002; Riessman, 1993, 2002). Real lives are reconciled with representation. A life *as told*, as opposed to a life that is *lived*, may be different at different times for different audiences or when it is told with a different purpose.

As one writes the research text, one needs to “consider the voice that is heard and the voice that is not heard” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:424). Poststructuralist theory and feminist theories are also concerned with the issue of voice and author, as this brings authority and subject into a text (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000; Olesen, 2000; Tierney, 2000). The problems of authors, voices and selves are complex. Plummer (2001:182) indicates the possibility of creating relatively open and democratic texts provided that they contain a degree of fluidity between participants, researchers and selves. He urges researchers to recognise different voices and to reject the temptation to present the text as a smooth, seamless flow, as a product of a unified, consistent, single voice, since this is impossible. Voices are deliberately chosen to be different at different places in the text. Clandinin and Connelly (1994:423-424) comment that the presence of voice is an acknowledgement that you have something to say. Clandinin and Connelly (1994:423) comment that the struggle for a research voice is the struggle to express one’s own voice “in the midst of an inquiry designed to capture the participants’ experience and represent their voices, while simultaneously attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon the audience’s voices”. For them voice and signature are closely connected. A research signature is the special mode that indicates our presence as writers being in the text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:148). The signature and its expression in discourse create an author identity. Voice and signature together make conversations among participants, researchers and audiences possible in the texts.

Participants are co-constructors of the research because they are creating their own history in the text. Narrative inquiry brings about a fundamental reconstruction of the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Casey, 1994:231). Clandinin and Connelly (2000:63-65) also elaborate on the necessity to establish a collaborative relationship between researcher and participant because narrative inquiry implies the sharing and interpenetration of two or more person's spheres of experience. Narrative research has brought the individual back into the social sciences so that she or he can provide the world of research with insights into how people make meaning (Becker, 1999:73).

I myself experienced Plummer's observation (2001:171) that I would become more and more self-conscious and reflective in the writing process. There is no longer any one straightforward description of reality "out there". I find that the personal merges with the academic in writing as I write simply as a human being "making sense of the daily ebb and flow" (Plummer, 2001:198). The emotional and ethical relationship to the participants and the inquiry makes a difference to how my research text is shaped (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:423). They emphasise that the ethical dimensions of researcher-participant relationships are extremely important in personal experience methods. The ethical care that we demonstrate towards our research partners goes beyond the relationships that we form and establish with them because it also enters into the shaping of the research text:

When we enter into a research relationship with participants and ask them to share their stories with us, there is the potential to shape their lived, told, relived and retold stories as well as our own. These intensive relationships require serious consideration of who we are as researchers in the stories of participants, for when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories... We owe our care, our responsibility, to the participants and how our research texts shape their lives...issues of ethical responsibility are always foregrounded as we construct research texts... We all can find ourselves in the eventually constructed research texts... (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994:422).

Ely et al. (1997:376) state that "writing can affect the writer and the readers in personal and professional ways". Tellers have their own purpose in telling the story and receivers have their own agendas and priorities in leading them to unconsciously or consciously select events to observe, record and report. Therefore

researchers need to monitor and acknowledge participation in the construction of the storied lives of the participants (Reddy, 2000:35,36).

Donawa (2003:¶5-6) draws attention to attentiveness, experience, understanding and reflection. She states that a prolonged, mindful attentiveness to experience is productive of understanding and insight. The practice of empathy and trust assists us to make recursive explorations to the experience itself so that the nature and significance of our reflections and the knowledge forms that we use can be better understood. For Donawa, to attend is to be present, to court, to serve, to accompany and to pay heed. She quotes Mary C. Bateson as saying that there is a “spiritual basis to attention, a humility in waiting upon the emergence of patterns from experience” (Donawa, 2003:¶5).

Because research may be regarded as the joint product of researcher and researched, each person is influenced by the other and this enriches the process (Lobovits & Seidel, 2003:¶18). My own research involved asking children about their experiences of having two lesbian women (mothers) as primary parental figures. I wanted to explore their subjective experiences in terms of how they interpreted, understood and defined same-gendered families within the dominant narrative of society in their lives. I also asked these children how this influenced their peer relationships, their openness to other people, and their engagement with their friends. As these children are still living in these stories and are still in the process of experiencing and *creating* experiences, I am only telling unfinished stories.

When I insert myself into my research partners’ narratives as a way of coming to understand their stories, Donawa (2003:¶3-5) reminds me that I am still in the midst of my own story, and that we both remain embedded in our own respective cultural contextual narratives. For her, these “small” stories of the relation between our (singular and shared) experience and its social and ideological landscape has the potential to “write back against the Grand Narrative of the dominant culture” (Donawa, 2003:¶5). In reflecting on my own inquiry as narrative text, framed as it is

by feminist, postmodern, social constructionist and post-structuralist perspectives, I became to understand how my academic interests enhanced my ability to understand the processes of my own life. I therefore continuously analysed my own feelings, thoughts and experiences in my research diaries as a presentation or representation of my research journey. The children's accounts are a result of their interaction with me: I am part of the research. Rather than attempt to ignore my presence, I use it to understand a necessary part of the research process. "We work within the space (narrative inquiry) not only with our participants but also with ourselves" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:61).

Queen Academia, in my conversation with you, I have located myself in the field of narrative methodologies. I will now move on to elaborate on the journey that I have taken in analysing and interpreting the created data.

THE THIRD LINK IN A STRING OF RIBBONS THAT REFLECTS BUBBLE THREE

What is my approach to data analysis and interpretation?

The *data analysis process* is an iterative process in which I continually moved backwards and forwards between the research text, the data creation, data analysis and interpretation.

During the initial stages of data creation, I read through my first few interviews and looked for whatever themes might emerge from the data/field texts. I simply read through the stories and underlined whatever phrases caught my attention. I then engaged with a few colleagues and asked them to do the same. After that, we compared our analytical notes. I used the feedback from my colleagues in an exploratory way in order to sharpen my interviewing skills, to assist me in reflecting on my own assumptions when I entered the interviews and to make myself conscious of the initial themes that were emerging from the already created field texts. This made me sensitive to whatever concepts were emerging, and that sensitivity provided me with points of departure that I used to frame more interview questions, to listen to my research partners in a more open way, and to think analytically about my data (Charmaz, 2003:81). Thus, for example, I was trying to expand my exploration of the experiences of children of same-gender parents by not only listening for incidents of prejudice, or evidence that they feel different from other families, but also for their bases of support, for how the strengths of the families showed itself, for how they understood the role of their mothers, and so on. I wanted to remain as open as possible to new views during my research. As I have noted in *The First Link*,²¹ there were times during the data creation process when I stopped my readings of the literature and my development of analytical categories because I felt that my spontaneous conversations with the

²¹ See this Bubble, page 130.

children had become blurred by insights or hunches that I had formed during this process. I did not want analytical background information to influence my engagement with the children. During the latter part of data creation this became more and more complex as I realised that I was sometimes comparing the children's experiences with each other and (inevitably) with those that I had encountered in the literature. When I reflected on how difficult it was to refrain from analysis, I realised that I could not escape from the iterative and emerging process of data creation and analysis.

Ely et al. (1997:160) reminded me that qualitative research is a deeply interpretive endeavour and analytical processes are at work in every stage of crafting the research. In spite of this, one reaches a stage in the research process when one begins to work quite specifically and deliberately at analysis. This happened to me once my engagement with my research partners had ended and I began to analyse the data in more depth. I was confronted with questions like: "After collecting a stack of transcripts and field notes, what do I do with them? How can I make sense of them? How can I give my data a fair reading, without selecting only what interests me? How can I identify significant findings and communicate them in a written document? What kind of explanations can I build from my data?" (Charmaz, 2003; Mason, 2002; Reddy, 2003).

In trying to find answers and searching for clear guidelines, I went back to the literature and read about different ways of doing qualitative analysis. I soon realised that there were no clear-cut guidelines. I started off with the idea of utilising the categorical-content approach of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998:16), which basically entailed a thematic analysis of the content. As I read through the field texts and searched for tentative themes, I could code each child's separate story with relative ease, but it seemed futile to me to perform a cross-case analysis in which I would look for themes across cases (Patton, 1990:376). I found that the necessity of having to downplay the specific case dynamics of each individual case bothered me because the uniqueness and individuality of each story got lost in the process. Although I could see similarities between cases and strong

similarities across two or three stories, there were also distinct differences or nuances that I needed to include. I wanted to capture the uniqueness of the experiences of the children growing up in same-gendered families' lives and a search for common cross-sectional themes did not provide me with this. I realised that the imposition of a consistent coding scheme onto in-depth interviews might even render my research invalid (Richards & Morse, 2002:175) because it would not facilitate the answering of my research question. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000:141) statement, "When participants are known intimately as people, not merely as categorical representatives, categories fragment", made me realise that I had to use a different approach for my analysis.

I once more revisited the literature and found an answer in Jennifer Mason's words. Mason (2002:165) helped me to realise that at this stage I was searching for the "*particular* in a context, rather than the common or consistent and for the *holistic* rather than the cross-sectional" (author's emphasis). Explanatory or analytical logic supported by a holistic organisation of data can illuminate the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families and can provide an explanation of the ways in which the children of same-gender parents engage with their world. I decided to go back to my field texts and immerse myself in my data.

In order to organise my data holistically, I reread the raw transcripts and field notes on the collages and time lines without highlighting themes. I simply read through the material several times to form an overall impression of what each specific child's story was about. My earnest desire was to understand the intricately interwoven parts of each unique story. It was from this emergent *overall* impression that general patterns in each individual story began to emerge in my mind. I then used coloured markers and coloured pens and started to work through the field texts again. I then identified narrative threads, tensions and patterns within the field texts of each story. I grouped, labelled, organised and sorted the data that was

necessary to understand each individual child and then only wrote a narrative version of each child's story.²²

In this way, I inductively analysed the created data to obtain a rich and descriptive account of those subjective experiences that my research partners were willing to share with me. These narratives were written to present and represent a descriptive, as well as an explanatory account of the experiences of children with same-gender parents. These narratives capture the subjective "feel" of their particular experiences and enhance the understanding of the social world in which these children live (Willig, 2001:12). This embodies one of the dominant themes in qualitative research, namely, to display an integrated, meaningful and contextual nature of a social phenomenon (Mouton, 2001:168). Writing the narratives became my analysis as I made sense of their worlds in a storied way. Daiute and Fine (2003:63) also mentions that writing is often a phase of data analysis. This is confirmed by Laurel Richardson (1994:517): "I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it."

In reading through the work of narrative writers and studying how they came to represent their interviewees (Ely et al., 1997; Mahoney, 2002; Reddy, 2000), I became aware of the complex process of choosing voice and signature. I started off by writing four narratives in order to explore different styles or formats.

With one story, for example, I derived four major categories from the field texts and discussed these categories by intertwining analytical comments and direct quotations. The analytical commentary gave me the opportunity to share some of my reflections and to make references to the literature. I felt, however, that I was not giving the child enough space to be known, and I also felt that my signature and that of the literature were becoming too strong. I also felt uncomfortable with the

²² See terminology in Bubble One for an explanation of the difference and similarity between narrative and story.

analytical discussion because it disrupted the flow of the reading. An example of the writing can be visited in Addendum B.

In another instance I categorised the interviews once again, shuffled the sequence to form a more coherent story line, and presented the interview followed by an analytical commentary. What bothered me with this presentation was that the child's voice became lost, and it felt as though the analytical discussions had not integrated well with the first section where the categories were outlined. An example of the writing can be visited in Addendum C.

I then reworked this particular narrative and wrote it in first person. This definitely made the text more readable and gave this particular child, Ryland, a definite voice. My supervisor and I were concerned about member validation. In addition, I heeded the warning of Reddy (2000:72) that writing in the first person might not be the way in which that person would have written it themselves since there is a difference between how a person talks about their lives and how they write about their lives. I did however decide to proceed to present his story in the first person because that style portrayed his story for me in the most convincing way. Ryland was satisfied with my account of his experiences and one of his mothers confirmed that it gave her great insight into his world and was most convincing.

With another story, that of Kim, I used the style in which I became the narrator. While I primarily used her experiences, I also inserted myself into the context. My thoughts, feelings, perceptions and views of what was happening were now presented in order to contextualise the interview process. I really enjoyed writing in this way because I could use what happened during the data creation process more comprehensively. An example of how I rewrote the transcripts into a narrative is given in Addendum D.

Reflecting on this process of how to capture each child's story with my supervisor lead me to pursue the style of researcher narrator. I continued with Kim's narrative and reworked another five in terms of the style of researcher narrator. I kept

Ryland's account in the first person, for reasons already mentioned. With Carl I used a different format because most of his interviews were carried out in the presence of his parents. I therefore included their voices and decided to present it differently. I wanted all four voices to be alive and to interact with one another. Although I was also part of this particular narrative, I did not include non-textual cues and moods in that account. I felt that there were enough cues in the story itself to present their views adequately, and that my absence as researcher narrator might enable a reader to insert his or her own commentary.

When I "speak for" (these children), I cannot avoid telling my story about their lives. I can use the voices of Others from my understanding of their positions, but I can never write from their positions. I cannot become them, I can only pass on selected aspects of what they have shown me about their lives... (Griffin, in Roberts, 2002:127).

The puzzle of knowing what to do had now been resolved, but how to write the narratives raised a different issue. How could I frame their lives and their experiences in a responsible and ethical way? How could I ensure that I would do them justice and not exploit them or some of the other voices that they shared with me? I took notice of Charmaz's words (2000:527) about how writers or "authors place their stories" and how their framing of them "can bring experience to life or wholly obscure it". I also carefully heeded the words of Huber and Clandinin (2002:800-801), and realised that I needed to ensure that my attempt to create a "good" plotline would not betray my research partners.

Contemplating and reflecting on how to present the experiences of the children that I had interviewed made me realise that writing the narratives was for me the most valid, honest, thorough and careful presentation that I could engage in. In being open with my readers about my own thoughts and feelings during my conversations, I was also letting readers know what I thought, how I reacted emotionally, and what my preliminary interpretations of the context were. This enabled them to "enter into the interview context with me, allowing them to watch and to imagine how they might have responded in a similar situation. Some readers

might draw conclusions that are different from mine, or interpret their words in a different light” (Ellis & Berger, 2002:862). This would enhance multiple readings and interpretations of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families (Ely et al., 1998; Mason, 2002). Mason’s words (2002:168) that “every narration or representation is a version rather than an objective and neutral description” resonated with my epistemological view of multiple realities because a social world is also an interpreted world.

Writing the narratives over and over again led me to discover new ways of seeing, saying and thinking about what the children had shared with me. Creating different versions allowed me to test my assumptions and to gain insight into their reported experiences (Ely et al., 1997:20). I also saw that the narratives were becoming an interpreted text, an interpretive document that represented my own way of making sense of their experiences. It was not simply the telling and re-telling of events, but also my interpretations that symbolically recreated these events.

Apart from focusing on the content of the narratives, I also realised that the form of the stories communicated to the audience. The following elements²³ of narrative approaches were utilised in my narratives (Riessman, 2002b:230). Firstly, the narratives have a beginning, middle and an end; secondly, I included part of Labov’s elements of a narrative in terms of an orientation (participants, time and place or situation), a sequence of events (although not always strictly linear); thirdly and specifically with regard to the disclosure processes: I included act (what was done), scene (when and where it was done), agent (who did it) and agency (how she or he did it) as I based parts of my writing on Burke’s classic method.

In constructing the narratives, I followed Dan Mahoney (2002:325) in inserting different voices throughout the narratives. Thus we find my *interviewee voice*, that is the narrative construction that draws on the direct transcripts, my *reflexive journal voice*, which indicates what I was thinking about and feeling while I was listening

²³ See page 164-165 for a theoretical discussion of narrative elements/ dimensions.

and probing, and the my *writing up voice*, that gives preliminary interpretations, although I have tried not to bring that voice (my writing up voice) out too much because there is ample space in a subsequent Bubble for interpretation. “In vivo-coding” was mainly used where direct quotations aided in letting each child’s story speak for itself. These selected phrases described particular aspects of the children’s reported experiences to capture the uniqueness of each child’s story. I have thus used the raw transcripts and made them into a readable narrative by describing and exploring the experiences of the children growing up in same-gendered families (See Addendum E²⁴).

I have not merely made the translations more fluent, but have also inverted the order in which the information was presented so as to combine the different interviews and other field texts into a single narrative. This means that I did not literally record everything that the child said and that I omitted bits of minor information in some cases (such as general talk about school subjects) in order to make the narrative more readable and to illuminate the experiences that I was focusing on. As no two languages work identically, some alterations were made in the transformation of the raw Afrikaans transcripts into the colloquial speech of young and/or teenager children, as well as in the English because of the differences between how various things are said and written. This links up with the comment that I made in The First Link of this Bubble,²⁵ where I said that I had tidied up some of the quotations to make the words of the children clearer and more understandable. I agree with Popadiuk (2004:408) that the use of the exact wording of my research partners may make them appear at times to be inarticulate. Since I have spent many hours polishing the academic text, it may stand in strong contrast

²⁴ The reader can find the narratives where the selected parts from the original texts appear as footnote references, as well as the alterations requested by the children, on the accompanying CD-Rom. An example is provided in paper format in Addendum E, and all the narratives are included in the CD-Rom. The original transcripts are also included on the CD-Rom. These two Addenda are in PDF format. (Addendum E: This addendum carries the narratives with reference to the original transcripts in the footnote section. This shows what aspects of the original transcripts were used, and how it was applied in forming the narratives for each individual child. Addendum F: Original transcripts).

²⁵ See page 142.

to the text of the narratives. I did however scrutinise the changes meticulously and ensured that the key expressions used by the children were not altered.

What helped me to write the narratives thoughtfully was the knowledge that my research partners would have an opportunity to scrutinise my account of their experiences. The narratives were given to the children that I interviewed for research partner validation/member checking. I asked them to ensure that all the information was accurate and truthful so that it could be presented to a wider audience. I also gave them the opportunity to add any additional information that they consider worthwhile and to indicate whether some aspects needed more or less emphasis. After that, I also gave the narratives to the parents, who were primary representatives of the first community of readers, so that they could discuss the texts with the children and make whatever suggestions for alterations they wished. I then reworked the narratives according to what the children and I had agreed upon.

With one participant I had to omit one crucial aspect of her story because she did not want a specific section of her narrative to be published. This omission did not influence the overall impression of her story. Even so, I made an ethical decision not to include it because of her status as a partner in the research process. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000:135) assert: "One of the poignant moments in narrative inquiry is always the moment when research texts are shared with participants. The concern is for the relationship between researcher and participant – as thoughts or words spoken and written on paper are always at a distance."

The re-worked narratives were then given to critical readers, some of them, but not all of them, familiar with the academic world because I wanted to obtain diverse critiques of the stories. Some of the comments I received were related to the content (suggestions affecting the translations, for example); others were related to the form of the stories (the footnoting, for example), while other comments were merely about the overall impression made by the narratives. Once again I made slight

changes and in some cases I once again contacted my research partners so as to ensure that they would approve of the changes.

Narrative inquiry begins with experience as lived and told in stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:414). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:381) mention that interpretive research always involves a circular movement between the general and specific. While the outcome is usually presented in general and theoretical terms, it remains at the same time an account of particular experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:141-143) hold a completely different view. They say that that one must decide whether or not you want to present more general findings or whether you want to focus on and present the participants' stories. This is what I established in writing the narratives. I set out to understand particular stories and present them in a way that people would be able to relate to, even if their circumstances were relatively different.

Having written the narratives, I proceeded with the interpretative phase. The focus here was on making sense of these narratives and I asked myself: "What does this mean? What can be extracted from these narratives?" In gaining a better perspective on what I was doing, I sensed that I was touching on a combination of different theoretical approaches that none of the "traditional" philosophical frames such as grounded analysis, or symbolic interactionism or phenomenology seemed to account for. While a great deal of overlapping occurs among social theory, lesbian and gay psychology, queer theory, positive psychology and theories on disclosure, none of these addressed the specific individuality and uniqueness of what I found in each story. My methodology is nevertheless highly compatible with the processes of narrative inquiries.

I remained with my decision not to impose any preconceived ideas and/or theories directly onto my data, and decided to see what would emerge from the narratives. I

asked myself the following question in order to frame and focus the experiences of children in same-gendered families: *“What do I know now that I did not know before about the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?”*

Interpretations generated while reading and analysing the narratives reminded me of grounded theory analysis, which generates categories that emerge from the data. I however started by viewing the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families from their perspectives since the experiences are grounded in the children’s words. The narratives are the mould into which I have poured their experiences. Interpretations would then emerge from these narratives. And so I stumbled upon the idea of calling this process “a grounded narrative”.²⁶ The narrative is grounded in the data, and using the specificity, individuality and uniqueness of the experiences to frame the emerging story.

I could find only a few references to “grounded narrative” with regard to methodology (PsycINFO & Internet Search, 12-21 February 2005: see Addendum G). The most comprehensive information came from an article by Béatrice Boufoy-Bastick (2003), which I will discuss shortly. Four articles use the word “grounded” merely as part of an adjective to describe the narrative. They used it in the form of foregrounded and backgrounded narrative (Tickoo, 2003), or reality grounded narrative (Franklin, 2000), or well-grounded narrative (Lius, 2003:¶9). In another article, Smith (2004:36) refers to “a ‘sociologically grounded narrative’ that can alter the shape and content of civic discourse by biographically, collectively and politically enfranchising the previously disenfranchised”. I assume that this refers to a narrative grounded in a sociological context, and in a lesser sense to the methodology applied.

But Boufoy-Bastick (2003:177) uses the term “grounded composite narrative”, which she derives from Weber’s Ideal Type and Grounded Theory methodology. She sees the grounded narrative as an interpretive tool to describe a particular

²⁶ This happened during a telephone conversation with a colleague, Prof. Brigitte Smit during December 2004.

context. For her, this “richly vivid descriptive narrative allows the reader to vicariously and emphatically experience the anthropological research context by reorganising and reconstructing its context to create personally relevant meaning”. She used it to describe a particular educational setting by blending it into a fictional school. I however did not blend all of their stories into a fictional narrative, but presented the narratives of each individual child even though the boundaries between fiction and fact have been blurred by a post-structuralist perspective (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:153). I then proceeded to the interpretive phase so that I could revisit the narratives as grounded narratives because the interpretive accounts are grounded in the narratives. The interpretations emerged from reading and analysing the narratives against a backdrop of the field texts as background data. The supporting evidence to develop explanations of these “interpretive themes” was selected from the narratives.

Available literature on the experiences of children with same-gender parents was consulted and woven into the interpretations. This was primarily literature that referred specifically to the perspectives of children. This literature had to be supported by broader perspectives on same-gender parenting and families because literature about the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families is extremely limited.

I will present these interpretative themes in Bubble Five after which I will again reflect on the iterative and emerging process of analysis and interpretation relevant to this particular Bubble.

Therefore, Queen Academia, I think that the time has arrived for us to gather once more in the King's Great Hall so that I can share all of the stories of the children growing up in same-gendered families with you...



Bubble Four

Here are our stories...

Visual pointers to Bubble Four...

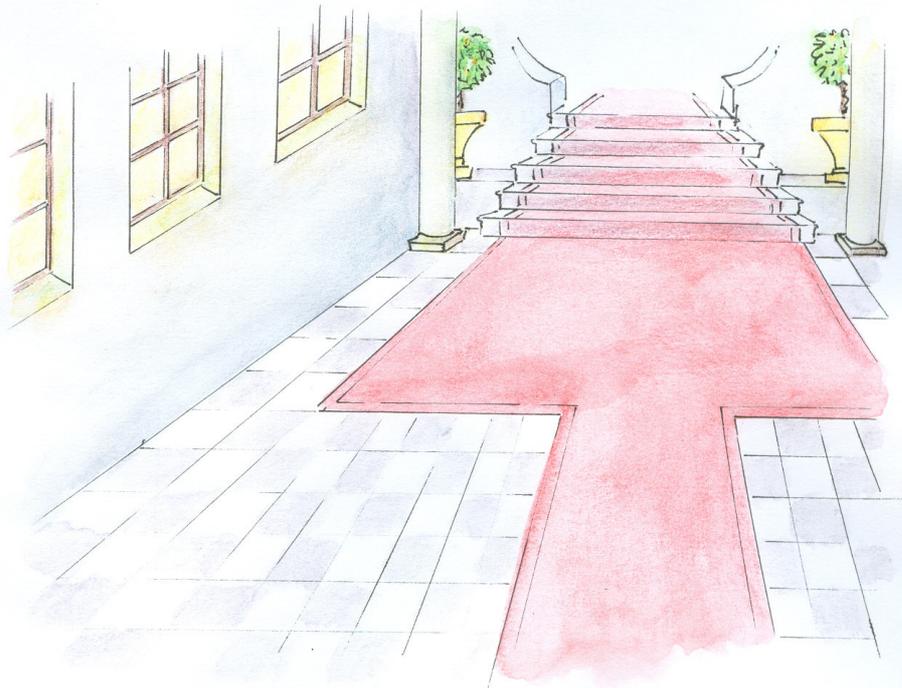
- Prelude to the symphony of voices...Important notes before you read the narratives p.190
- Introduction p.190
- The lead role players, in order of appearance: p.191
 - Kashni: "If they want to know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all" p.192
 - Erid: "If they want to know, I will tell them" p.200
 - Luanne: "We don't talk about our parents" p.208
 - Carl: "It doesn't bother me..." p.219
 - Tom: "You're trying to put together your puzzle..." p.247
 - Danielle: "If she's my best friend, then I'll share my secrets with her" p.261
 - Ryland: "I'll run away" p.274
 - Kim: "I would not choose to have my mother in any other way" p.279

Bubble Four

Here are our stories...

And so it happened that Queen Academia sent out messengers to announce that the Reading of the Narratives would take place. Once again, all of them gathered in the King's big chamber hall. Once everyone was seated, Queen Academia nodded to Carien, and she began to speak;

"... These are the voices that I heard, that I listened to, and that I have recorded... Here are the stories that the children and I co-constructed... Make yourselves comfortable and listen closely to what I have to say..."



Prelude to the symphony of voices...

Important notes before you read the narratives...

- The narratives presented in this chapter are presented without any referencing to the original transcripts, to allow for easier reading, as well as to establish a “clean”, uncluttered look and feel.
- The narratives with accompanying footnote-referencing to the original transcripts are included in Addendum E, which is in PDF Format on the CD-Rom. This shows what aspects of the original transcripts were used, and how it was applied in forming the narratives for each individual child.
- The original transcripts of the interviews are also available on the accompanying CD-Rom (Addendum F).
- These original transcripts of the interviews in PDF format can also be obtained from the researcher via e-mail: carien.lubbe@up.ac.za.
- Where a certain word or phrase needs clarification, the relevant footnote-indicator appears at the end of the word or phrase.
- The narratives can be read in any sequence. I presented the narratives more or less according to the sequence in which I interviewed them.
- All the names of persons and institutions have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Introduction

I will briefly **introduce** each child to you, after which their stories will follow without any further announcements.

Kashni has just turned 15 and she is in grade nine. Her brother, Erid, is 11 years old and in grade four. They were adopted by their two parents nine years ago. Their parents have now been together for 15 years.

Luanne is 14 years old (almost fifteen) and in grade nine. Her mother and co-mother have been together for the past 13 years.

Carl is 18 years old and currently in grade 12, his final school year. His mother and co-mother have been together for 15 years.

Tom is 14 years old, in grade eight. His sister Danielle is 12 years old, in grade five and Ryland is 9 years old, in grade three. Their mother and co-mother have been together for just over a year now (when they were interviewed).

Kim is 19 years of age, and currently a student. She has been in a same-gendered family since grade seven (12/13 years old), although her mother has only recently met her new partner.

The lead role players, in order of appearance:

- Kashni: "If they know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all"
- Erid: "If they want to know, I will tell them"
- Luanne: "We don't talk about our parents"
- Carl: "It doesn't bother me..."
- Tom: "You're trying to put together your puzzle..."
- Danielle: "If she's my best friend, then I'll share my secrets with her."
- Ryland: "I'll run away"
- Kim: "I would not choose to have my mother in any other way"

"If they know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all"

I enter the kitchen and am greeted by the cheerful sight of a family of four having their dinner. The family consists of two adult women (both parents of the same gender or "moms", as we all refer to them), a girl of 15 and a boy of nine years old. The girl immediately moves up one chair and offers me her place so that I can be seated next to her and one of her moms.

The girl hands me a cold drink and sets a placement on the table in front of me. They all invite me to join them for dinner and this immediately makes me feel at home. One of the mothers, Anriëtte, introduces me to the children.

"This is Kashni" she says, indicating the girl, "and this is Erid", she says, indicating the boy. I greet them both with a smile.

"Hi, Kashni. Hi, Erid."

"Hallo!" they call out in unison. They both greet me with big smiles.

Anriëtte says to the children: "Carien is here to look at gay families, gay parents with children, and mothers who are lesbians. Is that right, Carien?"

I almost choke on my food as she mentions the word "lesbians" in front of the children. I was preparing myself to discuss the issue of appropriate vocabulary first alone with the parents, before I spoke to the children. But now I could see that that was not necessary. To all of them, these words – that to us may be so laden with positive and negative emotions – are to some people just a natural part of their lives and conversation, and are not in any way a problem.

"Yes," I answer. "I am here to focus specifically on the experiences of the children."

Kashni immediately responds to this by saying, "I am definitely not a lesbian." Mom Zané says softly, "Yes, we all know that, Kashni," and the family continue their conversation without so much as a flicker of ill feeling or tension. Everyone talks and laughs and teases together, and Anriëtte tells me above the hubbub what excellent cooks both Erid and Kashni are. The household consists of the humans, cats, and (rather surprisingly) one pig. I have heard in the past what excellent pets pigs make (clean, loyal and intelligent). As we eat and talk, I am intrigued by the openness and easiness that exists among them.

After dinner the two children go off to study for their forthcoming examinations. Anriëtte, Zané and I then talk in a general way about the experiences of gay families in South Africa. They also ask me some questions about my study. It

is an exciting moment for me to be able to share ideas, insights and anecdotes with “real” same-gender parents who have so generously agreed to help me by sharing their privacy for the sake of my academic research.

Mom Anriëtte says something that resonates strongly with me. “It would be totally unrealistic in every way for us to imagine that our children will not at various times in their lives be teased about the fact that they have two mothers as parents. If same-gender parentage is problematic for some people, then they inherited their problem from a society – many of whom judges us and regards us in a most unfavourable light. Just look at these newspaper clips, from this week alone. She reads out aloud one of the headlines: ‘Singer says: gays are going to hell’.

“Many people,” Anriëtte continues, “have not yet realised that their own decisions about morality are not always universally applicable. They judge from own their point of view, either without knowing the facts or without even being willing to examine the position of others in a dispassionate way. Even though all four of us live open, carefree and responsible lives, we are always aware of the possibility that we might be unconsciously sending covert messages to our children that maybe it is better to be straight.”

At this point, Mom Zané interjects rather heatedly, “And that is definitely not OK.” I nod in acknowledgement.

Anriëtte continues. “I don’t want them to believe for one second that I am not proud of who I am – whatever that is.” They both laugh. I just don’t want them to feel – even in some small place in their hearts – that we are wrong in any way.

“Even though they will be free to make up their own minds about these issues later on in their lives, and even though they are sometimes compelled to hide these facts in front of other people or at school for the sake of peace or expediency, I never want them to feel like that at home and in their hearts – certainly not about their own mothers.

“They have to accept the reality of the situation as it is,” Anriëtte continues. “This is especially important currently for Kashni, who is experiencing her teenage years. Sometimes teenagers pick fights. But I don’t want them to use the fact that we are gay against us. That would be unfair. If Zané and I had not been gay, we would doubtless have married men and had our own children. But even that is not the real issue. The fact remains that we freely chose each other out of love, and we freely chose to have them as our children through adoption. All this is about being genuinely proud of who we are – and of who they are.”

We talk a bit about the adoption, and I can hear a note of passionate conviction in both their voices. Anriëtte adds another important observation.

“Although it is difficult at times to have to deal with having two moms, the real emotional issues – of separation from the mother – occurred between them and their biological mother, and those emotional scars are grounded in their biological mother’s rejection of them. A lot of the fights that occur between them arise out of what happened to them in that context.”

At this point, Kashni comes back into the kitchen. Anriëtte turns to me and asks, “Ah, now perhaps you two can talk a bit – if you want to.” She looks at Kashni, who nods graciously. “Maybe the sitting room will be the best place for your talk,” Zané suggests.

When we have settled in the sitting room, I tell Kashni a bit about the reasons for my study and research. Then, after a few minutes of friendly small talk, I ask her, “Tell me... When you (for example) go to school in the beginning of the year, or when you go out with your friends, are there times that you feel that you are different in some way? Or don’t you think of it in that way at all? Or do you perhaps think to yourself: ‘Is someone going to ask me about my parents or think something about the fact that I have two mothers?’ Do thoughts like these ever go through your mind, or...”

“Yes, they do,” says Kashni, forestalling more unanswered questions.

“Please tell me about it,” I ask her respectfully, realising that closed questions will not get me the information I am looking for.

Kashni answers at some length. “Some people are just uncomfortable with it, and, yes, that can sometimes create a difficult situation. Especially, you know, when the people who are feeling awkward or embarrassed are your friends. Then I have to make a decision about my friendship with them because obviously it’s not going to work out if I have friends who are not on the same wavelength as I am. But most of them are quite okay with it. If they know about my family and it’s not a problem for them, then there’s no problem at all.”

Both Kashni and I consider what she has said in silence for a few moments.

Then I ask her another question. “How do you sense or come to realise that they are uncomfortable with the situation?”

“I can feel it sometimes when I talk about my parents. Or, if I invite them to my house and then sense that my invitation has made them feel uncomfortable. Or sometimes I invite them and I can see that they would prefer not to come.... Yes, that’s how it happens.”

“So who, in that situation, makes the first move to resolve the situation?”

“Me,” Kashni answers without hesitation. “I just say to them upfront: ‘Listen, I have two mothers, okay.’ And then, it’s like, ‘Oh, alright then,’ and then there’re no problems after that.”

The dogs suddenly come rushing through the sitting room, barking loudly. When they have subsided, I ask Kashni, “Can you think of a time when it was actually a pleasure to tell someone?”

“Most times it’s cool,” she responds. “It was really great in Rodcrest College because most of the people there are very open-minded and that was nice. But now, in Festive School, it’s a bit more difficult, difficult because many of the people are more conservative.”

I agree with her observation. She continues, “Like, on this one particular day we were all standing at the bus stop, and a guy comes walking past, with his arm around a girl. One could see that they were, like, together. Maybe even married or something like that. Then some of the girls started making spiteful comments and noises. Why? Because the guy was black and the girl was white. Then I remembered my previous school where we white girls dated black guys and it didn’t matter at all.

“So I stood there thinking to myself, ‘If race is such a big issue for you guys, and you can’t handle that, then how on earth will I be able to tell you that my parents are gay?’

“I looked at them,” Kashni continues, “and I thought to myself: ‘Do I really want to be friends with any of you?’

“So I pick my friends very carefully, and I don’t hang out with children who are like that. If I have to be with them, I just keep quiet and I say nothing. It’s better that way. This new school is far more conservative. They’re “freaking” conservative and religious. I don’t mind all that stuff. But they’re racist as well. Even when I’m with them, I sometimes find that I just can’t keep quiet about their racism. So, one day, I just said to them: ‘When I’m around you, don’t say things like that’.

“But I think that it comes from their parents. Rodcrest College is not racist at all. There are Muslims there, and Jews and blacks. Schools really make a big difference. In Rodcrest College everyone was, like, tolerant and open-minded because there were children from different religions like Islam, and there were also a lot of children from overseas. It is also a private school. It was really nice.

“But Festive School is more difficult. You know, I also believe in God and I think that I’m more spiritual. But Festive School is, like, Christian. You have to be a Christian, pray three times a day and so on, and every morning the school opens with readings from the Bible. I don’t mind that kind of thing, but they are, like,

heavy about it and they are not tolerant about other religions. They only believe in Christian, um, values, and that's also what makes it so much more difficult there, because the Bible says that it's wrong and everything."

Kashni is making some really major disclosures, and so I encourage her to continue by listening in an open, sympathetic and attentive way.

"But, um, yes, I mean, I think the children are okay about it. But their parents.... Like there was one friend of mine who – at first – was fine with everything. Then she went and told her parents about my parents, and suddenly she couldn't come for sleepovers anymore. You know, I could still go to her house for sleepovers. But she never came to me anymore." Kashni remains silent and thoughtful.

After a while, I ask her, "What did she actually say to you?"

"Nothing specific. But I could just sense it. She always had excuses. There was always some or other reason why she couldn't come. Then I knew. You suddenly realise what is really happening."

I listen to her in awe, as her story pours out. She is giving me so much, that my head is spinning with all the detail. But this is her story, and so I let her continue talking for as long as she wishes.

"What is the worst experience you've had – the one in which you felt most uncomfortable?"

"I liked this one guy," Kashni answers. "We got on very well, but I didn't know how he felt about me. So I decided there and then that I just had to tell him because it simply couldn't work if he didn't know and accept it. I knew that if I were straightforward with him and told him the truth, then it would be okay. I was very worried," she laughs. "But he was fine with it."

I sense that it had not been easy for her, and I begin to wonder how long she hesitated before she told him. So I say. "So you kept quiet about your parents in the beginning of your relationship?"

"Yes, I did," Kashni replies. "Sometimes one just doesn't know. Sometimes an opportunity comes up and then you can tell them about the situation. And sometimes you can just tell another person about it all immediately."

"How do you decide that? I know that this might be a difficult question for you to answer, but when is it easier to speak out? Do you have to sense the right moment?"

"If a friend of yours is, like, very open and tolerant," Kashni replies, "then you can speak out without any problems at all. Or if you can see where a person is coming from, and they are not hostile, you can talk to them openly. But some people

are not easy to “read”, especially (for me) if it’s a boy and I don’t know him very well. I first have to take some time to get to know him and to understand him – what he is like and what kind of person he is – before I can explain our family situation.

“If he is, like, heavy conservative,” she continues, “then I don’t tell him because it simply won’t work out. So then I have to leave him. But in other cases, where they are open, you just tell him or her straight away.”

“What do you mean by ‘open’?” I ask Kashni. Although I don’t want to interrupt her train of thought, I would also like to hear more about this ability of hers to observe and sense other people’s feelings, behaviour and thoughts. I am intrigued by her ability (in some cases) to anticipate what the reactions of others will be after what is only a short acquaintance.

“By ‘open’,” she answers, “I mean open-minded, tolerant. They are not judgemental about things and they are comfortable with most situations.”

“How are things in the beginning of the year?” I ask Kashni, “when you walk into a new class – especially now that you are in Festive School?”

“Um, well, you know what it’s like. It’s the whole Grade Eight scene! Everyone is new. So you get to know certain people and you make your own close friends. But then I have other friends, certain friends I’m not really close to. I mean, I am friendly with them, but I don’t talk to them the whole day and they don’t come to my home. Which doesn’t bother me,” she adds. “If they hear about my parents it’s fine. They’re usually fine with it as well. But in the case of my best friends, those friends I talk to every day, then I must tell them.”

“Do you feel like you have to share, and that you cannot just leave it?” I ask.

“Yes,” she answers, “otherwise I just feel uncomfortable. If they come to my home and they don’t understand the situation before the time, then it could be very uncomfortable for them, especially if they have come for a sleep-over.”

“What do your friends say when they come to sleep over?”

“Nothing. They’re just fine with it”, she replies. “They just call my moms ‘Aunty Anriëtte’ and ‘Aunty Zané’. No, they’re quite happy with it.”

“Has anyone ever made, you know, some special comments about your parents, like, ‘I think it’s so cool!’ or ‘I think it’s so weird!’?”

“Hmm. Yes. Some people say it’s cool, it’s just got to be cool – having two mothers as parents. But,” and here Kashni takes a deep breath before continuing, “I have had a few problems.”

She then begins to describe a major incident.

“One day these boys were having a go at me and they just went too far and they said things like ‘You are a lesbian’ and ‘There’s something funny about your mother.’

“So I told my mother, and – can you believe it? – she (it was mom Anriëtte), went to school and she talked first to the principal, and then to my teacher, and then she came and spoke to the whole class. Then she called those boys to the front of the class and said, ‘Okay, if I ever hear that you have called my daughter a lesbian, I will phone your parents, and then I will lay charges against you for libel. And your parents will have to pay all the legal fees of the court action.’ “

Kashni pauses and then adds, “And then she said, ‘And – by the way – it’s not Kashni who is a lesbian. It’s us! If you ever have a problem with that, then you come and tell us.’ Of course it never was a problem again.”

Kashni laughs at the memory. But I wonder to myself how she felt inside about Anriëtte’s brave handling of the situation, and about how much of an impact it made on the children and the culture of education at that school.

So I ask Kashni how she felt when one of her moms walked into that room.

Kashni’s facial expression tells it all. But she answers and says, “It was ‘heavy’ embarrassing. I had my arms over my head during the whole thing. I felt very uncomfortable. I don’t really know how to explain it. I felt kind of sad. Tearful, and emotional. But I also felt very quiet and silent inside.

“Now I’m definitely not a quiet person. I’m actually a very loud person. I talk a lot in classes and give my opinions and sometimes the teachers don’t like it. I interrupt their classes with jokes and all that kind of thing. But I’m always the first one they get to know. But when that happened, I was just very quiet, and I didn’t say anything to anybody.”

“Did any of them ever risk saying anything like that to you afterwards?”

“Oh, no.”

“So that was probably the first time that something so serious happened?”

“Yes, and the last. In Grades Three and Four, nothing happened. It was fine. You just tell the whole class and they have no problems with it. I had lots of parties and everyone was at my home and both my moms were always there. So of course there were no problems. But as they get older, things begin to change.”

To relieve the tension that has built up as a result of this major disclosure, I change tack and ask Kashni, “So, then, what’s nice about having two mothers instead of a mother and father?”

Kashni laughs. “I guess one gets more attention. It’s usually the mother in a family that gives more attention to the children, and so you get a lot of attention in

your family. But sometimes you get more attention than you want because mothers can also be very overprotective. If there is one parent who is overprotective, it will usually be the mother.”

We both laugh and continue to chat about Kashni’s love for horses, and for her love for her art. She invites me into her room and she shows me some of the paintings that she did at school. Kashni’s trust and openness, and her willingness to share so many areas of her personal life with me in such a short space of time, have impressed me enormously.

Then Erid, fresh from his bath, joins us and he begins talking about the Christmas present that he got from his cousin. Kashni and I realise that he also needs an opportunity to talk, so I walk back into the sitting room with him to talk.

“If they want to know, I will tell them”

Erid walks into the sitting room. Standing in front of me is the most endearing nine-year-old boy, clean and fresh after his evening bath. He begins our conversation by giving me a detailed account of his new DVD, a Christmas present from his cousin. He had earlier bought his cousin exactly the same DVD for his birthday, so for him, this is a point of interest. He then tells me about the history examination that he will shortly be writing, and the new pens he has acquired that will help him to summarise his work.

I am pleasantly surprised at how easily he engages me in conversation. As he talks, it occurs to me that this might be a good moment to begin to direct the conversation towards my focus of research. So I ask, “What is it like being in this family?”

Erid seems eager to tell me. “It’s nice,” he replies, and in answer to my probing about what he means by “nice”, he avoids the central issue by pointing out that it’s pleasant to receive presents at Christmas time. In answer to further questions from me, he adds: “Oh, and I love getting money!”

Erid then shares with me and with Kashni, his fifteen-year-old sister, who is sitting with us, a story of something that had happened at school.

“A friend of mine at school offered me two hundred and fifty rand – for nothing, with no strings attached.” He turns to his sister. “Would you have taken it, Kashni, if you had been in my place?”

Kashni looks uncompromising and shakes her head. “No,” she answers without hesitation.

“Why not?” Erid asks.

“You just don’t,” she says.

Erid tries to undermine her certainty by saying, “But he offered it to me for nothing, with no strings attached!”

I suggest quietly that nothing is ever given for free and likewise never comes without some strings attached.

“Why is that?” asks Erid, refusing to let the point rest.

“Nothing is ever given for nothing,” Kashni agrees, using what I had said to justify her point of view.

But Erid is dissatisfied with such an unsubstantiated opinion, and challenges her again by asking, “Why would you not have taken it?”

Kashni firmly terminates this exchange by stating, “You just don’t.”

Kashni then looks at me and asks, “Would you like to talk to him now?” I sense that she also realises that Erid has things of importance that he could tell me, and I tell her gently, “Thank you, Kashni. Yes. I’ll talk to you again a bit later – if that’s OK.” Kashni nods and leaves the room.

I look into Erid’s large brown eyes and pursue a lead that he gave me at dinner. It involved an incident in which he hit another boy.

“So tell me about that boy you hit. Why did you hit him?”

“He said things about my mom, so I became angry,” Erid says defiantly.

“Did he tease you?”, I ask.

Erid reacts strongly. “No. He didn’t tease me. He said things about my mom.”

“Oh”, I reply. “He said things about your mom.” I reflect his words back to him. “How is that different from teasing you? Or is it the same?”

Erid looks thoughtful. “It’s the same, and it is different,” he replies.

“Okay, that makes sense. It wasn’t about you, but about someone who belongs to you. How many times has this happened?”

“Only a few times in this school, but lots of times in the other school.”

“What do you think would have happened at that other school if you had stayed there?”

“They would have stopped, or else I would have kept on hitting them until they did stop.”

I am angry with myself for having missed a cue to explore the children’s concepts of sameness and difference. It is my anxiety that is causing me to miss opportunities to probe crucial areas. Even though this is my first interview, I am not at all satisfied with the way in which I am handling it. I cast around for something else to ask Erid.

Eventually I say, “Can you remember what you said to this boy?” Then I add, “You don’t have to answer that question if you don’t want to.”

Erid closes that avenue by saying, “I don’t want to say.” I let it rest.

I am beginning to feel that the interview is not going well. Although my questions and remarks are apposite and appropriate, I do not want him to feel that I am putting pressure on him. So instead of pursuing the matter further, I offer him confirmation for his refusal by saying: “It’s quite OK if you don’t want to talk about that.”

I find it interesting that Erid prefers not to elaborate or give me a fuller version of the incident because one of his parents has already done so. But I now realise that that won’t be happening at this time.

After dinner, while Erid was taking his bath, one of his moms, Zané, had told me about the incident. She said: “A few weeks ago a boy in school said to him, ‘Your mother wants to be a man,’ and so he beat the boy up.

“As soon as he got into the car when we picked him up after school, he confessed to us what he had done because he knows that I don’t approve of him doing that kind of thing. But Anriëtte [Erid’s other mom] contradicted what I said by saying that, in her opinion, it is indeed necessary to act in that way under certain circumstances. Erid then told us that he couldn’t have let such a situation pass without doing something. He said that he had to defend his mom’s honour.”

Back in the interview, I pick up Erid’s cue about the differences between the two schools, and I begin once again to probe.

“Why do you think the two schools are so different?”

He looks at me and just says, “I don’t know.”

Inwardly, I warn myself to take it slowly and remind myself that he is only a nine-year-old boy. So, for a while, we continue to chat about this and that. Then another opportunity for probing arises. We happen to be talking about what happens when the children have to move to a new school.

“Let’s say that you have moved to a new school. What would go through your mind if your teacher were to say, ‘Today we are going to talk about our families?’”

Erid looks down and begins to play with his hands. “Um... I have never really thought about it. I would only say that we have moved. I wouldn’t say much.”

“Okay, so you prefer to say less rather than too much in that situation, and then they have to ask you if they want to know more?”

Erid agrees emphatically. “Yes.”

At that point, we are interrupted by friends of Erid and Kashni’s parents who have come to say goodbye.

Later, when we are alone again, I continue with questions about school life.

“Do the teachers – in the first week or so after school has started – ask you what you did during the holidays and other questions about your family?”

“They just ask you what you did during the holidays,” Erid replies.

Although Erid is clearly not exactly delighted with my repeated questions, I need to get a clear picture of how he copes at school, especially since he will soon be entering a new school yet again.

“Once you’ve moved to a new school and everyone gets a chance to stand up in class and tell the class about themselves, would you tell the class that you have two moms?”

Erid answers with great determination: "I would not say that. I would just tell them that we have moved."

I signify my agreement with his statement by nodding. I think to myself that it is almost like a strategy of minimal disclosure, of answering only what is being asked. What incentive does he need for elaborating further? In an attempt to create some basis for consensus, I suggest: "I think you are absolutely right. Of course the other kids would never say, 'Oh, I've got a mom or dad'. It would not be necessary. It wouldn't make sense, would it?"

Erid agrees wholeheartedly. "Ja. They have to find out if they want to know."

These last words of his make a strong impression on me. I sense that secrecy, or at least an avoidance of spontaneous self-revelation is a necessary part of his defences. So I ask, "Do you sometimes feel that you just can't tell?"

Erid looks confused. "Tell?" he asks inquiringly.

"Yes. Tell them that you have two moms. Do you feel that you must keep that a secret?"

Erid answers quite dispassionately. "If they want to know, I will tell them."

I then realise that the actual telling or disclosing is not a vital issue for him, but it is also not information that he will casually tell or share. It makes perfect sense that he will not carry this "interesting" information on his sleeve, and there is certainly no need to do so. I marvel at the insight of this great little man with a big soul.

"But would you not be a bit scared to share this information in a new school? This is something that I am curious about."

Erid answers, "Well, yes and no."

I am now intrigued by the fact that he seems willing to disclose something more than I have hitherto obtained. "Could you explain what you mean by that?" I ask.

"It's like this," he replies. "I don't... I don't talk much. But if I get to know somebody well, then, yes, I will tell them."

"Thank you for answering that," I say encouragingly. What he has just said does not confirm my previous conclusion that someone has to ask him specific questions before he will give specific information. I now see that he is willing to share voluntarily. I therefore ask him, "With whom would you be willing to share more information?"

Erid looks up. He seems slightly irritated. "I don't understand what you mean."

So I elaborate. "Would you share this information with really close friends?" I ask.

"No, I wouldn't say anything."

I continue to probe and hope that he does not feel that I am nagging him – although it is already feeling to me as though I am more or less extracting information from him.

"Do your friends sometimes ask you questions? I mean when you first get to know them?"

Erid delivers his most powerful answer yet. "That is why they are my friends. They don't ask me questions."

I cannot help but laugh, and it seems to break the ice somewhat. It seems as though he has directed this answer straight to me. I answer by nodding my head in amusement and saying, "OK. I won't ask you any more stupid personal questions."

Erid smiles back at me. Once again I get the impression that he simply cannot see what all the fuss is about. As far as he is concerned, he has two mothers and that is that. For him there is no need to share this rather insignificant piece of information about his life with every person he meets. If they ask him, he will tell them, but he will only give them the information they want – nothing more. This is exactly what he has been doing with me up to now. I see that my closed questions are certainly not helping to elicit much information from him.

"What do you think would happen if you have a close friend whom you have not told, and he comes to visit you? Do you think that having two moms would suddenly become a problem? Or would you tell him before he came to your house?"

Again Erid answers me firmly. "No."

"What about the friends you have now? If they come to your house to sleep over, would they say something like, 'Oh, this is, like, weird...'"

"They're my friends. They don't mind. They love playing here because our place is so big."

I decide to delve more deeply into his attitudes and decide to ask him how he would handle it if one of his friends turned out to be gay.

"If one of your friends realises that he is gay, how would you feel about that?"

"It would be fine."

"Hmm. But let's say that he has a problem with being gay. Or perhaps he doesn't want to be gay, or else he struggles with being gay. What advice would you give him? How do you think you would be able to support him?"

“I would just let him know that I am there for him because it’s okay,” he answers simply.

I suddenly feel tremendously excited by and appreciative of Erid’s gentle acceptance of an aspect of human nature that he clearly does not regard as a problem – even if others might.

“What advice,” I ask Erid, “would you give to other kids of your age who have two moms or two dads?”

“Advice?” he asks quizzically. “I would tell them just to be normal kids.” He is obviously surprised by my question about “giving advice”. But his answer clearly demonstrates yet again that he regards being gay as nothing out of the ordinary. His attitudes also serve to emphasise what his mom, Zané, told me about him being a “no-fuss guy”. “He just flows,” she had told me.

In spite of this, the critical social constructionist side of me immediately realises that Erid’s answers conceal an underlying assumption of, or at least an awareness of, the dichotomy of normality-abnormality, even if he never consciously thinks much about it. The humanist side of me analyses the situation at its face value. I see that he waits for his class mates to ask him directly before he discloses (minimal) information to them about his same-gender parents. But with his personal friends, he seems to be easy and natural. I hypothesise that as a sense of trust develops between them, a space opens up for him to disclose as and when he needs to.

I continue by asking him about other possible scenarios in which he might find himself. “Okay, if someone asks about your family... If they ask you how many brothers and sisters you have...”.

Erid quickly cuts me off. “I just tell them,” he answers in his characteristically straightforward way.

“People usually ask questions,” I continue, “like, ‘What does your mom do? What does your dad do?’ How do you answer those questions?”

“I just say ‘I don’t know.’ “

I wonder if such an answer would satisfy a curious child, so I elaborate on my previous question. “Okay. So you start off by saying that you don’t have a dad.”

“That’s what I used to say,” he replies. “But then they say, ‘But how’s it possible that you don’t have a dad?’ Then I say, ‘I’m adopted by two mummies.’ “

Although I am filled with admiration for his simplicity and directness, I focus narrowly on his words, “That’s what I used to say”, which raises a number of new questions in my mind. I wonder whether his original responses to other children

(“what I used to say”) elicited teasing from the other children or gave rise to further inappropriate or uncomfortable questions?

And so I ask, “Do some children ask more questions or give comments – like ‘How does it work?’ or ‘That’s impossible?’ “

Erid answers: “Yes. I don’t always answer questions like that. But sometimes they do ask me, and I just say to them, ‘I don’t feel like telling you now.’“

I am filled with admiration for how well Erid manages to navigate his way around people’s curiosity, even mine, with a few direct, honest and open answers, and with how he gives just enough information that contains no unnecessary detail.

I am also curious about the adoption and how it affected him.

“Okay. Do children sometimes ask you questions about your adoption, and about where you were before you were adopted?”

Erid nods. “Yes.”

“Does that sometimes bring up hurtful memories?”

“Yes, sometimes. But it’s OK. I just don’t tell them.” While Erid begins to play with his Tazzos,¹ I wonder how all of this affected him and how the children with whom he interacted reacted to his information about his adoption and him having two mommies. Is it the content of the disclosure or is it the way in which I am prying into his “private affairs” that dictates the way in which he answers questions? Perhaps he is just irritated by all the questions, most of which must seem ridiculous to him. I remember what his mom, Zané, observed about him: that he is carefree and his motto could be “Just be who you are.”

I continue by asking about the reactions of other children.

“How do other kids react when you tell them about your two mommies?”

Erid answers: “Most people act normally. Some are nice. Others are not. They are the bad ones.”

I remained focused on his answer. “What do they do?” I ask.

“They tease you – like that other one boy did – and so I hit him,” Erid replies with a flash of anger. He is recalling the incident about the boy who made derogatory remarks about his mother, and I realise that this is the only time when he reacted violently.

“Do you think it will get worse as you get older? I mean the teasing. From those bad kids that you just mentioned?”

Erid responds in a much calmer voice. “It gets better,” he says quietly, and then remains silent.

“Okay, I see. Why do you think that it will get better?”

“I don’t know. Maybe they will get more sense. Maybe they will not be so stupid when they get older.” Then Erid proceeds to show me how to play Tazzos, and we begin to talk about other more general issues. I decide to leave it at that for this session.

Later on, while I am talking to both parents in the kitchen, mom Anriëtte remarks that it would be unrealistic to imagine that their children would not be teased at one stage or the other.

“I know that it is a big irony, but because we decided to be open, we also opened up ourselves to be discriminated against. One still encounters a stigma in society, and that is where the problem lies. Think about that incident at school. That ten-year-old boy must have heard something negative about gays and lesbians somewhere. Perhaps from his own parents or from some other adult. Okay, it also depends on the context. You find healthy and unhealthy families... Obviously people in positions of leadership in their community won’t say anything stereotypical, hateful or discriminatory because they know that it’s not acceptable or tolerated in terms of official policy. But the ‘ordinary’ man-in-the-street does not normally have to be careful about what he says in private.”

As I leave them later that evening, Erid gives me a big hug. I sense that he is growing up in a very special and safe home where he and his sister are surrounded by love, acceptance and wisdom, and that these two mothers are raising exceptional children who will make a big difference in the future.

¹ Game played with plastic and metal discs.

“We don’t talk about our parents”

I am seeing Luanne again today. As I drive to her house, I recall the many conversations we have had thus far, about the varied topics that interest her. In past sessions, we have discussed yoga, music of various kinds, thrillers (films), netball, subject choices, teachers, Christmas presents and cards, calligraphy, how one writes in Chinese, school grades, and many more besides. Apart from one occasion, she has always been in a good mood, cheerful and excited about what life has to offer when I have met her. When I met her family for the first time, she was especially happy. I remember how she enthusiastically jumped up and fetched her photograph album and immediately began to share a lot of her childhood memories with me.

I clearly remember our first formal contact session. We sat on couches opposite each other in their sitting room. I began with a few questions in the hope that the direction in which she wanted to take the conversation would soon become apparent. This then is how this session developed.

“So, then, what do you call your two mothers, Luanne? ‘Mom and Hannah’? Or what?”

“Yes,” Luanne answers politely. “Mother and Hannah. The children that live around here also say, ‘Where are your two moms?’ ”

Pleased by the fact that Luanne has immediately focused on the people who live in their neighbourhood, I ask, “It sounds as if the people around here are quite happy with you having two mothers?”

“Oh yes,” Luanne agrees. She then lapses back into her polite, alert but expectant silence.

I am rather taken aback by her response – more by the tone of her voice than by her answer. It was as though her “Yes” expressed an unspoken observation that my question might be rather naïve and obvious. But I have become accustomed to being thought to be somewhat naïve (although never in an unkind way) by my youthful respondents. They certainly do live in a world that is very unlike the world of the past. But they do it, on the whole, with panache, style and courage.

But I remain focused on my researcher's quest because I hope to be able to elicit from Luanne some examples of discrimination, difference or otherness, if indeed they have occurred. So I ask: "Do the kids around here sometimes talk about your two moms? Or perhaps ask you any searching questions?"

"No, never," Luanne replies brightly.

I find Luanne's response slightly incredible, and so I say, "Really? Nothing at all? Not even any spontaneous comments?"

Luanne seemed slightly bemused. "Hmm. Sometimes they might say, 'Where are your two moms?' or something like that. But, no. They don't actually talk about my two moms." She begins to digress by telling me about a little girl who lives nearby who has the same surname that they have, and then digresses further into observations about different surnames. She then tells me about her science teacher at school, and about all the interesting questions that the class ask him regarding religion and the creation of the universe.

As the intensity of her talk slowly begins to diminish, I ask myself various internal questions about my own subjectivity. Am I perhaps moving too fast with questions that probe too personally before I have given Luanne time to trust me and the process that we are both involved in? I wonder why this might be happening. I then remind myself that the two children whom I interviewed before meeting Luanne had both immediately shared their negative and positive experiences with me. I suppose that I was half expecting that Luanne would also immediately share her range of diverse experiences as well. But perhaps she is comfortable with having same-gender parents. Perhaps it is just adults who struggle to accept the concept of same-gender parents – two mothers or two fathers as parents. I decide that I will not probe too deeply at first, but that I will first allow a stronger relationship of trust to develop. So I remain focused on her in a friendly and sympathetic way and allow her to take the conversation in whichever direction she wishes to take it.

I realise now that in my subsequent interviews with Luanne, I pursued this aim of allowing her to set the pace – in topics as well as in activities. In our second interview, we made collages together and drew time lines of our lives. She told me a range of interesting childhood stories such as of the time when she broke her arm. She explained what they were planning for their forthcoming Christmas holiday. We talked about her dad who lives in London and about her two stepsisters. I smile as I

remember how she accurately mimicked a certain kind of British accent. In fact, we had a lot of fun. Even though young, she has been great company.

We laughed while we ate ice cream and sucked sweets. She told me that she was the head girl in her primary school, and that she belonged to a small group of about five special friends, all girls, who have been friends since before they even went to primary school. I remember that I felt that in our second interview, we discussed everything except what my study was about. Then, in our third interview, I asked her about her friends, and we fortuitously ranged over other topics and issues as well. Here is what happened in that interview (related in the present tense).

We are sitting outside, and I ask Luanne: “Please tell me something about your nursery school or primary school days. Did the children ever say anything unkind to you about your mothers? Were they perhaps curious? Did they ask you questions of any kind?”

Luanne answers firmly. “No, the children just carried on as usual. And it wouldn’t have bothered me if they did.”

“But do you think that it might bother them?”

“Who? My friends? No, one of my friend’s mom is also gay. But her partner died recently, and they had anyway been separated for a long time. Now, she and her mom live alone together. So, you see, I’m not the only one.”

She smiles.

“Hmm.” I nod in agreement. “This kind of arrangement is becoming more and more common.” I am hoping that my casual acceptance of the “situation” will help her to relax so that she might eventually get into a frame of mind in which she might be willing to share more. I still don’t know whether or not she completely trusts me. I am heartened however to hear that she is aware that there are other families with gay parents as well. This knowledge must provide her with some sense of belonging.

Luanne seems willing to elaborate. “No, we don’t actually talk about it. Well, we don’t talk about that. No one talks about their moms and dads at school. We talk

about things like *Sewende Laan*², music, boys, and new movies. My friends are used to the set-up.”

“Okay”, I think to myself, “perhaps I have found a case study where everything is going smoothly and where there are no problems at all – as others who know about my research have predicted I would. But I wonder about Luanne’s short, even slightly abrupt, answers when I ask her about her same-gender parents. This is in such striking contrast to her extensive elaboration on just about every other topic we touch upon. This seems to me to indicate the existence of a fairly strong defence mechanism. Or perhaps she is truly just being herself and getting on with her daily life, and quite naturally finds the topic of “parents” (of whatever kind) rather boring. Perhaps I should give her the benefit of the doubt. She is, after all, only a teenager, and it is natural for teenagers to be more interested in their friends and their own activities rather than the ramifications of their parents’ relationships – or how they impinge on their life.

“Okay, Luanne. You have already mentioned to me that you were the head girl of your school. How are things at school now? Is it something that has to be discussed? What about school functions or meetings?” I recall her parents saying that they had approached the principal of the primary school and had asked him whether their sexual orientation as co-parents would be a problem for the school, and he had firmly said “No.” It seems that both parents and Luanne had experienced the primary school as an affirming place – and a good choice from every point of view. But I am wondering if the same pleasant atmosphere has been transferred to Luanne’s high school.

“Hannah sometimes goes to school functions,” says Luanne, “and on parents’ evening, they go together as my two moms.”

“So?” I ask, urging her to say more. “Do they make any comments or have any questions afterwards?”

“I don’t go to these events with them. But no, they don’t.”

I probe further. “How would it be if anyone asked you about your two moms?”

“Well, the teachers all know. I don’t know how they know. But the principal’s wife was my netball teacher in primary school. So I guess...”.

Luanne remains silent for a moment, and then adds in a quiet voice: “But it is actually wrong to be gay. The Bible says so.”

² One could translate this as “Seventh Avenue”. Luanne is referring to a popular South African local television soap opera.

I remain silent, allowing the importance of what she has just disclosed to register and be appreciated. Of course, I would never dream of engaging in a religious debate with her. I just want her to have a space to share – if that is what she wants to do. My challenge, as I see it, is to provide her with a safe and containing space in which she can freely share her thoughts and emotions – if she wants to.

Luanne continues, unaware of my private thoughts. “I think it’s in Romans, chapter 1. A teacher once told us that if you ever do ‘it’, even once, the Lord will never forgive you because He did not create women for women or men for men. He made man and woman so that they could be together. That’s why it is supposed to be a very big sin.

“I actually find that very confusing,” she continues, “because – what if two people really love each other? Look at this new law that parliament has passed, it makes it legal for gay people to marry. And if one takes into account what the church said the other day. Sometimes I just don’t understand what’s going on.”

I wonder how Luanne must have felt in that classroom when that teacher expounded his personal, radically fundamentalist understanding of what the Bible means, perhaps (or perhaps not?) unaware that there was a child (perhaps more than one child) who might be deeply upset and alienated by his dogmatic expression of opinion.

I therefore respond sympathetically and carefully by saying, “It must have upset you quite a lot when he said that about gay people.”

Her reply is nonchalant, but I can feel a twinge of her pain. “Oh no. But it was quite a shock.”

Of course, I agree with her. I can just imagine what might have been going through her mind and heart at that moment, because she had already told me that the staff of the school probably all know about her same-gender parents. In any event, I am stunned by the insensitivity of the teacher’s remarks, especially in a country like South Africa which has become a world leader in pioneering gay rights in the Bill of Rights and legislation.

“Well, Luanne, I can barely imagine what must have been going through your mind that day. I would have been very upset. I mean, some of the children there might have been influenced by what he said. But, for you, I think that this is a very personal issue.”

Luanne nods her head in agreement, and whispers “Yes.”

“And you had to go back home after school that day, look at your mom, and perhaps think, ‘I wonder if she knows that? If she does, I wonder what she thinks about that?’ Did you tell her what happened?”

“No, I didn’t actually.” Luanne is beginning to sound slightly defensive, and perhaps even a bit tired.

“It certainly would have been upsetting for me,” I add. “I am trying to think how I would have felt if I had been in your shoes.”

Luanne just shrugs, and says flatly, “Well, what can you do? I just get on with my life.”

I wonder how she accommodates the Christian view to her personal circumstances, and ask, “I don’t know if you think about this, Luanne, but when a person realises that they are gay, and they are also a Christian, they can get caught in a terrible struggle because of what they think the Bible says and because of the negative way in which some ministers talk about being gay.

“What I wonder is whether the children of gay parents sometimes feel the same pain that their parents feel – even though they are not gay themselves. I wonder if the children of gay parents ever wonder if society will accept them – because of what people think the Bible says, and so on. What are your opinions about this, Luanne?”

Luanne frowns, looks thoughtful, and then answers slowly. “I must say that I don’t really know a lot of people who aren’t Christians. But my parents are. They believe in God. Hmm. I really don’t think about that a lot, to be honest. On that one occasion when that teacher said what he said, I did think about it quite a lot. But then I thought about it less and less, and now, I don’t think about it at all.”

In the week that follows this interview, I constantly turn over in my mind what Luanne has so generously told me. I battle to find the “right way” to approach her – if such a thing as a “right way” exists. I question whether I have handled the situation appropriately by not appraising her of the opposing gay-friendly and gay-justifying views in that particular religious debate. I realise that she is also negotiating with the outside world from the point of view of her own private interior world, and that this process not only takes place from the inside to the outside. It is always a two-way process. We also construct our particular meanings, identities

and solutions from what gets said and done “out there”. What sometimes gets said “out there” does not necessarily reach the inner sanctum of the family.

I cannot banish the thought that even if Luanne manages to forget about this ugly and unfortunate incident altogether, it could nevertheless remain in her subconscious and therefore negatively affect the way that she will relate to her mother for the rest of her life. What I can see however is that she has adopted an efficient strategy to manage the situation – at least for the present. To forget about it and not to dwell on this perennially virulent debate between religious fundamentalists and those who subscribe to a more compassionate view of how gay people might be accommodated in their spiritual beliefs, is essentially a practical approach to a problem that will not easily go away.

I am encouraged by the fact that Luanne seems to be able to distance herself from negative comments. I also sense that she can see and is aware of her parents’ happiness. In previous interviews, she mentioned many of the positive elements in her relationship with her parents. So I have come to realise that – on a certain level, at least – she successfully manages not to let cruel religious opinions about gayness to overwhelm her confidence in herself and her parents. This ability enables her to manage and continue with her ordinary day-to-day life. In our first meeting, she said: “My moms always tease me by saying, ‘Love will be enough for Christmas!’ But then they always spoil me so much. I don’t think they always realise how much I appreciate it.”

At one stage, I specifically ask Luanne: “What do you like about having two mothers?”

Luanne laughed rather self-consciously when I asked this question. Then she said: “I like it because a mother is always protective, and because of that, I can see that it is not always easy for them to say “yes”. We are also so close. I think that the times I enjoy most are when we go out and have picnics together, and do fun things like that.

“Of course, it’s easier, I suppose, to get past them than it would be to get past a father – except that Hannah always asks me why I want to do something before she will say “Okay”. I can see that that is a good thing. The truth always gets out anyway in the long run. Sometimes I feel that they are handling some matter unfairly. Yes, they are both strict with me. But I can see that they are like that because they want to protect me and because they love me.”

Today will be our last session before I return for member checking. I view this session as a formality in which I will establish some closure and just spend some time with her. Some weeks have passed since I last saw Luanne. In the first few weeks, I interviewed her every week so that we would both have opportunities to establish trust and rapport. But I know that she has been busy with her netball trials and various matches, and with examinations as well. I am almost at their house, and I review in my mind our conversation of the previous session so that I will be prepared to pick up the connections. I had used that session to probe her about her friends and her relationships with her peers at school for the last time, as I sensed her frustration with my repeated probes regarding this theme. Today I brought a video with me and I am merely aiming to informally spend some time with her. I began our previous session together by saying:

“We are nearing the end of our process together, Luanne. I have been going through the notes that I made during our sessions and everything that we discussed.

“What I am still wondering about is how you manage to cope so well with having two lesbian mothers. Most of the other young people I have interviewed have described incidents such as people asking questions...”

Luanne interrupts me by saying, “When we meet someone that we don’t know and whose attitudes are unknown to us, we just say that Hannah is my aunt, so no one actually knows.”

“Is that right?” I reply. “That sounds to me like a decision that you all made together, like an ‘unwritten rule’ – although I don’t want to use the word ‘rule’.”

“Yes, it is,” says Luanne.

I ask whether any discussions ever take place at school about the different kinds of families that one finds in modern life, and whether the children talk about that independently of what is discussed in the classroom.

“Children don’t tease each other any more about their parents being divorced – because just about everybody comes from a divorced family,” Luanne replies in a matter-of-fact way.

I realise that Luanne also comes from a divorced family, and I wonder if she reveals her own family identity at school.

But Luanne says very firmly: “But I am not going to say that my mother has a girlfriend. I just keep quiet.”

In my researcher’s role as “devil’s advocate”, I ask: “What then do you say if someone asks you who Hannah is? Would you say that she’s your aunt, or a friend of your mom’s, or what?”

“I would just tell them that she is my aunt because I never know whether they will reject me or not because of that, or perhaps become judgemental or unpleasant. It is not necessary for everyone to know these details. But if they ask me directly, I will tell them.”

The clarity of Luanne’s reply provides an excellent answer to my desire to know how she handles meeting new people and whether her having two mothers would become an issue on such occasions. In order merely to confirm what I have learned, I ask her about how she would handle her new boyfriend in the same situation. “What – if anything – would you tell him about your moms being together as a couple?”

Luanne laughs. “I didn’t think that he even realised at first. But when he spent the night at our house, I think that he probably did realise it.”

It seems therefore that Luanne and her same-gender parents live with a comfortable degree of openness and acceptance, although they are wisely cautious when they come into contact with strangers whose attitudes are unknown to them. The acceptance, love and relative openness in this family seem to indicate to me that gay families are perhaps finally becoming more settled in themselves and in the communities in which they live.

Another possibility is that families with what would once have been regarded as families with atypical structures (single parents, same-gender parents, grandparent(s) acting as parents, and so on) are now so common as not to attract notice or attention – except perhaps from religious bigots and others with hostile agendas of their own.

Because Luanne and nearly all modern children grow up in families that would have been regarded as highly “irregular” a hundred or even fifty years ago, perhaps it is thus the case that Luanne and her friends no longer consciously think about family structures anymore, and that they just carry on with their lives and regard themselves as normal.

I arrive at the gate and park my car in the driveway. I am looking forward – as I always do – to this session because Luanne never fails to make me feel most welcome. It is certainly pleasant to be back once again in their now familiar surroundings. I remember during my first conversation with Hannah, Hannah mentioned that the parents of one friend had forbidden their daughter to visit their house for sleepovers. But, interestingly, since they have both been in high school, those same parents now allow their daughter to visit the house again – but only if their daughters are busy with school-related assignments. I wonder whether Luanne will be willing to share something about this experience with me, or whether she has forgotten about it.

In any case, I have brought a video with me that shows a selection of American children talking about their gay mothers and their experiences, and we watch it together. When the videotape reaches its end, Luanne turns around to me and says, “Carie, last time we talked about me how I tell people that Hannah is my aunt. Do you know what happened this week? Well, there is this little girl who lives nearby us. She went and said to her mother that she also wants two mothers like me, and she asked Hannah, ‘Are you Luanne’s second mom? Or her other mom?’ “ But Hannah said, ‘No, I am Luanne’s aunt’. But the little girl refused to believe her, and she insisted, ‘No! You are Luanne’s other mommy’ until Hannah eventually had to say, ‘Okay, okay, I am her other mom.’ Then this little kid said, ‘Oh, that’s so cool!’” Both Luanne and I laugh appreciatively.

I suddenly become aware of the considerable impact that our conversations are having on Luanne’s thinking. In a previous session she had merely mentioned that she tells people that Hannah is her aunt – when there seems to be no reason for more accurate disclosure. But now she has progressed to a point where she is able to reflect on how Hannah herself handles similar situations. I feel a bit concerned.

As if reading my thoughts, Luanne says: “But she easily says at work that I am her child, and there might be other times when she might say that she is my mom. Everyone that knows us, knows.”

“I am wondering,” I ask Luanne, “how you guys decide when to say that Hannah is not your mom but your aunt. When would you all do that? And what would influence your decision? Is it because of the pressures of society? Or is it just more convenient to say that Hannah is your aunt rather than your mother?”

Luanne answers with what seems to be a slight flash of irritation and/or defiance. “We just don’t want to advertise that my parents are gay. We all just want

to get on with our everyday lives, and we hardly ever bring up questions like this when we are alone. In the case of this girl, I guess Hannah said “aunt” out of respect for her age. She’s so young! Not everyone is open and okay with this kind of situation. She might think it’s ‘so cool’. But how can we know what her parents will say?”

I ponder the good sense inherent in her reply as I wrap up our conversation. I wish her good luck with her studies and with the remainder of the week’s activities. I conclude that Luanne is happy and contented with her situation. She is surrounded by friends whom she has grown up with and by teachers who know her situation, and she has no need to constantly explain or protect herself or to process other people’s discomfort, prejudice or scruples. Luanne’s face radiates happiness as she waves goodbye to me as I drive off.

“It doesn’t bother me...”

Penny:

Start at the beginning.

Susan:

No! That’s too far back.

Penny:

*Well, then, what about the first time
we met?*

Susan:

*This session is supposed to be about
Carl, remember?*

Carl:

When you had that “afro” hairstyle!

Penny:

*Carl, don’t you start! [She smiles at
him and then begins her story.] We
had real problems in the beginning
and they caused big fights. If Carl
wanted to do something and Susan
had said “No”, he would come and
ask me and I would say “Yes”.
As time went by, the situation
improved. But in the beginning! It
really used to make me very angry
indeed. I used to feel that Carl is my
child – and I felt that no one – not
even Susan – had a right to interfere
with the way in which I brought up
my own child. So obviously I resented
Susan for that. In one way and
another, we have all walked a long,
hard road together.*

Susan:

Straight people should understand that our relationship is just like any other relationship. We have all had our difficult times, but they have brought us all closer together, and God was with us during all those times.

It was fifteen years ago that I first prayed for something to happen, and my prayers were answered. I didn't want a husband, you see, but I did want children – although I didn't want to bring them into the world myself.

So, one night, as I was sitting in the bath, I prayed to God. I asked Him, "Please send me either a man, or a woman with a child." And Penny walked in the next week!

But she quickly made me understand that Carl was her child. She used to say things like, "Leave the child alone. He's my child!" So I told her, "I don't want to take him from you, Penny. I just want to have a part in his upbringing."

Penny:

We really endured some hard times together. But things have got better in a way that we could never have imagined.

Susan:

Now we are one, happy family. Of course we are not immune to pain, sadness and difficulties. But I would say that – as a family and as individuals – we are very stable. I personally think that Penny and I have brought Carl up very well. Certainly, to the best of our ability. Penny and I, for example, would never dream of holding each other affectionately in public places such as his school or shopping centres. We understand boundaries and the limits of public toleration. We've certainly never embarrassed Carl. And we're now talking about over ten years – since Carl was in primary school. We would also never hold hands if we were walking down a road, and we never get involved in confrontations. No, there is never anything like that, and our families appreciate that. For example, my brother and his wife privately thanked us for not holding one another affectionately, especially in front of their grandchildren, although they totally support our relationship.

Penny:

I agree. We are very careful in front of other people, especially when Carl's friends come to visit. Sometimes we might slip up and call each other something like "my angel" or some

other term of endearment. But we are constantly vigilant about the ways in which we interact, and about the possible consequences of our behaviour in places where it might cause offence to others.

Susan:

Sometimes we do slip up.

Penny:

But we try not to give anyone any reason to tease Carl.

Carien:

Carl, would it bother you if one of your mothers were to say “my angel” to the other in the presence of your friends?

Carl:

Of course not, it would never bother me. But it might bother them.

Carien:

Carl, what would happen if Penny and Susan decided to “come out” about their sexual orientation – and show it publicly in their behaviour? Like in front of the

*pupils at your
school?*

Carl:

*They would never do that! They keep
to the rules. Of course, here at home,
as far as I am concerned, they can do
whatever they want.*

Penny:

*Don't worry, Carl, we would never do
anything like that.*

Susan:

*It's all about
respect really.*

Penny:

*In fact, Carl himself was the one who
came out about our relationship. It
happened at his high school!*

Susan:

*We were both completely astounded
when he got into the car one day and
said, "Okay! Now everybody knows."
So, of course, we both shrieked,
"Knows what?"
And he replied, "Knows that you are
gay!"
[Everyone smiles.] Can you believe it?*

Carien:

*Please tell me the
story.*

Carl:

*It happened last year, at our inauguration as school
prefects for the new year. Susan was standing quietly
there near the door because she didn't want to be part of
the group photograph. Penny, my birth mother, was
already standing in the group for the photograph. So I*

called over to Susan, and said, "Come on, Susan!" So she came over.

After the photos had been taken, a few of us were standing around in a group. Then one of the guys (they were not exactly afraid, but you could see the apprehension in their eyes), asked me "Do you have two mothers, Carl? Or is the one lady your mother and the other lady your step-mother?" Something like that. I can't really remember their exact words now.

So I said, "No, Penny is my mother, and Susan is my dad."

When they had recovered from that shock, they said, "But she's a woman!"

And so I said, "So?"

After that, they never again asked me any other questions about my parents. You see, they don't think it's any big deal. And they still come to our house for sleepovers and so on. My mothers behave, you see. [We all laugh.]

Carien:

Have you always been allowed to have friends sleep over at the house?

Carl:

Yes. I suppose they must have had questions that they wanted to ask me. But they never asked! Except this one friend who asked a few questions. They obviously all know the set-up by now, but they don't ask me. They are too scared!

But, I mean, it's must be totally.

obvious to anyone who knows us well enough because my moms sleep together.

But if they want to know, they must ask me the questions – if they have any – and then I will answer them. Why should I lie to them? If someone doesn't want to accept me because my parents are gay, then that's okay. I've got lots of friends. I don't need people like that.

Carl:

My parents were away for the weekend, and I was alone at home with him. I think he had his suspicions about the situation. But he said nothing to me about them. Then a friend of my mom's came over, and she introduced herself to him by saying, "Hi, I'm Estelle, and I'm a lesbian."

He didn't respond to the way in which she described herself. But when she had left, I said to him: "So, ask now what you want to know?" He replied that he had obviously suspected it, but that he had been too scared to ask me. But now he knows.

Carien:

Tell me about your friend?

Carien:

So how did you feel after that experience? Did you feel the

same? Or better?

Or a bit weird?

Carl:

I didn't feel any different. They obviously all have their suspicions.

Penny:

And then sometimes I slip up – and call Susan “my angel” in front of visitors.

Carl:

And my friends have seen that there is only one double bed in that room.

Susan:

Yes, and they know that Penny and I sleep in one bedroom – and that we share the house.

Carl:

Oh, and my ex-girlfriend also knew.

Carien:

Did you tell her?

Carl:

Yes. We were lying on the bed chatting, and I told her that I wanted to share my biggest secret with her. Then I told her, and all she said was, “Oh.”

Susan:

She also said, “Well, as long as they don't interfere with me.”

Carl:

Oh, yes. She also said that. But she didn't have a problem with it. I also have a friend who lives near here. Her parents are also gay. They recently broke up, but I've heard that

they're back together again. We used to visit each other quite a lot. But her new boyfriend doesn't like me, so I don't go around there anymore.

But one day I asked her: "Are your mothers gay?" and she replied "Yes." Then she asked me whether my parents were gay, and I said "Yes." This created a strong bond between us and we were able to go to the gay church together with our parents. They gave her an excellent upbringing – just as my parents gave me. Her birthday falls in the week after mine, and we share the same interests. Her friends also accept it. I suppose that some of her friends might have gossiped about it, although I don't know all of her friends.

Carien:

I think that everyone accepts it in the end. If there's a problem, it's usually just in the beginning because some people are uncertain about how to react. And then they say nothing and leave it.

Carl:

I agree. Most of my friends never even raise the question. If any of them have a problem with my mothers' orientation, then it is their problem. Not mine.

Penny:

But none of his friends have changed at all. They remain as friendly and relaxed as they ever were. They certainly haven't written him off because of us. They still visit us a lot.

Carl:

If anything, they visit us even more now because no one here hassles them – as many of their parents do.

Penny:

If anyone acts in a way that we don't like, we will just kick them out. [We all laugh.]

Susan:

Yes, Carl's friends are great! They always greet us both most respectfully – including, of course, the ones who know our set-up.

Carl:

Oh, I need to tell you. Tiaan has found out that you are partners.

Susan:

What? How?

Carien:

Tell us what happened, Carl.

Carl:

We were here one day and Tiaan asked me whether my moms were still attending that church, because they attended the same church for a while, and I said, "No, they are going to a gay church now." He looked at me in amazement, and said, "To a gay church?" So I said "Didn't you know that my moms were gay?"

And he said, "Oh, don't talk nonsense!" And he kept on denying that it was possible until I went and got some family photographs to show him.

Susan:

One would think that Tiaan would have realised long ago that Penny and I are in a relationship.

Carl:

Yes. Even I was quite surprised by his reaction. But, in the end, he just said, "Okay", and that was that.

Carien:

Do you feel that you should "come out" to other people about your mothers' relationship, Carl?

Carl:

I only tell people that I can trust. I'm certainly not going to shout about it from the rooftops. But I'll tell my friends.

Carien:

Do you feel that you must tell them, Carl? Or do you leave it unsaid because it does not have to be said?

Carl:

*No, I don't feel compelled to tell them.
And, no, it doesn't bother me
anymore. Not much, anyway. No, in
fact, it doesn't bother me at all.*

Carien:

*It sounds to me
as though it
might have
bothered you at
some stage?*

Penny:

*Yes, I was also going to bring that
up...*

Carl:

*Yes. When I was young, I was afraid
of confrontations.*

Carien:

*I see. How old
were you at that
stage, Carl?*

Carl:

*Hmm. Let me see. That was in
primary school. In Grade 3. But in
Grades 4 and 5, I began to outgrow
the other kids and became the tallest
in the class. So they began to be a bit
afraid of me, and they would back off.*

Susan:

*But you were
never teased
about us, were
you, Carl?*

Carl:

*No. Except once. In Grade 1. But I
can't remember the details.*

Penny:

But I don't think that they were teasing you about us.

Carien:

Could you tell me about that?

Penny:

Yes, the kids teased him because they said that he didn't have a dad. I mean, Grade 1 kids don't even know what "gay" means. But they were giving him a hard time. So Susan and I went to the school and sorted things out. We explained the circumstances and from then on things were much better.

Carien:

How did you both find out that Carl was having problems at school?

Susan:

Didn't he cry that day?

Penny:

Yes, he seemed very sad that afternoon when he came home from school. He went to the bathroom to take his bath. When I asked him what the matter was, he started to cry. He was still very young at that stage. So I sat on the toilet seat next to the bath and began to talk to him very gently. Then he began to cry most bitterly, and said that the kids at school were teasing him. So I asked him, "What do they say to you?" And he replied, "They say that I don't have a father."

So then I said to him: “You might not have a dad, but you are very lucky because you have two mothers.”

Then Susan and I went to visit his teacher. She was very nice and accommodating. I explained the circumstances and told her that Carl does have a father, but that we were divorced. And that, under the circumstances, the kids should please not tease him because it could have a negative impact on his life.

She must have told them to lay off because, after that, he never once again came home looking sad – from that day to this.

A lot of people said that he would never make it, but look at him now. He has done well academically. He has been selected as a prefect. He has been awarded provincial colours for cricket. So he has showed everyone that he can do it.

Susan:

*And, in addition,
he is straight!*

Penny:

Yes, please, for heaven’s sake, he is straight. You know, so many people think that if two gay parents raise a child, the child will turn out to be gay.

Carl:

Actually, I am a lesbian. So who said that I wouldn’t make it? [All laugh.]

Penny:

Just after Susan and I had got together, someone close to me said that my child would be a disaster – just because I am a lesbian. So I said to him, “Susan and I together are going to bring this child up in a proper manner. So, if you have a problem with me being gay, please don’t make your problem mine.” But, yes, Grade 1 was quite an experience for all of us. I was rather nervous at first, to be honest.

Susan:

Carl used to refer to me as his “step-father”. I said to Penny that we had better put a stop to it because it could create problems.

When I used to pick him up in the afternoons after school, he would come running up to me and shout, “Hi, step-father!” I used to try to duck behind the steering wheel...

Now that he’s in high school, he’s taken to calling me “Dad”. Not often. But...

Carl:

Only at home, and in front of friends.

Susan:

Of course he would never say that in front of the extended family. But only when we’re at home. Or at the gay church. Then he calls me “Dad”. But now, I enjoy it.

Carl:

We’re close, you see. Susan is like my “male” figure, if you want to call it that. She and I go fishing together. When Penny’s dad was alive, he used to show me things and teach me stuff, like mechanical things. He had his own workshop and company.

Susan:

My dad was a real gentleman. If I wanted to drill a hole in a wall, I would ask him to show me how, but he would never let me do it.

Carl:

My uncle also teaches me. During my holidays, I go and work for him. I am going to make a success of my life. I want to show the world that I can do anything. I will be the first of the nephews that finishes the final year of school.

Susan:

And he's doing so well!

Penny:

Last year Carl got a bit of a fright.

Carien:

What happened?

Carl:

I had begun to fall behind with my school work because I wasn't working hard enough. And my marks reflected this. So of course I started to worry. I tried to talk to my mom, but it just started a fight. So I said to her, "Okay then. Just leave it."

Penny:

Carl can open up to Susan about anything. But he can't do that with me. I guess we are too close in many ways. So he doesn't share his stuff with me. He shares it all with Susan. But I really appreciate it – the fact that he has someone in the family to share it with.

Carl:

My mom's too, how can I say...?

Carien:

*Too close,
perhaps? Too
emotionally
involved?*

Susan:

I think that because Penny and I are so different, we have different ways of handling problems. Fortunately, Carl and I tend to share the same opinions about most things. He seems somehow to have internalised my character. For example, I have an ability to listen more calmly. Penny gets worked up very quickly, and once that happens, they can no longer talk calmly and rationally.

When I hear her voice getting more and more shrill, I just know that she is becoming more and more emotionally entangled. But I just remain calm and listen.

Carl:

Anyway, I phoned Susan and told her that I needed to talk to her. And she immediately said, "Come." So I took the bus and went to her office. We talked right there, in front of everybody else.

But I didn't mind. I got everything off my chest. Then she just said, "Everything will be fine. We just all need to pray" – and stuff like that.

*We all prayed, and things came right.
I did pass eventually. I was
extremely anxious, but I made it.*

Susan:

I could sense that something was wrong. He was moody the whole time. And then I got a text message from Penny saying, "Please talk to your child". And at the same time, I got a text message from Carl saying, "Dad, can I come and talk to you because I can't talk to Mom?" So he came to my work, as he said, and we talked it through. He cried a lot, and kept saying how he was going to disappoint everybody. But in the end he didn't do too badly.

Penny:

At times like that, I don't bother him. I know that he can talk things over with Susan. He told me the other day that if Susan and I ever broke up, he wouldn't come with me. Can you believe it? When he's away, he will never send me a text message saying, "Mom, I miss you and I love you." No. But there will be one for Susan.

Carl:

*But she can tell
you.*

Penny:

It's not the same, Carl. You should send me one as well.

Carl:

Sometimes, while I'm just sitting here quietly, Penny will come and sit next to me and say, "Oh, please, Carl, just hold me for a minute." I'm her son, for heaven's sake! And here is her husband, large as life, sitting with both of us on the couch.

Penny:

What's wrong with you just holding me a bit, Carl? Look, Susan's holding you now. Sometimes I just ask him to hold me a bit. People can think what they want! After all, we are mother and son.

Carl:

Then you should see her in the shopping malls. Then she wants to hold my hand. What if a pretty girl walks by? She will think that Penny's my girlfriend!

Susan:

Oh, she just wants a bit of love from her son, Carl. A hug from her son.

Carien:

Why do you enjoy calling Susan "dad", Carl?

Carl:

Because she's my father figure.

Carien:

And how does that work for you, Susan?

Susan:

Well, I mean, since I'm the "butch" partner in this relationship, I naturally tend to think of myself as the father figure – as "dad". I certainly try to be!

Carien:

What does the concept "father figure" mean to you, Carl?

Carl:

Let me see. A "father figure" is someone with whom you can share everything. So, because I'm the son, I share everything with Susan. Of course, I talk to my mom as well. But mostly, I talk to Susan.

Susan:

Let's put it this way. I can talk to him about things that a young man would want to know about or discuss, and if I don't know the answer, I will go and find the answer by talking to his Granddad or one of his uncles or cousins. Mostly, I can help him with whatever he wants to know.

Carien:

Would it make any difference if Carl were gay – and not straight?

Penny:

None at all. We both just accept him exactly the way he is. I told him just the other day that each of us has the right to make our own choices in life, and that we will never put any kind of pressure on him.

Carien:

It seems to me that there is quite a lot of pressure on gay parents in this regard. It's as though society is sometimes saying, "Do you think that their children will also be gay?"

Penny:

Yes, it's as though people assume, 'your child will definitely be gay'.

Susan:

But it seems to me that there are quite a lot of children from gay relationships that turn out to be gay. Well, I've heard of some. I don't know. Perhaps this is something that we all do unconsciously – we put pressure on our children. Perhaps we put pressure on Carl to be straight. I've sometimes wondered about it. There have been so many times when I've said to him: "Check out

that lady!” or “Look at that pretty girl!”

I’ve always made comments about pretty girls in Carl’s presence, and I draw his attention to them because I notice them. Why? I don’t really know. Perhaps because I play the father role?

I suppose that when a straight father and son walk together down a street, the father would say things like, “Look at that girl!” or “Isn’t that a pretty girl?” Things like that. I guess I just saw that as my role.

Carien:

Carl, what advice would you give to a boy who is just entering Grade 1 and who might be afraid that some of the classmates will tease him?

Carl:

At that age? First of all, he won’t be seeing them again in seven years’ time because they will all be moving on to high school. So he doesn’t need to say anything. He should just say nothing. In any case, people (in my experience) really have nothing worthwhile to say anyway. And, in the long run, they themselves will drop the topic. Why? Because it’s

boring! It's of no interest. Well, it might be for a week or so.

Susan:

It's far better just to ignore it. Once they see that they're not going to get any reaction out of a guy, then they themselves forget about it.

Carl:

I certainly don't worry about it.

Penny:

Carl would never lift his hand to hit anyone...

Susan:

He certainly would if he needed to!

Carien:

A lot of people who are gay say that they have to "come out" – go through the "coming out" process. Have you, Carl, ever felt that you needed to come out about the fact that your parents are both gay women?

Carl:

When one's older, yes. When you're younger and children tease you because of it, that can really get to you. But now they wouldn't risk calling me names. And I think that I am now at the right age for "coming out" about my gay parents. Next year, in any case, you don't see them anymore.

Carien:

When you speak of younger, Carl, how much younger do you mean?

Carl:

I would say about Grade 9. Not in Grade 8 because then one is still too young and inexperienced. About in Grade 9 or 10 is okay. I only came out about my gay moms last year. And then not to everyone, but only to my friends. On the night of the the inauguration.

Carien:

And did you decide beforehand that you were going to do so?

Carl:

No. It just happened.

Carien:

You mentioned earlier, Carl, that some children in primary school called you names. Did they call you names to your face – or did you just happen to hear about it?

Carl:

When I was younger, yes, they used to say these things to my face. My moms mentioned earlier that I used to come home crying a lot. But as I grew up, I don't know... I think maybe they became scared of me because I was the biggest boy in the primary school. Even now, I am still one of the biggest guys in high school. I suppose they're scared of me because of that. Yes, maybe they think that I will react violently and beat them or something like that.

Carien:

What are the children's perceptions or beliefs about having gay parents, Carl?

Carl:

I'm not really sure. I think it varies. They can see that I have advantages that they don't have.

Carien:

Like what for instance?

Carl:

Well, I don't get hidings like they do. Their dads beat them with canes and with their fists, and so on. A lot of their dads also drink a lot. My moms don't do that! And my moms allow me to do things that their dads don't normally allow them to do.

Carien:

Like what?

Carl:

Like, my moms allow me to take the car and go to school functions. Their dads... Well, some dads don't even allow that. I have this one friend, for example. The other day he accidentally let something fall onto his dad's car. And so his dad punched him in the face with his fists. His dad is very strict.

My moms are certainly strict, especially when it concerns school matters, but they're calm. And I'm conscientious! Well, sometimes I'm a bit lazy about with my household chores. But I'm well mannered and friendly. And I keep things light with jokes. I make a lot of jokes. Of course I have my bad days too. But then, everyone has their bad days.

Carien:

Are there children at school who have already realised that they are gay and who have come out to others?

Carl:

None of them have come out to me personally. But I know that Michelle and Ruan are gay. I know that there were also some gays among the matrics who have finished school. Then there was also this red-headed girl in our church. But she has left.

Carl:

No, everyone knows about Michelle. The girls hug each other. Our school doesn't have a problem.

Penny:

Young people are much more open these days – much more open.

Penny:

The advice I would give is: "Just be open."

Carien:

How are they coping at school? Are they being teased? Do people gossip about them?

Carien:

Yes, for sure. Now, what advice would you give other families? For other children who also have two gay moms or two gay dads as parents?

Susan:

Be yourself!

Penny:

Yes, be yourself. Love your child. Don't even try to hide it from him or her. Just be open with him or her, and when problems arise, sort them out in a reasonable and sensible way. But I also want to add that we should all face it, and be open with one another. We've all been through this. Hiding one's gayness may not affect the adult's relationship, but, in the end, it will tear the child apart. Hiding one's orientation will only damage the child in the end. We need to trust each other, and our child needs to trust us. He should be able to rely on us.

Carl:

But just don't make an issue out of things!

If it is an issue for other people, then let that be their problem.

I have received many benefits from having same-gender parents, we are a close-knit family.

“You’re trying to put together your puzzle...”

Tom walks in, juggling a rugby ball, and then, with one leap, he jumps over the back of the couch and onto the seat next to me. “Hmm,” I think, “here is someone filled with self-confidence.” He is probably a bit annoyed by the fact that he has had to leave an informal game of rugby with his neighbourhood pals to talk to this “researcher”.

We begin by chatting informally about rugby trials and what pseudonym we will use for him. He has the same name as his father and grandfather, and he is proud of his family legacy. This is the second time that I am interviewing Tom. On the first occasion, I interviewed him, his sister and brother. So now, to get the conversation rolling, I refer back to something that he had told me on the first occasion.

“You told me last time that, basically, all your friends know about your mom and your Aunt Sandy... That, it’s like general knowledge among them. How did that come about?”

“Oh yes. I don’t know, to be honest. I think that I told about half of them. The others, they just seemed to know. Some, like, just ask me. When they hear about the set-up, they’re fine. They’re cool with it. It’s fine. It’s normal. It’s nothing.”

He emanates that same nonchalant and unconcerned vibe that I remember in him from our previous interview. I remember that when I had asked him then about what he thought about my research topic, he had replied in that cool, matter-of-fact voice: “Hmm. It’s okay. It’s fine. Interesting – because I guess you won’t find many researchers who write about that.” Now he is using the same vocabulary of approval: ‘It’s nothing. It’s fine. It’s normal.’

“I see,” I say as I collect my thoughts. “But, do they actually ever ask? I mean, they wouldn’t come here for some time and say nothing surely... So, at some stage...”

Tom cuts me off with a flicker of a grin: “Yes, they ask – but only to confirm what they already see.”

“They confirm. They are making sure.” I reflect his statements back to him. I am really trying to reach him at some deeper level so that I will be able to understand him as sympathetically and accurately as possible.

Tom, undeterred, continues: “Half of my friends who come here think it’s... You know... That it’s supposed to be like that.”

I find this very interesting. I am surprised and excited by my breakthrough. This is the first time that Tom has come up with something really valuable on a deeper level.

“Is that right?” I ask.

“Yes. Because most of my friends never knew me when my dad lived here. My dad just wouldn’t allow anyone to come and visit us.

So, when my mom and my dad still lived here together, I just never had any friends at all because, well, no-one came over, and we never did anything that involved other people. I was friends with the next door neighbour’s daughter,” he says with a smile. “But I never even brought her around. I suppose I was what you might call your neighbourhood nerd.

“So, naturally, my friends from school – they are all totally in love with this new arrangement.”

What a way with words he has. Tom, starts to laugh, and I laugh too. “This new arrangement. What is it? Having two mothers?” (I bite my tongue. I know that I should never lead with a ready-made answer like that. I lecture myself briefly in silence.) Tom just nods pleasantly in agreement.

“Okay. So how do you handle the situation when your friends come over here and find two women who are both your parents?”

“It’s no problem because my mom told me that she would behave normally – and she does.”

“Normal”, It is a word that I constantly hear and is so easy to use. But in the gay world it can have a radically different meaning. What I find the most moving and enriching of all is that, to gay people, and to those families who have adapted to their orientation, which many in the “world” might regard as abnormal, deviant and sinfully exotic, is to them the normal fabric of everyday reality. Indeed, it is a reality that they hardly ever even think about. It just is. It is just here. And now, if they have to think about it, they think, “It is our reality, and it is none of anyone else’s business.”

Nevertheless, continuing to probe, as I must, I ask, “What does ‘behave normally’ mean to you, Tom?”

He smiles. “It’s, like, they’re friends.”

“Okay. But, now, what do you tell your friends? Do you say something like, ‘Hmm. I just want to tell you that I have two moms, and they are both gay,’ or what?”

Now I am really probing – and I hope that he rises to the bait.

“I just say that my mom lives with another woman – and if they have a problem with that, then they must just tell me. My mothers won’t do anything, like anything funny, they are just normal people. But of course, they don’t have a problem, and they never react negatively. If I do happen to tell someone who hasn’t been here before, he will just say something like ‘Ja, I see. It’s okay’ – or something like that. But it’s a matter of no real interest to them. We don’t sit around and talk about it. It’s just like something that happened a long time ago.”

Tom is oblivious to my inner conversations with myself, and – to my great relief – seems to have no problem with answering my probing research questions in some detail.

I try to sum it up by saying, “So, if you do have to tell someone, it’s just a once-off event. They confirm. They make sure, and then they...”.

“Move on,” Tom interjects, completing my sentence.

I get the impression that in those relatively few cases where he needs to disclose, it is a one-off event – which, it seems, is a matter of no great importance to either him or to his friends. Popular youth culture, especially the world of music and DJs, it seems, has made young people accustomed to alternative sexual orientations.

But, just to confirm that it is indeed so, I continue to ask further questions. “Okay, Tom, so you know your own friends and what kind of people they are. They, of course, don’t ask questions like ‘What’s going on?’ or ‘How does it work?’ – or any such-like questions. So I guess that must make it easier for you?”

“Well, it’s not a problem if they need to ask. I really don’t mind. It’s normal.” As in our past discussions, he remains cool and unflustered by my relentless questioning.

So I take a different line. “If it’s so normal, then why do you bother to tell them?”

“As I said, I would only mention it if someone were unfamiliar with the set-up in my house. When I invite my friends to my house, I want them to feel comfortable. So then, if they don’t know about my two mothers, I tell them. It doesn’t help if I keep secrets from them and then they have to wonder what is going on. But then they understand. I put them in the picture. My friends and I are all very straightforward with each other. It’s our big thing,” he says with some pride.

“So at what point would you tell someone who has not been to your house before? Before they arrive at your house, when you are arranging the visit, or at which stage?”

“No. I would tell them if I see that they are uncomfortable. Sometimes, a new friend arrives. They see my two moms. I don’t know what they are thinking, but it feels funny. It is as though they suspect something. They’re like, ‘I’m not supposed to be here, it’s not the right place to be’.” He smiles, but continues.

“When they look a bit suspicious, I just tell them quietly what the set-up is.”

Tom laughs again. Perhaps it is a nervous laugh.

“So you might see that they are feeling awkward?”

“Yes. And then I just explain what is going on. As soon I detect that they are feeling uncomfortable and not acting normal, then I tell them. I ask them what is wrong and when they withdraw a little, I ask them gently if they have a problem, if it’s OK for them, and if I can explain how it works. Basically, I want them to feel okay. So if they feel unable to explain how we live to their parents, I tell them that my mom could contact their parents and tell them about our household – if that’s what they would prefer.”

“What do you think makes them feel awkward?” I ask.

“Well, it’s an unusual situation. Let’s say they are staying over here,” Tom continues. “They might be staying here with me, and during the weekend, they might go round a corner and see my moms, like, holding hands. And then, because they’re not used to it, they might think, ‘Wow! That’s weird! Two women holding hands...’.”

This is the first time that Tom has been so open with me, so I cannot help but ask, “Okay. So have you asked your moms not to hold hands?”

“No!” Tom seems astounded that I should even ask such a question. But he explains nevertheless.

“After I explain to them what the family structure is, we all just carry on living our lives, enjoying ourselves like we always do. We relax, and go on playing – just like other kids do. We’re not any different from other kids. We go into each others cupboards and stuff like that.”

We both laugh at this, and I say, “I think I begin to understand. You help them if they don’t understand... If they seem uncomfortable. And when you start playing again and everything has settled down, you have this sense of confirmation that you were right in sensing that they felt awkward.”

“Exactly,” replies Tom.

“Okay, that’s interesting.”

Tom continues to expand in response to my interest.

“The mother of one of my friend’s left his father. My parents were already divorced, and his parents were in the process of getting divorced when his mom had

this big nervous breakdown. His mom was having a really bad time, so she came to speak to my mom to ask her about her experiences and how she had coped.

“This lady thought that she might be gay, or thought that she might be ‘becoming’ gay, but she wasn’t sure. Her feelings told her that she was gay, but her head couldn’t go there. She was in denial and conflict.

“So she talked to my mom about her difficulties. I could see that she was trying to find where and how she fitted into the world – and where she had lost her way. But she and her husband are together again, and they are happy now.”

“So the son of this lady – the one I’m telling you about – was the first friend I ever told. I felt that he needed to understand the whole concept and to be at ease with it. We still see each other every single day. He lives about two blocks away. Now he knows that it is no big deal, and he’s okay.”

I think appreciatively of this young man’s beautiful way with words. What a valuable support system for him – to have a friend who has been through almost the same experiences as he has, and, it seems, almost at the same time.

“But what about your other friends’ parents? Do you know how they react or feel?” I wonder whether other parents are quite so accepting.

“Oh, I don’t know. I suppose that they don’t even talk about it or know anything about it. My friends wouldn’t tell them because it’s certainly not important to them. They know everything is all right.”

“Okay.”

“We know everything about each other.”

“It’s actually nice to have everything in the open and no secrets,” I add. “To be – like you say – straightforward. It sounds as though it creates a really good support system.

“But how was it before? Please just fill me in, if you don’t mind, Tom. Could you tell me how you coped with the divorce, when your mom met this new person in her life, a new partner, and how and what you told your friends?

“What was it like before your lives settled down? Because now I can see that you are in a very happy space. I can see that clearly, and that’s good. It’s wonderful, in fact. As you have said, ‘it’s normal, it’s okay, it’s fine.’ But somehow I sense that it wasn’t always like that.”

“You want to know about the beginning?” Tom asks.

“Yes please. If you can tell me about that stage... .”

“From when?”

“You decide, Tom.”

“Okay, it was like this. When my mom and my dad were together, they constantly fought and quarrelled. It was, like, hell. My mom would be standing there, then my dad would get into a rage and punch a hole in a door. Oddly enough, my dad never hit my mom. He never ever touched her. But he would hit everything around her. There were holes in various doors – and smashed objects littered all around the house.

“So when my dad was here, it was absolutely awful. We couldn’t even talk to one another like civilised human beings. And when my brother or sister did something naughty, it was always me that got punished. I always got blamed for everything.

“But after my dad left, his new fiancée brought about one hell of a change in him. I don’t know what she said to him, or how she did it, but he really changed quite radically. So now he gives us pocket money – whereas before we were never given pocket money like other kids.

“Now, it’s, like, you only get into trouble for the really big things. Now my dad is a much nicer person. You wouldn’t even believe it’s the same person. Now we go out with them together whereas before none of us ever even went out of the house. She’s an amazing woman, his new fiancée. The extraordinary thing is that they’ve been together for six months now – and I have yet to see her ugly side.”

I am astounded at how well they have all coped with the divorce, and I say, “It’s really nice to hear that, Tom, because a lot of kids that go through divorce find it’s very traumatic for them. Especially when either the mother or the father or both start meeting and dating new people. There can be a lot of tension and unhappiness. But you guys are like... It’s just great.”

Tom looks sad, and qualifies my assessment of their experiences. “Actually, when they got divorced, I was very angry. I was so angry that, a week later, I went and bought myself a punch bag because I had so much anger in me and I wanted to get it out.

“I was also having problems at school... Children would come to me and I would suddenly – without any warning – have an urge to kill them.”

Tom’s whole body and tone of voice have suddenly changed, and anger and grief are etched on his face.

“Why do you think that was?” I ask.

“Because somehow it seemed as though every kid in that school had found out about my parents’ divorce. Then some kids started mocking me. Some in a subtle way, but others were not quite so subtle about it.”

“Who mocked you? Your friends? Or your classmates?”

“No. It was those kids who had never liked me anyway. But I just hung loose.”

I find it interesting that he should be teased about his parents’ divorce. I wonder to myself how these same children would react if they were to find out all the details about his mother and her new partner. But it doesn’t sound to me as though he has been teased about his mother’s new partner. I wait for him to continue... .

“When my mom eventually divorced my dad, that was another big event. But then I also started to get more friends because I was more upset and so I ended up talking to more people.”

“Okay, so you started to make friends?”

“Yes. But in reality, I wanted to be somewhere else,” he continues.

“Some place other than home?” I ask.

“Yes. Because I felt so dead lonely at that time. So, kind of, rejected. More lost than anyone here. But then I started making great new friends and stuff like that.

“Even when they were splitting, I still thought, hoped, that they might get back together again. But then my mom ended up with somebody else, with this other lady. My new friends were coming round a lot. And my mom didn’t even tell me! Nothing. For the whole year I had my private suspicions about what was really going on behind the scenes, and I kept trying to figure it all out.”

“I can just imagine. If you can look at how other people behave and wonder about them, you must have been looking at your mother and wondering exactly how it all added up.”

We both laugh, and I interject with: “Okay! So for the whole year you were...”.

Tom finishes my sentence by adding, “...busy investigating. Yep. I was looking on cell phones. I would get hold of my mom’s cell phone and read her text messages. And sometimes I would creep silently around so that I could spy on them when they were alone together. It was wrong of me, I suppose. But I was trying to put all the pieces together.”

“You were looking for answers. So what did you find out?”

“Well, basically, I found out that my mother was having an affair with this other woman.”

“How did you find that out?”

“Like I said, I would read most of my mom’s text messages. And there were other things. Like sometimes she would say that she was going out for a pizza or something. Then she would seem nervous, almost, like, guilty. I figured out that whenever she said that she was going out to eat, she wasn’t really doing that at all, because whenever she goes out to eat, she always brings back a doggy bag. It doesn’t matter where she goes – she always brings one back with her. So when there was never any doggy bag, I figured that she had been some place else.”

“Okay.”

“And she was always actually visiting that one place, the lady we call Aunt Theresa.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because we always used to be taken there, every single day, and that was not our house.”

“Okay, so she took you with her?”

“Yes.”

I am intrigued by the detail that he is now sharing with me, so I continue by asking, “How did you feel when you read the text messages and picked up that your mother was having an affair?”

“I used to get all nervous and feel all like... like, I needed to know what was going on.”

“Were you curious? Did you ask her? Did you ever confront her? Or...”

Tom interrupts, “No. I just wanted to know for myself. But, it’s strange, the moment I knew what was going on, my mom told me. But, by then, it was, like, old news.”

What I sense is that it was not necessarily his mother’s new partner that was making him feel insecure, but that his feelings of being left out, of not getting a normal amount of attention, that were making him feel unsettled. I note the meticulous way in which he traced and observed his mother’s behaviour. I wonder whether that changed their relationship. “So how did she react to that? To the fact that you already knew?”

“Oh, you know, okay.”

“How did you feel about your mom falling in love with another lady?”

“I didn’t mind that. I just wanted her to tell me what was happening. Then I wouldn’t have felt so... so... like, lost.

“You must understand that my mom was not giving us enough attention. She was always out there. We were like, ‘Hello’, ‘Hello’, ‘How are you?’, ‘Okay’, ‘And you?’, ‘Okay’, ‘There’s food for you there’, and then she would say, ‘Alright, dear.

Bye!'. And then she would go to her room and cry. All three of us were so lost. So then we started doing our own things, like playing 'donkerkamertjie'³ and all those stupid things."

I am caught up in his story. I used to love playing 'donkerkamertjie' when I was a child. I react immediately, "Gee, that's great. But why do you call them 'stupid things?' "

"Well, it seems stupid now."

"Okay, it's childish. Agreed, but then you were all feeling angry and lost."

"And very weird," Tom adds.

"So what happened next?"

"My mom caught me with her cell phone and everything."

"Can you tell me about that?"

"I was reading through her messages and then – whoops! – I accidentally deleted half of them. So she asked me what I was doing, and I told her. And that is why I was not surprised when she told me. I already knew."

"How did she react to your snooping on her phone?"

"She was very angry."

"Okay, and then?" He is on a "roll", and I would like to get as much as I can out of him while he is willing to talk.

"Ugh," he makes a despairing sound. "Then Aunt Theresa, she was mom's first partner, she came over and began to live here. Then we all moved in. I've never liked Aunt Theresa, not ever, not from the very first moment that I met her.

"When I realised for the first time that my mother was like that, I didn't mind. But when I met her... that shocked me, and then I became very angry."

"I see."

"I felt like running away and never coming back."

"Why was that, Tom? What didn't you like about her? Can you describe it?"

"Not really. I don't know... It's just...". He hesitates, but I can see that he is thinking hard.

I give him time to think and then say, "If you think back...?" I am not sure if Tom is wondering whether he can actually tell me – or whether he just doesn't know where to begin.

"First of all, I've just never liked her at any stage in my life. She never made any effort whatsoever to be pleasant to me. She always... I never... I didn't expect

³ Afrikaans name for game similar to hide and seek, played at night, indoors.

anything from her, and I have never.... But she always tried to make me do stupid things – things that I hate.”

To me this sounds like early-teenager trouble, and I try to elicit his version of the story. “Things like what, Tom?”

“Well, things like looking after her children, and all that stuff. And her twins! You can see how they have broken these chairs.”

I look round at the chairs near us and I can see that they have had their fair share of wear and tear, and I comment, “Okay. So they did that, they had no respect for your mother’s furniture.”

But Tom’s thoughts have already moved on, and he adds in an angry voice, “I also never had any privacy. I couldn’t go to the bathroom. I couldn’t do anything. It simply wasn’t my house anymore.”

I wonder how his distress influenced his relationship with his mother, and so I ask, “Were you able to talk to your mother about that?”

“Hmm. I did tell her, and all she said was some stuff like... ‘They are still small, you know,’ referring to the twins. She didn’t even know what I was talking about. I think she thought I was a bit mad or something. It was really tough.” He remains quiet for a while. Then he sighs deeply and continues, “And it’s still like that today, it’s still going on, you can’t even put a sweet under your pillow.”

“How often do you see them?” I ask.

“A lot. Too much! Like about three times a week. But once you see them, the moment you’re with them for, like, five minutes, they begin to irritate you.

“Just the things she did. I don’t know. She was always trying to challenge me in some way or another.” He sits quietly for a while, thinking, and then continues, “Or she’ll occasionally do something nice – just to get my mom on her side.”

“Hmm. I see. So, do you feel that she came between you and your mother?”

Tom answers instantly, “She will push in between us, and then back out again.”

I do not want to collect too much information about Tom’s mother’s first partner, and, in any case, I see that the thought of her and her children still upsets him. To me it feels like an intensely personal issue, and I would rather focus, if I can, on how he perceived his mother. So I ask, “You were obviously deeply aware that your mother was no longer together with your dad, but that she had moved on to being with Theresa. How did you feel about that? What did you think about your mother at that time?”

“To be honest, I was trying very hard not to think of anything at all and I just concentrated on hanging out with these new friends of mine. That was such a pleasure. My new friends were just too – Kung! Pow! – amazing!” he exclaims. His boyish sound effects make him look young and happy again. I have realised that he has a real talent for making and keeping friends.

“Great, okay.” Even though he is so excited, I am concerned that he might be evading my questions by turning the topic towards his friends. So I probe further, seeking clarification.

“Some kids go through a phase where they feel, hey, this is not right, it’s the wrong thing to do. Like the moral things that they are taught at home. Or what they are taught at school might be different from what they are taught at home. Did that ever happen to you?”

“No. You see, I always had my friends with me, and we always discuss things that are important to us amongst ourselves. Okay, one or two of my friends’ dads are also, like, gay as well, and they would tell me about that.”

This is potentially useful research information. So I say, “Okay, please tell me about that, if you don’t mind?”

“Agh, no!” He begins to bounce about. “They just said that they prefer that to how it used to be before, and they love it. And then I began to understand everything, to get a new view, and, well, then, you know, you feel like aliens communicating.”

I start to laugh at Tom’s antics, but I am not sure what he is trying to say, and so I ask for some clarification. “Please just tell me all that again in a way that I can understand.”

“You know what they’re talking about,” he says. “But it doesn’t make any sense in terms of everything you’ve ever learned.”

“Okay, I’ve lost you somewhere. Please tell me that again.” I still don’t understand, but I am hoping that he will be patient with me because this sounds as though it may be extremely important.

“Look, it’s like this,” he says sweetly as though explaining something complex to a fairly dim child. “It’s, like, their parents are gay, and they were trying to tell me how much easier life is for them because I was thinking that it would all be so much harder. I mean, they are really much happier now than they ever were before. They told me that having gay parents actually puts you in a better position. I could hear what they were saying but somehow it didn’t make sense to me at that time. It was like ‘you’re trying to build your puzzle, you’re trying to flip over the pieces and trying to put together your puzzle.’ I couldn’t quite get it. But now I do.”

I am deeply impressed by how much insight, support and affirmation Tom received from his peers, and I remember his remark about how being open and honest with one another was the most important thing in their lives.

I respond to his explanation by saying, “Thank you. I think I see what you mean. They were trying to tell you that their lives are much happier now with their gay parents than they were before with their original parents. But, at that stage, you had not yet reached that point.”

“Yes, yes.”

“But at that time you were still somewhat puzzled and confused? In what way were you confused, Tom? Could you try to explain that to me?”

“Sure. I was wondering how they are going to do everything, like, divide the household tasks. But my mother, she never used to work in the house. She just never did anything. Certainly no heavy housework. She wasn’t used to anything like that. It was my dad who did everything in and about the house.”

“So you were concerned when they separated?”

“Oh yes. Because I thought to myself, ‘What’s going to happen now? Who will fix toys and things when they break?’”

“So you felt, ‘Goodness! My mother will never be able to manage.’ “

“Exactly. But then, to my amazement, she started to do things by herself. She and I actually began to fix small motors and things like that. I was totally amazed.”

“Hmm. That’s very interesting. Was there anything else you were confused about?”

“Yes, there were other things too. My mom and dad, at a later stage, they used to get me alone and tell me about marriage, and what marriage is all about. They would tell me that marriage must be between a man and a woman. So, of course, that made me wonder how they would ever get married.”

Now Tom is sharing really deep and personal stuff, and I sense some tension in the room. I certainly don’t want to lose him now, so I try my best to reflect his feelings, “Mmm. So you were worried, Tom, about that aspect?”

“I sure was.”

“I’m so glad that you thought of that because that’s a very important question that I think every child has to face. Okay, and so who answered those questions for you? Or do you still have them?”

“Yes, I still sometimes wonder about it. But I’ve gradually figured it out. Like my mom told me that gay people never get married, but that they will make promises to each other if they are really serious.”

“Yes, people have different names for that process.”

“Hmm. I don’t exactly know what they call it.”

“Yes. I think it is called ‘life partners’.”

“That’s what I’ve heard. You see, Aunt Sandy, my mom’s partner, is more understanding. But my mom has a completely different kind of personality – and I don’t know where she gets it from.” He starts to laugh, and once more he looks so much more relaxed. “Yes, but it’s so great. When she comes over here, she always puts on this loud ‘doef-doef’⁴ kind of music, and I think, ‘Wow! What good music!’ Of course, I wasn’t used to it at that stage, but I really liked it, and when she came, it was, like, ‘Wow! There’s that music again!’

“In our house, we were always used to this, like, slow ‘classical’ music. But Aunt Sandy, she’s wild! She always puts on all this party music, and then she dances with us and goes crazy. She joins in! She is so much fun.” Tom makes dancing movements as he talks and it sounds as though he has really developed a good relationship with Sandy.

“Okay, so how do you think you can help your younger brother and sister to reach a place where they are also comfortable?” As the oldest, he has reached such a successful accommodation. Perhaps now he could help his siblings – almost in the same way that his friends helped him.

“To be honest,” says Tom thoughtfully, “I don’t want to lead them because I think it’s better if one rather finds out for oneself than if other people help you. I’ve figured out the best and easiest way for me to exist in this situation.”

“But what do you think Ryland⁵ thinks about all this? Do you think he understands what’s going on?”

“As far as the sexual side goes, no. But with regard to their relationship and their love for each other, yes, more or less.”

I am rather relieved that he thinks Ryland is okay. “Alright, and what about Danielle?”⁶

“No, I think she understands everything. She was, like, my big buddy back then. She used to tell me everything. I was amazed at how much she knew. I used to think, ‘Hey! How the heck did you find out all this stuff?’ ”

This sounds interesting, and I cannot help being pleased at the way they support each other. “What did she tell you?”

⁴ An expression of the beating sound of music.

⁵ Ryland is Tom’s only younger brother.

⁶ Danielle is Tom’s only younger sister.

Tom seems a bit embarrassed, but then he says, "That just like a boyfriend and girlfriend can hold hands, so a girlfriend and a girlfriend can also hold hands. They hug, you know... Just little things like that."

"Okay, all right."

We both look at each other and smile in appreciation. He has really opened up and shared so much with me. "Have you any questions that you would like to ask me, Tom? Is there anything that I can help you with?"

He just shakes his head and says, "Um, not really. But thanks anyway, Carien."

"Okay, and thank you! You were just great! I really appreciate how much you shared with me. And I think you might still have ten or fifteen minutes of daylight left if you still want to go and play rugby."

Tom answers gently, "No. It's alright." Outside the darkness is gathering fast and he continues to talk about this and that, about his sore foot, his soccer and karate. His mom brings us both some cool drink, and eventually the whole family joins us. We continue making pleasant small talk, and a little while later I make my way home. As they all wave goodbye to me at the gate, I imprint the memory in my mind: two mothers, surrounded by three smiling children.

“If she’s my best friend, then I’ll share my secrets with her.”

Danielle sits next to me on the couch, and eagerly begins to talk about her day. I am getting used to this. We have met twice before and from the beginning she has talked easily and freely about her friends, birthdays, the burglary of her bedroom, prospects for the coming holidays, the fake nails that they are now allowed to wear to school, the current fights that she and her friends are having with the boys and with each other.

We talked for quite a while about mathematics, about her grades and how she likes group work, her secret scrapbook, and many other topics. It is sometimes hard for me to interrupt her flow or to interpose a definite question that relates to my research. She seems oblivious of the primary reason why I am there. As she continues telling me about her day, I remember her description of her reaction to her parents’ divorce in our first session.

She said: “It’s weird. For over two years I was, like, everybody could torture me and make me very unhappy – but now I am the biggest torturer in the class. I, like, give out this vibe of “Just don’t even think of touching me!”. They used to pick on me and I used to get so angry. But I knew that I just couldn’t let them stress me. So I started to get angry and say stuff like, ‘Stop that!’ or ‘I’ll hit you!’ Now nobody picks on me.” Danielle smiles.

Danielle confirms what her brother, Tom, had said about the divorce. She also mentions that there was a feeling of relief in the family home after the parental divorce and their father’s movement to other accommodation. “I will be honest with you. I only found out that my father had moved out because suddenly all his things were gone! So I thought to myself, ‘Wow! Now we are going to be much happier! No fights!’

“When my parents fought, we used to hear my mom crying, and then me and Tom used to sit in the kitchen. So I was very happy when my dad left. When the new lady – my mother’s friend – moved in, my mother said that they’re “together”. Then we all talked about it in a nice and soft way, and I said, ‘I understand, mommy! It really is much better now than it was when you were with dad.’ I think that made her very happy, and we all cried a little. But we were crying with happiness.”

As I listen to Danielle’s almost compulsive talking, I realise that I will have to begin to provide coherent structure for our sessions together. I therefore say to

Danielle: "So please tell me, Danielle, more about what it is like to live with two moms?"

She instantly corrects me. "I now have three moms!" she exclaims.

"Okay," I am very intrigued by the information that she is offering about having three mothers. But I want to verify my conclusion, and so I say: "Who are your three mothers, Danielle, because you haven't mentioned that to me before?"

"My mom, Aunt Sandy and Auntie Thea."

"So you feel that Auntie Thea is also your mom?" I ask.

"Yes, she is actually my Auntie. But my dad can be a very different person with Auntie Thea. It's, like, an amazing difference. Now they are engaged. They will be married as soon as they have saved enough money. They say they are going to have "a perfect wedding". She says she is going to make me... They're going to make me... Make me wear a dress."

I am suddenly intrigued because Danielle is a beautiful girl with long golden brown hair. I can plausibly imagine her looking most alluring in a beautiful dress, especially her prospective role of bridesmaid.

"What do you have against dresses?" I ask suddenly.

Danielle answers. "I am a girl. But I don't like wearing girl dresses. But I do sometimes because it makes my mom happy. I also make them happy when I wear a girl's T-shirt and a boy's pants. And I'm pleased when they're happy because I feel comfortable in boy's clothes."

"Like last weekend we went to a wedding, and for the wedding my father bought me a skirt that was so short. And so I thought, 'I can't wear that! I just can't wear it. They are torturing me with this outfit.'"

"My father also bought me a girl's T-shirt and a pair of high-heeled shoes. But I don't want to wear these things! They're too girlish."

Danielle shrieks with disgust. Then she continues: "If you are a girl, you are not allowed to do things that boys do. I remember once when we ate at Spur. I was wearing a dress, and I tore my dress so badly as I was climbing over a chair."

"Was it then that you decided that you didn't like dresses?" I ask.

"Dresses are yechhy!" she exclaims.

While I would love to find out a bit more about Danielle, I know that she is too young to understand any theory about the construction of her femininity and masculinity. But for me this topic is very interesting and significant in the context of the literature on gender roles. Especially when it is articulated by one who is so young.

So, with a playful smile, I say to her: “So then, are you saying that you prefer boy’s clothes?”

“Yes,” she answers. “I like boy’s things.”

“What do you mean by that, Danielle?” I ask.

“When you are a girl, you can’t do much. So I do boy and girl things. Like, I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments.”

“What is ‘a boy moment’?” I ask.

“Oh, I build things, and I play rugby with my brothers, and all that sort of stuff.”

“Girls like to make styles with their hair...”, I suggest.

Danielle completes my line of thought by saying, “And they paint their nails and put on make-up. I don’t like make-up,” she asserts rather defiantly.

“And your clothes? What do you wear? If you could pick all your own clothes, what would you wear?” I ask her. I want to obtain as clear a picture as possible of what she constructs as “girlish” and “boyish”.

“If I could pick my clothes, I would borrow from my brother, my big brother, because my mother won’t buy me their kind of clothes. So I sometimes borrow from my brother. And, for civvies⁷, I wear these long baggy things and a cool T-shirt. Then I wear ‘takkies’ or something.”

“So why would your mom have a problem with that?” I ask.

“She wants me to look like a girl. To look like a little girl.”

“How do you know that?” I ask.

“Because she, like, tells me. She says, ‘I know that you’re having these boy moments, Danielle, but I am trying to stop you because when you grow up, you will find that you will have a difficult time.’ “

“Did she explain that?” I would very much like to know what she understands by her mother’s statement.

“Yes, she did. She doesn’t like it very much. But now she is fine with it.”

“Okay,” I reply tentatively. Danielle has not really answered my question, and so I probe gently. “Do you know what your mom means when she says, ‘It’s going to be difficult for you when you grow up’?”

“She says that I will start doing all those things that normal teenagers do, all those mad things like drinking and taking drugs and all those kind of things, and I am very scared of doing that. I don’t want to do those things,” she says with some emphasis.

⁷ Very casual wear.

I murmur quietly, but do not interrupt her because I hope that she will continue.

“I just don’t want to do that. My brother really cares about that and he doesn’t want me to do those kinds of things either. It’s like, if you’re a girl, then you won’t do those things. He says that if you’re too much of a girl, then you won’t turn out like that. But I don’t want to do all those ‘sweet’ girl things. But I really do want to make my mom happy, so I will try not to turn out like that. I won’t go like to teenage parties and all that, I will rather go to movies instead.”

I wonder whether these social scripts influence her friends as well, so I ask, “So what kind of clothes do your friends wear, Danielle?”

“Okay,” she replies, “Cherese wears girl’s pants because she doesn’t have so many boy moments.

“I am the only one who wears boy’s clothes when I am with all my friends. It’s so nice walking in them. It looks so cool! And they are all walking so lady-like.” Danielle imitates a very feminine way of walking.

“So walking is also part of it, the way you walk. So there are things that you do, and things that you wear, and then there’s the way that you walk.”

“Yes! And my friends are so, like, ‘Oh, I’m such a lady!’ “ Danielle now imitates their high-pitched girls’ voices, and then continues, “ I feel so, like, ‘I don’t think that I can wear lady-like clothes like that for two minutes’.

“Anel was in our school for one year, and we had civvies, and I wore boy clothes. She didn’t know that I had boy’s things. And she looked at me and said ‘You look like a boy.’ And so I said, ‘I am sorry. I have these boyish moments, thank you very much.’ And then she teased me and then I began to cry because...”.

“How did she tease you?” I ask.

“She said, ‘Danielle! You! I didn’t know that you were like that. I am too much of a girl to play with you anymore’.”

I hear these vague words – often emotionally laden but nevertheless vague – from most of the children whom I have thus far interviewed. I therefore probe to try to uncover some of the hidden meanings. “What does ‘to be like that’ mean? What was Anel trying to say?” I ask.

“She’s like... Okay, she is in the bathroom, then she turns around and looks at me in this funny way and says, ‘I am not going to play with you anymore’. Then I say, ‘Why?’ And she says, ‘Because you, like, wear boy’s clothes, and I can’t hang out with a boy’.

“Then I begin to cry and say, ‘Why do you say that, Anel? Don’t you also have boy moments? Do you have a problem with that?’ Then she says, ‘I thought

that... I thought you... I thought that you knew that I thought you look nice.' " Danielle looks directly at me. "I can't exactly explain that," she adds.

Danielle tells this story with so much passion and emotion that it is not always comprehensible. But I certainly sense that she is quite upset. So I just answer, "Okay" so that she will feel reassured. I then decide to leave this topic, and inquire more closely into possible incidents of disclosure that have happened in her family. Possibly the children she associates with link her boy moments with her family structure. It would be most interesting and worthwhile to find out.

"What I am wondering now, Danielle, is whether your friends know about the fact that you have two moms?"

"No, they don't, and I am not going to tell them," Danielle replies promptly and directly. "I'm not going to tell anybody," she adds. "It's a secret."

"Why don't you want people at school to find out?" I ask. "Why are you afraid of that?" I wonder if I am not perhaps being too direct. I also sense that she is afraid. I have picked that up in her voice. She is defending strongly against some or other fear or fears.

"They will tease me," Danielle says. "It is difficult. There are not many people that are like that. And it's just... They will do something to me, like kill me or something. Or they would say, 'At least my parents are better than yours'." She mimics the mocking voices of the children who tease her, and enacts how they would tease her, and I can hear the anger rising in her voice.

"Okay, you said just now that there are not a lot of people like that – like your mom. What did you mean by that, Danielle?"

"She is my mom. She is a good person. I trust my mommy."

She has not answered my question satisfactorily, so I continue to probe by saying, "What do you mean when you say, 'There are not a lot of people like that?' I mean when the other kids tease you and tell you that their parents are better and all that."

"I don't know, I don't actually know," she replies with touching honesty. "I don't actually know what they're going to do. I just get a bad feeling that they're going to do something."

I smile sympathetically at her. I deeply appreciate her sensitive awareness of what various non-verbal cues might mean – not to mention her intuitive awareness that other people might indeed do something that will hurt her or her parents. Danielle's responses remind me of something that I read in the literature just a week before. It was an assertion that a minority group may fear prejudice more than the fact that the prejudice or discrimination may lead to some kind of action. But such

fears are not unfounded, and certainly incidents do occur that reinforce the fears. Danielle continues, as always, by merging one story into another.

“But when, Alicia, one of my best friends, came to stay for a visit, I felt, like, I had to tell her. When someone’s my best friend, then I always share my secrets with them. Only my best friends know. Only my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me. But I was also scared that she would tell her mom. Then I thought, ‘What will happen if her mom doesn’t ever talk to my mom again?’ That is scary. Now, if only I could tell the future, then I could...”

I start to laugh and add, “Then none of us would have a problem, now, would we? You would be the richest girl on earth – and the cleverest.”

She and I laugh together, and then Danielle begins to act out what seems to be a private satire or personal joke with the words, “Okay! Would you like to have three children? Thank you. Now that will be three hundred rand, please.”

I watch her in admiration for a while and then I say, “Do you sometimes have sleepovers and things like that?” I sense that she wants to share an important incident, and I am scared that she will lose the thread of her story. So I hope that I am not now distracting her from sharing whatever it is that she wanted to say about Alicia and her real need to tell her best friends her secrets.

“Not on school nights. Only during the weekends,” Danielle answers.

“Then, Danielle, what do you tell your friends when they come over? What do you say about Sandy?”

“I say that she’s a friend. I say she actually lives with my mom because they are best friends.”

“Okay, and then how do your friends react? Do they ask more questions after that?”

“Oh yes, like, Alicia asked me, ‘Are they together? Do they sleep together?’ Then I was, like, ‘Umm, yes. Where else would she sleep?’ Alicia really caught me with that question.”

I am intrigued by her reaction at this point, and I promptly ask her, “What happened then, Danielle?”

“I was thinking,” Danielle replies. “I was thinking that I would have to explain to her that my mom... That if I tell her, if I’ll tell her that they are together, and just keep explaining all those things, like they sleep together and just...”. She hesitates and then adds, “I’m sorry that I’m a liar. It’s just that this stuff is very personal for me, and I can’t share all my personal things’. If I could tell her, and she could understand, then I would be very happy.”

“To me that sounds like a good way of dealing with it,” I interject affirmatively. I am touched by her honesty, and astonished at how well prepared she is to deliver appropriate answers.

“Then Alicia told me that she heard my mother and Auntie Sandy talking about themselves, about the two of them together, and that she had heard everything.”

“Oh?” I say. “Could you tell me about that please?” It sounds now as though Danielle’s best friend has found out her secret even before she, Danielle, had an opportunity to tell her herself.

“Okay, I will tell you. It’s like this. I was with my brothers. We were playing together”

“Oh, so Alicia wasn’t near you when this happened?” I am trying to obtain more clarity about this incident.

“No. I was playing with my brothers at the time. I was trying to sort out some problem with them. I said to her, ‘Alicia, just wait here’, but she wandered off and then heard them talking somewhere.”

I have difficulty following her train of thought. So I ask: “Who did she hear talking, Danielle?”

“It was my mom and Auntie Sandy that she heard,” Danielle answers rather abruptly.

“Oh, okay. So she overheard them? She was listening to what they said?”

“Yes! Then she came and asked me, ‘is all this true?’ So I said, ‘Yes, it is true, and it’s about time that you should hear it.’ Then I told her, ‘My mommy and Auntie Sandy are together, is that fine with you?’ And she just said, ‘Yeah, and you are still my best friend.’ She said such sweet things that I began to cry. When I told her the truth, I began to feel so heartsore.”

I express my deep sympathy and support in my body language, and ask, “That is a beautiful story, Danielle. How did you feel when that was happening?”

“Like, ah...” Danielle sighs and breathes deeply. “My friend said, ‘So you don’t have a dad. Instead, you have like three mothers.’ And I answered: ‘Yes! It’s, like, hey, cool, but that’s all I’m saying!’”

“And was she happy to know?”

“Well, obviously. But I don’t know if my mother knows.”

“Do you think Alicia’s mom will mind if she knows that your mom and auntie Sandy are together?” I ask.

"I don't think that she will mind," Danielle answers thoughtfully. "But her mother knows that we are best friends, and we are always staying over at each other's place."

"Did Alicia tell you what she overheard? What exactly your mom and Auntie Sandy said to one another?"

"Yes! She said... But now I can hardly remember what it was because I was only in Grade Three. She said something to me like, "Hmm. Now they will go to this place where other women like them go, and all stuff like that."

"Okay. What do you mean, Danielle, when you say, 'Like that'?" I ask. She is once again using these euphemisms and circumlocutions, and perhaps she needs to.

"But Alicia's also very clever. So she, like, she overheard that my mother is hanging out with a couple and with two women who are "together", who are sleeping with the other woman – and then she knew that my mother is one of them... ."

I am still wondering about the precise dynamics of Danielle feeling that she 'has to tell'. She mentioned in the beginning that she felt Alicia should know. So I probe further.

"Danielle, do you sometimes feel you simply must tell?" I ask.

"Yes." She answers with some conviction.

"Okay. Now, in what circumstances do you feel that you have to tell?"

"I get this feeling... I get this feeling that, like, pushes the words out of me. I, I don't understand it. I often don't know what I am saying. I just speak. It just comes out. It even happened with my teacher. I put up my hand to say something, and then it all just came out."

Danielle re-enacts the whole classroom scene. She waves her hands as she tries to explain to me how it happens when she feels that she loses control over her impulses to disclose. Her mention of the teacher reminds me that it is possible that other children in her school are also talking about same-gender parents.

So I ask her: "Alright. Do the kids at your school talk about women like that? Women...".

Danielle interrupts me quickly. "They don't even think about it. Because it's very dumb." She continues with an anecdote about a boy that once hit her in class, and how that developed into a huge fight.

I let her continue for a while, and then gently ask: "If you find yourself speaking, and you find that you can't control what you say, do you sometimes realise afterwards that you have actually said something about your two moms?"

“No,” replies Danielle. “I don’t actually share my secret. I only share that secret with my best friends, like Shirley and Alicia. But Shirley knew what was happening even before I did. That my mother and her mother were together.”

Now I am fascinated. “Oh, that is very interesting, Danielle. So how did that happen? Did she tell you?”

“No, she didn’t tell me”, Danielle replies. “She only said: ‘I know a secret that you have to ask your mom’. I thought about this, and then I said, ‘What must I ask my mom?’

“And Shirley replied, ‘Just ask your mom whatever comes into your mind...’. And so I did that. I asked my mom about what was on my mind. And my mother listened, and then she said ‘Yes. It is all true’.”

How strange that must have been, I think to myself. Imagine how she must have felt. Her friend giving her such a strange and cryptic instruction. I wonder to myself how Danielle’s mother reacted – and what must have gone through her mind when her little girl asked her this question straight out of the blue. “What exactly did you ask your mom, Danielle?” I ask so as to gain further clarity.

I just asked her: “Are you together?” So she replied, ‘Yes. How did you know?’

I remind Danielle that in another interview she had mentioned that she had spoken to her mother a bit about the whole matter.

Danielle interrupts, “I just asked her everything. And she told me all the women that she had been with before... .”

“Okay.”

“It’s actually hard to remember all the facts. I think that this happened last year or the year before. Or maybe even the year before that.”

“Okay. But how did you feel when she told you all that stuff?” I ask.

“I just thought, ‘Oh! Are you with Auntie Theresa now?’ And she replied, ‘Yes.’ So I said, ‘Then that’s okay by me. I’m just fine with that’. Auntie Theresa had these twins.

“Oh yes, I remember that you mentioned the twins before.” All three of them elaborated extensively in the first session on how terribly destructive the twins were and how they had really to struggle to adapt to accepting other strange children as a part of their family. I really do not want to hear more about that, so I try to cut that topic off.

But Danielle continues. “Do you want to know how Shirley found out?” she asks.

“Yes,” I reply, thinking that this might provide some insights, and it will also tell me about another girl’s experiences, even though the information will come to me from a third party. Although I don’t want to get stuck in trivial gossip, this story might just provide something of value.

Danielle seems keen to tell me. “She found this book in her mom’s room. She takes it. And then she and her brother go into the room and they lock the door. Then they read the book together. But then...! Her mother knocks on the door while they are reading. And her mother calls, ‘Wake up!’ because Shirley always locks the door when she sleeps. And so she calls, ‘Yes, mommy’.”

“Okay, so she was a bit naughty,” I observe mildly. “So what was in the book? Was it a photograph album?”

“I can’t remember exactly. No, it was not a photograph album. It only had one picture in it – and a PS chocolate wrapper.”

“Okay, okay.”

“And short poems about my mom.”

“Okay. So did she talk to her mom about the book? Did she ask, ‘What is this book all about?’ “

Danielle whispers, “No! She didn’t talk to her. She only told me about it. When her mom eventually told her, she acted like she didn’t know anything.” Secrecy again, I think to myself. How do these children manage their own process of dealing with all these events?

“Danielle, when did you realise that mom liked other women?” Danielle has spoken extensively about her friends, but I wonder what process she went through before she could accept the new situation.

“Oh, it was when she was involved with Auntie Tersia and my mom and us were at Auntie Theresa’s house, her old house. And then I asked them if they were together. It happened like this. We all went to Auntie Theresa, and Auntie Tersia came with us. So I said to my mom, ‘I don’t believe you.’ And then she said, “Well, if you don’t believe me, go and ask Auntie Tersia.’ So then I asked Auntie Tersia. I said to her, “Aren’t you going to tell Karen,” and Auntie Tersia replied, ‘No. She’s not old enough to understand yet.”

“So Karen is Auntie Tersia’s daughter?”

“Yes.”

“Did they ask you not to tell her or...?”

“Yes, they asked me not to tell her.” Danielle smiles at the memory.

I reflect her statements by saying, “I understand. She’s too young to understand.” I remain quiet for some time, and then look at her. Danielle’s face lights up with a smile. “Why are you smiling?” I ask in a friendly way.

Danielle looks slightly embarrassed. “Because I did tell her,” she confesses. Then she bursts out laughing. “I couldn’t hold it back! I just had to tell her!”

“How old was Karen then?” I ask.

Danielle continues. “She’s my best friend. But not always. She is always hanging out with my brothers. But I’m beginning to like her a lot.”

“Okay, I see that. You are both getting older now. What did you tell her?” I am professionally curious about how she would frame the situation to another child because that knowledge might reveal some of her own process to me in managing this unusual situation.

“What do you mean, ‘How old was she?’ Danielle does not understand my question.

“How old was she when you told her? How old was she then?”

“Oh, alright.” She thinks for a moment. “I was eleven – and she was ten.”

I am a bit relieved, I thought that they had both been much younger. I ask, “Okay, and what did you say to her?”

Danielle whispers. “I said to her, ‘Karen, do you know that our mothers and all of them are, like... together?’ Danielle mimics Karen’s expression of shock and surprise. Then Karen said, like, ‘Ooo-oo!’” Then I told her, ‘But listen, Karen. I am not supposed to tell you what I have just said, now. Remember that. You have not heard what I have said.’ ”

“Do you think that Karen told her mom?” I ask. I wonder about all this secrecy, and whether or not this child will also confront her mother, as Danielle did.

“No, she didn’t tell. But I think that her mom told her.”

“What do you think that her reaction was when her mom told her?”

“She didn’t tell me, “ Danielle says simply.

“Oh, okay.”

“I wasn’t with her at that time. Her mom told her when her mom and my mom broke up.”

I begin another line of inquiry. “What I am thinking now is, ‘What does the word “mom” mean to you? What is a mother? I remember you said that you have boy moments and girl moments. So what does the word ‘mother’ mean to you?” I am trying a new line of questioning without knowing whether or not it will work. Perhaps Danielle will not understand. This might be too abstract for her.

“For me my mom is somebody that I just love so much. And I trust my mom. I love her. It is difficult to explain. I just love her a lot.”

I am quite surprised at her answer and I am really glad that I asked it. So I continue to probe. “Okay. Now your real mom, your birth mother, and Auntie Sandy, Danielle. Is there a big difference between Auntie Sandy being a mom to you, and Auntie Thea being a mom, and your own mom?”

“There’s no big difference,” she says.

““Okay. I see that, for you, they are almost, basically, the same?”

“I must say that my real mom feels more like my real mom to me.”

“In what way?” I inquire.

“I think that I just love my mom more than the others. She feels more like a mom to me than the others do.”

“Did you and your brothers ever discuss what was happening with Auntie Theresa or Auntie Sandy?” I ask.

“Well, we did agree that Auntie Sandy is much better than Auntie Theresa. And that her children are a big pain. You are not even safe in your room when they are around. The other weekend when I was with my dad, I heard they took my rat and put it on the pool table, and they hit the poor rat with the pool things. But Auntie Sandy... I like her a lot. Last year, we were against each other quite a lot. Now, all of a sudden, we are very nice to each other.”

“What was it like last year?” I ask.

“Last year I wasn’t used to house work. But now I am used to it. Now I know what to do, and how to clean. She asks us all to clean up. Imagine what our house would look like if she weren’t here. I like it when she says, ‘Please clean up your room.’ Then I go and clean my room. Before that I never used to clean my room much. And when you get to know her, she’s actually a very nice person. But it’s very hard to get to know her.”

We continue to chat for a while about her untidiness, and about how she and Sandy used to have differences about how clean and neat her room should be. Danielle explains how she used to get tired of washing the dishes. Then she wanders onto the topic of her friends and their sleepovers.

As I begin to wrap up the conversation, Danielle raises an important issue. She asks, “When you write that book that you are writing, could we please read it? And I want to know who will be reading that book as well because I am scared that some children might read that book and find out who my parents are. But I do really want to be in your magazine.”

I smile gently at her, and try to reassure her. She must be reassured that I will respect strict boundaries about disclosing their family's privacy and their anonymity.

"It's okay," I say. "No one will ever know who you are. I will give all of you different names, and I will change a few things so that no one will ever know that it is about you."

"I like the name Danielle," she says in her inimitably sweet manner.

“I’ll run away”

In the following narrative, Ryland speaks in the first person and I, the researcher, interpose my reflections. Ryland is a beautiful, soft-spoken nine-year old, somewhat shy and reserved at times, but indomitably courageous – if one reflects on his perception of his world.

One night my mother told me that a lady would be coming to visit us. This lady (she said) is writing a book about “people who live together as parents”. I did not like that at all, and I told my mother: “No, I don’t like that. Mom and Auntie Sandy’s lives are private, and what we as a family do, has nothing to do with anyone else.”

But my mother went on to explain a lot of stuff about how this lady’s book can help other children and other mothers... I can’t remember all the details of what she said, but after she had explained what it was all about, it sounded more or less okay to me. But then I thought: “But why must this lady come to us? To visit our house?” I thought about how many families there are in our city. So why can’t she visit other families – instead of us?

I was also very worried in case other people should see our names in her book and know that it was us she was writing about. I even made sure to check with the lady when she came about whether my mother would also be given a different name – like those that she said she would use for us. She told me that we would all be given different names and that nobody would recognise us or the situations in the book.

Then suddenly one night – there she was. I was quite surprised. She didn’t look at all like the kind of mean lady that I thought she would be. She even brought a game with her for all of us to play together. The fact that I had arranged for all my friends to come over didn’t bother her at all. She just mixed in with our family in a very friendly way and we all had a lot of fun.

After a while, she asked if my friends could leave. And I was thinking to myself, “Don’t leave... Please don’t leave...”. But they did leave. That’s when I decided to keep quiet and just let my brother and sister do all the talking. But after keeping quiet for a while, I just couldn’t help myself anymore. I just had to say something. Like, I wanted to tell the lady how important the punching bag is that my

brother bought for himself, because, if it weren't for that bag, my brother would not be as patient and quiet as he is now... I know!

I also wanted to tell her about how I cried all the time after my dad left our house. I just couldn't understand how my sister could be so happy when my parents divorced. I told my sister: "You are not supposed to be happy!"

When the lady asked us "So what is so nice about having two moms?", I was the first one to answer. I quickly said: "There is nothing wrong with it. I don't worry about it." I had hoped that that answer would satisfy her and that she would then ask us something else. But she wanted to know more. She asked me what I meant, and because my brother and sister had kept quiet, it felt to me as though I were alone with only her and that question in that room.

After I had answered her, I knew that my secret was out. But it actually felt good to share it and let it come out. I said to her: "No one talks about it because no one knows about it. It's only my family that knows about it, and a few other close people like Anna. It's not wrong! There is nothing wrong with it. We don't tell the children at school – and that's how I want to keep it. Now if Danielle (for example) goes and tells everyone, 'I've got two mothers at home', then we will have big problems to deal with."

The lady went on with her questions in a very friendly way. She asked: "Does anyone else know that you have two moms?" I just shook my head. Then, after a while, I said, "I haven't told anyone. Only my teacher knows about my other mother. We had to tell the teacher about her. But I didn't tell her about Auntie Sandy. "

The lady went on with her questions. She asked: "How do you describe your own family when you all talk about 'family lessons' in school?" I got a bit angry at that point, and I said: "I don't talk about it. If I say anything, I talk only about my mom and my dad because it is none of anyone's business!" It's like, if other children ask questions, I just keep quiet, or I say "I don't want to talk about it."

The lady looked at me and asked, "Why would that be a problem, do you think, Ryland?". So I said, "I don't want to tell the other kids because they will come and wara-wara me with questions like, 'Ryland, tell us about your two mothers.' I know that if I told them about my mothers, they would just keep on pestering me and talking about it all the time, and I wouldn't even be able to go and play like rugby with my friends. If I told them, they would never stop saying, like, Ryland, this, and Ryland, that. No! They, I know, would never stop asking me stupid questions – and teasing me. You don't know what those kids are like! I know that it

would be very, very bad for us if the kids at that school ever found out because they would never stop hassling me – just like they do with other kids at the school.”

I then tried to explain to the lady how bad it is at our school. I told her, “The blacks are horrible to me and to my friends. The girls hurt us and tell us to carry their suitcases. The older boys... If you bring something like a tennis ball or anything like that to school, you have to hand it over and give it to them forever.”

I was so upset at that stage. I remember that I was almost crying, and that my voice had become very, very soft. It is really bad at our school. So when she asked, “What do you think your friends will do if they find out that you have two moms?”, I told her: “They will push me around and tease me. They will laugh at me and never stop saying what a little wimp I am, and stuff like that.”

In fact, I could not tell her all the stuff that they would say to me. I also said to her: “I have seen it happen to other kids at our school! Like, we were talking about stuff. Then some other kid would hear. Then he would go and tell the others, and then everyone would tell everyone else. That’s why I have to keep it a secret, so that people don’t tease me.” I even said to the lady, “If anyone finds out, I will run away!”

The lady also asked me how much I worry about someone finding out that I have two moms. “Well”, I told her, “I worry about it everyday.” Which I do! I also told her, “I don’t even want to think about it... When I start to think about it, I just go out running or something like that. We also all play rugby in the square. And I’ve got other stuff to keep me busy. I’ve also got my work to think about. And other stuff. Yes, that helps me to forget.”

The lady also asked me about other situations, like when there are activities at school. Like, in the beginning of the year, there is a parents evening. She asked me if Auntie Sandy goes with my mom. I nearly went into a frenzy when she asked that! I said, “Oh no! No! Only one of them goes to those school meetings. I definitely don’t want both of them to go. If Auntie Sandy decides to go with my mom, I will run away from that school.”

Then she asked me if Auntie Sandy and mom held hands in the shopping mall. Well, of course, they don’t! Auntie Sandy loves to shop, and so she goes off shopping on her own. She enjoys shopping so much that she almost, like, runs around to look at the stuff.

The lady’s next question was about me. We were able to speak about why I say that I am untruthful. Well, the answer is simple. It’s because I have to be! Then the lady asked me, “Alright! But if a friend sees you in a shopping mall with your

mom and Auntie Sandy, and afterwards asks you who they both are, what will you say?”

I told her: “I will just say that Sandy is my auntie.” Then I told her what I said to my friend, the one who gets asthma. I told her: “I just say – if they ask – that Sandy is my auntie.” I remember once, my friend asked, the friend who gets the asthma attack.

Then the lady asked me: “Are your friends satisfied with that answer, Ryland?” I nodded, and said, “Yes, because they think that it is true.” Then the lady seemed to understand, and I was so relieved! So she said, “And that is why you say you’re untruthful.” I think that I smiled at her.

Annotation

Pre-interpretive thoughts...

Ryland’s narrative clearly indicates that he does not feel safe talking about his family structure, or talking about having two mothers who are involved in a same-gender parental partnership. He feels very strongly that it is a fact that needs to be kept secret at all times. He also imagines that the only way out for him personally, if anyone should ever find out the truth, would be to run away from his school. He feels that he would not be able to face up to his peers, his teachers, or even his friends. He doesn’t even begin to imagine what the girls or older boys or blacks would say if they were to confront him with this knowledge. This is the reason why he says “Nothing’s wrong... I don’t really worry about that... No one talks about it because no one knows about it.” He feels that, as long as no one knows about it, no one will talk about him having two mothers. He therefore feels that he does not need to worry about having two same-gender parents – so long as nobody knows. But he has no guarantee that no one inside (or outside) his circle will ever find out.

Ryland tries to guarantee the integrity of his personal narrative in relation to the attitudes of the broader community by simply keeping silent. He does not tell anyone, and he even tries to avoid thinking about it. The information about his family that he offers is limited to the divorce and the lady who might become his

new stepmother. But surely his teacher (if she is a person of integrity) should know about his mother's partner?

He also tells his friends that Sandy is an aunt. It was sad for me to hear him describing himself in our first session as being untruthful. When he told me that his friend had believed him when he had described Sandy as his "auntie", I could feel in him a degree of guilt and shyness.

Ryland's coping mechanism is not to tell the whole "truth" – and also to cosmeticize some of the factual details of his life if he cannot avoid talking. The tension I feel in him as he tries to balance keeping his secret and being truthful is almost unbearable. I sense it in his voice and in the atmosphere that surrounds him when he speaks. Ryland also tries to escape any contemplation of his secret by playing rugby and keeping himself occupied with his schoolwork. This defence against reality seems to me less than effective because he says he nevertheless thinks about it almost every day.

For me, this felt very much like the situation of a person of gay orientation locked in the proverbial closet. S/he obsesses constantly about it and worries about whether anyone will ever find out, or whether their secret will ever slip out. Even before I came, and his co-parents were preparing the children, Ryland consistently reacted with resistance and hostility to the news of my possible arrival. This confirms his level of anxiety and concern about privacy and nondisclosure.

Ryland perceives his school community as being full of racism, sexism, bullying, discrimination and hostility. He has spoken a few times about the racial conflicts at school, mentioning that the blacks calls them "whities", "boertjies" and "caramel boys". The incidents with the girls, that hurt them, as well the older boys who bully them, support his perception that the environment that he perceives around him is indeed hostile and discriminatory. His observation that children gossip compulsively ("every person tells everyone else") indicates his sensitivity and fear about what children might say about him if his "secret" slips out. He gives the impression that anyone in that environment who is even slightly different will be gossiped about and/or teased.

My engagement with Ryland left me with feelings of great sadness, compassion and an urge to protect him from all his fears. The image of a scared young boy, bitterly afraid of other's reactions, extremely sensitive to what others might think of him... In fact, a desperate child exhausted from hiding his secret, remains firmly in my mind.

“I would not choose to have my mother in any other way”

I sit down with my coffee and wonder how this interview with Kim will go. To break the ice, we begin to chat about all kinds of things: the December holiday with her mom, about her mom’s work in England, about the openness that exists between Kim and her mother, about how Kim’s mom told me how proud she is of her “student” daughter. Finally, the conversation veers towards Kim’s brother and the contrast between her and her brother that has so embittered Kim, about how he is caught up in drug addiction, and about how he neither works nor studies – despite everything Kim’s mother had done to give him the opportunity to join her in England, arrangements that cost her more British pounds than she cares to remember.

My reference to the experiences of children sets Kim off.

“I find it incredible,” says Kim, “that we are both children of the same mother because my brother is still extremely angry about everything that happened. He still cannot accept my mother as she is. He constantly blames my mother for the way in which he has turned out. He constantly maintains that she is totally to blame for everything that he has become. I, on the other hand, would not choose to have my mother in any other way. Well, that’s my point of view anyway, but my brother sees it completely differently.”

What I notice immediately is the anger in Kim’s voice, and how frustrated and angry she is with her brother. She even admits that she would like to hit him.

But I also hear in Kim’s talk the great care and concern that she feels for her mother. She confirms these conclusions by telling me that her brother never telephones their mother, and how sad their mother becomes when the brother does not phone her. Then Kim tells me how she chews his head off because he never phones their mother, and he merely replies, “I don’t want to phone her.” And this makes their mother terribly sad.

“But my brother always implies that his problems are far worse than anyone else’s, and he blames everything, every little thing, on someone else. And, of course, he imagines that every bad experience that he has is because of what she is.”

There is deep frustration, resentment and anger in Kim’s voice. “I mean, honestly, to blame everything that he does on my mother just because she happens to be gay.... Any person who believes nonsense like that deserves a damn good slap!”

“Look, it certainly was difficult at a stage,” Kim continues with a sigh. “Mom, I remember once overhearing you say that we children didn’t know anything about

you before the matter became public. But I can tell you that children know almost everything about their parents.” She laughs, embarrassed by the profound truth of what she has just revealed. Translated, it means that when children see the truth that lurks behind parental façades and deceptions, they have a certain hold over their parents. “Parents think that their children do not know about certain things – when they do,” says Kim defiantly. “I was very angry with you,” Kim tells her mother, “when that newspaper story came out.” Then Kim falls silent, perhaps stunned by the rawness of the wounds that she is once again bringing out into the light of day.

As I watch and listen, creating as best I can, a sympathetic, containing and completely non-judgemental space for interaction, I begin to recall the details of the story that appeared when the “secret” of Elina’s⁸ lesbianism came to light and subsequently made headlines on the front page of a Sunday morning newspaper. I also begin to feel, as far as I can, the anxiety, pain, stress, anger, hurt and bewilderment that accompanied this cruel public revelation of what should have remained a very private affair. These are events and situations that should definitely never have been placed under the harsh glare of public scrutiny. But public cruelty is alive and well, and will continue to be so long after we have gone.

Kim rallies to her point. “When that newspaper story became public, I got one hell of a lot of negative feedback. But my brother got none because naturally he’s a boy, and no one would pick a fight with him. But that is the reason why I had to enrol in Festive School, because of public antagonism.”

Elina says quietly, “I don’t think your brother got any flak. If he did, he never said anything about it to me.”

“Of course he didn’t,” Kim snaps irritably, as though such a fact should be blindingly obvious to any but the most obtuse.

“I was with him in Grade Seven and Grade Eight. In fact, we were good friends until he was in Grade Eleven and began to smoke too much “dagga” [marijuana] and... I won’t say what else.

“It was then that I decided, ‘Oh no. Let me get all these dreadful things out of my life. Well, as far as I can anyway.’

*“But he was already in Festive School when the sh*t hit the fan... Now I am really feeling sorry for myself... It was in all the newspapers.”*

Kim’s mother interrupts. “I think that your brother had problems as well, Kim. He just never talked about them.”

⁸ Elina is Kim’s mother.

I am amazed at the honesty and frankness of Kim's self-revelation under such painful circumstances. I feel a deep empathy for the loneliness and anguish that she must have experienced.

"Everything was in the newspapers," she repeats, "everything! And everyone... There was poor Alene. She's my best friend, Carien, and she is the most honest person I know. Even two months after the story broke, she still didn't know that anything out of the ordinary had happened. Then, two months after the newspaper reports, Lilly, another girl who was in our class, came to her and said, 'Listen, aren't you scared to visit Kim's home?' Then Alene asked, 'Why should I be?' And Lilly said, 'Because, you know, Kim's mother is like that.'

"Again Alene said, 'You are lying.' Then Alene came and asked me what was going on, and I said, 'I am not going to lie to you, what Lilly says is true.'

"Then do you know what? Alene didn't change at all, not one bit. She is one of the most endearing people I know. She knows everything about me – absolutely everything."

I am amazed at how spontaneously and honestly Kim shares her memories about the painful events of her family's first collective "coming out" experience. I note also the contrast between the two children's reactions to these events. I sense how painful it must have been for Kim to have been ostracised by some of her peers – and how grateful she must have been to have been supported by those who simply – and without any fuss – accepted her and her family for what they are.

I gently probe a bit further because I want to know more about the differences in the reactions of her peers to her revelation of her mother's sexual orientation.

"Kim, did anyone at school know about your mother's sexual orientation?" I ask.

Kim replies with some emphasis: "No! No one, no one, no one. My brother and I kept it completely to ourselves. At that time, I was in Grade Seven, and my brother was already in high school. Then the newspaper hit us with their story. Oh, my goodness!" She sighs at the memory of their pain and shock. "When my mother saw the effect that it was having on me, she said, 'Would you like me to take you out of that school?'

"I thought about that for a moment, then I thought to myself, 'It's the middle of the year, and I am really not prepared just to go and leave my own school now because of this whole drama'. You see, I honestly didn't think that it would attract so much attention. But you know what young kids are like! There's nothing they

love more than something sensational to gossip and snigger about. And I was, of course, still in primary school. But, yes, some of the children were saying things like 'You are going to become like your mother' and 'This girl is a sinful child of Satan.' But that's OK. I survived."

"Did they start to make trouble for you because your name was in the paper? Or did they know about your mother?" I ask.

"Everything was there," Kim answers laconically. "Name, photo, address."

"Can you still remember any specific reactions when you arrived at the school after the story broke?" I ask.

"To be honest, all I can really remember clearly is this one guy in the history class. He said to me: 'Your mother is gay, she is like this and does this-and-that and so on, you are going to become like your mother, and maybe you should not talk to other people because you will make friends...'. "

"I can't remember exactly what I said to him. But I picked up a chair with great force and was about to hit him with it. But then I stopped myself with the chair in mid-air. Instead, I just kicked him on the leg, and screamed at him: 'Leave me alone! Leave me alone!'"

"After that I was very, very angry with my mother because then everybody knew. I said things to her like, 'How could you do that to me? How could you? You've always had boyfriends. You married dad! If you're gay you should not have had children.'"

Kim's raises her voice angrily as she speaks, but then just as quickly she quietens herself down again. Then she adds calmly: "Well, in any event, that was my opinion. I was extremely angry with you, mom, for a long time. But, Carien, I never let her see my anger. No! That's not the way I am. Certainly not with my close family.

"Until Grade Ten. Then I went to this seminar. Before that I just thought, 'Why me? Why? Why? Why? It's my mother! Why did it happen to me?' But then I resolved it."

"What kind of seminar was it?" I ask.

"It was a Christian seminar for children of different ages who have problems. It was actually very nice. There were people there ready to help those who had problems. So I had to try to face forgiving my mother and that ... that woman. Linda. Yes, that was certainly difficult.

"But it happened! From that time on, I can tell you, it was as though a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Now I can actually talk to my mother when I

want to and I don't have to hide anything. So it was good. What I learned on that camp is: forgive and forget, and go on as if nothing has happened."

Kim sighs heavily. "But that woman, Linda..".

Elina, Kim's mother, clarifies this point. "She was the one who contacted the newspaper and gave them the story. It was nightmarish."

"It sure was," Kim agrees sadly.

Because neither of them offers any more information or comment about that incident, I decide to leave it for the moment and return to it later. We continue the conversation about Kim's friend, Alene, who has been very supportive all along.

At this point, Kim shares her views about the issue of disclosure.

"I still wouldn't tell just anyone. Let's say that Mary comes for a visit, Mary is my mom's partner, and while Mary is here, Ann comes to pick me up. If Ann then asks me who Mary is, I would not tell her that Mary is my moms' girlfriend. I would just say, 'She's a friend of my mother's.'

"You see, I don't know how my mother feels about the situation – whether or not she wants everyone to know. Quite frankly, I do not want everyone to know, because then it's like, 'Oh, now this is happening to me.' No. As far as I am concerned, disclosure is a personal matter – and should be dealt with by the person concerned."

Elina nods in support. "Yes, I agree. It should be a purely personal decision."

Kim continues, "Not everyone needs to know. And even if they do get to know, then it is, like, 'So what's the big deal?'"

"It's like in the case of Jo, one of my friends at the Technikon. I can see that it's incredibly difficult for him to come out to others as a gay man. But the weird thing is that anyone can see at a glance that he is gay." At this point Kim gives us an amusing but kindly demonstration of how Jo unconsciously gestures all the time in that loose-wrist way that a very small number of gay men affect without being able to prevent themselves.

"But he is adorable!" Kim continues. "So, just to give him an opportunity at disclosure and to help him to feel more at ease, I said to him, 'Listen, Jo, my own mother is gay, so I just want you to know that I won't ever betray you or tell people in the church.'

"So I told him, and there were also two other friends I told. But the telling always took place naturally and in the context of friendly conversations."

Elina interjects: "What about that other guy – the one who is so "femme" [effeminate in manner] – but who is not gay?"

Now I am interested because studies have shown that some heterosexual boys in school are often cruelly persecuted for being gay when they are not at all. I ask Kim if she would care to share this story with us.

“We were all sitting in Barchello’s,”⁹ she says, “and we were all just talking about families. One of the guys is gay, and so is his sister, so we were all listening to their stories about family visits, and we were also discussing the whole issue in a more general way. Then, at one point in the conversation, I said to all of them, ‘I am also a little bit used to that situation.’ “

Kim imparts this last sentence in a whisper. This leaves me wondering what the significance of her whispering these words is – and also why she is now openly using the word “gay” when before she has habitually used rather arch euphemisms such as “like this” or ‘it’ or ‘like that’. But she continues nevertheless.

“So yes, those are about the only people I have told. Jane doesn’t know and she doesn’t need to know.” Then Kim raises her voice and continues in an almost aggressive tone, “If people come to me in an open and straightforward way and say, ‘Listen here, is your mother gay?’ “

Kim pauses for a while, silent. Then, in a quiet voice, she says: “You know, if people attack me in that kind of way, first, I will smack them, then I will say, ‘Yes.’

“In any case I don’t mind if people that I don’t care about know or not. If some crazy stranger came up to me in the street and asked, ‘Is your mom gay?’, then, yes, I might say, ‘Yes. Now go away.’

But people in our closest circle, those people who matter to us, our friends and family – not all these people need to know because this is a personal matter. It’s our own small world – and they must just accept it or lump it.”

Kim suddenly announces that she has to terminate the interview because she has to get ready to leave for her part-time job as a waitress. So we quickly make arrangements for another interview. I also tactfully inquire whether it would be possible for me to see Kim alone next time. What I am keen to find out is whether she will report her experiences differently if her mother is not present and listening. For the time being, in any case, my plan is to focus more on Kim’s story and less on her brother’s. But even as I speak, I am wondering whether I should involve the brother as well. It could be a revealing exchange. On the other hand, I sense that I have a sufficient number of research partners for the time being, and Kim’s mother is manifesting some resistance to me contacting him – which is obviously meaningful

⁹ Restaurant.

in itself. But if that proves to be important in any way for my research, I can always follow it up later.

As I realise that my thoughts have wandered off on a tangent, I feel Kim's stare resting on me. I say my goodbyes and express my gratitude, and as I walk out, I feel a sense of satisfaction at what has been achieved. Both Kim and her mom have welcomed me most warmly and sincerely, and Kim has a real ability to share spontaneously regarding her and her family. So I leave, looking forward with anticipation to our next meeting.

When Kim and I meet up again, about two or three weeks later, she seems quite relaxed and also unconcerned about the tape recorder. She asks me a few questions about the process of writing and, then, after some general polite conversation, we begin to discuss her parents' divorce. She shares her anger about the fact that her mom ever got married at all.

"You know, I'm not sure, but I think that my dad is extremely hurt. I'm not even sure if I should tell you this, but just the other day my mom told me that my father knew that she was gay even before they got married. From what I can gather, she had a sexual experience – and then promised herself in remorse that she would never ever become involved in such evil and satanic things again. Then she married my dad. I think that's just terrible."

I immediately pick up on her last remark in spite of the crucial information she has just given me. "Why terrible?" I ask.

"My mother knew that she was never attracted to men," she asserts with some vehemence. "She told me that my father knew that she was gay even before they got married," she repeats.

We continue to discuss the various reasons that people have for getting married. In retrospect I realised that perhaps I was trying to reframe her feelings of the "terrible-ness" of what her parents had done in a way that would make it a more positive way for her.

Then she herself offers me this compassionate insight about the reasons why gay people might marry. "I am glad that my parents are divorced because everyday one hears stories about people who everyone knows are gay, but who remain married. These people are ruining their own lives! I mean, come on, just get divorced," she proclaims in her "no-nonsense" voice. Then she becomes more muted and adds: "You should not do it. It is just so unfair! It is unbelievably unfair – to the other person, and to the children, and what a dreadful example! Of course, the children know everything. Children always know everything about their parents."

I remember that she made this assertion in our previous meeting as well. This assertion must therefore be deeply significant for her. Why is she so keen to make me understand that children “know” and that parents cannot hide or pretend? She becomes quite adamant on this point. “Even a one-year-old baby can sense, listen, and feel that something is not right in such situations. You cannot pretend because there is just so much that is wrong... You can’t put a good face on it. It just doesn’t work. It really is terrible.”

Here is her “terrible-ness” again. But perhaps this insistence is Kim’s way of expressing her anger, confusion and her longing to be heard. But Kim is not yet finished with her “the-children-always-know” theme, and she elaborates.

“Last time when you were here, I heard my mother say that we did not know anything before that story got into the newspapers. Can you believe it? As if we didn’t know!

“If Linda were staying over for a weekend and they were taking (say) an afternoon nap, my brother and I used to crouch in front of their bedroom door... and we would peep through the keyhole. We were utterly intrigued. What was all this? Of course it was something completely new to us, and neither of us really understood completely what it all meant. But what we did know was that it was not the same as it used to be between my parents...”

“So, yes, we knew what was going on. But of course we never said anything at all.” As I listen, I think to myself, “Hmm, so even though children might not know the details, you can never fool them.”

Kim then elaborates on her first encounter with her mom’s first real relationship with a woman and her feelings and thoughts about how it was different. I sense the aura of secrecy that surrounded these events, the difficulty they had as they tried to clarify for themselves exactly what was happening, and adjust their lives and feelings to their new circumstances.

“It was so damned confusing,” Kim says, “because my mom had two or three boyfriends. And then they would go and eat out, and not take us along. Or if we were visiting friends, then they would go out. But after Linda arrived, we never had my mother to ourselves again. Never! Linda got all the attention – and her child, Rhyno. He was the naughtiest brat you could imagine. When he got up to mischief, which he did a lot, then we would always get into trouble. Always.

“There was one time when I had a bad stomach ache, and my mother didn’t even open the door. All these little things. I think that she failed us there. She never rejected us. No, ‘reject’ is too strong a word. But we were completely uninformed.

“She would just always tell us that her friend was staying over or whatever. We never knew when Linda would come or when she would leave. Sometimes she would stay for up to a month. But then, quite suddenly, she was staying with us permanently, and, of course, it’s my mother’s house – so we couldn’t say a word. My mom was very low-key about it. But she never explained anything to us until it reached the newspapers. I think that really affected my brother because he likes to be in control of things.”

I am interested in their concepts of knowing and not-knowing, of their intuition that something was new and different from what it was before, so I probe as to whether she and her brother ever talked to each other about it.

“Did you ever get into deep conversations about these events with your brother?” I ask.

“Not at all,” Kim replies. “We knew of course what was happening, but we never put it into words. Never. I just couldn’t find it in myself to say to him, ‘You know what? This is actually what is happening.’”

Kim also elaborates on how she found out for the first time, and how she did not know how to handle it.

“The very first time I found out, I simply didn’t know how to handle it,” she confides. “It happened when I was in Grade Six, and we had all gone on holiday to Franschoek. My brother and I were relaxing on the beach, and I decided to go back to the house to surprise them... You know, to give them a fright, to scare them. It was really just a practical joke.

“So I tip-toed in very, very quietly. As I came to the door of the lounge, I saw them both lying on the couch, and, well, I will leave what I saw to your imagination... I just stood there for a moment, absolutely silent, unable to move, just to take in what the hell was going on – because I had never actually seen anything like that in my entire life. And, of course, one of the people involved was my own mother.”

Kim starts to giggle, probably because she is embarrassed by the memory. But her laughter comes as quite a relief for me too because this is such extremely personal information. “Once I had got my head together, I tip-toed back very, very quietly, and went back to the front door. From there, I turned around, stood still, and shouted very loudly, ‘I’m back!’

“It was a shock. But that’s how I found out. Obviously, after that, I knew – or at least, I had some idea – about what this whole scene was about. I didn’t even tell my brother until I was in Grade Ten or Eleven. Fortunately he had not followed me

into the house, or else who knows how it may have ended? I kept very quiet about it, and I don't really want to tell my mom because it will obviously upset her. In any case, she still feels guilty about her orientation. We know that. My feeling is that she should just let go of her guilt. She can't feel guilty for the rest of her life! But it seems as though she can't forgive herself. It's terrible. It's really very, very hard on her."

Kim continues her narrative. "My mother and this Linda woman had real bitch-fights. My mom's other girlfriends were really nice, and I liked them all a lot. But Linda! So when I read in the newspaper that she had denied that they ever had fights, I became very angry.

"Apparently on the night when they broke up, she smashed our glass door. And then she went to the newspaper because my mother had told her that it was not working out."

"I cannot believe," I say to Kim, "that a newspaper would actually be interested in printing such a story."

But Kim is quick to put me in the picture. "Things were very different in those days. It was like, 'Do such people exist? Stone them to death!' It wasn't like it is today. It was terrible."

"What about the time when your mother had to tell you about their relationship because of the newspaper story? She must obviously have thought that it was the first time that you were being given this information?" I steer the conversation back towards the themes of secrecy and disclosure that are such an integral part of all of these events.

"Yes. But I just acted as though it was the first time we were finding out anything that we had not known before."

I am more or less satisfied with the information she has given me about the newspaper story and her own process of finding out that her mother is attracted to women. I see her acceptance of her mother's sexual orientation, and how strongly she desires her mother simply to accept what has happened and not to feel guilty anymore. I recall to myself how crucial that seminar was for her in Grade 10 or 11 when she came to accept her mother and the events that involved Linda and her mother. But I sense a lot of anger and frustration in how and what she says, even though she tries to hide it. I would now like to know something about what happened in the years in between. So I ask, "Please tell me about that period before the Grade Ten camp when you were not able to accept and forgive your mom."

Kim begins once again to reminisce, and once again I am astounded at the richness of what she is telling me. Although I am quite aware that I am deviating somewhat from the main line of my inquiry, I feel for the first time in my interviewing

process that I am obtaining material that resonates with the narrative literature that I have been reading. Kim, in any event, is unaware of the theoretical dimensions of my research.

“Look,” she says, “I have always been pleasant to my mother. As I said last time, I simply cannot be unkind to my closest family. So my mother never knew that I was angry with her. Never. Never. Never.” She pauses, and I wonder at her emphasis.

“In those four years after I first found out – from between Grade Six and Grade Ten – I didn’t once pray, I didn’t once read the Bible because I was talking to God in my heart and saying, ‘You have harmed me! Why are you doing this to me? Why me? Why me?’ “

My heart goes out to her. The shock and denial that culminated in her anger is so painfully evident. So I say, “And so you were not only angry with you’re your mother, but also with God?”

“Oh yes,” Kim agrees, “extremely angry. Bitterly angry. Then I decided to go on this camp. That was in Grade Ten. Yes, I went once in Grade Ten and once in Grade Eleven. It was at about that time, more or less. I went the first time because I wanted to be able to forgive these people. I was in a mess! I just wanted to get to a place where I would be able to forgive God, to forgive Linda, and to forgive my mother – because it was all just getting too much for me. And it was there that I found someone to whom I could talk to and with whom I could work through all this stuff.”

What Kim has disclosed has given me a much clearer understanding of what she was going through before she went to the camp. But I need to know more about how she managed to cope under such unbearable strain for so long without any help from anyone.

So I say, “Kim, I’m sorry to interrupt your flow of thought, but could you tell me how you came to realise that what was happening inside you was becoming too much for you?” If Kim can answer this question coherently, I will have some invaluable research information. I just hope that Kim will take this cue and not side-step the question as she sometimes does. My luck holds, and she elaborates as requested.

“It was, like, I couldn’t even look my mother straight in the eye because, you know, every time I made a real connection with my mother, I would just crack up. I would think, ‘This is my mother and I hate her.’ That was actually what was tearing

me apart. The fact of the matter is that, at heart, I am deeply Christian in my attitudes.

“So I continued to attend Sunday school, and I would sit there listening to the sermon, and think to myself, ‘Mr Minister, everything you are saying is a lie. I mean, how can a person as wonderful as my mother do that to me? You are lying.’ I got into the habit of being cynical about everything that I came into contact with. I was a terrible... I was so incredibly mad at the world.” The recollection of her pain is making Kim incoherent, and she makes a tightly clenched fist with her hand. It is indeed an apt and powerful symbol of what she feels.

As happened in our first meeting, I sense the incredible underlying anger that Kim allows to surface in the safe, containing conditions of our interviews. “I really was very destructive. I had so much hatred inside. Then one day I took some time off to be alone and think about the situation. I spoke to myself in more or less these words: ‘Now listen here, Kim. You just have to stop this, because your mother is going to be with you forever, and you cannot go on hating Linda for the rest of your life. In any case, she is out of your life now. It’s just high time that you made a change in your life. Forget and forgive. Forgive that woman. Just let it go. That is all in the past. And once you’ve done all that, you should straighten out your relationship with the Lord. Okay? So now, get ready to go on this camp.’ “

I continue to be deeply moved by the quality of Kim’s self-talk and the remarkable way in which she regulates her thoughts and feelings as she attempts to rationalise and make some sense of the events of those deeply stressful times and situations. I am also struck by her willingness to be independent, to accept responsibility for herself, and to take control over her life – and to stop casting herself in the role of victim.

Kim interrupts my thoughts as she begins to talk again with a mixture of amazement and excitement. “That camp was really great! It just helped me so much – in a way that I didn’t dream were possible. I can still remember that when I got back from the seminar, I immediately ‘phoned my mom. I started crying and said to her, ‘Mom, I have forgiven Linda!’ So she said to me, ‘What?’ ‘Mom, I said that I have forgiven Linda! It is just so amazing.’ I think she must have been collecting her thoughts (it must have been quite something for her to take in so quickly), but she eventually said, ‘Okay! That is just great...’ and a whole lot of other things that I can’t precisely remember now.

“But the best thing of all was that, since I went on that camp, all kinds of people began to say to me, ‘You know, Kim, since you went on that camp, you have become a much friendlier person.’ “

“Kim, could you please tell me more about how you actually managed to forgive those people, especially your mother?” I am very interested in the fact that she was able to forgive, and in the phenomenon of forgiveness generally because this is something that so many people (even sincerely religious people) struggle to achieve and establish at a deep level – and not only in relation to matters that concern sexual orientation and sexual acts.

What Kim tells me certainly is revealing. “You know what, after thinking about it more clearly, I realised that being gay is not a disease. It is not like HIV or AIDS or something that could have destroyed my mother’s life. It is just the way my mother is. Sure, it is something different from what the majority of people do, but it is totally “normal” for her and for people like her. That’s just how they are.

“Once I got clear about that, I could think about my mother and Linda more clearly. I realised then that my mom is still the same wonderful person who, on her own and without help, baked lasagne for the whole congregation of people who attended the gathering after my grandfather’s funeral.

“I realised that my mom was still the same lovable mom that she had always been before...”.

Kim stays silent for a while, before she continues. “She is just bisexual. Some people are just like that. Okay, it may be different from what most other people are, but no two things in this world are alike.

“So then I thought, ‘So why shouldn’t she just go for it? Why should she fake it, and pretend, and lie – like so many other people do just because they are too frightened to be who they really are?’ If that is your preference, you should have the courage to go with it.

“So then I decided: My mom is my mom. She is the one who has pulled me through when the going was tough. She is the one who has always stood beside me, no matter what. So why should her sexual preferences destroy my love for her now? Why should it matter? Is this thing going to change our lives?

“I can remember one night... It was after that seminar. We were just sitting and talking about this and that. And as she spoke, I realised that my mom still behaves in exactly the same way towards me now as she did when she was still married to my father. My mom even looks exactly the same, and she still dresses in the same way.” Kim smiles. “She is still an incredibly efficient and well organised person. It was then that I came to the conclusion: My mother is my mother. Why shouldn’t I continue to love her in exactly the same way that I always used to do when she and my dad were still together?”

“It was such a strong realisation. My mother is my mother, end of story. That, I think, is what my brother should also realise.

*“And that is why I actually admire gay people. They say, ‘F*** you’ to the unwritten laws of society. Of course everyone knows that a man and woman should establish a relationship and everything. People just stampede into marriage and other-sex relations without even thinking. But gay people (if they are honest enough to face what they really feel) will rather follow their hearts. They think for themselves, and they will turn to that kind of relationship which their heart tells them is true for them.*

“Most people suffer from a kind of tunnel vision, and they will simply go where society expects them to go. It can cause a tremendous amount of sorrow and heartache. I suppose people are afraid of...”

“Labels”, I add.

But it sounds as if Kim has found her vision of reality and continues with passion. “I have great respect for people who have enough courage to walk on a road that is different from the road that everyone else seems to be walking along.”

She pauses a moment, and then adds, “But the world has its own rules, and people should be aware of how those rules work. Do you understand what I mean?”

Silently, within myself, I answer, “No, I don’t understand, Kim. Where are you coming from now? Just a moment ago, you were telling me about how you accept your mother, and how you hold this enlightened view that gay people should be true to themselves. You’ve managed to accept that your mother is bisexual, but now you seem to be approving of secrecy and of hiding one’s true nature. So now we are back to what the Americans call ‘the closet’. But keep quiet, Carien. This is Kim’s story, and whether or not you approve of what she reveals, what is important here is to give Kim the freedom of disclosing her own views without interference.”

Kim looks at me thoughtfully before elaborating on what she is trying to get across. “I don’t like it,” she says quietly, “when two women walk hand-in-hand down the road. I don’t think that gay people should do things like that because society is not yet ready for that kind of freedom and openness. There are places, I suppose, in cities like Amsterdam, where one can do that kind of thing. But not here. Not yet anyway. So I think that gay people should try to behave as discreetly as possible. They can’t just behave as they would like to in public. We are all bound by the rules and expectations of our society. Gay people too. They can’t just behave as they want to in public. They should appreciate that.”

“Okay”, I say, “what would you do if you were walking with your mother and her lover in a shopping mall – and they were holding hands?”

"I would just tell them not to do it," Kim replies firmly. "Not now. That's just how life is," Kim continues. "You have to have respect for other people's feelings and conventions. That's what this whole thing is about – respect for other people's expectations, and a shopping mall is a public place, you see. There are always limits on what we as individuals and groups can do.

"Take another example. Let's say that you were to place a photograph of a naked woman in a pharmacy in order to sell suntan lotion. You just wouldn't do it! One has to have some respect for what other people might be exposed to against their will. That is what it is all about. If there are people around, you have to use your judgement and common sense. It might be something that they don't want to see. Not necessarily because it is wrong, but because people are just accustomed to certain public norms of behaviour. They have certain expectations, and we all abide by them. In any shopping centre, there will certainly always be people who would not want to see two women holding hands. So, then, we should just not do it. It's about respect for others. So, yes, rather don't do it in public until the society has reached that point where it will be something that will not offend anyone. Until we reach that stage, it is better to be discreet."

This time I utter my thoughts aloud – not with the intent of challenging Kim personally, but with the hope that she might define her ideas even more clearly.

"And so," I say, "how do you think that society will ever get to that 'that stage'? Also, who defines what society is? Who has the right to say that a husband, wife and children constitute an ideal towards which everyone else in society should strive?"

"You know," answers Kim, "I just don't know. I think that what happens is that one courageous person may come, then perhaps another, and then another, and then perhaps eventually all these people find each other, and make places where they can meet other people. The benefit that comes from this process is that people realise, 'Now I know that I'm not the only one in the world.'

"Then other people gradually start to become more and more relaxed about it because people write books about their experiences and that gives others like them courage and hope. There are so many books now on this topic, and even magazines.

"Look at Elton John, he is a role model for so many people, and he is gay. I think that because of this kind of thing, and the publicity that these people receive in the media, more and more people come round to accepting gay behaviour and gay relationships.

"The cumulative effect of all these things, great and small, is that people begin slowly, slowly to accept it because they become so used to it. I mean, gay

people are simply everywhere. You see them on television, in magazines, in clubs, everywhere. People are far more relaxed about this whole topic nowadays. They realise that gay people are real – and that they will not be going away. Take, for example, that article about my mom's relationship that was printed in the newspaper. Such an article will never make the headlines today. That is why I say that a time will definitely come...".

I complete her sentence in a humorous way by saying, "...when you will see two women lovingly holding hands in the street – and it will be perfectly normal."

For a moment Kim looks surprised, and then we both laugh together. Kim comments, "Yes! You may even walk with your children. But how you got them, I wouldn't know. But that too is coming."

"But you wouldn't want your mother to be one of them?" I suggest. Kim and I both laugh at this.

"Well..." she says, and then she becomes serious again. "But I still think that people should be discreet. They should do whatever they want to do – but at the right time and in the right place.

"Take another example. If you had shown people a computer in the 1910s, and what it could do, most people would have thought that you were an alien. But the times were not ready for it. Everything happens at the right time and in the right place, and everything evolves in its own time. Like, some people ask now: 'Why are many modern parents less strict with their children?' Who decided that that should happen? Well, no one decided it. It just happened because of the changes that took place in society over long periods of time. I personally think that our society is getting too permissive. Many people have become too lazy to decide for themselves whether something is right or wrong. We seem to accept that almost anything is right. But everything finds its own level. Goodness knows, my brother is not on the right road. There are basically three roads. There is a straight road, a detour road, and another road that twists and turns. Eventually all these roads lead to the same destination, and there is only one destination. There are not seventy destinations but only one, and that destination is the one at which we will all eventually arrive."

"What incredibly wise words for one so young," I think to myself. "They encapsulate a whole world view." I ask her whether she came to this realisation on the seminar. Kim responds enthusiastically to my question.

"You know, the first day of the seminar's programme was devoted to the topic of forgiveness. When I heard that, I just went up to people at random and told them the story about my mother, and do you know how much that helped me?"

She starts to giggle and imitate a certain kind of voice. “ ‘Come here please! Did you know that my mother is so-and-so...?’, and ‘Hi, please listen to me! My name is Kim, and do you know what...?’. I did it, I suppose, just to get it off my chest. I suppose, also, that I realised I would never see any of them again.”

“It was also a safe thing to do in that particular context?” I suggest.

She nods. “They could go and repeat it to someone else, but the person they told wouldn’t know me, and so it would make no difference. But I couldn’t go to my school friends and just pour my heart out to them because I would never know who they would tell. Do you see what I was doing? So that was really great. I had opportunities to talk to ministers and others, and eventually everything started to fall into place. Eventually I got to the place where I could forgive. So I did forgive my mother and others, and I did it sincerely – because I wanted to.

“Another thing: forgiveness does not mean that one has to forget and to act as if nothing has ever happened. Understanding that was very necessary for me. We received little cards on the camp with sayings on, and all of my little cards basically carried the message of, ‘just accept it, you are not going to be answered, live with it, everything is okay’.”

I ask Kim about the role that language played in the process.

“Okay, Kim, I would like to ask you now about how you framed your experience in words. Did you say that your mother is ‘so and so’, or did you say, ‘My mother is in love with another woman?’ “

“I said, ‘My mother really dislikes men. My mother only loves women!’“

“Oh, okay”, I reply, somewhat stunned by her directness.

She picks up on my silence. “It was most effective.”

“So what were the reactions?” I ask, wondering how the other children had reacted to her frankness.

“You know, the reactions of those people were not as vehement as they were when I told people back home – because my problems are minimal compared to the problems of these people. But, even so, there was one night when we were all sharing around the campfire and I found that I simply could not stand up and share what I wanted to say in front of everyone there. So I just said something like, ‘Listen, my mother is... a bit different’. Then I added that I had forgiven my mother and left it at that.”

I hear a tone of deep disappointment in her voice, as well as enormous empathy and compassion as she shares the life story of one of the other participants.

“But now,” I ask, “when you think back on that camp, why do you think that you couldn’t share it in front of everyone else? At that time, why was it okay or not okay to share, or would you have wanted it to have happened differently if that had been possible?”

Kim responds immediately, “Oh, in those days, it was such a totally alien topic. In fact, I was extremely scared because people used to assume that I was going to turn out like my mother, and then everyone started to treat me rather cautiously – except for Alene. Like, no one wanted to come for sleep overs anymore, just after the newspaper incident. I became very frightened because I began to think to myself that the people here at the camp would also begin to treat me in the same way like the people back home.

“I made some really great friends on that camp, people with whom I am still friendly today. But I was also scared that they would also begin to react oddly towards me. So I never told the people that I knew really well. I told them nothing! But when strangers came walking past – people I didn’t know at all – I would grab them by their coats, even if they just greeted me, and would say, ‘Come here, please. You must listen to me! I’m not giving you a choice.’ ”

I sense the relief in the theatrical violence of her acts. “You are going to listen now! You don’t have any choice in this matter!” (She must have been confronted by a few shocked faces.) I also sense the relief that she must have felt when she was at last able to break the silence and share what had burdened her for so long and talk to others about her mother.

At this point, I want to explore in more depth the different reactions that Kim had to deal with from her friends and peers at school.

“How did you experience the change from primary to high school? I mean, everyone in your primary school knew about your domestic situation. But then you had to face a whole new set of people in high school.”

“Well, that’s the reason why I went to Festive School. No one from my primary school was going there. I also went to stay in the hostel, and so I only saw the friends that I wanted to see on weekends. I didn’t bump into people by accident. And hostel life also changed me a lot. I was a bit overweight in Grade Seven, no, let’s face it – I was fat. I lost a lot of weight in Grades Eight and Nine, and I even began to model. So my life changed.

“You should have seen Peter, the guy in the history class that mocked me and told me that I was going to be like my mother, when he saw me again for the

first time in Grade Nine. I thought he was going to pass out! He was as quiet as a mouse.

“I went to ABC High School for Grade 11 and then to Witbank for Grade 12. But by then, I was no longer so bothered about my family background and I could cope without fear or shame with anything that arose.

“The people in ABC High School that I had known in primary school and that had caused trouble for me, were now all silent. None of them made any waves. In fact, my friends and I were the most respected pupils in the whole school and they all knew that. Alene and I used to talk openly about my situation and we did not regard it as weird in any way.

“In addition, all my friends in ABC were very open-minded about it, and no one thought anything about it.

“But there was this one occasion that I want to tell you about. As I was walking past one of my brother’s best friends, he said: ‘Look! She’s a lesbian’.

“I thought that they were talking about me, and, obviously, that was a topic about which I was most sensitive. I was so hurt that I started to cry. When my brother saw me crying, he came over and asked me what the matter was.

“I told him that people just could not stop making remarks about my mother’s situation.

“He just said, ‘Who said something?’ and I replied, ‘Max’.

“Even though Max was one of his best friends, he grabbed him by his lapels and threw him down onto the grass. ‘What do you think you’re doing to my sister?’ he yelled at Max. Kim imitates the way in which her brother shouted.

“So, you see, Carien, even at that stage, before his problems started and before I had even accepted it and we were both still very confused, my brother was still very protective of me. I really appreciated that.

“In Witbank, there was this one guy in our group that everyone thought was gay. We used to say to him, ‘Everyone thinks that you’re gay. When are you going to get a girlfriend?’ But it was really just a joke, and there was nothing nasty about it. When you reach Grade 11 and 12, everyone becomes far more relaxed about this topic.”

“So what did you tell the people in Witbank?” I ask.

“Nothing of interest, really. I would just talk about how my mother was working in London at that time, and about my dad and his new girlfriend. No one knew in Festive School either. Until today no one from that school knows the story. Because it is a single-gender school, I was scared that the children would gossip if they found out. But no one mentioned it. But there are some real bigots there – the

crowd who would, like, to stone gay people to death. There were a few girls who were like that, you know, gay, and I was very careful not to get involved with them. Like, if someone wanted to give me a hug when they were greeting me, I would move away. It's not that there's anything wrong with hugs. It's not wrong. But I just wanted them to stay away from me."

"So what are the attitudes these days?" I ask.

Kim replies, "I have seen so many different situations. Like, one of my friends, he's straight. But he hangs out with a group of guys who are gay. I mean, one of those guys is much more of a woman than I am. Obviously, he and his friends all know. But my friend, Jane, for example. She doesn't know, and I don't discuss it with her. Different people have different attitudes, and you can never be sure...".

At this point, Kim begins to talk about her brother again. I sense that she is really concerned about him, and would like to see him get better for his own and for his mother's sake, and, of course, for her own peace of mind as well. I let her talk freely while I listen attentively and my attitude demonstrates that I am supportive of her. It is hard for me to keep my distance as a researcher and not slide unconsciously into the therapeutic role. It is as though she is expressing some of her own unresolved anger by talking about him. I can see that this information will be too sensitive and too personal to include in my research.

At one stage, Kim pauses in her narrative and looks at me in earnest and says, "You know, I still don't know exactly what you're doing with all this information."

Then, even though I have explained my research process and aims to her, I think to myself that she might be feeling that perhaps she has shared too much. We continue chatting about what pseudonym we will use for her, and a few other details.

As I take my leave of her, I cannot help feeling a deep compassion for Kim, for her mother, and for her brother. At times things seem to go well and they get the acceptance they long for. Then, at other times, they become the unwilling victims of society's stereotypical thinking and prejudice. But in spite of their difficulties, they show a lot of love, compassion and concern for each other, and that, I believe, is what really matters. As Kim said, "some times things happen in your life, and then you overcome it".

As the last story came to an end, a deep silence fell on all those that had gathered in the Great Hall to listen to the Reading of the Narratives. Thus Carien completed her reading. Looking up at all those who had assembled, she said, "These are the representations of the reported experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. These are the stories that the children that I met shared with me."

Then the King stood up. Everyone looked at him and wondered what his reaction would be. This is what happened:

Bubble Five

Making sense of stories

Visual pointers to Bubble Five...

- Introduction to Bubble Five p.302

1st Ribbon p.305 Being okay



- In order of “appearance”:
 - Tom p.307
 - Luanne p.315
 - Kashni p.319
 - Carl p.325
 - Erid p.329
 - Danielle p.334
 - Kim p.338
 - Ryland p.345
- Comments on protection p.348
- Tying up Ribbon One p.349

2nd Ribbon p.357 Critical incidents



- Introductory comment p.357
- In order of “appearance”:
 - Carl p.357
 - Kashni p.361
 - Luanne p.363
 - Erid p.365
 - Tom p.366
 - Danielle p.370
 - Ryland p.372
 - Kim p.372
- Tying up Ribbon Two p.380

3rd Ribbon p.381 Contextual factors



- Introductory comment p.381
- Divorce and adoption p.381
- School context p.388
- Changing schools p.391
- Age p.393
- Openness in family relationships p.396
- Tying up Ribbon Three p.403

- Reflection on Bubble Five p.404

The King asked: "But what does this mean? How can I use this? What can we make of this?"

Bubble Five

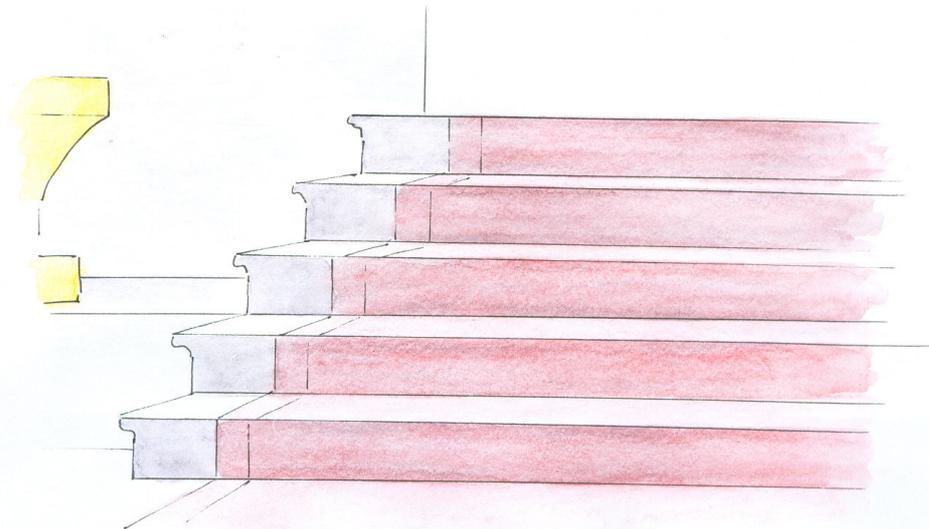
Making sense of stories

Carien (*approaching the King*): Your Majesty: I would appreciate it if I could address this gathering now. I would like to unpack my interpretation of what the children's stories mean. (*The King nods his assent.*)

Carien: Thank you, your Majesty. (*Carien turns towards the people and begins to talk.*)

The only proper way to begin this address is by asking myself the question: "What have I learnt from these children? What do I know now that I did not know before?"

Some of the people began to move closer to Carien so that they could hear her words. They formed a big but respectful circle around her and the King. All the others joined them and they sat down. Then she continued...



From the experiences that these children reported to me and from what I have observed, I derive an overall sense that they are all in principle okay with growing up in a same-gendered family. I must however ask myself how much they really allowed me to see. Were they only giving me selective glimpses into their lives? Or were they telling me everything of importance (relevant to this topic) about their lives? During the process of member checking, some of the families asked me not to reveal certain aspects of their stories. They were therefore dictating to some extent (consistent with my research design) what I could present and influencing the way in which I co-constructed the truth with them.

In spite of my unanswerable question about selective self-revelation (asked in the paragraph above), I intuit that they are all fundamentally okay with their family structure. On the other hand, I must also ask: Would it have ever been possible for any of them to say that they were *not* okay? (One has to bear in mind that they are all in the position of parent-dependent minors.) What would the consequences of saying that they were not okay have been? A same-gendered family is all that most of them know, and it is the *de facto* family constellation in which they all now live. I also note that for most of them the quality of the relationships that they now experience is far better than they were before they settled into same-gendered families.

This present okayness with their same-gendered family structure does not mean that they will not in the future encounter people who hold conservative (negative) views about homosexuality, or that they will never be confronted by friends or peers who are pruriently curious or merely uncomfortable about their same-gender parents. Having openly same-gender parents is something new in this society, and people need time to adapt to the idea. As I observed their okayness with their same-gender parents, and having heard their stories about how they had to cope with prejudice and teasing, I realised that I would need to reflect on my own stance as to how I view same-gendered families in this research project. If I position myself in

terms of Victoria Clarke's analytical framework,¹ which uses four dimensions of difference to analyse perspectives of lesbian parenting and families, I find that I place myself mainly in the "difference only because of oppression" category. This position forms part of the "sameness" discourse that maintains that sexuality is but one small part of any person's personality and that gayness is therefore equivalent to straightness for all practical purposes. This position obviously encourages the acceptance of same-gender parents because they form part of the richness of humanity in all its variety. In spite of this, same-gender parents and thus also their families are often constructed as *different* because of prejudice and homophobia. An acknowledgement of the power and structural differences that still exist in society, even though they are changing, therefore placed this viewpoint of mine in the "difference only because of oppression" category (Clarke, 2002b:211-216).

When I scrutinised Clarke's "different and transformative" category more carefully, I realised that I also share some of those viewpoints. Thus, I honour and do not apologise for same-gendered families, and I do believe that same-gender parents can make an exceptional and unique contribution to the nurturing of a new generation of young people – but that holding such a view does not preclude me from having equally positive views about heterosexual parents. I acknowledge that some lesbian/gay couples choose to be different, and that positioning oneself on the margins of society confers its own benefits (Clarke, 2002b:215). Even so, when I am being true to myself and when I listen to my inner voice, I believe that we can transform difference to *diversity*; otherness to *uniqueness*, and sameness to *interconnectedness*.

As I worked through the children's stories and immersed myself once again in their reported experiences, I realised that there exists a tension between the "nothingness" of growing up in a same-gendered family, and the need that the children have

¹ See Bubble Two for discussion of her framework. The four dimensions for analysing same-gender families according to her are (1) no difference, (2) different and transformative, (3) different only because of oppression,

to negotiate their position vis-à-vis the heteronormative discourse that still prevails in our society and cultures. It is obvious from their stories that the heteronormative discourse becomes visible through the thoughts and actions of their peers, close friends, other parents and teachers, and through the all-pervasiveness of mainstream (as opposed to countercultural or alternative) media. It is a challenge for children growing up in same-gendered families to legitimate their personal stories in such a way that they reach some kind of accommodation with the structural and social stories that function in society (Jenness & Richman, 2002; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

But let me take a closer look at the narratives of the children and unpack the above statements. Let's call this section:



Ribbon One



"Being okay with having two moms"

In examining the okayness of children growing up in a same-gendered family, I cannot separate it from the interactions they have with others. In the way in which they talk to their friends, their class mates or to other significant people, their okayness is displayed. Being okay becomes visible in how they share the phenomenon of having two mothers, linking being okay with disclosure or "coming out". I view disclosure as the process of revealing intimate personal information to others and the social perceptions inherent in that act (Rotenberg, 1995:1).

Why is it necessary for me to scrutinise disclosure? Because even though someone's sexual orientation is but one small part of that person's life, societal processes has

marginalized people that prefer partners of the same gender. As I have already noted in Bubble Two, heterosexuality is assumed to be the accepted, largely unquestioned and “natural” sexual orientation of people in our Westernised culture, while homosexuality has been constructed through two millennia of normative religious, sexual and medical discourse as “unnatural”, deviant, and worse. Because of the power and persuasiveness of these discourses that have been embedded in society, and the consequent labelling of homosexual behaviour and relationships as “unnatural” and sinful, most people who possess a gay sexual orientation have been silenced and marginalized by fear of the judicial and social punishments for their gay sexual orientation.

Since the middle 1960s and 1970s, this silence has been increasingly challenged, and the liberation of gay and lesbian people has become increasingly familiar through “coming out” stories (Adam, 2002; Creith, 1996; Gevisser, 1994; Plummer, 1995; Sedgwick, 1990). But because heteronormativity has been so effectively embedded in Western societies and mass consciousness, there still exists a prevailing conviction among the masses that an ideal *family* should be heterosexual. This means that the children of same-gendered parents often run the risk of being “closeted” about their same-gender parents and effectively silenced because of the stigmatisation of their same-gender parents and the general prejudice against gay sexual orientation among most conservative people. Consequently, the children of same-gender parents feel a strong pressure not to be open and relaxed about the exact nature of their same-gender parental set-up. They therefore also feel a very real pressure to decide whether to “come out” about their families or to remain “closeted” about their same-gender parents. Paechter (2000:398) states that “coming out” (in this context) describes the process of moving from “silence or deception about the sexual orientation of one’s parents to being open and even declarative about it”.

I now have to ask myself whether being okay (okayness) is a state that is achieved or whether it is a process. I lean more towards the belief that it is a *process*, thereby agreeing with Shallenberger (1996:325) who says that “coming out is an iterative and drawn-out process, repeated with each new person”. Bozett (1987:20) also reminds us that coming out is a process that has to be repeatedly engaged in. Eve Sedgwick (1990:67,68) notes that:

even at an individual level, there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally or economically or institutionally important to them..., and it is equally difficult for any interlocutor to guess whether the knowledge would seem important.

Even though the statements of these three authors relate to the coming out process of gay individuals themselves (as I noted in Bubble One), the “coming out” process that children undergo with reference to disclosing that they have same-gender parents shares many similarities with the experience of how individuals “come out” (or are “outed” by others – often as a political measure taken by gay activists against virulent homophobes) in society. O’Connell (1999:261) also states that the children of lesbian mothers are, like their mothers, equally vulnerable to the pressures of the cultures in which they live and, because of this, often become caught up in a maze of similar negotiations with family and friends.

As I therefore contemplate the okayness of these children, it seems unlikely that I will find full openness and disclosure at all times, even though that would certainly be the ideal. What one is probably more likely to find is that there will be degrees of comfort of being okay with having same-gender parents – degrees that permit many permutations, complexities, nuances and contradictions. I shall now examine my data and extract from it what my research partners revealed to me during the researcher process.

For **Tom**, having two mothers is “nothing” (*line 80,S2²*) “and everything is all right” (*line 83,S2; narrative p.9³*). This gives a clear indication of his okayness. In addition, all his friends and class mates know about his same-gendered family because he disclosed the fact publicly in a class in the year previous to my meeting him. His statement that “half of my friends who come here think it’s...You know...That it’s suppose to be like that” (*line 22,S2; narrative p.2*), and that they think “it’s fine, it’s normal, it’s nothing” (*line 15,S2; narrative p.1*) may also be indicative of his peer group acceptance. The consequences of this public disclosure for Tom are that he experiences acceptance from his peers and that he himself can function in a relaxed and carefree way. For example, he invites friends over without ever thinking or worrying about what they may say or think. Tom’s okayness is wrapped up in the acceptance of his friends. In his conversations with me, he mentioned that one of his friends “knows that it is no big deal” (*narrative p.9*) and that “my friends from school – they are all totally in love with this new arrangement” (*line 27,S2; narrative p.3*). This indicates the level of spontaneity that exists between Tom and his friends. Tom clearly experiences the “no-thing-ness”, and thus the okayness of having parents of the same-gender.

According to Tom, his own acceptance happened almost immediately. “When I realised for the first time that my mom was like that, I didn’t mind” (*lines 263-264,S1; narrative p.17*). Perhaps this readiness to accept the situation as it is contributes to the fact that he has no qualms about sharing this information with his friends. What makes Tom’s story even more remarkable is that his process of reaching okayness was supported by other children he met in similar situations. This suggests that children growing up in same-gendered families are speaking out more and more.

² This refers to the original transcript that can be found on the CD-ROM (Addendum F), Tom’s session 2, line 80.

³ This refers to the original transcript that can be found on the CD-ROM (Addendum F), Tom’s session 2, line 83, as well as to the narratives included in Addendum E, also on the CD-ROM. This then refers to the narrative of Tom, page 10, which will also include citing the line number and session as part of footnotes in this narrative.

Okay, one or two of my friends' dads are also, like, gay as well, and they would tell me about that... They just said that they prefer that to how it used to be before, and they love it... It's, like, their parents are gay, and they were trying to tell me how much easier life is for them because I was thinking that it would all be so much harder. I mean, they are really much happier now than they ever were before. They told me that having gay parents actually puts you in a better position. I could hear what they were saying but somehow it didn't make sense to me at that time. It was like 'you're trying to build your puzzle, you're trying to flip over the pieces and trying to put together your puzzle'. I couldn't quite get it. But now I do. (lines 237-249,S2; narrative p.21)

These words indicate that Tom did go through a period during which he was confused and even though his friends highlighted positive qualities of living in a same-gendered family, thus projecting approval and acceptance of his situation, it took some time to work out where he stood in relation to his mother's "new" orientation. Findings from Patterson (1992:50) and Wright (2001:285) suggest that having contact with peers in similar situations is frequently supportive. Vanfraussen et al. (2002:249) mention that the children in their study felt that children in other same-gendered families would better understand their situation. Ray and Gregory (2001:30) reported similar findings. They reported that the children of same-gendered families felt more comfortable talking to other children with same-gender parents because they knew that they would not be rejected. For Tom, having friends who were growing up in households that were also run by same-gender parents assisted his understanding as he went through the process of coming to terms with what was happening to his mother. These friends played an active part in guiding him on his journey towards acceptance.

Through Tom's explanation of how his friends came to know, I sense his easiness and openness. Tom experiences that his friends are okay with his mothers as he says "they just seem to know". He is also of the opinion that his friends ask him just to confirm what they already know.

I don't know, to be honest. I think that I told about half of them. The others, they just seemed to know. Some, like, just ask me. When they hear about the set-up, they're fine. They're cool with it. It's fine. It's normal. It's nothing. (lines 13-15,S2; narrative p.1)

I try to sum it up by saying, "So, if you do have to tell someone, it's just a once-off event. They confirm. They make sure, and then they..."

"Move on," Tom interjects, completing my sentence. (lines 38-39,S2; narrative p.5)

It seems as though Tom and his friends do not feel that coming from a same-gendered family is a big issue at all. His friends may (and do) ask if they are unsure, and Tom discloses the truth to any friend who comes to visit his home for the first time and who notices the same-gender parents. After that, they "move on". They discuss it quickly, and then it becomes "old news" that is basically uninteresting, unsensational and free from any covert negative emotional charge. That is why Tom can probably say: "Well, it's not a problem if they need to ask. I really don't mind. It's normal" (line 43,S2; narrative p.5.) This indicates to me that Tom knows that some questions or comments from his friends are a necessary part of their process of adapting to his family structure.

But of course, they don't have a problem, and they never react negatively. If I do happen to tell someone who hasn't been here before, he will just say something like 'Ja, I see. It's okay' – or something like that. But it's a matter of no real interest to them. We don't sit around and talk about it. It's just like something that happened a long time ago. (lines 32-37,S2; narrative p.5)

In Tom's elaboration on how he discloses to someone new or who comes to visit for the first time, I sense that being okay also highlights the contrast when others are not okay. This shows the different nuances of being okay/ not okay, for example when new friends are uneasy or unfamiliar with being in a same-gender household. This also seems to be the condition for Tom when he would intervene and disclose. Tom displays an awareness and ability to anticipate any apprehension, anxiety or uneasiness in others.

I would only mention it if someone were unfamiliar with the set-up in my house. When I invite my friends to my house, I want them to feel comfortable. So then, if they don't know about my two mothers, I tell them. It doesn't help if I keep secrets from them and then they have to wonder what is going on. But then they understand. I put them in the picture. My friends and I are all very straightforward with each other. It's our big thing... . (lines 45-48,S2; narrative p.6)

"No. I would tell them if I see that they are uncomfortable. Sometimes, a new friend arrives. They see my two moms. I don't know what they are thinking, but it feels

funny. It is as though they suspect something. They're like, 'I'm not suppose to be here, it's not the right place to be'." He smiles, but continues. "When they look a bit suspicious, I just tell them quietly what the set-up is."

"So you might see that they are feeling awkward?"

"Yes. And then I just explain what is going on. As soon I detect that they are feeling uncomfortable and not acting normal, then I tell them. I ask them what is wrong and when they withdraw a little, I ask them gently if they have a problem, if it's OK for them, and if I can explain how it works. Basically, I want them to feel okay. So if they feel unable to explain how we live to their parents, I tell them that my mom could contact their parents and tell them about our household – if that's what they would prefer." (lines 52-57,S2 & lines 319-322,S2; narrative p.6,7)

I would unpack this example in the following way. Tom displays a sensitivity in observing his friends and picking up on their non-verbal language, especially their facial expressions and general demeanour. He shows foresight and sensitivity in anticipating what they might be thinking. This enables him to take appropriate action that will help, guide and support his friends (and indirectly his same-gender parents). The way in which he discloses, and the times at which he chooses to disclose, show that even though he shares easily and without shame or fear, he does not share the fact that his mother is gay spontaneously or without a good reason. His disclosures are therefore actions that are preceded by careful consideration of the circumstances. When Tom discloses that he has same-gender parents to his friends, his purpose in doing so is to make his friends feel comfortable by resolving their uncertainty. When he observes indications of uncertainty, or discomfort, he takes these as cues to intervene and disclose. But he does not blurt out his disclosure in one set-piece speech. He gently questions his friend and waits for their response(s). He then deals in a kindly way with the reactions that follow and he also offers them support – even to the extent of being willing to obtain the cooperation of his mother(s) in presenting this knowledge to the outside world, represented in this case by his friends' parents. Disclosure in such cases serves to ease levels of discomfort and to enhance mutual understanding, honesty and openness. Tom is proud of the openness that exists among himself and his friends and he emphasises this by saying that they keep no "secrets" from each other. Disclosure in such circumstances serves Tom's interests because it safeguards and

maintains his friendships. Tom has realised that his friends might be averse to visiting him at home were they to feel uncomfortable in his domestic situation, and so his openness and having no “secrets” serves to secure his personal friendships.

Tom displays a certain degree of confidence (and perhaps even youthful naïveté) by believing that his friends’ parents will be as accepting and relaxed as their children are about a same-gendered family. His openness is really a kind of gamble with necessity, and, in his case, it is one that has paid off.

*“But what about your other friends’ parents? Do you know how they react or feel?”
“Oh, I don’t know. I suppose that they don’t even talk about it or know anything about it. My friends wouldn’t tell them because it’s certainly not important to them. They know everything is all right... We know everything about each other.” (lines 75-85,S2; narrative p.9)*

His explanation of how he tells his friends in a straightforward and direct manner, and how he invites them to make comments, indicates his confidence in his strategy:

I just say that my mom lives with another woman – and if they have a problem with that, then they must just tell me. My mothers won’t do anything, like anything funny, they are just normal people. (lines 32-34,S2; narrative p.5).

However, this last remark (“my mothers won’t do anything funny”) may reflect the stereotyped thinking of numerous people when they project their fantasy that gay people always harm or molest children, that they are perverse, and that they are not safe to be around (Clunis & Green, 2000:61). I wonder whether this remark indicates Tom’s own perceptions, or whether he has been asked questions like this in the past. It might simply be the case that Tom was merely trying to establish that his parental home is a safe place to be in, a place that – contrary to ignorant fantasies and projections – is both safe and secure. He might also be trying to assure his friends that the atmosphere in his home *now* is different from what it was when his own father (now divorced from his mother) was still living with them.

Another aspect that assists him to share easily and to invite friends home is that

it's no problem because my mom told me that she would behave normally – and she does. (line 312,S2; narrative p.3).

This is the second time that Tom mentions that his mothers will behave “normally”, and perhaps it represents his attempt to legitimise his current same-gender parents “normality” and therefore align them more nearly with the standards of a society in which parents never harm or molest children, are never perverse, and are always safe to be around. The patent untruth of this statement shows how sordid (even gothic) are the projections of people who entertain irrational prejudices against gay people in general, and gay parents in particular. I do not think that Tom makes this attempt consciously. But on a subconscious level at least he may be aware of how immersed significant sectors of our society are in simplistic binary thinking and how most of us passively consent to the labels with which gay people are dismissed and diminished (Greene, 2000:8). This fragment also serves to warn us of the extent to which the dichotomous prejudices of historical Western culture are burnt into our minds at the deepest levels and how even children use binary modes of thought to structure their experience while remaining unaware that “sexuality extends along so many dimensions that aren’t well described in terms of the gender of object-choice at all” (Sedgwick, 1990:35).

Tom’s answer on my probe as to what “behave normally” means, may indicate an attempt from Tom’s side to establish what Bozett (1987:34) has called “boundary control”. This could mean that Tom has asked his parents not to express their gayness either verbally or behaviourally in front of his friends – however harmless, innocent and even delightful such behaviour (such as holding hands) might be in itself. Or perhaps his mother assured him that she and her partner would behave “like friends” in front of *his* friends because they appreciated Tom’s need for restraint and discretion so that he would find it easier to maintain *his* social balance in an uncertain situation.

*“What does ‘behave normally’ mean to you, Tom?”
He smiles. “It’s, like, they’re friends.” (lines 313-314,S2; narrative p.4)*

Tom is aware of the visible indicators of being gay, such as, for example, holding hands. He personally has no problem with his parents holding hands and this serves to emphasise his own sense of being okay in both their public and private spheres. This phrase therefore does not support my previous conclusion that he might have asked his parents not to express their gayness. He does however realise that any visible or auditory evidence of his mothers' sexual orientation (however mild) might cause feelings of uneasiness in friends to whom he has not yet disclosed, and he therefore feels the need to disclose to them in order to maintain the equilibrium of his inner group of friends. He knows that his disclosure will serve to protect them against any "weird" (i.e. awkward) feelings. But Tom's disclosure also serves the purpose of maintaining coherence, loyalty and group solidarity among his most valued friends who all pride themselves in "having no secrets". Tom's disclosure therefore also serves to emphasise his loyalty to this group's ethic. In exchange for this, they feel "comfortable" and continue to associate with Tom and stay over at his house for "sleepovers".

"What do you think makes them feel awkward?" I ask.

"Well, it's an unusual situation. Let's say they are staying over here," Tom continues. "They might be staying here with me. And during the weekend, they might go round a corner and see my moms, like, holding hands. And then, because they're not used to it, they might think, 'Wow! That's weird! Two women holding hands...'

"...Okay. So have you asked your moms not to hold hands?"

"No!" Tom seems astounded that I should even ask such a question. But he explains nevertheless... "After I explain to them what the family structure is, we all just carry on living our lives and enjoying ourselves like we always do. We relax, and go on playing – just like other kids do. We're not any different from other kids. We go into each others cupboards and stuff like that." (lines 319-328 & 56-58,S2; narrative p.7-8)

The apparent discontinuity between "behaving normally like friends" and Tom's acceptance of his mothers' holding hands might make sense because even though his mothers have agreed to behave "like friends" in front of his friends, the friends might wander through the house and "go round a corner". If people are staying over in their house, there is really no way in which his parents can make allowance for this kind of unexpected event and make concessions to Tom without being

thoroughly untrue to themselves in their own house. Tom deals with this possibility and respects the limits of his parents' willing concealment by being proactive in disclosing to his friends. The converse of this seemingly ingenious solution is that what Tom understands as "normal" might be somewhat different from what his friends might regard as normal. Although children in general are not usually comfortable with public displays of affection on the part of their parents in our culture, some kinds of public display are more acceptable to them than other forms. Thus while children might feel comfortable with their parents discreetly holding hands in public, they would probably feel uncomfortable were their parents to engage in a prolonged and very intimate public kiss. It might just be that Tom associates holding hands with friendship, and that he feels comfortable with his two mothers' holding hands as a couple because holding hands (in our culture at least) is not necessarily a sexual or pre-sexual act. It could just as easily be construed as a friendly act between two people who are merely friends. I will not pursue the interesting point here that while *women* holding hands in our Westernised society may be construed merely as a sign of friendship, it is less likely that two *men* holding hands would be so easily dismissed or rationalised (unless it were to take place in some structured group such as a political protest or a prayer meeting where the holding of hands by men could be construed as non-erotic or even non-affectionate).

Making sense of **Luanne's** story unfolds for me into a story of a child who has grown up with two mothers and who has had a circle of friends who are so accustomed to her same-gender parents arrangement that "they don't actually talk about" her parents anymore because it does not "bother them". She has lived in "total" disclosure with her friends she had since they were in nursery school together and has never been under pressure to answer "awkward" questions or deal with hostile or critical comments.

"Do the kids around here sometimes talk about your two moms? Or perhaps ask you any searching questions?"

"No, never," Luanne replies brightly.

I find Luanne's response slightly incredible, and so I say, "Really? Nothing at all? Not even any spontaneous comments?"

Luanne seems slightly bemused. "Hmm. Sometimes they might say, 'Where are your two moms?' or something like that. But, no. They don't actually talk about my two moms." (lines 94-103,S1; narrative p.2).

My friends are used to the set-up. (line 31,S5; narrative p.5).

"Please tell me something about your nursery school or primary school days. Did the children ever say anything unkind to you about your mothers? Were they perhaps curious? Did they ask you questions of any kind?"

Luanne answers firmly. "No, the children just carried on as usual. It wouldn't have bothered me if they had."

"But do you think that it might bother them?"

"Who? My friends? No, one of my friend's mom is also gay. But her partner died recently, and they had anyway been separated for a long time. Now, she and her mom live alone together. So, you see, I'm not the only one." (lines 164-177,S3; narrative p.4,5).

The consequence of all this for Luanne is that she has never had to disclose or "come out" about her same-gender parents to others. There was never any need for her to do so, and since she has stayed with her close circle of friends, there is no need today. Patterson (1992:50) explains the dynamics of this situation. She asserts that the *younger* children are when a same-gendered family is formed, the easier it is for them to reach acceptance and to view their family as just another one of many possible diverse family constellations. Tasker and Golombok (1997:90) also support this by saying that children in same-gendered families may be less likely to experience teasing if they have close friends and these friends are accepting of the family.

As with Tom, Luanne finds solace in knowing that there are other same-gendered families. As stated before, the research of Ray and Gregory (2001:30) revealed that children from same-gendered families valued knowing other children with gay or lesbian parents and enjoyed being with other children who lived in similar family arrangements. Luanne's intimate circle of friends comprises seven members. Another one of these seven girls is growing up in a same-gendered family as well. This led me to wonder about the views and perceptions of the other five friends in

this group. Did having two friends from same-gendered families help them to come to understand that same-gendered families are nothing extraordinary or reprehensible? Or could one ascribe this relaxed acceptance to a process of parental coaching of their perceptions – or perhaps to their own personality styles? Providing an answer is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, but may be explored in follow-up studies.

As far as Luanne can recall, she has never encountered any teasing specifically aimed at her. Only once a friend was not allowed to come to their house for a while (lines 18-19:1, Reflection notes Jan - March 2004), but apart from that, everyone around her has accepted it. The openness of her parents, in being upfront with the various schools might have enabled her to escape incidents of teasing.

I recall her parents saying that they had approached the principal of the primary school and had asked him whether their sexual orientation as co-parents would be a problem for the school, and he had firmly said "No."

..."Hannah sometimes goes to school functions," says Luanne, "and on parents' evening, they go together as my two moms." (lines 23-34,S6; narrative p.6)

Since the atmosphere of okayness and openness in which Luanne lives is supported by a close circle of friends, my question would be: "How will she react when she is confronted with a question, or a remark, by some or other curious or hostile person?" An incident that happened with a little girl who lives close to their home, reveals some aspects of a possible answer:

"She went and said to her mother that she also wants two mothers like me, and she asked Hannah, 'Are you Luanne's second mom? Or her other mom?' But Hannah said, 'No, I am Luanne's aunt'. But the little girl refused to believe her, and she insisted, 'No! You are Luanne's other mommy' until Hannah eventually had to say, 'Okay, okay, I am her other mom.' Then this little kid said, 'Oh, that's so cool!'" (lines 4-13,S7; narrative p.16)

The reaction of her mother (Hannah) suggests that it was difficult for her to perceive what the "best" way might be to answer questions like this, especially coming from a little girl. Luanne provides an answer:

When we meet someone that we don't know and whose attitudes are unknown to us, we just say that Hannah is my aunt, so no one actually knows. (lines 18-26,S5; narrative p.13)

She also explains it in terms of new people she might meet at school:

I am not going to say that my mother has a girlfriend. I just keep quiet... I would just tell them that she is my aunt because I never know whether they will reject me or not because of that, or perhaps become judgemental or unpleasant. It is not necessary for everyone to know these details. But if they ask me directly, I will tell them. (lines 20-21, 65,S6 & footnote 18, narrative p.14)

Luanne has therefore somehow acquired a practical and thoughtful awareness of how and why people may judge and reject *her* because of her same-gender parents. Because of this, she constructs her co-mother as her “aunt” when she meets new people. This phenomenon is quite frequently referred to in the literature (although most researchers refer back to Bozett’s strategies of disclosure that were conceived in 1980). What happens is that either the children or the parents themselves will refer to the social mother as an “aunt” or a “friend” in order to discourage other people from asking probing or potentially controversial questions (Bozett, 1980; Johnson & O’Connor, 2001; Paechter, 2001; Pennington, 1987; Ray & Gregory, 2001; Vanfraussen et al., 2002). I call this strategy “masked disclosure”. Masked disclosure means that children change significant details during disclosure either in order to protect themselves or their mothers against possible prejudice, or to protect and shield the other person who might feel uncomfortable about the concept and reality of same-gender parents.

Luanne’s revelation that “no one actually knows” is an ironic explanation for her sense of *apparently* total okayness. I say “apparently” because a few other statements that Luanne made (see below) puzzle me, and I would like to examine them even though I do not want to burden a few remarks of hers with too heavy a load of interpretation. What they suggest however is that she *does* in fact encounter situations that are in strong contrast to the freedom and openness that she enjoys in her intimate and private circles. The fact that she also keeps quiet and expects *other* people to confront or question her seems to me an indication that she is taking

practical steps to protect herself. She rationalises her behaviour in this regard in the following manner:

We just don't want to advertise that my parents are gay. We all just want to get on with our everyday lives, and we hardly ever bring up questions like this when we are alone... Not everyone is open and okay with this kind of situation. (footnote 22, narrative p.17)

The silence that Luanne prefers to exercise outside the safety of her intimate circles and the fact that she does not deliberately disclose except if someone asks her directly, and the fact that they construct her co-mom as an "aunt", signifies that she is protecting herself, her mothers, and even the other people who are involved with her and their domestic situation. But why should she feel this need to protect? Her observation that "not everyone is open and okay" reveals that she is quite aware of prejudice and discrimination and has therefore resolved to protect herself and those she cares for against the possibility of being ridiculed or worse. Another explanation might be that because different people have different moral standards, discretion acts an effective strategy to protect effective relationships and promote peace and harmony in her situation. In spite of these strategies, Luanne does not necessarily deny who or what her parents are. On the contrary, her effective use of what is a sensible strategy in a largely hostile or indifferent world means that she possesses an intelligent and well-informed understanding of her parents' sexual orientation and of how this might be disturbing to people in the "outside" world.

What is even more revealing and in stronger contrast to her apparent sense of being okay is a fundamental concern that troubles her:

But it is actually wrong to be gay. The Bible says so. (lines 178-180,S3; narrative p.7)

Her statement highlights the "link between religion and sexuality" (Evans, 2002:108) that has defined homosexuality since this term was invented in the late 1800s. Bozett (1987:48) observes that homonegative reactions like these indicate the diverse range of reactions a child may have to homosexuality and to having a gay mother

(or father). While this reflects the attitudes and feelings of various sectors of society towards homosexuality in general, it also reveals to us something of Luanne's inner struggle, and suggests the possibility of being okay on different levels. I have no doubt that she feels okay in the safety of her intimate friends, but feeling and experiencing the hostility expressed by others in situations in the world outside her inner circles, especially when confronted by homophobic discourses in society at large (such as the fundamentalist interpretation of homosexuality as a sin), causes her to feel less okay even though she may have reached a successful accommodation with society and people in general.

Despite this, Luanne lives her daily life without being confronted by people who view her same-gendered family negatively. Because her intimate and private circle of friends have come to know and love her family, she is able to live and work without having to think about her family structure except on rare occasions. But when these occasions arise, she has a successful way of dealing with negativity. This implies a certain vigilance on her part, even though it may not be apparent in her manner or her lifestyle. Luanne says:

Everyone that knows us, knows. (footnote 22, narrative p.17)

Kashni and her brother, Erid are growing up with parents who are both open and out. The manner in which they introduced me at our first meeting showed me how their parents' sexuality is a natural and accepted part of their lives. Thus, for example, the use of the word "lesbian" is a natural part of any given conversation. Anriëtte, one of the mothers, introduced me to the children and said: "Carien is here to look at gay families, gay parents with children, and mothers who are lesbians" (lines 15-17, Kashni Erid Parents S1; narrative p.1). Other studies have shown how a positive sense of well-being and an unqualified acceptance of the parents' own sexual orientation as a gay or lesbian person is an essential precondition for supporting one's children and for teaching them how to deal effectively with the outside world (Dunne, 2000; Patterson, 1992; Patterson, 1997). This openness displayed by her parents forms the backdrop against which I will

look at Kashni's story. Johnson and O'Connor (2001:177) comment that the level of a parent's *comfort* with their family configuration helps all concerned to be "out" as a family. They have found that if lesbian mothers are open and unconcerned about their same-gendered family, people respond to them in a mostly positive way.

Kashni does not express her own sense of being okay directly, but filters it through her observations of her peers and her friend's reactions.

I can feel it sometimes when I talk about my parents. Or, if I invite them to my house and then sense that my invitation has made them feel uncomfortable. Or sometimes I invite them and I can see that they would prefer not to come... . (lines 74-76,S1; narrative p.6)

Since she spontaneously talks about her parents' sexual orientation in the company of her friends, I may be justified in assuming that she is okay with having same-gendered parents. She does not hide information from her friends or feel the need to change significant details about her situation. At the same time, Kashni's sense of being okay with her situation and her same-gender parents' sexuality is qualified by her apprehension of other people's reactions. She is aware of the feelings and reactions of others and possesses a finely developed sense (as does Tom) of whether or not other people may be feeling uneasy or uncomfortable. An analysis of her ability to sense the perceptions of others of her family situation reveals the complexity of the disclosure process and how difficult it sometimes is to decide who to tell and when to raise the topic in conversation. Sometimes she gets a "feeling" (intuition). At other times, she "reads" other people's non-verbal cues. Sometimes she directly notices their uneasiness and this confirms her own intuition that all is not well. Kashni seems able to perceive very quickly how "open" a person may be, and she displays a remarkable ability to reflect on what is happening in any given situation and to assess alternative explanations for someone else's behavioural or non-verbal cues.

Some people are just uncomfortable with it, and, yes, that can sometimes create a difficult situation. (lines 64-65,S1; narrative p.5).

I could just sense it. She always had excuses. There was always some or other reason why she couldn't come. Then I knew. You suddenly realise what is happening. (lines 231-232,S1; narrative p.9)

These difficult situations are even more sensitive when an important relationship is at stake and therefore needs to be carefully negotiated. With regard to friendships she says:

Especially, you know, when the people who are feeling awkward or embarrassed are your friends. Then I have to make a decision about my friendship with them because obviously it's not going to work out if I have friends who are not on the same wavelength as I am. (lines 64-67,S1; narrative p.5)

Kashni indicates with the above statement that she knows that she cannot continue or build a relationship with a friend if the other person does not understand her family's structure or, knowing about it, is not comfortable with all that it implies. She realises this before entering into a relationship and consciously acknowledges that there would not be much of a future for such relationship from her point of view. By doing this, she both protects and cares for herself and for the other person involved.

Kashni distinguishes between more ordinary day-to-day acquaintances with whom she is friendly, but with whom she does not form intimate friendships, and others (close friends) with whom she is friendly and who visit her in her home. Understandably she focuses more on her close friends rather than other class mates, and is therefore more concerned about disclosing to them in person. She is not concerned even when her other friends find out about her parent's sexuality. What probably reinforces her sense of being okay with her other friends is her realisation that they will probably also react positively to her family.

But then I have other friends, certain friends I'm not really close to. I mean, I am friendly with them, but I don't talk to them the whole day and they don't come to my home. Which doesn't bother me... If they hear about my parents it's fine. They're usually fine with it as well. But in the case of my best friends, those friends I talk to every day, then I must tell them. (lines 183-189,S1; narrative p.11, 12)

She elaborates on this "must tell" by saying:

...otherwise I just feel uncomfortable. If they come to my home and they don't understand the situation before the time, then it could be very uncomfortable for them, especially if they have come for a sleep-over. (lines 191-193,S1; narrative p.12)

This remark indicates that disclosing for Kashni is a prerequisite for being okay. This correlates with what Buhrmester and Prager (1995: 30) have established: that self-disclosure addresses some very basic concerns of the discloser and serves the function of enhancing relationship development. According to Bozett (1988:558), the preparation of friends *before* they become the recipients of a possible full disclosure is also a common feature of the disclosure process among children. Kashni's sensitivity towards others, and especially towards her friends, enables her to help and guide them by giving them information beforehand so that they will not be surprised or overwhelmed. I also discern a caring and protective attitude in Kashni in wanting to disclose to her friends before they hear about her same-gender parents and in caring about how they will handle any (possible) unforeseen circumstances. She therefore assumes the role of an active agent in helping her friends to understand and adjust. This makes her an active agent in negotiating the construction of her situation with the outside world. Kashni also uses a distinctively straightforward manner when she discloses. "I just say to them upfront: 'Listen, I have two mothers, okay?' " (lines 78-79,S1; narrative p.6).

Disclosure also becomes an important factor for Kashni in the relationship when she meets someone (a boy) to whom she feels attracted. Disclosure becomes once again a prerequisite for her being okay, and she expresses this most eloquently in the following quotation:

I liked this one guy... We got on very well, but I didn't know how he felt about me. So I decided there and then that I just had to tell him because it simply couldn't work if he didn't know and accept it. I knew that if I were straightforward with him and told him the truth, then it would be okay. I was very worried... But he was fine with it. (lines 90-93,S1; narrative p.10)

From this statement I conclude that it is fundamentally important to her that if she likes someone and wants to be in a relationship with him, he has to accept her

family situation, be okay with it, and not reject her or any of her family in any way. The maturity of her approach to this fact of her family life is revealed by her realisation that she cannot hide this information. She realises that she *needs* to disclose the truth and be totally straightforward and open while knowing all the while that by making such a disclosure, she may very well lose the love and acceptance of someone for whom she cares – someone with whom she might otherwise have had an intimate relationship.

In the following section I will demonstrate how Kashni reveals how difficult and complex the process of disclosure is. Even though she knows that disclosing is a necessary precondition if relationships are to develop, the actual process of deciding when to disclose and under what circumstances, and foreseeing any possible reactions, is more difficult to decide with any clarity and confidence. In her narrative, Kashni describes three possible scenarios she had encountered. Sometimes she says that she can share easily. This is when the recipient is open, tolerant and shows no signs of hostility or disapproval. In such circumstances, she finds that she is able to disclose in a straightforward and relaxed manner. In other cases something may happen that she identifies as an opportunity that gives her a pretext for disclosure. And at yet other times, she is perplexed about how to approach another person. She has difficulty in ascertaining what might happen as a result of her disclosure to such people, and she therefore gives herself time to get to know such a person better as she tries to determine the most beneficial moment for disclosure. In these cases, she becomes extremely sensitive to whether that person is open-minded and non-judgemental, or not.

Sometimes one just doesn't know. Sometimes an opportunity comes up and then you can tell them about the situation. And sometimes you can just tell another person about it all immediately. (lines 95-96,S1; narrative p.10)

If a friend of yours is, like, very open and tolerant... then you can speak out without any problems at all. Or if you can see where a person is coming from, and they are not hostile, you can talk to them openly. But some people are not easy to "read", especially (for me) if it's a boy and I don't know him very well. I first have to take some time to get to know him and to understand him – what he is like and what kind

of person he is – before I can explain our family situation... If he is, like, heavy conservative... then I don't tell him because it simply won't work out. So then I have to leave him. But in other cases, where they are open, you just tell him or her straight away. (lines 99-106,S1; narrative p.10,11).

She has possibly obtained her clear understanding of the difference between how more liberal and open-minded people will react and how more conservative and fundamentalist people will react to her family structure from her exposure to different schools in which these polar opposite attitudes were prevalent in the collective culture of the schools concerned. While I will explore this in more detail in Ribbon Three, her description of the following event shows the influence that more conservative and/or judgemental remarks have on her openness and willingness to disclose, as well as on her friendships.

Like, on this one particular day we were all standing at the bus stop, and a guy comes walking past, with his arm around a girl. One could see that they were, like, together. Maybe even married or something like that. Then some of the girls started making spiteful comments and noises. Why? Because the guy was black and the girl was white. Then I remembered my previous school where we white girls dated black guys and it didn't matter at all... So I stood there thinking to myself, 'If race is such a big issue for you guys, and you can't handle that, then how on earth will I be able to tell you that my parents are gay?' I looked at them... and I thought to myself: 'Do I really want to be friends with any of you?' So I pick my friends very carefully, and I don't hang out with children who are like that. If I have to be with them, I just keep quiet and I say nothing. (lines 18-32,S2; narrative p.6,7)

Kashni seems to know when silence is the best strategy to cope with stereotypical perceptions. She would also try, whenever possible, to avoid the company of children who are prejudiced. The anecdote above reflects her sensitivity to other forms of discrimination. She realises this by means of syllogistic reasoning and deduces the possible consequences of this knowledge for her own family as well.

The supportive environment provided by her friends sustains Kashni. Their acceptance and approval give her positive feedback and reinforce her sense of being okay.

[To] ... a question of mine, "What do your friends say when they come to sleep over?" she replies, "Nothing. They're just fine with it. They just call my moms

'Aunty Anriëtte' and 'Aunty Zané'. No, they're quite happy with it.' (lines 121-123,S1; narrative p.12)

Some people say it's cool, it's just got to be cool – having two mothers as parents. (lines 126-127,S1; narrative p.12)

'... I have two mothers, okay.' And then, it's like, 'Oh, alright then.' And then there're no problems after that. (lines 78-79,S1; narrative p.6)

Kashni also highlights another significant aspect of the social discourse that surrounds disclosure and acceptance or rejection, and this is that prejudice often emanates from her friends' *parents* rather than from her friends themselves.

But, um, yes, I mean, I think the children are okay about it. But their parents.... Like there was one friend of mine who – at first – was fine with everything. Then she went and told her parents about my parents. And suddenly she couldn't come for sleepovers anymore. (lines 226-229,S1; narrative p.9)

The following remark suggests that she experiences that *most people* accept her family structure, although the phrase itself indicates that not everyone does.

But most of them are quite okay with it. If they know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all. (lines 67-69,S1; narrative p.5)

This might explain the caution with which she approaches encounters with new people in her life. It also underlies her stance that even though she is okay with having same-gendered parents, she needs the other person to know about it and be open and comfortable with it. If they are not comfortable with it, she knows that fundamental problems will arise. It seems that she experiences mostly acceptance in her encounters and this must no doubt serve to reinforce her sense of being okay.

I personally wonder how much of her own disclosure has to do with the fact that both her *parents* are so open and out. Would it have been easier for her if they had been more closeted?

When I examine **Carl's** story, my answer to the above question might be, "Not necessarily." His parents, one could say, "play it safe". They act to protect themselves and their son against possible prejudice. Here are some of their remarks:

But we try not to give anyone any reason to tease Carl. (line 271,S3; narrative p.5)

We are very careful in front of other people, especially when Carl's friends come to visit. (lines 82-83,S1; narrative p.4)

We would never dream of holding each other affectionately in public places such as his school or shopping centres. We understand boundaries and the limits of public toleration. We never get involved in confrontations. No, there is never anything like that. (lines 48-50,55-56,S1; narrative p.4)

Lott-Whitehead and Tully (1993:265), as well as Tasker and Golombok (1997:85) found in their studies that gay parents were careful to protect their children from the impact of homophobia and to maintain their family's integrity. This aspect of protection highlights the denial versus discretion argument that I see in Luanne's story, but it can also be seen as a form of support from his parents, in helping him to feel safe and protected.

In order not to embarrass Carl or to evoke any confrontations with other people, his parents "keep to the rules" (line 353,S1; narrative p.6) and "behave" (line 445,S2; narrative p.8) out of "respect" for others (line 365,S1; narrative p.6). These actions might be motivated by a desire to disprove the cruel and spiteful prediction that emerged in a deeply unpleasant and wounding encounter that Penny had with one of her close relatives:

Just after Susan and I had got together, someone close to me said that my child would be a disaster – just because I am a lesbian (lines 40-41,S4; narrative p.19).

Other relatives reinforced this belief of being discreet by "thanking" them:

My brother and his wife privately thanked us for not holding one another affectionately, especially in front of their grandchildren, although they totally support our relationship (lines 48-50&53,S1; narrative p.4).

Despite this, some of Carl's school peers became curious when they saw his two moms together, and confronted him directly, forcing him to come out. Therefore, even though his parents might be less open than Kashni's, he encountered what I call a "forced disclosure".⁴

⁴ See Ribbon Two: "Critical incidents" for a full description of this event.

Carl however is undeterred by these events. He is seemingly at ease with his parents' sexuality.

Why should I lie to them? If someone doesn't want to accept me because my parents are gay, then that's okay. I've got lots of friends. I don't need people like that. (lines 449-454,S2; narrative p.9)

It doesn't bother me anymore. (line 120,S3; narrative p.16)

These comments emphasise his own acceptance of his parents and the position he takes with his peers. Provided that his parents "behave" and "play safe" (which they do), he is brave and principled enough to take the stance that he will not forsake his parents just to be accepted by his peers.

But Carl is only open with those whom he feels he can trust. This reveals another dimension of his disclosure, as the following comment shows:

I only tell people that I can trust. I'm certainly not going to shout about it from the rooftops. But I'll tell my friends. (line 115,S3; narrative p.15)

This is similar to Luanne's conviction that she should not reveal her parent's gayness or talk about it in an open way, and Kashni's awareness that she should be thoughtful about selecting the people to whom she will disclose her parents' sexual orientation. All three of them therefore have developed an understanding that not everyone will sympathetically receive this information. Their dilemma brings Paechter's words (2000:402) to mind. She asserts that children are "torn" between a desire not to make a "big deal" of the situation and a realisation that if one is going to tell people, one needs to do it selectively, carefully and thoughtfully.

As I review Carl's comments about whom he tells and whom he refrains from telling, the manner in which he tells and the kind of people about whom he is prepared to share spontaneously, I detect a certain happy-go-lucky, carefree quality in his accommodation. It seems as though he feels that if *he* accepts his same-

gendered parents for what they are, why would it bother anyone else? He appears also to refrain from feeling personally responsible for the attitudes of anyone else who is unable to accept his same-gendered family.

Most of my friends never even raise the question. If any of them have a problem with my mothers' orientation, then it is their problem. Not mine. (lines 586; 590-591,S2; narrative p.12)

I suppose they must have had questions that they wanted to ask me. But they never asked! Except this one friend who asked a few questions. They obviously all know the set-up by now, but they don't ask me. They are too scared! (lines 447-449,S2; narrative p.8)

I think he had his suspicions about the situation. But he said nothing to me about them. (lines 375-376,S1; narrative p.9)

He assumes that his friends know, and that any struggle they might have in coming to terms with his family constellation is not his problem. In this his attitude is unlike that of Kashni and Tom who are sensitive about how their friends might react and who go to some lengths to help their friends to reach a sympathetic accommodation after their disclosures. Carl's attitude is the same as that of Luanne: if friends have a problem or want more information, they should ask him:

But if they want to know, they must ask me the questions – if they have any – and then I will answer them. (line 350,S2; narrative p.8)

Remaining silent can be a beneficial strategy for coping with awkward or unpleasant situations. It can significantly reduce (or even prevent) one's exposure to negative, tactless and ill-informed reactions on the part of other people. This in turn means that one will not have to cope with the disagreeable situations that might arise as a result of their negativity. It is highly unlikely that a friend will ask a *direct* question pertaining to the sexual orientation of one's own mother. But the downside of not disclosing is that one may live in fear of a possible disclosure at a time when one may not be ready for it. But Carl is seemingly not bothered by this possibility. He seems largely indifferent to whether people know or not.

Carl disclosed spontaneously to one of his close friends and confirmed that he is happy to have two lesbian mothers as his parents. He also answered his friend's questions and explained the intricacies of the situation as best he could, he even ended up convincing his friend of the reality of his two mothers' sexual orientation.

We were here one day and Tiaan asked me whether my moms were still attending that church because they attended the same church for a while, and I said, "No, they are going to a gay church now." He looked at me in amazement, and said, "To a gay church?" So I said "Didn't you know that my moms were gay?"

And he said, "Oh, don't talk nonsense!" And he kept on denying that it was possible until I went and got some family photographs to show him.

[Carl's mother interjected:] "One would think that Tiaan would have realised long ago that Penny and I are in a relationship."

"Yes. Even I was quite surprised by his reaction. But, in the end, he just said, "Okay", and that was that." (lines 77-96,S3; narrative p.14)

One observes the same spontaneity in Carl when he disclosed to a girlfriend. In her case, however, he constructed it to her as "his biggest secret".

We were lying on the bed chatting, and I told her that I wanted to share my biggest secret with her. Then I told her and all she said was, "Oh." She didn't have a problem with it. (lines 405-410,S1; narrative p.11)

Constructing the gayness of his mothers as his "biggest secret" suggests that Carl is well aware that homosexual people are often stigmatised in our culture, that a significant number of people are prejudiced against homosexuals, and that this sensitive information cannot therefore be disclosed to just anyone. O'Connell (1999:275) notes that "secrecy, remaining silent or lying" are perceived by many children of gay parents to be a vital strategy for maintaining relationships. Carl, on the other hand, felt that disclosing would enhance his relationships, and he felt the need to share his "secret". This might indicate his personal sense of being okay, and his belief in honesty and openness as personal values.

Carl is fortunate to have connected with another peer who has same-gender parents. He receives from this friend the kind of support that Tom and Luanne received from others in similar circumstances:

I also have a friend who lives near here. Her parents are also gay. They recently broke up, but I've heard that they're back together again. We used to visit each other quite

a lot... But one day I asked her: "Are your mothers gay?" and she replied "Yes." Then she asked me whether my parents were gay, and I said "Yes." This created a strong bond between us and we were able to go to the gay church together with our parents (lines 561-565, 592-596,S2; narrative p.11).

Erid's story, on a first reading, does not give the impression that he feels comfortable or okay with having two mothers as same-gender parents. He answers are framed in short and direct remarks, and he does not willingly share anything other than what he has been asked. There may be two contradictory explanations for his self-presentation. The first is that he does not feel okay because he has been teased about his home situation in the past. An alternative explanation may be that he feels *so* okay with having same-gender parents that he cannot understand why some people make such a fuss about what he feels is really an "insignificant" piece of information about his life context. If the latter scenario explains Erid's self-presentation (short and direct remarks and an unwillingness to share anything other than what he has been asked), I assume that Erid feels totally at ease with his situation.

I feel that it is important to reflect on my interaction with Erid so that I do not place an excessive weight of interpretation on what he has shared with me. As I mentioned in Bubble Three, Erid was a member of the first family that I interviewed. Because this family moved within four weeks of my initial meeting with them, I did not have the opportunity of spending an extended amount of time with him. It also became clear to me that firstly, he is a child that does not say much, secondly, his actions speak louder than his words, and thirdly, it would take a long time to really get to know him well. My reservation about the possibility of extracting too much interpretation from Erid's data is based on my uncertainty about whether I was ever allowed to penetrate deeper levels of Erid's story – especially since he shared so little. But if I merely focus on the data in front of me, I have to come to the conclusion that Erid feels okay, especially because he is a straightforward and a "no fuss" kind of child.

Where he *does* show his sense of being okay very clearly is when I asked him what advice he would give a friend if that friend were to disclose to him (Erid) that he was gay. Erid's response was:

I would tell them just to be normal kids. (line 148,S2; narrative p. 11)

I would just let him know that I am there for him because it's okay. (line 198,S2; narrative p.10)

In this answer he clearly demonstrates that he regards being gay as nothing out of the ordinary. While an awareness of what society or others might regard as "normal" and "abnormal" is implicit in his advice to his hypothetical friend (as it was with Tom), I do not believe that Erid consciously thinks about it too much, if at all.

But he is strongly averse to anyone prying into his family constellation, as the following excerpt illustrates:⁵

"Okay, if someone asks about your family... If they ask you how many brothers and sisters you have..."

Erid quickly cuts me off. "I just tell them," he answers in his characteristically straightforward way.

"People usually ask questions," I continue, "like, 'What does your mom do? What does your dad do?' How do you answer those questions?"

"I just say 'I don't know.' "

...And so I ask, "Do some children ask more questions or comments...?"

Erid answers: "Yes. I don't always answer questions like that. But sometimes they do ask me, and I just say to them, 'I don't feel like telling you now.' " (lines 156-157, 173-176,S2; narrative p.12)

This shows me that Erid is essentially a very private person and that he does not like people to inquire into his private life. Ray and Gregory (2001:29) also found that some of the children they interviewed about their school experiences sometimes felt misunderstood by their peers and that their peers would ask difficult or annoying questions like "How were you born then?" or make gratuitous comments like: "One [of the same-gender parents] must be an aunt." They observed

⁵ See Erid's narrative, pp. 11 & 12, for a full description of the context (Addenda E: CD-Rom).

that children in younger grades would become more reserved about answering questions that were posed to them. This may also be applicable to Erid. It also seemed to me that Erid was trying to forestall questions of a kind that would force him into a category in which he could be labelled in terms of some rigid stereotype or in which he could become a representative of something “Other” or different, as a “type” that would deny his individuality (Evans, 2002:87).

Although I will explore the social issues that impact on the children’s experience in a subsequent Ribbon, it is necessary to include some information about Erid’s background at this stage. It is possible that Erid may experience difference and otherness in three different ways: in terms of race, of being adopted, and of being a child of same-gender parents. I conclude from some of Erid’s remarks that he is aware of the kind of cruel and spiteful labels and stereotypes that are used to exclude, humiliate and degrade others (Hudak & Kihn, 2001:xvi). Since his personal circumstances have changed dramatically for the better since he was adopted, I must deduce that Erid in no way regrets being in the circumstances in which he currently finds himself with his same-gender parents.⁶

Erid’s repeated comments like “I wouldn’t say much” (*line 82,S1; narrative p.6*), “I wouldn’t say anything” (*line 179,S2; narrative p.8*), or “I just don’t tell them” (*line 162,S2; narrative p.13*) clearly indicate his reluctance to share the intimate details of his life – and perhaps also his irritation that other people should ask in the first place. Even though Erid does not remain completely silent about these issues, he feels (as do Carl and Luanne) that *others* must first ask *him* before he will disclose relevant information. This indicates that he retains a sense of control over what is happening.

If they want to know, I will tell them. (line 96,S1; narrative p.7)

They have to find out if they want to know. (line 141,S2; narrative p.7)

⁶ See the following pages for full details: lines 38-40:1, 48-52:1, 54-57:2, 75-77:2; Kashni Erid Parents Session 1 (Addenda F: CD-Rom).

The precondition that he insists upon before he shares with anyone is that he must first know that person well.

I don't talk much. But if I get to know somebody well, then, yes, I will tell them. (lines 128-130,S2; narrative p.8).

It is of interest to note that the people he knows best (his friends) are people who do not ask him prying questions.

That is why they are my friends. They don't ask me questions. (line 182,S2; narrative p.9)
They're my friends, they don't mind (line 86,S1; narrative p.10).

What then might I conclude from Erid's desire that his friends should not ask him questions? Erid said that if he gets to know someone well, he will disclose. But his friends, whom he now obviously knows very well, do not ask questions. This may simply mean that their need to ask questions about Erid's same-gender parents has become redundant because having got to know them well, Erid would have already disclosed the facts to them – should any such disclosure have been necessary. But it also seems as though he does not need to disclose to them any further information because “they don't mind”. Although I might be overstating my case here, it seems as though there exists an openness and an acceptance between friends that transcend the cultural “boundaries” that are dictated by heteronormative society. This was indeed the dominant impression that I received from Erid and his friends when I visited them. Although Erid was indeed rather domineering in dictating to his friends the toys with which they should play, I observed that the atmosphere that prevailed among them was relaxed, easy-going, and characterised by a sense of fun and playfulness (lines 10-11:1 & 213-214,S2; lines 21-23, Kashni session 1; line 86,S1; narrative p.10).

Erid illuminates for us the various reactions to homosexuality that exist in the outside world in which he lives. When I probe him to tell me how other children react when he tells them that he has two mothers, Erid answers:

*Most people act normally. Some are nice. Others are not. They are the bad ones... they tease you.*⁷ (lines 169-170,S2; narrative p. 13)

For Erid, to “act normally” might mean to be civil and tolerant, and to refrain from teasing. Erid has been the target of some incidents of teasing in his past.

*“How many times has this (the teasing) happened?”
“Only a few times in this school. But lots of times in the other school.”* (lines 91-92,S2; narrative p.3).

Sometimes Erid reacts physically and aggressively to the teasing. (I will describe this in more detail in Ribbon Two.) He says:

They would have stopped, or else I would have kept on hitting them until they did stop. (lines 109-113,S2; narrative p.4)

Ray and Gregory (2001:31) report that some of the boys with same-gender parents believed that fighting would help them. Erid only resorted to fighting after he had been aroused to anger by provocative comments that had been aimed at his mother. Apart from these (few) incidents, Erid had learned non-physical ways of negotiating resolutions to homophobic reactions (such as teasing). These effective self-protection solutions involved not saying too much and never revealing too much. I call this kind of protective behaviour a strategy of “minimal disclosure”. It helped to prevent incidents of teasing to which he could react physically. He does not need to use these strategies when he knows someone well and trusts them because then he can relax his self-protective boundaries and excessive vigilance.

Danielle is also aware that teasing could occur although it has not yet happened to her personally – as it has with Erid.

I’m not going to tell anybody... It’s a secret. (line 418,S1; narrative p.9)

They will tease me... It is difficult. There are not many people that are like that. And it’s just... They will do something to me, like kill me or something. Or they would say, ‘At least my parents are better than yours’. (lines 262–266,S2; narrative p.10)

⁷ See Ribbon Two: “Critical incidents” for a full description of this event.

I don't actually know what they're going to do. I just get a bad feeling that they're going to do something. (lines 279–280,S2; narrative p.11)

Her story relates more to the incidence of prejudice and discrimination as perceived risks rather than actual events that take place in her life. Even so, the way in which she frames her fear (especially her use of words like “killing me or something”) suggests to me at least that her fear may sometimes border on extreme anxiety. A fear of being “killed” (whatever that may mean) suggests *prima facie* that a child feels extremely insecure. The non-specific but extreme way in which she expresses herself indicates that even though her fear is only perceived, for her it *feels* very real. As therapists/ educational psychologists we respect another person’s fears in terms of their own perception and understanding of reality because it is axiomatic that what “feels” real *is* real for most people. Danielle’s fears could not therefore but exert a decisively negative effect on how she negotiates her outside world.

When Danielle talks about her closer, more intimate friends, she expresses the need to *prepare* them for disclosure of her same-gender parents’ domestic situation. Kashni also prepares her friends, primarily to prevent embarrassment or uneasiness in her friends. In contrast to Kashni, Danielle’s aim in preparing her friends is to allow for a more authentic relationship to develop. She does not want to hide anything from her friends and she desires to be open with them. Disclosure for her therefore serves to enhance and support authentic relationships. For Tubbs and Moss (1994:222), self-disclosure represents an attempt to permit the values of authenticity to permeate our social relationships, and secondly, to enhance the intimacy, depth and breadth of our relationships.

As I relate Danielle’s need to be open, to the fear that she experiences, I wonder whether she distinguishes between closer friends and ordinary school mates, or whether her fear concerns a painful loss of control – of her not being able to control the time and place of her disclosures and the identity of the recipients to whom she will disclose. It raises the theme of private disclosure versus public disclosure.

Another significant aspect is that Danielle (like Carl) constructs her same-gender parent situation as a secret. This emphasises Danielle's awareness that she (like Carl) cannot disclose to just anybody. Another significant aspect that she reveals is her concern and attentiveness to the possible effect that her disclosure(s) might have on her mother's relationships. This indicates that she *chooses* to be silent to protect her mother.

I don't actually share my secret. I only share that secret with my best friends... (lines 207-208,S2; narrative p.17)

But when Alicia, one of my best friends, came to stay for a visit, I felt, like, I had to tell her. When someone's my best friend, then I always share my secrets with them. Only my best friends know. Only my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me. But I was also scared that she would tell her mom. Then I thought, 'What will happen if her mom doesn't ever talk to my mom again?' That is scary. (lines 176-179 & 283-285,S2; narrative p.11,12)

Another statement of Danielle's that suggests that she is more comfortable when disclosing personally rather than publicly, is the following:

When you write that book that you are writing, could we please read it? And I want to know who will be reading that book as well because I am scared that some children might read that book and find out who my parents are. But I do really want to be in your magazine. (lines 401-409,S1; narrative p.24)

At times Danielle feels the need to protect herself and her mom by disguising her second mother as a "friend" of her own biological mother. This is a utilisation of the strategy of masked disclosure.

I say she is a friend. I say she actually lives with my mom because they are best friends. (lines 295-296,S2; narrative p.13)

But Danielle's friends are not satisfied with this patently false explanation. Their natural curiosity and interest are aroused. Because the "closet" that Danielle tries to construct around her same-gender parents is made of "glass", it becomes an "open secret" (Sedgwick, 1990:80) – in other words, no secret at all. The visible indicators that other people observe, such as her same-gender parents sleeping together in the same bed, invalidate the "secret" and expose the obvious truth to others.

Oh yes, like, Alicia asked me, 'Are they together? Do they sleep together?' Then I was, like, 'Umm, yes. Where else would she sleep?' Alicia really caught me with that question. (lines 298-299,S2; narrative p.13)

Because Danielle inevitably ended up in situations where she was forced to “confess”, I regard this kind of situation as constituting a “forced disclosure”.

I'm sorry that I'm a liar. It's just that this stuff is very personal for me, and I can't share all my personal things. If I could tell her, and she could understand, then I would be very happy. (lines 167-184,277-304,S2 & 75-98,S3; narrative p.13)

The discourse of confession ties into the historical-religious dogmatic construction of homosexuality as (primarily) a sexual sin. Her friend's referral to the fact that her two mothers sleep together, focuses attention on the purely sexual component of gay identity. Foucault (quoted in Evans, 2002:88) states that such confessions point to the pathologised history of gay people.

Danielle also demonstrates how she sometimes takes trouble to think very carefully about what she will say, which reveals her attempt to prepare and construct answers that she hopes will satisfy her listeners.

I was thinking that I would have to explain to her that my mom... That if I tell her, if I'll tell her that they are together, and just keep explaining all those things, like they sleep together and just... (lines 303-304,S2; narrative p.13).

In other situations (by contrast) she does not elaborate, she does not allow any conversation to “flow” or any more questions to be asked. By doing this, she tries to regain some control over her situation. This is characteristic of a minimal disclosure.

My friend said, 'So you don't have a dad. Instead, you have like three mothers.' And I answered: 'Yes! It's, like, hey, cool, but that's all I'm saying!' (lines 95-96,S3; narrative p.14)

The following quotation describes Danielle's poignantly grateful reaction to the support received by a close friend after her (Danielle's) disclosure of the full facts.

Then I told her, 'My mommy and Auntie Sandy are together, is that fine with you?' And she just said, 'Yeah, and you are still my best friend.' She said such sweet things that I began to cry. When I told her the truth, I began to feel so heartsore. (lines 182-187,S2; narrative p.14)

The emotional depth of Danielle's reaction suggests that *some* children of same-gender parents do indeed experience their situation in same-gendered families as emotionally burdensome and sometimes intellectually problematic (they may feel, for example, that homosexuality is a "sin" or something "other" because of the constant societal pressure to which they have been subjected).

Another meaningful aspect of Danielle's story is that she relates her new family constellation to how it was when her mother and father were together. Stevens et al. (2003:354) also mention that a child that they interviewed commented on how much happier she was with her same-gendered family than she had been when they had lived with her father. In Danielle's case, there has been an improvement in her home situation, and this helps to advance her process of acceptance and being okay. This reminds us yet again of the influence that social issues have on these children's experiences. I shall discuss this in more detail in Ribbon Three.

When the new lady – my mother's friend – moved in, my mother said that they're "together". Then we all talked about it in a nice and soft way, and I said, 'I understand, mommy! It really is much better now than it was when you were with dad.' I think that made her very happy, and we all cried a little. But we were crying with happiness. (lines 253-259,S1; narrative p.2)

Her ability to integrate her mother and father's new partners into her life and value system, and her construction of these events as "having three mothers" (line 347,S1; narrative p.3) signals her acceptance and therefore her sense of being okay.

Kim's story contains an interesting twist. She expresses her sense of being okay with her mother in the following words:

I... would not choose to have my mother in any other way. (line 32,S1; narrative p.1)

It is just the way my mother is (line 417,S2; narrative p.23)

In spite of her being okay, she shows resistance to the proposition that *all* gay people in general should (or could) be fully open and "out" in *every* situation. Even

though Kim clearly respects and admires gay people, she recognizes the limitations of being open.

*I actually admire gay people. They say, 'F*** you' to the unwritten laws of society... I have great respect for people who have enough courage to walk on a road that is different from the road that everyone else seems to be walking along... But the world has its own rules. And people should be aware of how those rules work. (line 428,S2; narrative p.25)*

She reflects on the way that she is “out” about her same-gendered family, and she reflects with remarkable acuity on the way in which societies operate.

“I don't like it,” she says quietly, “when two women walk hand-in-hand down the road. I don't think that gay people should do things like that because society is not yet ready for that kind of freedom and openness. (lines 430-433,S2; narrative p.26)

She elaborates on this when I ask her how she would feel if her mothers held hands in public.

“I would just tell them not to do it,” Kim replies firmly. “Not now. That's just how life is,” Kim continues. “You have to have respect for other people's feelings and conventions. That's what this whole thing is about – respect for other people's expectations. And a shopping mall is a public place, you see. There are always limits on what we as individuals and groups can do. Take another example. Let's say that you were to place a photograph of a naked woman in a pharmacy in order to sell suntan lotion. You just wouldn't do it! One has to have some respect for what other people might be exposed to against their will. That is what it is all about. If there are people around, you have to use your judgement and common sense. It might be something that they don't want to see. Not necessarily because it is wrong, but because people are just accustomed to certain public standards of behaviour. They have certain expectations, and we all abide by them. In any shopping centre, there will always certainly be people who will not want to see two women holding hands. So, then, we should just not do it. It's about respect for others. So, yes, rather don't do it in public until the society has reached that point where it will be something that will not offend anyone. Until we reach that stage, it is better to be discreet... They should do whatever they want to do – but at the right time and in the right place.” (lines 730-741,754-755,S2; narrative p.27 & 29)

May I assume that Kim's views reflect experience of homonegative remarks (Bozett, 1987:48) – or is she merely observing that it is only prudent (common sense) not to confront “ordinary” people with something “other” than the consensual norms of society, thereby precipitating confrontations that may be extremely disagreeable? Discretion in her mind means showing respect and abiding by public standards of

behaviour and living according to the customs and expectations of heterosexual society. This view implicitly supports the view that heterosexuality should be the dominant norm in society, and Kim's view that homosexual people should refrain from "offending" the heterosexual majority implies that everyone should give uncritical assent to heteronormativity. Since Kim relates this view to the example of nudity, I yet once again realise how fixated most people are by the purely *sexual* aspect of homosexuality (as though it were the *only* component of a gay person's life). Kim distinguishes between public and private spaces. She opines that the visibility of gay couples should occur "at the right time and the right place". Kim certainly does not feel that homosexuality is "wrong" and she feels that gay people can "do whatever they want to do" except if doing what they want exposes them to a generalised public scrutiny. She appeals for gay people to use their common sense, judgement, respect and discretion before they expose their sexual orientation to general public scrutiny.

Kim offers her own recollections about how society has changed between the time when her same-gender parents' lives were viciously exposed to public hostility by a newspaper – and what the social climate is like nowadays:

Things were very different in those days. It was like, 'Do such people exist? Stone them to death!' It wasn't like it is today. It was terrible. (lines 155-156,S2; narrative p.18)

She contrasts this with how people are now.

People begin slowly, slowly to accept it because they become so used to it. I mean, gay people are simply everywhere. You see them on television, in magazines, in clubs, everywhere. People are far more relaxed about this whole topic nowadays. They realise that gay people are real – and that they will not be going away. Take, for example, that article about my mom’s relationship that was printed in the newspaper. Such an article will never make the headlines today. (lines 716-718,750-752,S2; narrative p.28)

Her awareness of different points of view in society influences her own disclosure process. She will disclose on the basis of what she concludes about the views of the person to whom she is considering whether or not to disclose. Her disclosures are therefore limited to a few friends who are gay themselves or to heterosexual friends who already have valued gay friends. Her openness and sense of being okay are based on this criterion.

I have seen so many different situations. Like, one of my friends, he’s straight. But he hangs out with a group of guys who are gay. I mean, one of those guys is much more of a woman than I am. Obviously, he and his friends all know. But my friend, Jane, for example. She doesn’t know, and I don’t discuss it with her. Different people have different attitudes, and you can never be sure.... (lines 679-682,691-694,S2; narrative p.38)

In the company of other gay people, she feels safe to share details of her domestic situation (her same-gendered family). Even though she reaches out and assists her friend to feel more comfortable with disclosure, her message is coloured by stereotypical comments that connect religious considerations and sexuality. One could however argue that her advice to her friend that she will not tell others or “the church” may be precisely what her friend, as a young person who is just coming out, *needs* to hear. In saying that she is just “a little bit used to it”, Kim minimises her role in being a *de facto* member of the gay community because of her situation as a young person with same-gender parents.

It’s like in the case of Jo, one of my friends at the Technikon. I can see that it’s incredibly difficult for him to come out to others as a gay man. But the weird thing is that anyone can see at a glance that he is gay... So, just to give him an opportunity of disclosure and to help him to feel more at ease, I said to him, ‘Listen, Jo, my own mother is gay. And I just want you to know that I won’t ever betray you or tell people in the church.’

So I told him, and there were also two other friends I told. But the telling always took place naturally and in the context of friendly conversations...

We were all sitting in Barchello's... and we were all just talking about families. One of the guys is gay, and so is his sister, so we were all listening to their stories about family visits, and we were also discussing the whole issue in a more general way. Then, at one point in the conversation, I said to all of them, 'I am also a little bit used to that situation.' (lines 98-117,S1; narrative p.9,10)

Where she feels that disclosure cannot harm or substantially affect her or her family, she tends to be less circumspect and discloses (if necessary) with some aplomb and self-assurance, as the extract below demonstrates. But once again, she feels (as do Luanne, Carl and Erid) that someone must specifically *ask* before she will disclose.

"If people come to me in an open and straightforward way and say, 'Listen here. Is your mother gay?' "

Kim pauses for a while, silent. Then, in a quiet voice, she says: "You know, if people attack me in that kind of way, first, I will smack them, and then I will say, 'Yes.'... I don't mind if people that I don't care about know or not. If some crazy stranger came up to me in the street and asked, 'Is your mom gay?', then, yes, I might say, 'Yes. Now go away.' " (lines 119-124,S1; narrative p.11)

Kim gives the impression that she does not welcome these kinds of questions. It seems as though she has experienced questions like these as a personal attack, and she accordingly reacts in an aggressive way ("I will smack them" and "Now go away"). The narrative records how she spoke these words with a great deal of anger – no doubt an indicator that she does not welcome people who try to pry into her private life and domestic situation. I find it significant that she says that she "might" say "yes" (i.e. disclose) *before* she chases the inquiring person away (presumably so as to pre-empt any further prying or questioning).

Kim has firm convictions on how to deal with her intimate private circle and her family and close friends, all people who "matter" to her:

But people in our closest circle, those people who matter to us, our friends and family – not all these people need to know because this is a personal matter. It's our own small world – and they must just accept it or lump it. (lines 124-127,S1; narrative p.11)

Kim implies here that she wants to retain her right to *choose* whom she will tell (“not all of these people need to know”), perhaps because sexual orientation is such a personal matter. Despite her general unwillingness to disclose, Kim accepts that what they possess in common is her family’s reality (“our own small world”) and that its configuration is therefore non-negotiable. Like Danielle, Kim expresses an awareness of and sensitivity towards her mother’s position and she will simply not disclose intimate information if it might harm her mother. This reflects the view of Casper, Schultz and Wickens (1992:123) that “the very act of disclosure is a shared responsibility”. In such situations, Kim would refer to her co-mother as her mother’s “friend”. By doing this, she is making skilful use of the strategy of masked disclosure in cases where awkward or hostile questions arise. She also does not require sympathy from her friends because she feels that this would be using her mother’s gayness to get attention.

I still wouldn't tell just anyone. Let's say that Mary comes for a visit. Mary is my mom's partner, and while Mary is here, Ann comes to pick me up. If Ann then asks me who Mary is, I would not tell her that Mary is my moms' girlfriend. I would just say, 'She's a friend of my mother's.' You see, I don't know how my mother feels about the situation – whether or not she wants everyone to know. Quite frankly, I do not want everyone to know. Because then it's like, 'Oh, now this is happening to me.' No. As far as I am concerned, disclosure is a personal matter – and should be dealt with by the person concerned. (lines 91-97,S1; narrative p.9)

Kim’s need to protect herself, and her sensitivity about whom she will tell or not might be attributable to the fact that she has also had to endure incidents of teasing, some of them quite severe. This teasing started when the story of her mother’s relationship appeared without warning in a newspaper.⁸ The teasing was not only aimed at her mother, but also focused spitefully on the question of Kim’s own sexuality.

When that newspaper story became public, I got one hell of a lot of negative feedback. (lines 76-78,S1; narrative p.4)

⁸ See Bubble IV for details of this incident in Kim’s narrative; or Ribbon Two for a discussion of Kim’s critical incident.

But there was this one occasion that I want to tell you about. As I was walking past one of my brother's best friends, he said: 'Look! She's a lesbian'. I thought that they were talking about me, and, obviously, that was a topic about which I was most sensitive. I was so hurt that I started to cry. (lines 618-622,S2; narrative p.35)

... Lilly said, 'Because, you know, Kim's mother is like that.' (lines 80-82,S1; narrative p.4)

... He said to me: 'Your mother is gay, and she is like this and does this-and-that and so on, you are going to become like your mother...'. (lines 149-150,S1; narrative p.7)

After these initial incidents of teasing, Kim's capacity to form new friendships seems to have remained fragile if I examine her reported experience. Kim felt scared that she would once again lose friends – as had happened before. This becomes evident in her conversation about events in a Christian camp which she attended. (For a full discussion of this event, see Ribbon Two.)

I became very frightened because I began to think to myself that the people here at the camp would also begin to treat me in the same way like the people back home. (lines 299-300,S2; narrative p.33)

I made some really great friends on that camp, people with whom I am still friendly today. But I was also scared that they would also begin to react oddly towards me. So I never told the people that I knew really well. I told them nothing! But when strangers came walking past – people I didn't know at all – I would grab them by their coats, even if they just greeted me, and would say, 'Come here, please. You must listen to me! I'm not giving you a choice.' (lines 303-309,S2; narrative p.33)

They could go and repeat it to someone else, but the person they told wouldn't know me, and so it would make no difference. But I couldn't go to my school friends and just pour my heart out to them because I would never know who they would tell. (lines 259-261,S2; narrative p.31)

What Kim reveals here is how betrayed and hurt she felt at school when most of her friends gossiped about her, and how she therefore became acutely aware of how she should not disclose to people because of her fear of repeated rejection and discrimination. And even though five years had elapsed since the traumatising exposure of her same-gender parents, Kim was still frightened and anxious about possible reactions from her new friends at the camp. This self-consciousness on her part might have restricted her interactions with new friends and might indicate that

she had become much more calculating about the formation of new friendships. Before making liaisons, Kim would therefore try beforehand to estimate how potential friends might behave to her after disclosure. But the making of new friendships usually entails a degree of tentativeness and sensitivity in approaching the other person. The tentativeness with which Kim approached possible new friends at the camp may also just indicate her need for uncomplicated relationships and for some measure of discretion and trustworthiness so that she could protect both herself and her family. It might also just indicate her conviction that some matters (like the sexuality of one's parents) are more private than others.

I can now understand why she feels more comfortable with disclosing to a stranger than to people for whom she really cares, as people with whom she wants to form an intimate bond with may reject her if they get to know about her mother's sexual orientation. But Kim also makes the following comment that reveals that she can cope no matter who knows, even though she would prefer to make her own decisions about those to whom she would like to disclose. But if disclosure happens "by accident", the following extract shows that Kim can cope with it without undue disruption of her life or happiness – or even regret.

Not everyone needs to know. And even if they do get to know, then it is, like, 'So what's the big deal?' (lines 122-123,S1; narrative p.9)

One would think that the prejudice and teasing that she had endured would have made her extremely sensitive to the sometimes blatant inequities of heteronormative language and conduct. But there are times when it seems as though she is unaware of her own behaviour – times when she herself displays heterosexist attitudes. These passages seem to reveal Kim's own unconscious internalisation of homophobic attitudes:

In Witbank, there was this one guy in our group that everyone thought was gay. We used to say to him, 'Everyone thinks that you're gay. When are you going to get a girlfriend?' But it was really just a joke, and there was nothing nasty about it. (lines 712-713,S2; narrative p.36)

There were a few girls who were like that, you know, gay, and I was very careful not to get involved with them. Like, if someone wanted to give me a hug when they were greeting me, I would move away. It's not that there's anything wrong with hugs. It's not wrong. But I just wanted them to stay away from me. (lines 702-705,S2; narrative p.37)

What Ray and Gregory (2001:31) suggest is that fear of the consequences of the disclosure of their parents' sexual orientation is so great and the desire of children to belong is so strong that some children actually resort to homophobic bullying themselves as a way of distancing themselves from the feared outcome. This may well be what Kim was experiencing because these incidents occurred while she was in high school. Certainly, Kim's behaviour could hardly be regarded as "bullying" in these incidents. But she defensively indicates that there is nothing "wrong" with the girls in question. She only says that she merely does not want to have any physical contact with these gay girls. One can understand Kim's feelings and appreciate that she wants to draw her boundaries. But I detect a great deal of defensive fear underneath her desire not to be associated with these gay girls.

Ryland's story is in stark contrast to the other stories. He is uncompromising about his need for privacy and silence, and does not even consider disclosing this part of his life to others. Bozett (1987:42; 1988:558) refers to this situation (in which children avoid telling other children) as *a strategy of nondisclosure*.

I haven't told anyone. Only my teacher knows about my other mother [who is his father's fiancée]. (lines 14 & 20,S2; narrative p.3)

No one talks about it because no one knows about it. It's only my family that knows about it, and a few other close people... It's not wrong! There is nothing wrong with it. We don't tell the children at school – and that's how I want to keep it. Now if Danielle (for example) goes and tells everyone, 'I've got two mothers at home', then we will have big problems to deal with. (lines 342-346,S1; narrative p.3)

If he has to give any information about his family, he describes the divorce of his biological parents. But he remains silent about the new partners of his mother and father. It is as though he feels that these circumstances have been imposed on him. Gerschon et al. (1999:443) state that children of same-gender parents sometimes felt

a need for secrecy and experience a sense of isolation because they are bearers of a “dangerous” secret that has been imposed upon them. This serves to separate and isolate them from their peers.

I don't talk about it. If I say anything. I talk only about my mom and dad because it is none of their business! It's like, if other children ask questions, I just keep quiet, or I say 'I don't want to talk about it'. (lines 77-80,S2; narrative p.4)

There is one exception to his coping strategies that Ryland shared. He told one of his friends after this friend had posed a question that related to his co-mother. But Ryland used a strategy of masked disclosure in this situation and described his co-mother as his “aunt”. This might indicate that he used masked disclosure to protect himself against the possibility of being rejected by his friend, or that he was “protecting” his friend by being discreet, and perhaps even that he was attempting to protect their friendship (or any combination of the above reasons).

I just say – if they ask – that Sandy is my auntie. I remember once, my friend asked, the friend who gets the asthma attack... They think that it is true. (lines 91-99,S2; narrative p.7,8)

Ryland’s statement (“They think it is true”) indicates the heavy burden of guilt that he feels even as he lies and does not tell the truth about his same-gender parents. I also had a sense that Ryland wished that he did not need to keep the “secret” of his mothers’ sexual orientation, which is corroborated in the literature (Ray & Gregory, 2001:30). Other authors are also of the opinion that children who are struggling to accept their mothers’ sexual orientation will often (because of a fear that their mothers’ sexual orientation might be discovered) become anxious, withdrawn, hypervigilant and secretive (Clunis & Green, 2000; John, 1994; O’Connell, 1999; Pennington, 1987).

There seems to be an apparent contradiction in what Ryland says, even though I do not want to discount the sincerity of the content of the following two sentences without considering the wavering sense of loyalty that many people feel under extreme pressure. Since most of us do experience ambivalence in our lives and

sometimes alternate between opposites for various reasons, it might happen that we will occasionally contradict ourselves in conversation without even realising it. This is not an indication of insincerity, but of other underlying dynamics. Thus, while Ryland says:

There is nothing wrong with it. I don't worry about it. (line 336,S1; narrative p.2,3)

he also says:

I worry about it everyday. (lines 59-63,S2; narrative p.6)

Making sense of this incongruency leads me to think that while Ryland feels that it is really okay to be gay or have gay parents on a deeply personal level, he cannot cope with the possible consequences of disclosure in the day-to-day management of his life. He therefore truly suffers in case he should be “found out” and consequently ostracised and isolated were his mothers’ sexual orientation ever to become widely known (Pennington, 1987:62). Or perhaps he genuinely finds it not-okay to have two same-gender parents. This may be a dilemma for him and cause worrying problems for him in the day-to-day management of his life. In his case, he finds the need to hide extremely difficult and distressing.

Ryland therefore inevitably experiences his school context as an unfriendly and unsafe space. He has seen how others in similar circumstances are teased, and he therefore hides, keeps his “secret” with great care and does not disclose. He shows that he is aware that teasing, mocking and prejudice of this kind can be exceedingly painful and he does not want to experience that. The consequences that follow on disclosure in these circumstances have reduced Ryland to a vigilant and unhappy silence – a silence that is caused by fear.

I have seen it happen to other kids at our school! Like, we were talking about stuff. Then some other kid would hear. Then he would go and tell the others, and then everyone would tell everyone else.⁹ That's why I have to keep it a secret, so that people don't tease me. (lines 51-52,S2 & 61-64,S3; narrative p.5,6)

⁹ Lines 60-62:2, S3.

C: Okay. Do you feel that you have to keep it a secret? How do you keep it a secret?

R: Agh no. So that people don't tease me.

This indeed explains why Ryland does not want to disclose his family background at school and why his life is dominated by fear. Even the activities of his co-mother are restricted by his fear.

The lady also asked me about other situations, like when there are activities at school. Like, in the beginning of the year, there is a parent's evening. She asked me if Auntie Sandy goes with my mom. I nearly went into a frenzy when she asked that! I said, "Oh no! No! Only one of them goes to those school meetings. I definitely don't want both of them to go. If Auntie Sandy decides to go with my mom, I will run away from that school." (lines 59-74,S2; narrative p.6,7)

Ryland's fear borders on disabling anxiety and panic. This last statement signals his desperation. He mentions in another extract as well:

If anyone finds out, I will run away! (line 31,S2; narrative p.6).

Ryland explains why he feels he needs to hide:

They will push me around and tease me. They will laugh at me and never stop saying what a little wimp I am, and stuff like that. (lines 30-52,S2; narrative p.5)

I don't want to tell the other kids because they will come and wara-wara me with questions like, 'Ryland, tell us about your two mothers.' I know that if I told them about my mothers, they would just keep on pestering me and talking about it all the time, and I wouldn't even be able to go and play, like, rugby with my friends. If I told them, they would never stop saying, like, Ryland, this, and Ryland, that. No! They, I know, would never stop asking me stupid questions – and teasing me. You don't know what those kids are like! I know that it would be very, very bad for us if the kids at that school ever found out because they would never stop hassling me – just like they do with other kids at the school. (lines 348-352,S1 & 51-52,S2; narrative p.4).

Ryland's words signal for me his need to be carefree so that he can do ordinary things like play rugby, get on with his work, and not to be bothered by emotional and relationship issues. Ryland's attitude to disclosure can be summed up in his words that I quoted earlier: "It's none of their business."

I don't even want to think about it... When I start to think about it, I just go out running or something like that. We also all play rugby in the square. And I've got other stuff to keep me busy. I've also got my work to think about. And other stuff. Yes, that helps me to forget. (lines 59-74,S2; narrative p.6)

This need of his to live in a relatively carefree and uncomplicated environment suggests that he may even choose to stay silent so as to ensure (as far as possible) that he will not be continuously bothered by probing questions or mocking insults – as opposed to remaining silent because of fear. In the absence of further evidence, I hypothesise that it is his fear of being ridiculed that keeps him silent at school and, to a lesser degree, at home.

Your Majesty, King Heterosexuality, and my esteemed fellow listeners: I feel that now might be a suitable time for me to share some of my thoughts about what I have just been exploring with you. While I have been looking at the sense of being okay of the children whom I have been studying, I have constantly had to ask myself where this material is coming from. Are my interpretations really evident in

the data, or is it me speaking even though I have been extremely careful not to influence my interpretation with my own quest. At one stage I framed the children's sense of being okay or not okay in terms of *protection*. And, yes, some children need to be protected as they negotiate the processes between their inner and outer lives. But why should I feel a need to protect them? I felt this need especially strongly as I worked with Ryland's narrative. Every time I look at his story, I am overwhelmed by the need to "mother" him – to *protect* him (so to speak). Although he is coping well under the circumstances, this feeling arose in me as I focused on the minute details of his life and the problems with which he is struggling. However, his parents are supporting him, they *are* aware of his journey and his process, and they walk alongside him every step of the way. But let me return to my original question. Why am I focusing on protection? I feel a great need to protect him and all the other children in this study from the insults, the derogatory remarks, the mindless ignorance and the naïveté that all gay people, their parents, and I have had to endure in our lives. I feel a deep need to frame "being gay" as nothing more than a preference. We are all human beings, and there is so much more to being human than simply identity (of which sexual identity is but a limited part).

Let me now tie up (summarise) this Ribbon by looking at the points that emerged in Ribbon One.

From this study it is evident that children growing up in same-gendered families experience varied degrees of *being okay* and/or *being not okay* because they have same-gender parents. Being okay/ being not okay becomes visible in how they share the phenomenon of having two mothers with others, and how they link this to their feelings about disclosure and non-disclosure. At times they are willing to disclose. At other times they will not disclose. Thus, there are two ways in which being okay manifests. The first is being okay with the sexuality of one's parents.

The second is being okay in terms of disclosing or not disclosing. Non-disclosure and being not okay, on the other hand, can therefore be associated with each other.

I cannot separate the children's sense of being okay from the interaction that these children have with others. Thus there are many factors that will enhance a child's conviction of being okay. These include a supportive environment that will consist of (among other factors) friends who react favourably to disclosure, friends who "just seem to know", and friends who give positive feedback that is reinforced by statements like "It's nothing" or "It does not bother me". Such attitudes sustain and enhance the children's sense of being okay. Another source of support for some of the children is contact with other children who are growing up in same-gendered families (as was the case with Tom, Luanne and Carl). They either receive support directly from these other children, or they are reassured by just knowing that they are not the only same-gendered family in the universe!

The degree of openness on the part of the children's parents also serves as a support. Thus parents may be actively supportive *before* the child's enrolment at a school (as in the case of Luanne). Or else they may actively challenge the school and demand that justice be done when incidents of mocking occur (as in the case of Kashni and Carl). Or they may provide more indirect forms of emotional support (as in the case of Erid). The children's sense of being okay is inseparable from the support that they receive from their parents.

I now come to ask myself how and when children from same-gendered families disclose from a position of being okay.

Most of the children in my study realise *that they cannot hide* the fact that they have same-gender parents (two mothers) from the world. They therefore resort to being as straightforward as prudence, circumstances and common sense allow, and they utilise truth, honesty and openness to good effect when their significant

relationships are at stake. They feel that the other (significant) people who cross their life path should know about their situation and that they should feel open and comfortable with it. If this doesn't happen, they feel that problems will inevitably arise. They are all fully aware that by disclosing they risk losing someone's acceptance and the possibility of an intimate relationship. But if a more authentic relationship is to develop, they know that full disclosure and openness are necessary. Disclosure then serves both to enhance and support authentic relationships and to safeguard friendships. They thus use indications of uncertainty and/or discomfort as signals that warn them that the time has come to intervene and disclose. Disclosure then serves to dispel feelings of awkwardness and uncertainty. It also serves to clarify existing situations in a way that enhances mutual understanding, honesty and openness. These children also realise that visible signs of their mothers' sexual orientation (actions such as holding hands or calling each other by special names) might cause uneasiness in their friends. They also know that disclosure will either prevent or minimise such uneasiness in their friends.

Some of the children (Kashni, Danielle) take great care to prepare their friends beforehand so that they will be at ease with their family's structure. They want to disclose to their friends *before* their friends hear it from someone else, and they want to be in a position to handle any possible but unforeseen consequences themselves. Others (Tom, Kim) disclose whenever an opportunity arises, for example, they will disclose if they notice a change in their friends' behaviour. Sometimes a disclosure will happen spontaneously as when a friend inadvertently asks a leading question (Carl). Most of the children are sensitive about how their friends might react, and they take care of their concerns or feelings after disclosing. Even though all these children know that disclosure is necessary if relationships are to develop and thrive, the actual process of deciding when to disclose and the possibility of foreseeing all possible reactions is more difficult to negotiate. Kashni describes three possible scenarios that she has encountered. All of these relate to the experiences that the

other children in this study had. At times, she can share easily. The person is open, tolerant and not hostile, and she can disclose in a straightforward and fluent manner. Sometimes an event will occur that she will identify as an opportunity in which to disclose. At other times, she is at a loss about how to approach another person. She finds it difficult to know what to expect, and she therefore feels that she needs to get to know that person better before she can continue the process. In such cases, she becomes extremely sensitive to whether that person is open-minded and non-judgemental or not. Carl also requires this precondition to be operative before he will disclose. He first needs to know someone and need to trust them completely.

Some disclose in a straightforward manner (Tom, Kashni), and invite questions or commentary (Tom, Carl). Others will wait until their friends ask them the leading question (Danielle, Luanne). Tom is of the opinion that his friends ask him just to confirm what they already know. Most of the time it is a one-off event that happens when a friend comes to visit them for the first time. After that "it is like old news."¹⁰ But this explains why disclosure can be a continuous process: new people are crossing their paths all the time.

Disclosure may also happen differently in public and private spheres. Some of the children find disclosing to a more intimate circle of friends or one's immediate family is easier (Luanne, Kashni), while for others (Kim), the more distant the person to whom they wish to disclose, and the less they know of the "secret", the easier they find it to disclose.

Being okay also highlights the contrast with those who do not feel okay with the reality of same-gender parenthood, either because they know no same-gendered families or because of other reasons such as their moral or religious values. While the children of same-gendered families' sense of being okay is not always directly

stated, it filters through their observations of their peers' and their friends' reactions. Their sense of being okay may also be shaken by the hostility or ignorance of other people's reactions. Children who grow up in same-gendered families therefore know that it is perfectly okay *not* to disclose in some situations.

Some of the children of same-gendered families have an ability to anticipate apprehension, anxiety or uneasiness in others (Tom, Kashni). They have the ability to read and interpret social cues and therefore to respond proactively. While they might be okay in the safety of their circles of intimate friends, they may be less okay when exposed to the hostility of others. This may disrupt and destabilise their sense of being okay. This happened, for example, to Luanne, and to Kim and Kashni, who were teased in front of other children. Alternately, they might speak out, as Carl did when he was asked about his parents, or as Tom did when he told his whole class at school that he has two same-gender parents (mothers).

It is an incontrovertible assertion that negative and/or judgemental remarks motivated by conservative ideologies, ignorance or even unadulterated spite and cruelty, will reduce any person's willingness to be open and to disclose. The children's awareness that different viewpoints do exist in society influences the viability of their disclosure processes. Kim for example will disclose on the basis of what she intuits another person's opinions and attitudes to be. She therefore limits her disclosure to a few friends who are either gay themselves or who have gay friends. Kashni keeps quiet when she encounters biases in others. Carl, whose classmates "forced" him (in a certain sense) to disclose, did not remain silent. He decided to share fully. An awareness that people may judge and reject them, causes some children to change significant details when they meet new people. Thus, for example, they might describe the co-mom as an "aunt" or "friend" of their mother. This kind of masked disclosure permits them to protect themselves and their parents, and it usually discourages (sensitive) people from asking any further

¹⁰ Tom's narrative, p.16 (Addenda E: CD-Rom).

probing questions. Kim states that she prefers to choose those whom she will tell (“Not all of these people need to know”¹¹) because sexual orientation is such a deeply personal (and frequently controversial) component of one’s life. Like Kim, Danielle is aware of her mother’s position. Her love for – and loyalty to – her mother dictates that she will not disclose intimate information if she feels that it might harm her mother or have a negative impact on her mother’s relationships.

It seems as if these children are aware of the difference between denial and discretion. Some of the children verbalised that different people have different beliefs about what is moral and what is not. Most of them regard discretion as an effective strategy for protecting relationships and for respecting the opinions and values of others (although they might not agree with them). In an important sense, they are preserving the stability of the social and family order by appearing to pay homage to a set of societal values with which they might privately disagree.

Sometimes they will remain silent and wait until someone confronts or asks them. This indicates caution (and possible even fear or suppressed panic, as in the case of Ryland), and a need to protect the self and one’s family from negative consequences. They are aware that one has to be intelligently selective about the people to whom one will disclose. They all know that not everyone is sympathetic to the concept of same-gender parents. Some of them therefore construct the gayness of their mothers as a secret and regard it as sensitive information that they should not disclose to anyone.

At times the children of same-gender parents experience such a strong sense of being okay in spite of having same-gender parents that they cannot understand why this should bother anyone else. It is as though they refrain from accepting responsibility for anyone else’s *inability* to feel that having same-gender parents and same-gendered families is an acceptable alternative to having the more usual

¹¹ Kim’s narrative, p.11 (Addenda E: CD-Rom).

opposite-gender parents. Carl and Luanne, for example, assume that their friends know what their domestic situation entails, and that any struggle that they might have in coming to terms with their family constellation is not their problem. If also feel that the onus is on their friends to ask questions if they either do not know or else suspect – and therefore feel uneasy and uncomfortable. Kim takes the position that having same-gender parents is an undeniable part of her family's reality ("It is our own small world"¹²) – that it is a "given" and therefore non-negotiable. These more outgoing children are also not bothered by the possibility that someone might find out, because having same-gender parents are not an issue for them. They therefore do not fear "public opinion" and I surmise that they seldom even think about it. For them, their families are "ordinary". Because their family structure is not an issue for them, they do not feel a need to disclose. They obviously also feel that if anyone else were to find out, the outcome for them and their families would not be disturbing or anxiety-provoking. "Exposure" does not disturb their sense of being okay because, as far as they are concerned, "It's nothing", it is ordinary.

In spite of this, there are times when even they are reluctant to disclose and they become irritated if they are pushed to share the intimate details of their lives. In some cases, they do not like prying into their family constellation and try to prevent or cut short expository analyses or questions (Danielle, Kim). They connect a sense of being okay on this level with an absence of "talking" or "asking", and so they attempt to silence or cut short explanations, worries, concerns or awkward questions (Kashni, Ryland, Erid, Danielle).

I propose that children growing up in same-gendered families experience different levels of being okay and that because of this, they express different levels of disclosure. I indicated earlier in the discussion that these children are sometimes willing to disclose and sometimes not, but that even this "non- disclosure" arises out of a sense of being okay. The sensitivity they reveal in recognising other

¹² Kim's narrative, p.11 (Addenda E: CD-Rom).

people's behaviours and perceptions makes them aware of the possibility of teasing, mocking and prejudice. The possibility of a negative outcome in a certain situation might cause them to opt for silence rather than disclosure as a preventative measure in awkward circumstances. Most frequently, it is the perceived risk of arousing prejudice and discrimination, rather than the actual event itself that makes them decide in favour of silence. In addition, most of them at one time or another have been teased, mocked and ridiculed about their parents' sexuality, and this makes them wary about the possibility of that it could happen again. Staying silent confers significant benefits. Remaining silent means that they are not exposed to the negative reactions of others, and this relieves them of the necessity of having to process their own or their friends' negative emotions or discomfort. I therefore regard silence (not disclosing) as an effective strategy for dealing with stereotypical perceptions. As a matter of course, they also deliberately try to avoid other children who are likely to vent prejudice about same-gender parents. In other words, they have learned to be practical and proactive in the organisation of their daily lives. These qualities significantly enhance their ability to live productive and rational lives.

There are however instances where non-disclosure suggests to me that the child involved is *not being okay* because he or she has same-gender parents. Although this is especially evident in Ryland's story, this surfaced with some of the other children as well. The disadvantage of *not* disclosing when non-disclosure stems from fear is that they continue to live with the fear that someone might find out (Ryland), and that they continue to feel that they might be ostracised, isolated or worse if their mothers' sexual orientation should become known. For such children, forming new friendships becomes an anxiety-provoking and fragile trade-off between trying to get to know someone and allowing them to get to know oneself while at the same time remaining scared of what might happen if the "secret" should slip out. These children frame their attempts to make friends against the hurt and humiliation they remember when previous attempts produced uncomfortable consequences and

hurtful incidents and reactions. One of them (Ryland) feels guilty about lying and not telling the truth, while another (Kim) refrains from disclosing so that she will be spared unwanted sympathy from her friends. Not being okay when others know about their parents' sexual orientation creates a need for privacy and silence, and such privacy can sometimes be maintained by non-disclosure.

My investigation of the interaction between these children and others, between their personal stories and the landscape beyond their homes, leads me to conclude that these children negotiate their position with the outside world from these three different positions: (1) a sense of being okay when one discloses, (2) a sense of being okay not to disclose, and (3) complete non-disclosure and an accompanying sense of being not okay.

I would now like to share with you some incidents and observations that will help co-construct even more detailed analyses of these children and their unique situations. As I examined the stories of these children who grow up in same-gendered families, I became aware of a specific and unique incident (or incidents) in each child's life that made a distinctive and crucial impact on them. I shall refer to these events or incidents that serve an important purpose as "critical incidents". I shall therefore call the following section:



Ribbon Two



"Critical incidents"

Critical incidents serve different purposes in the lives of the children. Because of the nature of the data creation process in this study and my focus on the experiences of children who have same-gender parents, these critical incidents relate mostly to disclosure or non-disclosure, or to confrontations engendered by heterosexist remarks. I am making the assumption that these critical incidents have changed the way in which these children would usually negotiate challenging situations. For

some, the critical incident became the deciding factor that led them to decide whether to tell or not to tell, to disclose or not to disclose. When they disclose, these children will also have had to decide whether they intend to tell the “whole truth” or whether they will only disclose in some minimal way. In the case of others, their private lives have already been made public through some agency, and as a consequence they have no control over whether to disclose or not. For others, incessant daily confrontations with the heterosexist discourses that dominate the minds, thoughts and behaviour of their peers, close friends, other (non-domestic) parents and teachers challenges them either to react or to choose the strategy of silence. I call these incidents “critical” because they precipitate a crucial change in the lives of these children. Because such critical incidents are not the same for each child, I once again feel the distinctiveness and uniqueness that characterises the stories of each of these children.

Carl’s critical incident was the occasion when he “came out” about his two same-gender parents to his class mates. As Susan says: “Carl himself was the one who came out about our relationship” (*line 85,S1; narrative p.6*). Although a few of Carl’s friends and his (ex)-girlfriend knew about his domestic situation, he himself made the crucial decision to be “out” and open about his same-gender parents in a more public way.

It happened last year, at our inauguration as school prefects for the new year. Susan was standing quietly there near the door because she didn’t want to be part of the group photograph. Penny, my birth mother, was already standing in the group for the photograph. So I called over to Susan, and said, “Come on, Susan!” So she came over.

After the photos had been taken, a few of us were standing around in a group. Then one of the guys (they were not exactly afraid, but you could see the apprehension in their eyes), asked me “Do you have two mothers, Carl? Or is the one lady your mother and the other lady your step-mother?” Something like that. I can’t really remember their exact words...

...

When they had recovered from that shock, they said, “But she’s a woman!”

And so I said, “So?”

And after that, they never again asked me any other questions about my parents. (lines 431-448,S2; narrative p.7,8)

Since Carl had not decided beforehand about whether or not he wanted to disclose this information, he was in a sense “forced” to decide whether he would tell the “whole truth”, or whether he would minimise the disclosure by framing Susan as an “aunt” or “friend” of his mother. From the way in which Carl describes the manner in which the question was put to him, I suspect that there might have been some element of mockery from the other school leaders. But Carl chose not to focus on that. Instead he chose to “come out” with such honesty and directness in disclosing the special relationship that he has with Susan (whom he regards as his “dad”) that his critics must have been totally disarmed. The relationship between Susan and Carl transcends all conventional gender boundaries and therefore subverts all conventional constructions of so-called masculine and feminine characteristics. Although it would be both fruitful and rewarding to explore the various ways in which Carl constructs Susan as his “dad”, a detailed examination would be beyond the scope of this thesis. But the phenomenon itself is so fascinating that I would like to make a few observations before moving on.

I wonder whether Carl is deliberately subverting and parodying the symbolism and structure of heterosexual families, or whether the situation arose because Carl and Susan’s personalities and ways of coping with challenges are so similar that they just naturally slipped into these roles? Did Carl react by trying to shock his class mates because they had tried to shock (or undermine) him by posing such a direct question? Did Carl use this direct manner of disclosure to minimise or prevent further questions from ever arising again in the future? Or did Carl simply speak spontaneously from his heart, oblivious to these undercurrents? The data seems to indicate that Susan consciously creates and plays this “dad” role in the family. She herself says:

Well, I mean, since I’m the “butch” partner in this relationship, I naturally tend to think of myself as the father figure – as “dad”. I certainly try to be! (lines 171-172,S3; narrative p.26)

Perhaps because I play the father role? I suppose that when a straight father and son walk together down a street, the father would say things like, “Look at that girl!” or

"Isn't that a pretty girl?" Things like that. I guess I just saw that as my role. (lines 81-86,S4; narrative p.29)

Carl defines what he understands by an ideal father figure.

Let me see. A "father figure" is someone with whom you can share everything. So, because I'm the son, I share everything with Susan. Of course, I talk to my mom as well. But mostly, I talk to Susan. (lines 177-178,S3; narrative p.27)

This brings me to wonder about the kind of power that women might appropriate if – as woman – they were to engage in traditionally “male” activities and be allowed to live out various masculine roles in society. As Susan tells in the interviews,¹³ Penny’s (deceased) father used to introduce her to his friends as his son-in-law, and she used to sit with the men and drink beer while the women were in the kitchen. Susan therefore transcends the stereotypical view of gender roles that bind women to female activities like being responsible for the “work in the kitchen”. Susan “fathers” Carl – although her gender is not in doubt. She instinctively performs the role of father in Carl’s life with such conspicuous success that her “fatherly” role is even explicitly acknowledged on extended family occasions such as family “braais” (barbecues). Susan simply discounts conventional stereotypes and conspicuously lives out masculine roles in her daily life.

Dunne (2000:24) argues that ideas about singularity and the exclusivity of the identity of “Mum” are so powerful that parenting is polarised along lines of gender in a social world that is structured by heterosexual norms. She claims in her research that a lot of parents were confronted with other people’s “confusions” or curiosity about the status of the mothers, of who the birth-mother is, and what the social mother’s role is. Muzio (1999:203) gives her own valuable gloss on this view. She asserts that it is the *differentiation between women*, and not the different-ness

¹³ Lines 71-72:2, S3.

Her father-in-law used to introduce her as his “son-in-law”, and then she had to sit with the men and drink beer while the women were in the kitchen.

Original Afrikaans:

Haar skoonpa het haar aan al sy pelle voorgestel as sy skoonseun, en dat sy dan by mans moet sit en bier drink, terwyl die vrouens in die kombuis is.

between stereotypical masculine and feminine relational patterns, that needs clarification. The point that Carl and his co-mother and “dad”, Susan, raise here by implication is that parenting is a product of more than just the gender of a person concerned. It is also about the social and practical role that that a person fulfils in the child’s life (Malone & Cleary, 2002:275).

One might sum up by saying that Carl’s critical incident was a way for him to disclose his family constellation in a more public manner and forum than he had ever done before. Although it was a disclosure made under almost irresistible pressure in a public place, Carl responded to the question with a full and valuable admission about Susan’s extremely nurturing (even though unorthodox) role in his life. He could have responded in others ways by, for example, denying the truth or by framing Susan, his co-mother, as an “aunt” or “friend” of his mother. But he chose instead to frame her in a much more powerful and decisive way. He depicted Susan proudly as his “dad”. By doing this, he demonstrated his own strength of character and moral fibre in a potentially compromising situation. Even though he and his family had been inadvertently exposed, Carl quickly regained control of the situation and made the process of disclosure his own. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this was a defining moment in Carl’s life, and that he established the honour and humanity of his family and his same-gender mothers by exercising his courage, integrity, intelligence and valour in a moment of crisis.

Sadly, exposure does not necessarily lead to regaining control. **Kashni**’s critical incident was significantly influenced by her mother’s involvement. I regard this particular incident as critical for Kashni when I examine it in the context of the whole of Kashni’s story as I know it. In all our conversations *except this one*, Kashni described and explained to me how she sensed other people’s reactions and behaviours, how she acted on these intuitions, and how she managed the uneasiness that arose in her on those occasions. It was only in this instance that

Kashni admitted to herself and to me that she also had problems. “I have had a few problems,” she said (line 127,S1; narrative p.12).

One day these boys were having a go at me and they just went too far and they said things like ‘You are a lesbian’ and ‘There’s something funny about your mother.’ So I told my mother, and – can you believe it? – she (it was mom Anriëtte), went to school and she talked first to the principal, and then to my teacher, and then she came and spoke to the whole class. And then she called these boys to the front of the class and said, ‘Okay, if I ever hear that you have called my daughter a lesbian, I will phone your parents, and then I will lay charges against you for libel. And your parents will have to pay all the legal fees of the court action...’. And then she said, ‘And – by the way – it’s not Kashni who is a lesbian. It’s us! If you ever have a problem with that, then you come and tell us.’ And of course it never was a problem again. (lines 127-141,S1; narrative p.13)

What happened in this incident is in enormous contrast to the way in which Kashni usually controls situations by initially observing the behaviour and reactions of others and then intervening on her own terms. But in this incident I observe first that Kashni is teased and supposedly insulted by remarks that are intended to be derogatory. Significantly, the boys try to insult Kashni by saying, “You are a lesbian” – which Kashni is not. It is interesting to note that in the ignorance of these boys, merely *being* a lesbian would constitute an insult. Their undoing then (so graphically portrayed in the passage above) is that they go on to say that there is something “funny” about Kashni’s mother. Kashni’s mother, Anriëtte, then decided to step in and take control of the situation and by so doing, removed responsibility for the resolving of the situation from Kashni (her minor dependent). Anriëtte’s decisively threatening action in the classroom served to create an awareness in the school that same-gender parenting is a responsible and legitimate form of parenting. Her powerful mothering and nurturing action in this case caused her to regain control of the situation by shifting the balance of power between the children and the adults, and to create a memorable and significant incident in the history of the school. It also served as an object lesson in the need to respect the boundaries between the private and personal sphere and the public sphere of interest and action. However awkward and embarrassing it must have been for Kashni, it defined the need for *respect* on the part of the public (represented in this case by the

boys and school) for alternative identities – in this case, sexual orientations and same-gendered families. Anriëtte acted in a powerful way that Kashni herself could never have done. Of course Kashni felt uncomfortable, but my guess is that Kashni felt secretly proud of her mother. Perhaps her feeling “tearful” and “very quiet and silent inside” indicated *relief* that the matter had been taken out of her hands?

So I ask Kashni how she felt when one of her moms walked into that room. Kashni's facial expression tells it all. But she answers and says, "It was 'heavy' embarrassing. I had my arms over my head during the whole thing. I felt very uncomfortable. I don't really know how to explain it. I felt kind of sad. Tearful, and emotional. But I also felt very quiet and silent inside. Now I'm definitely not a quiet person. I'm actually a very loud person. I talk a lot in classes and give my opinions and sometimes the teachers don't like it. I interrupt their classes with jokes and all that kind of thing. But I'm always the first one they get to know. But when that happened, I was just very quiet, and I didn't say anything to anybody. (lines 145-161,S1; narrative p.14)

I propose that this was Kashni's critical incident because of her behavioural changes in this specific situation and because of how much this experience meant to her. What did Kashni's silence mean in this situation? Obviously she felt exposed (powerful parental intervention). For once, she was not in control (her favoured mode), and for once she was not able to take responsibility for choosing those to whom she would disclose. In this case someone else was managing Kashni's disclosure for her. Possibly Kashni chose silence as an effective strategy to manage *this* particular situation. This would suggest that Kashni's behaviour in this situation was situation-specific: even though Kashni might have been silenced here, I infer that she would not easily be silenced in other situations that involved her own heterosexual orientation or that of her same-gender parents. According to Kashni herself, this incident might have marked the dividing line between her more carefree years when she was younger and the period after this incident when she became increasingly sensitive to other people's attitudes to same-gendered families. After this incident, she was always more careful and aware of other people's reactions, and she made it her business to prevent difficulties connected to her same-gendered family from arising.

"Did any of them ever risk saying anything like that to you afterwards?"

“Oh, no.”

“So that was probably the first time that something so serious happened?”

“Yes, and the last. In Grades Three and Four, nothing happened. It was fine. You just tell the whole class and they have no problems with it. I had lots of parties and everyone was at my home and both my moms were always there. And so of course there were no problems. But as they get older, things begin to change.” (lines 175-180 & 196-205,S1; narrative p.14,15)

Luanne’s critical incident was of a completely different kind. It did not involve a question that had been directed to her in person, but a seemingly innocent comment – probably delivered in good faith – by one of her teachers. Nevertheless, if I deconstruct the remark made by this teacher, I become aware of just how prevalent ignorance about sexual orientations and same-gendered families is, and how “invisible” gayness is in schools. Even though her parents had been proactive in their arrangements and had visited the school in order to “clear” their sexual orientation with the principal and (by implication) the staff, this did not protect Luanne from ignorance and prejudice directed at the homosexual community in general. This confirms Bozett’s (1987:5) finding while gays tend to be *collectively* rejected, individually they are not. In addition, because of the relative novelty and “invisibility” of same-gendered families in the community, the curriculum in schools does not make provision for educating children about same-gendered families and alternative sexual orientations. This, in turn, means that most teachers are ignorant about the need in both school and community for taking same-gendered families and children from such families into account. Without officially sanctioned education about same-gendered families and alternative sexual orientations, it can be problematic for children from same-gendered families to live in a way that integrates the interests of both home and school (Paechter, 2000:406). An atmosphere hostile to gay sexual orientation can become a reason why a child might prefer to remain in the closet about his or her parents’ same-gender orientation. Koepke, Hare and Moran (1992:227) emphasise that ignorance about the true facts about homosexuality and same-gendered families is caused by the propagation of the same hostile stereotypical myths and prejudices that have been prevalent for years (centuries) in Western society. Even if a teacher does not regard

derogatory opinions about homosexuality as an example of stereotypical thinking, she or he exposes children to only one viewpoint out of a multitude of possible viewpoints if she or he does not state “the other side” (or different arguments) specifically and clearly.

[Luanne says]: “I think it’s in Romans, chapter 1. A teacher once told us that if you ever do ‘it’, even once, the Lord will never forgive you because He did not create women for women or men for men. He made man and woman so that they could be together. That’s why it is supposed to be a very big sin.

“I actually find that very confusing,” she continues, “because – what if two people really love each other? Look at this new law that parliament has passed, it makes it legal for gay people to marry. And if one takes into account what the church said the other day.... Sometimes I just don’t understand what’s going on.” (lines 178-185,S3 & footnote 10; narrative p.7,8)

Even though Luanne’s story informs us that she and her family carry on with their everyday activities and that they are seldom forced to disclose or explain their constellation, the statement that the teacher made brought up some very real difficulties for Luanne. Luanne was torn between accommodating the Bible verses as they have been currently translated and interpreted and propagated by some churches for nearly two millennia and the very real love that she has for her two mothers. Even the church that she belongs to (the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa) has officially altered its position about gay sexual orientation in the months prior to the writing of this text, Luanne is confused about where she herself fits into all of this. I felt personally aware of how difficult it must have been (and probably still is) for Luanne to interact with her mothers after she had heard and reflected on the teacher’s opinions. Luanne must have struggled intensely to come to terms with this. How in fact does she reconcile these heteronormative statements with her own personal life situation?

From what I could gather from Luanne, she merely continues as best she can with the routines of her daily life: “I just get on with my life” (*narrative p.9*). She does not think about her dilemma or mentions it to anyone – be they parent, friend, another teacher, a minister or a school counsellor. So to whom can she turn for help? Who

will offer her a balanced view that will allow her to make up her *own* mind? Or is the whole subject of homosexuality so charged with negative emotions and antiquated prejudice that it becomes impossible to discuss in a calm, balanced and rational way how homosexuality in all its manifestations has a valuable contribution to make to morality, values, religion, spirituality, love, sex, families, society and caring for our children? Will children simply be left to judge that which they do not understand? My views apart, this teacher's statement certainly introduced a strong homophobic influence and atmosphere into the school environment. Luanne opted for silence,¹⁴ and not even she and her intimate friends discussed the incident. She remained silent because she probably experienced the homophobic statement of this teacher as a severe emotional and intellectual shock, and there was no precedent for discussing parental attitudes in this class. She therefore protected herself by silence.

Oh no. But it was quite a shock. (line 186,S3; narrative p.8)

No one talks about their moms and dads at school. (line 201,S3; narrative p.5)

However, her silence in the school and at home, is also silencing her parents, as they remain unaware of these incidents. And even if they did know or suspected that homophobic remarks would be made during Luanne's life, how would they manage it, or prevent it? But again, my focus is on the experiences of the children, and how they negotiate situations like these.

In **Erid's** case, he neither opted for silence – nor was he silenced.

I look into Erid's large brown eyes and pursue a lead that he gave me at dinner. It involved an incident in which he hit another boy.

"So tell me about that boy that you hit. Why did you hit him?"

"He said things about my mom, and so I became angry," Erid says defiantly.

"Did he tease you?", I ask.

¹⁴ Lines 197-199:4, S3.

C: (laughter) That is probably the best. Hmm. And did you all discussed it at school or...

L: No, we don't actually talk about it... We don't talk about it.

Original Afrikaans:

C: [lag] Dit is maar die beste... Imm, en het julle toe al by die skool daaroor gechat of...

L: Nee, ons praat nie eintlik daaroor nie... Ons praat nie daaroor nie

*Erid reacts strongly. "No. He didn't tease me. He said things about my mom."
"Oh", I reply. "He said things about your mom." I reflect his words back to him.
"How is that different from teasing you? Or is it the same?"
Erid looks thoughtful. "It's the same. And it is different," he replies.
"Okay, that makes sense. It wasn't about you, but about someone who belongs to
you. How many times has this happened?"
"Only a few times in this school. But lots of times in the other school."
(lines 54:1-61:2,S1; 86-93:2,S2; narrative p.3-4)*

*After dinner, while Erid was taking his bath, one of his moms, Zané, had told me
about the incident. She said: "A few weeks ago a boy in school said to him, 'Your
mother wants to be a man,' and so he beat the boy up. As soon as he got into the car
when we picked him up after school, he confessed to us what he had done because he
knows that I don't approve of him doing that kind of thing. But Anriëtte [Erid's
other mom] contradicted what I said by saying that, in her opinion, it is indeed
necessary to act in that way under certain circumstances. Erid then told us that he
couldn't have let such a situation pass without doing something. He said that he had
to defend his mom's honour. (lines 59-63:2, K&E Parents S1; narrative p.4-5)*

Erid is motivated by a taunt aimed at his mother. He therefore, in the words of his mother, sprang into action to "defend his mom's honour". Because he was so angered by this insult (as he perceived it), he reacted with punitive violence. Interestingly, Erid's narrative and the discussion in Ribbon One show that he is a lad that goes quietly about his daily routine. He is not obsessively silent, but he avoids saying a lot or sharing much detail about himself. Erid's critical incident described above therefore describes a mode of behaviour which is an exception to his usual behaviour. Even though his mother (Zané) would prefer him not to handle these challenging situations in a violent manner, exposure elicits violent retribution from him.

As I discuss Tom, Danielle and Ryland, it is helpful to bear in mind that they are part of one family. Tom's critical incident centres around the divorce of his (their) parents, and the subsequent chain of events in which he learned about his mother's sexual orientation.

Tom's life changed when his parents divorced. Before the divorce of his parents (while they still lived together), he had almost no friends. This changed

dramatically after the divorce because he then found that he had the freedom to make new friends and to invite them to his home.

Yes. Because most of my friends never knew me when my dad lived here. My dad just wouldn't allow anyone to come and visit us. So, when my mom and my dad still lived here together, I just never had any friends at all because, well, no-one came over, and we never did anything that involved other people. (lines 24-25,S2; narrative p.2-3)

When my mom eventually divorced my dad, that was another big event. But then I also started to get more friends because I was more upset and so I ended up talking to more people. (lines 129-131,S2; narrative p.13)

I felt so dead lonely at that time. So, kind of, rejected. More lost than anyone here. But then I started making great new friends... (lines 135-136,S2; narrative p.14)

His feelings of desolation after the break up of his parents' marriage forced him to talk to other children, and this helped him to move on with his life. He then found many new congenial friends. Tom's critical incident therefore was precipitated by the divorce of his parents. Other events immediately *after* the divorce are also important for our understanding. It is essential to take these into account because they shed light on our understanding of how Tom came to terms with his mother's "new" sexual orientation. O'Connell's (1999:274) conclusion is similar to my own because she reports that some of her participants told her that it was the "dissolution of the original family" that was a far more significant event in their lives than their mother's apparent "change" in sexual orientation. In spite of this, the mother's coming out remained pivotal because it signalled and/or confirmed the end of the parents' marriage. This is basically what Tom relates in the following extract:

Even when they were splitting, I still thought, hoped, that they might get back together again. But then my mom ended up with somebody else, with this other lady. And my new friends were coming round a lot. (lines 136-140,S2; narrative p.14,15)

His newly found friendships remain a common theme throughout his story, emphasising its importance to him. His discussion of what happened after the divorce reveals the changing circumstances in their home and his relationship with his mother.

And my mom didn't even tell me! Nothing. For the whole year I had my private suspicions about what was really going on behind the scenes, and I kept trying to figure it all out... I was looking on cell phones. I would get hold of my mom's cell phone and read her text messages. And sometimes I would creep silently around so that I could spy on them when they were alone together. It was wrong of me, I suppose. But I was trying to put all the pieces together... Well, basically, I found out that my mother was having an affair with this other woman... I use to get all nervous and feel all like... like, I needed to know what was going on... I just wanted to know for myself. But, it's strange, the moment I knew what was going on, my mom told me. But, by then, it was, like, old news. (lines 138-174,S2; narrative p.15-16)

Because Tom was lonely and did not know what was going on, he felt a desperate need to know. The secrecy that surrounded these events made him feel left out, alone and disempowered. He became angry with his mother for being disempowered and this led him to take action in various ways. He therefore began to “investigate” what she was doing until he felt properly informed. Tom only felt in control, so to speak, once he had gathered the necessary information, confirmed his mother’s “new” sexual orientation, and knew who her new partner was. But his comment (below) may indicate that he was not primarily focused on his mother’s sexual orientation, but that the secrecy between his mother and her new partner acted as a hindrance to his continued relationship with his mother. (He was also dissatisfied with the amount of attention that they as children received from his mother.)

*“How did you feel about your mom falling in love with another lady?”
“I didn't mind that. I just wanted her to tell me what was happening. Then I wouldn't have felt so... so... like, lost. You must understand that my mom was not giving us enough attention. She was always out there.” (lines 177-181,S2; narrative p.16)*

Once his need for accurate knowledge had been satisfied, he felt more empowered. Once this happened, his anger subsided and he focused on what brought him real personal pleasure: his new found friendships.

“You were obviously deeply aware that your mother was no longer together with your dad, but that she had moved on to being with Theresa. How did you feel about that? And what did you think about your mother at that time?”

"To be honest, I was trying very hard not to think of anything at all and I just concentrated on hanging out with these new friends of mine. That was such a pleasure." (lines 227-231,S2; narrative p.20,21)

Tom found adapting to his mother's new partner was a real challenge. But this challenge might have had more to do with Theresa's personality and his relationship with her than with the divorce and his mother's sexual orientation. His statement also reveals some of the problems of adapting to new siblings in a blended family because Theresa also had children of her own that were incorporated into the new family.

Then Aunt Theresa, she was mom's first partner, she came over and began to live here. Then we all moved in. I've never liked Aunt Theresa, not ever, not from the very first moment that I met her. When I realised for the first time that my mother was like that, I didn't mind. But when I met her... that shocked me, and then I became very angry... I felt like running away and never coming back... I've just never liked her [Theresa] at any stage in my life. She never made any effort whatsoever to be pleasant to me. She always... I never... I didn't expect anything from her, and I have never.... But she always tried to make me do stupid things – things that I hate. Things like looking after her children, and all that stuff. And her twins! ... I also never had any privacy. I couldn't go to the bathroom. I couldn't do anything. It simply wasn't my house anymore... Just the things she did. I don't know. She was always trying to challenge me in some way or another... Or she'll occasionally do something nice – just to get my mom on her side... She will push in between us, and then back out again." (lines 201-212,214-252,258-262,295-302 & 319-323,S2; narrative p.17-20)

Even though Tom was not primarily concerned with his mother's sexual orientation, there were aspects of it that he was concerned about.

I was wondering how they are going to do everything, like, divide the household tasks. But my mother, she never used to work in the house. She just never did anything. Certainly no heavy housework. She wasn't used to anything like that. It was my dad who did everything in and about the house. (lines 262-265,S2; narrative p.23)

Tom thus pondered the practicalities of everyday life, as well as more intimate and personal details.

My mom and dad, at a later stage, they used to get me alone and tell me about marriage, and what marriage is all about. They would tell me that marriage must be between a man and a woman. So, of course, that made me wonder how they would ever get married... But I've gradually figured it out. Like my mom told me that gay

people never get married, but that they will make promises to each other if they are really serious. (lines 281-283,S2; narrative p.23,24)

(And Danielle) used to tell me everything. I was amazed at how much she knew... That just like a boyfriend and girlfriend can hold hands, so a girlfriend and a girlfriend can also hold hands. They hug, you know... Just little things like that. (lines 341-342,S2; narrative p.25)

As opposed to the previous four instances (Carl, Luanne, Erid, Kashni), Tom's critical incident does not stem from his mother's sexual orientation as such. His life changed because of his parents' divorce and the resulting new friendships that came into his life. Furthermore, these friendships, especially with children who have same-gender parents like Tom, helped him in his process of coming to terms with his mother's new lifestyle (as is shown in Ribbon One).

Danielle's critical incident is more difficult to identify. Because she was only 11 years old and because she felt relief when her parents divorced (see Ribbon Three), she seems to have made a fairly good adjustment to her new family constellation. As I read her story over and over again, I struggled to find *the* critical incident that made a profound impact on her life.

One possibility is the teasing that she experienced because she likes "boy-things". This may signal the existence of gender role tension in her life.

I am a girl. But I don't like wearing girl dresses. But I do sometimes because it makes my mom happy. I also make them happy when I wear a girl's T-shirt and a boy's pants ... I feel comfortable in boy clothes... When you are a girl, you can't do much. So I do boy and girl things. Like, I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments. (lines 62-64,70-73 & 77-78,S2; narrative p.4,6)

And she (Danielle's friend) looked at me and said 'You look like a boy.' And so I said, 'I am sorry. I have these boyish moments, thank you very much.' And then she teased me and then I began to cry because... then she turns around and looks at me in this funny way and says, 'I am not going to play with you anymore.' Then I say, 'Why?' And she says, 'Because you, like, wear boy's clothes, and I can't hang out with a boy.' Then I begin to cry and say, 'Why do you say that, Anel? Don't you also have boy moments? Do you have a problem with that?' Then she says, 'I thought that... I thought you... I thought that you knew that I thought you look nice.' (lines 152-164,S2; narrative p.8,9)

Then there was the occasion when Danielle's friend, Alicia, challenged Danielle directly with confrontational questions because she did not accept her attempt to get by with a masked disclosure.

Oh yes, like, Alicia asked me, 'Are they together? Do they sleep together?' Then I was, like, 'Umm, yes. Where else would she sleep?' Alicia really caught me with that question. (lines 298-299,S2; narrative p.13)

Another possible incident might be when her other friend, Shirley, who knew before her, encouraged her to confront her mother.

"No, she didn't tell me", Danielle replies. "She only said: 'I know a secret that you have to ask your mom'. I thought about this, and then I said, "What must I ask my mom?"

And Shirley replied, "Just ask your mom whatever comes into your mind...". And so I did that. I asked my mom about what was on my mind. And my mother listened, and then she said "Yes. It is all true." (lines 211-214,S2; narrative p.17)

Or could Danielle's critical incident be her disclosure to Karen, the daughter of her mom's first partner, whom she promised not to tell.

Danielle looks slightly embarrassed. "Because I did tell her," she confesses. Then she bursts out laughing. "I couldn't hold it back! I just had to tell her!" ...

Danielle whispers. "I said to her, 'Karen, do you know that our mothers and all of them are, like... together?' Danielle mimics Karen's expression of shock and surprise. Then Karen said, like, 'Ooo-ooh!' Then I told her, "But listen, Karen. I am not supposed to tell you what I have just said, now. Remember that. You have not heard what I have said.'" (lines 163,172-174,S3; narrative p.21)

But what changed her life dramatically? I must conclude after having examined her story that there is no single event that can be said to be the exception. Perhaps all the small incidents cumulatively changed her and her life's course, although she seems always to accept whatever life throws at her.

Because of the role that exposure, silence and secrecy seemed to play in some of the other children's lives, I decided to reread Danielle's story and apply these constructs to her story.

I am not going to tell them, ... I'm not going to tell anybody... It's a secret. (line 149,S2; narrative p.9)

They will tease me, ... It is difficult. There are not many people that are like that. And it's just... They will do something to me, like kill me or something. Or they would say, 'At least my parents are better than yours.' (lines 262-266,S2; narrative p.10)

I don't actually know what they're going to do. I just get a bad feeling that they're going to do something. (lines 279-280,S2; narrative p.11)

Only my best friends know. Only my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me. (lines 309-310,S2; narrative p.12)

I don't actually share my secret. I only share that secret with my best friends... (line 207,S2; narrative p.17)

Danielle experiences trust and openness with her friends because they represent the more private and personal sphere of her life. This description of Danielle reveals her perceived fear of disclosure and of letting her secret be exposed in public view. She chooses silence in order to protect herself from the ridicule that she predicts will be the consequence. But because such ridicule has never happened, it can probably not be regarded as a critical incident in her life's journey. But, as with Ryland, the *perceived* fear may well constitute the critical incident that Danielle experiences. Because these two children are the youngest of my research partners and because enough time has not yet elapsed in which they can reflect (as in the case of Carl or Kim), they might not yet have encountered a critical incident in their lives. With luck, they may never do so.

As I noted, **Ryland's** awareness of the *possibility* of being ridiculed at any time may constitutes the critical incident through which he is currently living.

That's why I have to keep it a secret, so that people don't tease me... If anyone finds out, I'll run away from school! (lines 31,74,S2 & 61-63,S3; narrative p.6)

Ryland feels dangerously exposed – even though his very close friends and his family do not know this. Because he is silent in the public sphere, he lives in fear

that he might be exposed. Ryland also chooses the strategy of silence to protect himself.

No one talks about it because no one knows about it. It's only my family that knows about it, and a few other close people like Anna. It's not wrong! There is nothing wrong with it. We don't tell the children at school – and that's how I want to keep it. Now if Danielle (for example) goes and tells everyone, 'I've got two mothers at home', then we will have big problems to deal with. (lines 342-346,S1; narrative p.3)

Kim's describes her critical incident in intense details. It centres around her mother's coming out and how she experienced this as having a profound and significant influence on her life. For me, Kim's story is characterised by *silences*. Kim has used this strategy for a long time to negotiate her personal narrative in relation to the outside world. Even now, although she has enrolled in a tertiary educational institution and made some good new friends, she only occasionally breaks her silence and shares some of her experiences in a limited way with these friends.

I deduce from what she has shared with me that her difficulties began mostly after her parents divorce and when she and her brother sensed that something new was happening in their family.

Of course it was something completely new to us, and neither of us really understood completely what it all meant. But what we did know was that it was not the same as it used to be between my parents... We knew of course what was happening, but we never put it into words. Never. I just couldn't find it in myself to say to him, 'You know what? This is actually what is happening.' (lines 52-54,79 & 81,S2; narrative p.14 & 16)

Kim reports that at times silence reigned between her and her brother, and between them and their mother. The consequence of this secrecy and silence was that Kim became extremely frustrated with her mother and with “not knowing” what was really happening. It seems as though Kim was annoyed with the confusion she felt as a result of not her knowing and of the disempowerment she felt as she tried to come to terms with her mother's “new” sexual orientation without understanding the details of her mother's varied social and sexual life.

“It was so damned confusing,” Kim says, “because my mom had two or three boyfriends. And then they would go and eat out, and not take us along. Or if we were visiting friends, then they would go out. But after Linda arrived, we never had

my mother to ourselves again. Never! Linda got all the attention...". (lines 37-38, 104-105 & 115-117,S2; narrative p.15)

My mom was very low-key about it. But she never explained anything to us until it reached the newspapers. (line 185,S2; narrative p.16)

Even today, Kim's words reflect her anger and frustration. It is as though she *needs* her mother to recognise that she felt hurt and confused.

Last time when you were here, I heard my mother say that we did not know anything before that story got into the newspapers. Can you believe it? As if we didn't know! (lines 45-47,S2; narrative p.14)

Mom, I remember you once overhearing you say that we children didn't know anything about you before the matter became public. But I can tell you that children know almost everything about their parents. (lines 58-59,S1; narrative p.3)

Kim's experience of the frustration and confusion escalated into rage and embarrassment when the privacy and intimacy of their home life were publicly and crudely displayed in a Sunday newspaper's front-page story.

"I was very angry with you," Kim tells her mother, "when that newspaper story came out." (line 64,S1; narrative p.3)

In one way at least, breaking the news in this way, devastating though it may be, can act as a catalyst because it at least broke the cast-iron silence between Kim and her mother. At least then she was "informed" and her mother was "forced" to disclose to her. But the possibility of a more open and honest communication ensuing was once again overwhelmed by silence and denial as Kim pretended not to know.

I just acted as though it was the first time we were finding out anything that we had not known before. (lines 157-159,S2; narrative p.19)

Perhaps if Kim had confessed at that moment that she already knew far more than her mother realised, it might have worsened the already difficult circumstances (being exposed by means of the public media and adapting to a 'new' family structure) with which the family were attempting to cope. Perhaps it was just easier to pretend that she did not know. Or perhaps her priority at that time was simply

privately to review all the events that had contributed to her suspicion that her mother had a new partner. Whatever the reason, Kim never got the recognition that information was withheld from her, information that she, at a stage, so desperately needed.

At that stage of the process, Kim did not make much of a fuss about the newspaper story. But that soon changed.

I honestly didn't think that it would attract so much attention. But you know what young kids are like! There's nothing they love more than something sensational to gossip and snigger about. And I was, of course, still in primary school. But, yes, some of the children were saying things like 'You are going to become like your mother' and 'This girl is a sinful child of Satan.' But that's OK. I survived. (lines 140-144,S1; narrative p.6)

Kim says that the mockery and blatant teasing that she endured during that period and subsequently made a significant negative impact on her. Some of her classmates abandoned and isolated her.

"Everything was in the newspapers," she repeats, "everything! And everyone... There was poor Alene. She's my best friend, Carien, and she is the most honest person I know. And even two months after the story broke, she still didn't know that anything out of the ordinary had happened. Then, two months after the newspaper reports, Lilly, another girl who was in our class, came to her and said, 'Listen, aren't you scared to visit Kim's home?' Then Alene asked, 'Why should I be?' And Lilly said, 'Because, you know, Kim's mother is like that.' And Alene said, 'You are lying.' And then Alene came and asked me what was going on. And I said, 'I am not going to lie to you. What Lilly says is true.' (lines 78-85,S1; narrative p.4,5)

It was a great solace to Kim that this particular friend (Alene) did not abandon her. Alene's reaction also indicates how differently people reacted to the "news" of their mothers' sexual orientation.

Then do you know what? Alene didn't change at all, not one bit. She is one of the most endearing people I know. She knows everything about me – absolutely everything. (lines 84-86,S2; narrative p.5)

Despite these reassuring incidents, Kim became angry at the other children's questions and observations:

All I can really remember clearly is this one guy in the history class. He said to me: 'Your mother is gay, and she is like this and does this-and-that and so on, and you are going to become like your mother, and maybe you should not talk to other people because you will make friends... I can't remember exactly what I said to him. But I picked up a chair with great force and was about to hit him with it. But then I stopped myself with the chair in mid-air. Instead, I just kicked him on the leg, and screamed at him: 'Leave me alone! Leave me alone!' (lines 148-154,S1; narrative p.7)

These incidents of teasing and being rejected, isolated Kim and left her in fear of what other people's reactions might be should they ever find out about her mother's sexual orientation. I deduce that that is why Kim only discloses her same-gendered family structure when she feels safe. She only discloses to people who are either gay themselves or in situations in which she can deduce from the conversation that they are (at least) open-minded and non-judgemental. (I have discussed this in some detail in Ribbon One.)

One of the guys is gay, and so is his sister, and so we were all listening to their stories about family visits, and we were also discussing the whole issue in a more general way. Then, at one point in the conversation, I said to all of them, 'I am also a little bit used to that situation.' (lines 112-117,S1; narrative p.10)

I have seen so many different situations. Like, one of my friends, he's straight. But he hangs out with a group of guys who are gay... But my friend, Jane, for example. She doesn't know. And I don't discuss it with her. Different people have different attitudes. And you can never be sure... (lines 679-694,S2; narrative p.38)

Her anger intensified against her mom during this period when she was being ridiculed. But once again she used silence as a defensive strategy. Kim reports that she kept her anger with her mother hidden inside her.

I was extremely angry with you, mom, for a long time. But, Carien, I never let her see my anger. No! That's not the way I am. Certainly not with my close family. (lines 158-160,S1; narrative p.7)

"Look," she says, "I have always been pleasant to my mother. As I said last time, I simply cannot be unkind to my closest family. And so my mother never knew that I was angry with her. Never. Never. Never." (lines 215-218,S2; narrative p.19,20)

Kim shared that the silence and hidden anger that she experienced at this time caused her to become hateful to everyone around her. Laird (1994:135) states that

typical first reactions of children learning about their mother's sexual orientation for the first time are anger and a sense of betrayal.

It was, like, I couldn't even look my mother straight in the eye because, you know, every time I made a real connection with my mother, I would just crack up. I would think, 'This is my mother and I hate her.' And that was what was tearing me apart. The fact of the matter is that, at heart, I am deeply Christian in my attitudes. So I continued to attend Sunday school, and I would sit there listening to the sermon, and think to myself, 'Mr Minister, everything you are saying is a lie. I mean, how can a person as wonderful as my mother do that to me? You are lying.' I got into the habit of being cynical about everything that I came into contact with. I was a terrible... I was so incredibly mad at the world. (lines 231-240,S2; narrative p.21)

She also went through a period when she reflected on her mother's decision to marry – and she expresses her bitterness and disbelief about this. These feelings and thoughts signal an existential crisis for Kim because her very life is a direct consequence of her mother's decision to marry.

I was very, very angry with my mother because then everybody knew. I said things to her like, 'How could you do that to me? How could you? You've always had boyfriends. You married dad! If you're gay you should not have had children.' (lines 156-157,S1; narrative p.7)

Just the other day my mom told me that my father knew that she was gay even before they got married. From what I can gather, she had a sexual experience [with a woman] – and then promised herself in remorse that she would never ever become involved in such evil and satanic things again. Then she married my dad. I think that's just terrible... My mother knew that she was never attracted to men... (lines 388-402,S2; narrative p.12).

I wonder why Kim judges her mother's decision to marry more harshly than her mom's gayness? Is it because it has already happened? Because it is an historical fact that cannot be changed, or because is it easier to focus on her mother's marriage rather than on her mother's gayness? Or is Kim perhaps trying to signal that if the marriage had happened, she would not now have been in such distressing circumstances?

This existential crisis also impacted on Kim's spiritual life. She was not only angry with herself, with the other children and with her mother. She was also angry with God.

In those four years after I first found out –from between Grade Six and Grade Ten – I didn't once pray, I didn't once read the Bible because I was talking to God in my heart and saying, 'You have harmed me! Why are you doing this to me? Why me? Why me?'

My heart goes out to her. The shock and denial that culminated in her anger is so painfully evident. And so I say, "And so you were not only angry you're your mother, but also with God?"

"Oh yes," Kim agrees, "extremely angry. Bitterly angry. And then I decided to go on this camp." (lines 218-224,S2; narrative p.20).

Until Grade Ten. Then I went to this seminar [the Christian camp]. Before that I just thought, 'Why me? Why? Why? Why? It's my mother! Why did it happen to me?' But then I resolved it. (lines 167-172,S1; narrative p.8)

These comments, and the following ones, signal Kim's isolation, her hurt, her overwhelming feelings of anger and resentment, her bitterness and disbelief and her futile attempts to try to make sense of the events until she reached a certain critical point when she could no longer cope effectively with her denial any longer. It was at this point that Kim's second critical event occurred: she decided to go on a Christian camp.

I really was very destructive. I had so much hatred inside. And then one day I took some time off to be alone and think about the situation. And I spoke to myself in more or less these words: 'Now listen here, Kim. You just have to stop this because your mother is going to be with you forever, and you cannot go on hating Linda for the rest of your life. In any case, she is out of your life now. It's just high time that you made a change in your life. Forget and forgive. Forgive that woman. Just let it go. That is all in the past. And once you've done all that, you should straighten out your relationship with the Lord. Okay? So now, get ready to go on this camp.' (lines 242-249,S2; narrative p.22)

Kim explanation of why she wanted to go on this camp and her desperation at being unable to forgive indicate how exhausted she must have been with her dilemma. She was exhausted by all the negative publicity, the teasing and her own anger. Perhaps, most importantly of all, she was exhausted and depleted by her

own constant (silent) interrogation of her own life and her relationship with her mother on the deepest personal level.

I went the first time [to the camp] because I wanted to be able to forgive these people. I was in a mess! I just wanted to get to a place where I would be able to forgive God, to forgive Linda, and to forgive my mother – because it was all just getting too much for me. And it was there that I found someone to whom I could talk and with whom I could work through all this stuff. (lines 227-230,S2; narrative p.20)

It was on this camp that a breakthrough event happened for Kim. She found that she could, for the first time, talk about the painful events of her life without any fear of being ridiculed. And because she could then disclose safely in public by talking to and telling others in a safe and containing (regulated) space, she managed to break her soul-festering silence and she found that she was able to forgive and be forgiven.

“You know, the first day of the seminar’s programme was devoted to the topic of forgiveness. When I heard that, I just went up to people at random and told them the story about my mother. And do you know how much that helped me?”

She starts to giggle and imitate a certain kind of voice. “ ‘Come here please! Did you know that my mother is so-and-so...?’ , and ‘Hi, please listen to me! My name is Kim, and do you know what...?’ . I did it, I suppose, just to get it off my chest. I suppose, also, that I realised that I would never see any of them again.”

“It was also a safe thing to do in that particular context?” I suggest.

She nods. “They could go and repeat it to someone else, but the person they told wouldn’t know me, and so it would make no difference. But I couldn’t go to my school friends and just pour my heart out to them because I would never know who they would tell. Do you see what I was doing? So that was really great. I had opportunities to talk to ministers and others, and eventually everything started to fall into place. Eventually I got to the place where I could forgive. And so I did forgive my mother and others. And I did it sincerely – because I wanted to... We received little cards on the camp with sayings on, and all of my little cards basically carried a message of, ‘Just accept it, you are not going to get answers, live with it, everything is okay’. (lines 249-265& 320-325,S2; narrative p.30,31)

That camp was really great! It just helped me so much – in a way that I didn’t dream was possible. I can still remember that when I got back from the seminar, I immediately ‘phoned my mom. I started crying and said to her, ‘Mom, I have forgiven Linda!’ And she said to me, ‘What?’ ‘Mom, I said that I have forgiven Linda! It is just so amazing.’ (lines 334-338,S2; narrative p.22)

From that time on, I can tell you, it was as though a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Now I can actually talk to my mother when I want to and I don’t have to hide anything. (lines 177-179,S2; narrative p.8)

At the most desperate point in her life, Kim was indeed fortunate to go on that camp because it gave her the space and the opportunity to disclose to anyone who came near her. And disclose she did! Almost at random. But in that way she managed to get her mother's "new" sexual orientation "off her chest" in a safe context because she knew that she would never see the people on that camp again and that they could gossip as much as they liked (if they cared to do so) without any ill consequences for her. Kim felt safe in these circumstances because she could disclose without any fear of unpleasant repercussions. This state of affairs contrasts strongly to the situation that prevailed among her close friends back home – friends who she felt had betrayed and hurt her.

Kim's experience was that as she was able to forgive, she was simultaneously released from her corrosive anger and bitterness. People who knew her commented on the positive effects of the changes that they noted in her life:

But the best thing of all was that, since I went on that camp, all kinds of people began to say to me, 'You know, Kim, since you went on that camp, you have become a much friendlier person.' (lines 338-339,S2; narrative p.23)

In Kim's case, it seems as though acceptance eventually followed forgiveness.

"I can remember one night... It was after that seminar. We were just sitting and talking about this and that. And as she spoke, I realised that my mom still behaves in exactly the same way towards me now as she did when she was still married to my father. My mom even looks exactly the same, and she still dresses in the same way." Kim smiles. "She is still an incredibly efficient and well organised person. It was then that I came to the conclusion: My mother is my mother. Why shouldn't I continue to love her in exactly the same way that I always used to do when she and my dad were still together?

"It was such a strong realisation. My mother is my mother..." (lines 437-450,S2; narrative p.24)

Because Kim is much older than Ryland, for example, her story is characterised by much more in-depth reflections and graphic expositions of her experience. I am able therefore to trace her experiences as a more coherent trajectory that moves from shock, frustration and anger to letting go, forgiveness and acceptance. I hypothesise

that a person's coming to terms with a mother's sexual orientation or preference follows a cyclical process that is almost similar to what can be called a "cycle of acceptance" which has been conceptualised by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (1986:59). Van Voorhis and McClain (1996:644) reported similar trends in their study of how children came to accept a lesbian mother. This however falls outside the parameters of this research. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that when children have just learnt about their mother's sexual orientation, their reactions are very different to what they will be after some years have elapsed. Thus, for example, Kim (as Ryland does now) lived for quite some time in a state of anguished fear.

In tying up this ribbon, I take note of the fact that that there seems to be no correlation between the age of a child when her or his parents formed a family and the critical incident they experienced when either they or other people learned about their mothers' sexual orientation. Because Kashni and Erid were adopted at young age, their friends got to know them when they already had two mothers (same-gender parents). Because Carl and Kashni's parents had both been together for 15 years and longer, their friends therefore also got to know them when they already had two mothers (same-gender parents). But in the cases of Kim, Ryland, Tom and Danielle, their critical incidents were precipitated by their biological mother's coming out for the first time. Their friends and class mates had known their families when a father had been present, or else they had known the mother as a single parent after she had already divorced.

My fellow listeners, I cannot share my lessons learned without extraditing the importance of certain contextual factors that these children raised whilst sharing their stories. So let me introduce to you:



Ribbon Three

Contextual factors



While there is much more to these children's experiences than only having two mothers (same-gender parents), I framed and focused my study on what these children experienced as they grew up in same-gendered families. Although I could just as well have examined other aspects of the children's experiences, it was not the main purpose of my study to do so. What I have discussed in Ribbon Three arose out of the spontaneous sharing of the children who were my research partners. While I will now examine certain background factors and the way in which these influenced the experiences of the children, I will consider these against a background of how these factors influenced the children's disclosure, their interaction or negotiation with the outside world and consequently, their okayness with growing up in this particular kind of family. For me it is significant to see how their backgrounds and the landscape in which they functioned affected and influenced their experiences, and how these also provide a commentary on some of the social issues implicit in their situations.

The first background factors that I propose to examine entail the social issues of **divorce and adoption**. Because I spontaneously included these two elements as criteria in the selection and sampling of my research partners, it comes as no surprise that they feature as some of the contextual factors. I decided to include them because they reveal a lot about what the children themselves make of these social issues.

While six of the eight children in my sample were born into the context of heterosexual marriages, two others were adopted. Kashni never elaborated on her **adoption**. She just mentioned it briefly while sharing a humorous incident that related to one of her nieces who confused the words "adoption" ("aangeneem"¹⁵)

¹⁵ In Afrikaans these two words are only different in terms of the last vowels "ee" and "aa". Unfortunately this is not so in English.

Lines 58-59:2, S2:

Talks about friend who pronounced "aangenaam" as "aangeneem" and the confusion that it created.

Original Afrikaans:

with being “pleasant” (“aangenaam”), something that briefly confused her two mothers. I cannot really explain why we did not talk about the adoption in any detail other than to say that it did not seem important to the two of us at the time of data creation. I do not deduce anything about our silence on this matter. I only remind myself that one of Kashni’s mothers mentioned that:

...the real emotional issues – of separation from the mother – occurred between them and their biological mother, and those emotional scars are grounded in their biological mother’s rejection of them. A lot of the fights that occur between them arise out of what happened to them in that context. (lines 38-40, Erid Kashni Parents S1; narrative p.4)

Erid, Kashni’s brother, describes his attitude to his adoption in the following extract:

And so I [Carien] ask, “Do some children ask more questions or comments – like ‘How does it work?’ or ‘That’s impossible?’ “
Erid answers: “Yes. I don’t always answer questions like that. But sometimes they do ask me, and I just say to them, ‘I don’t feel like telling you now.’ “
“Okay. Do children sometimes ask you questions about your adoption? And about where you were before you were adopted?”
Erid nods. “Yes.”
“Does that sometimes bring up hurtful memories?”
“Yes, sometimes. But it’s OK. I just don’t tell them.”
(lines 156-162,S2; narrative p.12).

I infer that Erid refrains from sharing more information with other children than is strictly necessary. I think that these questions or queries from other children (and from me too) might make him feel uneasy and insecure. On the other hand he may feel that this is an insignificant detail that others need not know about. Or perhaps he simply cannot understand what the fuss is all about. If that is the case, why would people want to anything more about it? Erid is anyway a very private person, and he does not readily or easily share his painful memories.

In my discussion of what the children shared about their parents’ **divorces**, I want to start by discussing the experiences of Tom, Ryland and Danielle because they form part of the same family unit. Tom, Ryland and Danielle all mentioned the

unpleasant events that preceded the divorce. Both Tom and Danielle told me how relieved they felt when the fighting stopped. Tom and Ryland make further disclosures by sharing some of the emotions that they felt at the time of the divorce.

As I have noted before, Ryland – in comparison with his brother and sister – did not elaborate extensively in the interviews. He only mentioned that he was angry about the break up, and sad about the fighting (lines 166-168, 182, 194, 219 TDR S1:4).¹⁶

I also wanted to tell her about how I cried all the time after my dad left our house. I just couldn't understand how my sister could be so happy when my parents divorced. I told my sister: "You are not supposed to be happy!" (lines 224 & 232,S1; narrative p.2)

These are characteristic emotions that a child experiencing a parental divorce may feel. O'Connell (1999:274) states that when the children of lesbian mothers who were divorced spoke about divorce, they evinced feelings of loyalty, sadness, anger, worry and vulnerability.

Tom also refers to the conflict that raged between their parents. He provides a more detailed description of the family dynamics and how they influenced his relationships with his friends and peers.

"When my mom and my dad were together, they constantly fought and quarrelled. It was, like, hell... I just never had any friends at all because, well, no-one came over, and we never did anything that involved other people. I was friends with the next door neighbour's daughter," he says with a smile. "But I never even brought her around. I suppose I was what you might call your neighbourhood nerd." (lines 114-126,S2; narrative p. 2,3,10)

¹⁶ Lines 166- 168, 182, 194, 219; Tom Danielle Ryland Session 1.

C: Tell me about the divorce. You said you were angry.

To: Ja, when I heard.

R: Me too.

...

R: I forgot

...

R: Now I remember it,

...

R: I was crying every time. It's like because my father, they always used to fight...

The change in his father, reportedly brought about by his father's new (female) partner, would certainly have helped Tom to process his parents' divorce. At the same time, Tom noted and was impressed by the change that his mother's partner reportedly brought about in his mother. It seems then that because Tom was finely attuned to the nuances of his parents' emotions and relationships, he realised that they were much happier and more fulfilled with their new partners than they had been in their heterosexual marriage.

But after my dad left, his new fiancée brought about one a hell of a change in him. I don't know what she said to him, or how she did it, but he really changed quite radically... Now my dad is a very much nicer person. You wouldn't even believe that it's the same person. (line 128,S1; narrative p.11)

My mom has a completely different kind of personality – and I don't know where she gets it from. (lines 290-291,S2; narrative p.24)

Danielle also confirms the change in her father:

But my dad can be a very different person with Auntie Thea. It's like, an amazing difference. (lines 329-330,S2; narrative p.3)

Because Tom has reached a stage of acceptance now, this does not mean that things were always so smooth. Tom also went through a phase of anger and he experienced the divorce as impacting negatively on his school life.

When they got divorced, I was very angry. I was also having problems at school... Children would come to me and I would suddenly – without any warning – have an urge to kill them... Because somehow it seemed as though every kid in that school had found out about my parents' divorce. And then some kids started mocking me. Some in a subtle way. but others were not quite so subtle about it... It was those kids who had never liked me anyway. But I just hung loose. (lines 163,179-182,S1; narrative p.12)

This indicates to me how Tom went through a major disclosure event even before he was faced with the problem of having to disclose his same-gender parent relationship. It is important to note his reflexivity in analysing his own behaviour and thoughts, even though he had no idea where this anger or urge was coming from. The overwhelming feeling that "everyone knows" indicates the

powerlessness that Tom felt at that time. This phrase suggests to me Tom's ability to rationalise such incidents in a way that comforts him and gives him closure. His experience demonstrated to him that the children who mocked him were in any case children with whom he did not have good relationships. Their negativity therefore bothered him less than it might otherwise have done. It is as though there was less at stake and therefore less to lose. In those cases, none of Tom's important relationships were in any danger. As the following extract shows, he also established important friendships during this period.

When my mom eventually divorced my dad, that was another big event. But then I also started to get more friends because I was more upset and so I ended up talking to more people... I felt so dead lonely at that time. So, kind of, rejected. More lost than anyone here. But then I started making great new friends. (lines 135-136,S2; narrative p.14,15)

Tom constructs divorce as a major "event" in his life. It is as though he assigns some degree of guilt or blame in the way that he frames the responsibility and culpability for "who divorced whom". Feelings of loneliness, rejection and being lost more or less compelled him to start talking to "more people". The positive outcome of this was that he made new and supportive friends (I have discussed this in some detail in Ribbon One and Two). In addition, this was the main strategy that Tom used to cope with the negativity generated by the divorce.

I was trying very hard not to think of anything at all and I just concentrated on hanging out with these new friends of mine. (lines 129-131,S2; narrative p.20)

Danielle also mentions her feeling of relief after their parents were divorced. But she frames her experience in a more positive way than either Tom or Ryland, and she shows her support for her mother by identifying more strongly with her than with her father's interests.

I will be honest with you. I only found out that my father had moved out because suddenly all his things were gone! So I thought to myself, 'Wow! Now we are going to be much happier! No fights!' ... I said, 'I understand, mommy! It really is much better now than it was when you were with dad.' (lines 228-231 & 258-259,S1; narrative p.2)

Danielle reflects some of the secrecy that she felt as she came to terms with the divorce. She noticed that her father's essential belongings were missing and she deduced from that that he had moved out. But it was purely a deduction. No one had told her. She does not report any feelings of loss. In contrast, she focuses on how much happier they will now all be because there will no longer be any fights and quarrels in the family home. From what she has reported, I note that she is very much focused on identifying her own feelings and also the atmosphere in the house as a whole. She does however share some of the strain that the others feel as they attempt to adjust to her mother's new partner.

And when you get to know her, she's actually a very nice person. But it's very hard to get to know her. (lines 278-279,S1; narrative p.24)

Despite this, it seems that Danielle is able to integrate her mother and father's new partners after the divorce. In fact, she refers to them as her three mothers.

I now have three moms! (lines 347,S1 & 231,S2, narrative p.3).

What I derive from the above brief examination of the experience of these three children are nuanced variations in the ways in which they share details about the divorce and the different ways in which they handled the actual event.

Kim has internalised a public discourse of marriage that is privileged, heterosexist and inflexible – and she feels strongly about the wrongness of gay people marrying into a heterosexual relationship:

I am glad that my parents are divorced because everyday one hears stories about people who everyone knows is gay, but who remain married. These people are ruining their own lives! I mean, come on, just get divorced...You should not do it. It is just so unfair! It is unbelievably unfair – to the other person, and to the children. And what a dreadful example! Of course, the children know everything. Children always know everything about their parents. (lines 350-353,357-365,S2; narrative p.13)

People just stampede into marriage and other-sex relationships without even thinking. (line 423,S2; narrative p.25)

Ruthellen Josselson (1992:184) states that when we marry, we not only marry a person, but we also become proponents and exemplars of the social institution of marriage. Because everything about marriage is shaped by socially defined roles, it expresses the expectations of the society we live in and an unspoken assumption that individuals will participate in and abide by the social forms that define marriage. Kim shows great insight when she is apprehensive about the prospect of someone entering a relationship that they cannot fulfil and that is therefore not meant for them. Because she foresees the consequences for all involved, Kim emphasises the impact that divorce will have on children, and she projects this hurt and anger onto her mother. Kim also justifies to herself the reasons why her mother should never have married at all, and she frames the justification of her views (which allow her to condemn her mother) in terms of her own conservative and heterosexist views about what marriage “must” be. (I have discussed this in Ribbon Two.)

With regard to Carl, the events of his mother’s divorce from his biological father were not easily disclosed to me. This is understandable because the divorce had taken place 16 years before, and because of the circumstances in which he and his biological mother subsequently found themselves. These circumstances were a source of unhappiness and were therefore not easily amenable to disclosure. Intense and painful personal information is always difficult to share. But it also seems to me from what they reported that the need to share and disclose fades with the passage of years. Penny (Carl’s biological mother) elaborated to some extent on how Carl’s biological father had abused him.¹⁷

¹⁷ Lines 273-275, 279-280:6, S3.

Penny talks about how her drunken husband burnt Carl with cigarettes while he was driving. He almost let Carl drown in the swimming pool. She could only feed Carl “marog” * and corn-rice until he was three months old. Then her parents came to fetch him. She only spoke to her parents again after her divorce.

* An indigenous African vegetable that tastes like a mild spinach.

Original Afrikaans:

Apart from this information, Penny describes how some children teased Carl when he was in Grade One.

Yes, he seemed very sad that afternoon when he came home from school. He went to the bathroom to take his bath. When I asked him what the matter was, he started to cry. He was still very young at that stage. So I sat on the toilet seat next to the bath and began to talk to him very gently. Then he began to cry most bitterly, and said that the kids at school were teasing him. So I asked him, "What do they say to you?" And he replied, "They say that I don't have a father."

So then I said to him: "You might not have a dad, but you are very lucky because you have two mothers."

Then Susan and I went to visit his teacher. She was very nice and accommodating. I explained the circumstances and told her that Carl does have a father, but that we were divorced. And that, under the circumstances, the kids should please not tease him because it could have a negative impact on his life.

She must have told them to lay off because, after that, he never once again came home looking sad – from that day to this. (lines 75-80 & 219-231,S1; narrative p.18)

Active intervention on the part of the mother at this young age proved to be extremely beneficial for Carl's future (as Penny attests). What is also significant is the way in which Penny constructed having two mothers as a *strength* and an advantage as she comforted him when he was so young.

Luanne does not experience divorce as such a critical issue. Her father lives in London, and her biological parents were divorced twelve years ago prior to my seeing her. Her carefree attitude to life seems to be enhanced what appears to be a tolerant atmosphere in the school environment:

Children don't tease each other any more about their parents being divorced – because just about everybody comes from a divorced family. (lines 64-65,S6; narrative p.14)

This brings me to a consideration of what I deem to be the most significant contextual factor and integral to each child's landscape: the **school context**. The children in this study supplied information about incidents that happened at their schools. They also appeared to judge the okayness or non-okayness of their school

Penny praat oor hoe't haar man Carl met stompies gebrand as sy kar bestuur, want hy's te dronk. Hoe hy hom amper in swembad laat verdrink het. Carl net marog en mielierys geëet vir sy eerste 3 maande, toe het haar

environments positively or negatively in terms of how accommodating or otherwise they were about children who grow up in same-gendered families.

Because Kashni is very sensitive about the contexts in which she moves, she is quite clear about the difference that a particular kind of school environment can make when she is deciding to disclose or not disclose.

Most times it's cool... It was really great in Rodcrest College because most of the people there are very open-minded and that was nice. But now, in Festive School, it's a bit more difficult, difficult because many of the people are more conservative. (lines 82-85,S1; narrative p.6)

The feature that is most crucial for Kashni is whether the people in the situation (in this case, the school) are open-minded and enlightened or whether they are conservative in their views. She is very clear about how different schools influenced her experiences of openness and her acceptance or non-acceptance by others. Another crucial indicator that emerges from the narratives and the interviews is *religion* in schools and the views that people internalise from their particular brand or formulation of religion.

In Rodcrest College everyone was, like, tolerant and open-minded because there were children from different religions like Islam, and there were also a lot of children from overseas. It is also a private school. It was really nice. But Festive School is more difficult. You know, I also believe in God and I think that I'm spiritual. But Festive School is, like, Christian. You have to be a Christian, pray three times a day and so on, and every morning the school opens with readings from the Bible. I don't mind that kind of thing, but they are, like, heavy about it and they are not tolerant about other religions. They only believe in Christian, um, values, and that's also what makes it so much more difficult there, because the Bible says that it's wrong and everything. (lines 210-222,S1; narrative p.8)

Kashni defines what openness means to her:

By 'open', ...I mean open-minded, tolerant. They are not judgemental about things and they are comfortable with most situations. (lines 110-111,S1; narrative p.11)

Luanne also shared an incident from her school where religion played a defining role. Although the teacher presented his views, the children were never invited to discuss or analyse what the teacher had said:

A teacher once told us that if you ever do 'it', even once, the Lord will never forgive you... (lines 178-179,S3; narrative p.7)

Another factor (and its complications) that children encounter in schools and that Kashni brought strongly to the fore, is *race* and *racism*.

This new school is so much more conservative. They're "freaking" conservative and religious. I don't mind all that stuff. But they're racist as well. Even when I'm with them, I sometimes find that I just can't keep quiet about their racism. So, one day, I just said to them: 'When I'm around you, don't say things like that'. But I think that it comes from the parents. Rodcrest College is not racist at all. There are Muslims there, and Jews and blacks. Schools really make a big difference. (lines 5-13, 29-30,34,S2; narrative p.7,8)

Kashni describes the conservative attitudes that she observed in one particular school and how the behaviour of those children influenced her friendships. What has happened to Kashni and what she has learned from these events shows that she differentiates between religion as such – and the intolerance that some people display whether they are religious or not. This is a subtle and important distinction.

Ryland is also aware of how racist factors in his environment make his life a whole lot less pleasant. The girls and older boys also bully him and his friends.

The blacks are horrible to me and to my friends. The girls hurt us and tell us to carry their suitcases. The older boys... If you bring something like a tennis ball or anything like that to school, you have to hand it over and give it to them forever. (lines 41-43, 54-56,S2 & 23-30,S3; narrative p.4,5)

Then they said, "Ah, you caramel boy." (line 28,S3)

There's only three white children, people in our class. And it's me, this other guy and my teacher. (lines 119-120,S2)

That's what I said last time. Do you have a problem with my... that I'm a boerekind. And they said, "Yes, because you're white." The other guy, he's the racist in our class. (lines 134-136,S2)

What this emphasises is how obsessed South Africans still are about race (and this includes children). What my research indicates is that children of same-gendered families experience these visible indicators of difference (such as race) as markers that other people can use to categorise people and make them the objects of prejudice, ridicule and hostility. The hostility that Ryland endures in his school is enormous because, apart from being teased and bullied by the girls and older boys, he is also subjected to racial prejudice.

Ryland also reveals that he is sensitive to how a school community reacts to other children's experiences when those children are already vulnerable in some way or another. More than anything, he wants to avoid having the other children gossiping about him personally.

I have seen it happen to other kids at our school! Like, we were talking about stuff. Then some other kid would hear. Then he would go and tell the others, and then everyone would tell everyone else. (lines 46-52,S3; narrative p.5,6)

In stark contrast to the above, Carl functions in a school environment that is even tolerant of children that are themselves gay. In the following comment he talks about a girl who has come out about her own "alternative" sexuality:

Everyone knows about Michelle. The girls hug each other. Our school doesn't have a problem. (lines 480-508,S1; narrative p.35)

Luanne also experiences her school context as a more pleasant environment because her peers neither discuss nor comment on the parents and family structures of other children.

No, we don't actually talk about it. Well, we don't talk about that. No one talks about their moms and dads at school. We talk about things like Sewende Laan,¹⁸ music, boys, and new movies. (lines 198-204,S3; narrative p.5)

Her observation that the children at her school do not tease children who have divorced parents is also indicative of her experience that she is enrolled in a more

¹⁸ As mentioned in Bubble Four, one could translate this as "Seventh Avenue". Luanne is referring to a popular South African local television soap opera.

tolerant school (lines 64-65:2,S6, narrative p.13). Danielle also notes that parents and children are not a topic of discussion at her school.

*“Alright. Do the kids at school talk about women like that...?”
Danielle interrupts me quickly, “They don’t even think about it. Because it’s very dumb.” (lines 130-131,S3; narrative p.16)*

A factor that influences the “coming out” experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, and their sense of being okay, becomes visible when they **change schools**. A change of schools can either occur naturally as part of the transition between primary and secondary school, or because family circumstances such as moving to another town necessitate it.

Luanne’s natural progress from primary to secondary school was easy, and she has encountered no difficulties. This means that she does not have to “think about that a lot” (i.e. her family composition) (narrative p.10).

Well, the teachers all know. I don’t know how they know. But the principal’s wife was my netball teacher in primary school. (lines 26-29,S6; narrative p.7)

Kashni, apart from the contrasting impressions and perceptions about Festive School’s more conservative and judgmental orientation, and Rodcrest College’s more open-minded and tolerant attitudes, notes how she coped with her transition to high school.

Um, well, you know what it’s like. It’s the whole Grade Eight scene! Everyone is new. So you get to know certain people and you make your own close friends. But then I have other friends, certain friends I’m not really close to. I mean, I am friendly with them, but I don’t talk to them the whole day and they don’t come to my home. Which doesn’t bother me... If they hear about my parents it’s fine. They’re usually fine with it as well. But in the case of my best friends, those friends I talk to every day, then I must tell them. (lines 183-189,S1; narrative p.11,12)

In the conversation that I had with Erid, we discussed his willingness to disclose his family structure in a new school. For him, the main criterion is to get to know someone. “If I get to know somebody well, then, yes, I will tell them” (line 130,S2; narrative p.8). He will not share it immediately in the beginning, and therefore say

that he doesn't "talk much" (line 128,S2; narrative p.8), or that he would "just tell them that we have moved" (line 138,S2; narrative p.7). When it comes to sharing more about his family life, Erid mentions that he has changed the way in which he answers questions. Before then, he used to say that he didn't have a father, but this elicited more questions from the children, questions such as, "But how's it possible that you don't have a dad?" (lines 156-157,S2; narrative p.12). So then he shared with them the fact that he has been adopted by two mothers – and that resulted in even more questions. So nowadays he simply says, "I don't feel like telling you now" (line 176,S2; narrative p.12).

In Kim's case, most of her descriptions of the school context centres around her critical incident. When the newspaper story broke, her mother thought of moving her to another school. Kim's explanation of how she perceived the situation shows how even then she did not realise what would or could possibly happen.

I thought about that for a moment, and then I thought to myself, It's the middle of the year, and I am really not prepared just to go and leave my own school now because of this whole drama. You see, I honestly didn't think that it would attract so much attention. But you know what young kids are like! There's nothing they love more than something sensational to gossip and snigger about. And I was, of course, still in primary school. But, yes, some of the children were saying things like 'You are going to become like your mother' and 'This girl is a sinful child of Satan.' But that's OK. I survived. (lines 137-144,S1; narrative p.6)

The negativity of the experience in primary school, influenced her choice of schools for high school:

"How did you experience the change from primary to high school? I mean, everyone in your primary school knew about your domestic situation. But then you had to face a whole new set of people in high school."

"Well, that's the reason why I went to Festive School. No one from my primary school was going there. I also went to stay in the hostel, and so I only saw the friends that I wanted to see on weekends. I didn't bump into people by accident." (lines 575-583,S2; narrative p.34)

Kim reports that she nevertheless remained silent in those early years of high school, because it was a single-gender school, where she felt that the girls might

gossip more. The fear that she lived in those days is once again evident in the following extract.

No one knew in Festive School either. Until today no one from that school knows the story. Because it is a single-gender school, I was scared that the children would gossip if they found out. But no one mentioned it. (lines 668-673,S2; narrative p.37)

Kim, as seen above, describes Festive School as “conservative”. Because she also enrolled in other high schools, she is in a good position to compare the prevalent cultures of different schools. Kim also elaborates on the various changes that occurred as she grew older. This allows us to consider how **age** may function as another significant contextual factor for the children of same-gender parents in schools.

I went to ABC High School for Grade 11 and then to Witbank for Grade12. But by then, I was no longer so bothered by my family background and I could cope without fear or shame with anything that arose. The people in ABC High School that I had known in primary school and that had caused trouble for me, were now all silent. None of them made any waves. In fact, my friends and I were the most respected pupils in the whole school and they all knew that. Alene and I used to talk openly about my situation and we did not regard it as weird in any way. In addition, all my friends in ABC were very open-minded about it, and no one thought anything about it. (lines 599-612,S2; narrative p.35)

According to Kim, open-mindedness in the culture of a school permits its learners to live and function in a more carefree way (because “no one thought anything about it”). It also gives learners the opportunity to talk freely to their most intimate friends. This happened between Kim and Alene, who accepted Kim’s situation totally.¹⁹

Carl also explains how he himself changed as he grew older.

When I was young, I was afraid of confrontations... That was in primary school. In Grade 3. But in Grades 4 and 5, I began to outgrow the other kids and became the tallest in the class. So they began to be a bit afraid of me, and they would back off. (lines 125-131,S3; narrative p.16)

¹⁹ See Ribbon Two for Kim's critical incident.

When I was younger, yes, they used to say these things to my face. My moms mentioned earlier that I used to come home crying a lot. But as I grew up, I don't know... I think maybe they became scared of me because I was the biggest boy in the primary school. Even now, I am still one of the biggest guys in high school. I suppose they're scared of me because of that. Yes, maybe they think that I will react violently and beat them or something like that. (lines 487-493,S2; narrative p.33)

As Carl grew older, his awareness of his physical advantage over other children led him to believe that that was the reason why they never bothered him with snide questions or comments. An advantage of being one of the “biggest guys” is that he felt (probably rightly) that others were afraid of him. Because of this, he felt confident and safe in the knowledge that the others would not dare to bother him.

While Erid's situation was rather different from Carl's, it also refers to managing situations by physical means. This is what Erid says about teasing in schools.

“How many times has this (teasing) happened?”

“Only a few times in this school. But lots of times in the other school.”

“What do you think would have happened at that other school if you had stayed there?”

“They would have stopped. Or I would have kept on hitting them until they did stop.” (lines 91-92,109-113,S2; narrative p.3,4)

As I consider the role that age may play in ameliorating the lives of these children, I note that Erid (currently in Grade 6) believes that the older one becomes in school, the better it is. This seems to suggest that he might have been teased most in his earliest years in school. These then were probably the years during which he was probably most apprehensive about disclosing sensitive information and consequently the years in which he would have remained silent about having same-gender parents.

“Do you think it will get worse as you get older? I mean the teasing. From those bad kids that you just mentioned?”

“It gets better... Maybe they will get more sense. Maybe they will not be so stupid when they get older.” (lines 184-188,S2; narrative p.13,14)

Ray and Gregory (2001:31) also found that some children disclosed at a later age, with rate of disclosure increasing between Grades 5 to 10. The children that they had interviewed attributed this to “the kids are more mature”.

Carl, who has almost completed his schooling (he is in Grade 12), also holds this view:

When one's older, yes. When you're younger and children tease you because of it, that can really get to you. But now they wouldn't risk calling me names. And I think that I am now at the right age for “coming out” about my gay parents. Next year, in any case, you don't see them anymore. (lines 416-418,488-489,S2 & 355,S1; narrative p.31)

Carl recommends high school as an appropriate time to “come out” – for him anyway.

I would say about Grade 9. Not in Grade 8 because then one is still too young and inexperienced. About in Grade 9 or 10 is okay. (lines 426-427,S2; narrative p.31)

Kim, who has completed her schooling, supports the views of Carl and Erid:

But you know what young kids are like! There's nothing they love more than something sensational to gossip and snigger about. (lines 141-144,S1; narrative p.6)

When you reach Grade 11 and 12, everyone becomes much more relaxed about this topic. (lines 715-717,S2; narrative p.36)

Kashni (Grade 9), in contrast, mentions that the children whom she encountered at a younger age were more accepting of her.

In Grades Three and Four, nothing happened. It was fine. You just tell the whole class and they have no problems with it. I had lots of parties and everyone was at my home and both my moms were always there. So of course there were no problems. But as they get older, things begin to change. (lines 197-199,204-205,S1; narrative p.15)

I have taken the uniqueness of each child's story into account in my attempt to find an explanation for the exception that Kashni provides. Because Kashni had been adopted and had had two mothers since an early school-going age, her classmates seem to have become used to her domestic same-gender parent situation. She did however experience a deeply unpleasant incidence of teasing in Grade 4 of primary

school. She therefore regards those earlier years as being more carefree than the years after this incident happened. It was as if she became more aware of prejudice after this incident and remained vigilant lest another such incident should happen.

Kim, on the other hand, was born into the context of a heterosexual relationship, and the coming out of her mother was made public while she was in Grade 6. She has no basis for comparison between her latter years at school and her years previous to that because her first family constellation was not same-gendered. She says that she experiences more openness in the latter years of her high school education.

Both Erid and Carl depend on their physical advantages for the confidence with which they can handle uneasy situations. I must remark that this quite surprised me because neither of them seemed in physical appearance to be anything out of the ordinary. On the contrary, Erid is quite slender, although he may be quite strong. Carl attributes his ability to manage negative situations to his physical maturity. Because he is older, he is able to stand up for himself. The negativity of other children also does not “get him down” because he finds solace in realising how transient his situation in the school is (“Next year in any case you don’t see them anymore”).

I identify another contextual factor in the **relationships inside** same-gendered families. The most important factor that emerges for me here is the **openness** (or lack thereof) between the parents and the children, and among the siblings themselves where there was more than one child in one family. Once again, although this was not the main focus of my study, these experiences emerged from what the children shared with me and seemed to me to be significant for a proper understanding of what children experience in same-gendered families. Apart from the openness that is required in order to disclose oneself so as to achieve honest and authentic relationships with one’s friends or other significant people, or the

realisation that some people are *not* so open-minded that one can confront them with the realities of a same-gendered family structure, openness also emerges in other ways as well.

The children in this study reported frankness and openness between them and their parents. Carl, for example, reports that he easily shares the events of his life with his mothers, but more particularly with Susan (the second mother whom he has proudly and lovingly constructed as his “dad”).

I share everything with Susan. Of course, I talk to my mom as well. But mostly, I talk to Susan. (line 184 ,S3; narrative p.27)

So of course I started to worry. I tried to talk to my mom, but it just started a fight. So I said to her, “Okay then. Just leave it.” (lines 215-216,S2; narrative p.22)

[Penny says that] Carl can open up to Susan about anything. (line 578,S1; narrative p.22)

His parents in turn mention that they can usually sense when something is bothering him. This suggests that they know him well.

I could sense that something was wrong. He was moody the whole time. (lines 574,S1; narrative p.24)

Their openness is also revealed by Penny when she says:

We both just accept him exactly the way he is. I told him just the other day that each of us has the right to make our own choices in life, and that we will never put any kind of pressure on him. (lines 63-67,S4; narrative p.28)

When Carl compares his mothers to some of his friends’ parents, his comments also reveal an openness between him and his mothers:

Well, I don’t get hidings like they do. Their dads beat them with canes and with their fists, and so on. A lot of their dads also drink a lot. My moms don’t do that! And my moms allow me to do things that their dads don’t normally allow them to do. (lines 500-503,S2; narrative p.33)

Penny’s advice to other same-gendered families also reveals the openness that they share as a family:

Just be open with him or her, and when problems arise, sort them out in a reasonable and sensible way. But I also want to add that we should all face it, and be open with one another. We've all been through this. Hiding one's gayness may not affect the adult's relationship, but, in the end, it will tear the child apart. Hiding one's orientation will only damage the child in the end. We need to trust each other, and our child needs to trust us. He should be able to rely on us. (lines 512-520,S1; narrative p.37).

As I mentioned above in Ribbon One, Kashni and Erid are raised in a home where gayness is openly named and discussed. After watching a movie one night,²⁰ the

²⁰ Lines 13-38, 44-49:1, Erid Kashni parents: Session 2.

Z: We watched a movie about a young gay guy who was murdered in a conservative part of America. The movie was called the Laminer Project (the Matthew Shephard story). And so we watched it because Kashni likes to watch movies and she can quickly tell you whether a movie is worth watching or not, and most of the time her judgement is quite good.

A: She was very keen that we should watch it.

Z: Yes, because often she isn't very keen on gay movies. And then we thought, okay, this might be a good way to talk with the kids.

A: And usually I don't like murder cases, but then I thought, okay, and it was actually a nice movie.

Z: Very American, and obviously very emotional – and they do manage to push the buttons. So afterwards Erid and I were in tears.

A: Anyway, after the movie... the movie made me realise, especially with regard to Kashni's comment the other day, that even though we live open, carefree and responsible lives, we are always aware of the possibility that we might be unconsciously sending covert messages to our children that maybe it is better to be straight.

Z: And that is not OK.

A: And then I decided to rectify this.

C: It's a fine line.

A: And then I told them that they should come and sit with me so that we could talk about it. I was also a bit emotional and cried as well, but I told them that I didn't want them to believe for one second that I am not proud of who I am – whatever that is... I just don't want them to feel – even in some small place in their hearts – that we are wrong in any way... even though they will be free to make up their own minds about these issues later on in their lives, and even though they are sometimes compelled to hide these facts in front of other people or at school for the sake of peace or expediency. I never want them to feel like that at home and in their hearts – certainly not about their own mothers. They have to accept the reality of the situation as it is...

Original Afrikaans:

Z: 'n Jong gay outjie in een van die konserwatiewe dele van Amerika doodgemaak – The Laminer Project (Matthew Shephard story). En ons kyk dit toe, en kyk Kashni is baie keen op movies kyk en sy sal gou vir jou kan sê of dit 'n goeie of slegte een is, en baiekeer is haar oordeel van die ding nogal reg

A: Sy was nogal keen dat ons dit moet kyk

Z: Ja, want baie keer is sy nie keen op die gay movies nie. En toe, okay, dink ons dis 'n goeie manier om met die kiddies te praat

A: En ek hou gewoonlik nie daarvan nie, want dis 'n moordsaak en ek hou niks daarvan nie, maar toe sy nou sê toe dog ek, agh oraait. En dit was nogal 'n nice movie

Z: Ja, very American, maar dit was toe obviously baie emosioneel – and they do manage to push the buttons – en ek en Erid is toe in trane

A: Anyway, toe dit nou klaar is. Die flik het my tot die besef laat kom, na aanleiding van Kashni se reaksie nou die dag. Selfs ons wat so openlik is en wat so gewoond lewe asof dit niks is nie stuur sulke klein boodskappies na die kinders toe, dat dit tog beter is om straight te wees

Z: That it's not okay

A: Verstaan jy en ek het toe besluit dat ek net daai ding regstel

.../ next page; volgende bladsy

C: Dis 'n fyn ding

mothers talked to both Kashni and Erid about being gay. This indicates an openness between them. (Although a section of this conversation is used in the narrative of Kashni, a fuller version is provided in the footnote.)

I don't want them to believe for one second that I am not proud of who I am – whatever that is... I just don't want them to feel – even in some small place in their hearts – that we are wrong in any way... Even though they will be free to make up their own minds about these issues later on in their lives, and even though they are sometimes compelled to hide these facts in front of other people or at school for the sake of peace or expediency, I never want them to feel like that at home and in their hearts – certainly not about their own mothers. They have to accept the reality of the situation as it is... (lines 33-48, Erid Kashni Parents S2, narrative p.3)

Some openness seems to exist between Ryland and his mothers. One can deduce this from the fact that he felt free to tell them that he did *not* want the researcher to explore their lives:

No, I don't like that. Mom and Auntie Sandy's lives are private, and what we as a family do, has nothing to do with anyone else. (lines 20-23, TDR Parents S1; narrative p.1)

Experience has taught Luanne that openness is probably the best way to handle situations between her and her parents. She notes:

The truth always gets out anyway in the long run. Sometimes I feel that they are handling some matter unfairly. Yes, they are both strict with me. But I can see that they are like that because they want to protect me and because they love me. (lines 101,117-123,S5; narrative p.12)

There are however indications that there are degrees of openness in the family and that not everything is said or discussed immediately – and that some things never get discussed at all. Luanne, for example, never told her mothers about what her teacher had said about people with gay sexual orientations in school.

A: En toe sê ek hulle tweetjies moet by my kom sit, dat ons daaroor praat, ek was nou bietjie emosioneel en het bietjie gehuil ook, maar ek het vir hulle gesê: hulle moenie vir een oomblik dink ek is nie trots op wat ek is nie, wat dit ook al is nie, want ek dink nie dis verkeerd nie en hulle moet nie, ek wil nie hê hulle moet êrens in hulle harte dink ons is verkeerd nie, en dis hulle eie morele oordeel later en ek sal dit ook later vir hulle sê, en hulle kan besluit is dit reg of verkeerd, maar ek wil nie hê hulle moet oordeel nie... en ek verstaan dat jy by die skool of voor ander mense moet wegstroom, maar in jou hart moet jy nie so voel nie, dat dit oor jou eie ma is nie, want dan gaan dit nie lekker wees vir jou eie ma nie en jou ma gee jou al daai baie liefde en goedjies and if you want to accept that you have to accept the reality of the situation en dit is, en en ons glo nie dat wat ons doen is nie verkeerd nie.

“Did you tell her what happened?”

“No, I didn’t actually.” (lines 193-195,S3; narrative p.9)

Despite this, Luanne also shares some of the more intimate experiences of her relationships with her mothers:

“My moms always tease me by saying, ‘Love will be enough for Christmas!’ But then they always spoil me so much. I don’t think they always realise how much I appreciate it.”

At one stage, I specifically ask Luanne: “What do you like about having two mothers?”

“I like it because a mother is always protective, and because of that, I can see that it is not always easy for them to say “yes”. We are also so close. I think that the times I enjoy most are when we go out and have picnics together, and do fun things like that. (lines 135-139,S1 & 47-55,S5; narrative p.11)

Indications of an open relationship also exist between Danielle and her mother. Indications of a lesser degrees of openness are also present even though Danielle felt free to ask her mother searching questions about her mother’s first (female) partner when she was trying to come to terms with her situation.

When the new lady – my mother’s friend – moved in, my mother said that they’re “together”. Then we all talked about it in a nice and soft way... (lines 257-259,S1; narrative p.2)

I just asked her: ‘Are you together?’ So she replied, ‘Yes. How did you know?... “I just asked her everything. And she told me [about] all the women that she had been with before... (lines 220-221,S2; narrative p.18)

It was during the period when his mother started to see her female friends that Tom experienced a lack of communication – and consequently a lack of openness – between his mother and himself.

I just wanted her to tell me what was happening. Then I wouldn’t have felt so... so... like, lost. (lines 177-181,S2; narrative p.16)

It seemed to him as though this lack of attention and communication affected his brother and sister as well.

All three of us were so lost. So then we started doing our own things... (line 184,S2; narrative p.16)

Even when his mother's first partner moved in with them, the situation did not improve. Tom felt that his mother did not understand him. This probably contributed to the lack of openness between them.

"Were you able to talk to your mother about that?"

"Hmm. I did tell her, and all she said was some stuff like... 'They are still small, you know,' referring to the twins. She didn't even know what I was talking about. I think she thought I was a bit mad or something. It was really tough." (lines 303-307,S1; narrative p.18,19)

Tom also shared with me some of the difficulties he encountered as he tried to establish a relationship with his mom's first partner (as described in Ribbon Two). He also describes how it is apparently easier for him to interact with his current co-mother (Sandy), although his explanation ("I wasn't used to it at that stage") might also indicate some of the difficulties that he is now experiencing as he tries to adapt to a new co-mother. In spite of this, Sandy's ability to share in and empathise with their youthful activities has created a real degree of openness and trust between them.

You see, Aunt Sandy, my mom's partner, is more understanding... "Yes, but it's so great. When she comes over here, she always puts on this loud 'doef-doef' kind of music, and I think, 'Wow! What good music!' Of course, I wasn't used to it at that stage, but I really liked it, and when she came, it was, like, 'Wow! There's that music again!'... And then she dances with us and goes crazy. She joins in! She is so much fun." (lines 290,294-295 & 304-305,S2; narrative p.24)

Danielle agrees that she and her brothers are having some success in adapting to their mother's new partner. Danielle tells me that there is more and more openness between her and her co-mother she has got to know her:

"Did you and your brothers ever discuss what was happening with Auntie Theresa or Auntie Sandy?" I ask.

"Well, we did agree that Auntie Sandy is much better than Auntie Theresa... . But Auntie Sandy... I like her a lot. Last year, we were against each other quite a lot. Now, all of a sudden, we are very nice to each other... And when you get to know her, she's actually a very nice person. But it's very hard to get to know her." (lines 183,S3 & 271-279,S1; narrative p.23)

As I noted in Ribbon Two, Kim's critical incident included experiencing a period of uncertainty and poor communication when her mother began to date new female

partners. This uncertainty and poor communication was something that they both somehow maintained.

So, yes, we knew what was going on. But of course we never said anything at all. (line 79,S2; narrative p.14)

We were completely uninformed... We never knew when Linda would come or when she would leave... (line 177,S2; narrative p.15)

My mom was very low-key about it. But she never explained anything to us until it reached the newspapers. I think that really affected my brother because he likes to be in control of things. (lines 179-181,S2; narrative p.16)

Kim tells me that even today she still withholds various kinds of information from her mother.

I don't really want to tell my mom because it will obviously upset her. (line 203:S2, narrative p.18).

What comes out strongly is that Kim and her brother were sometimes more open with *each other* during this challenging time in their lives. Kim also remains sensitive about the influence these events exerted on her brother, even though they are not all that close to each other anymore.

We were good friends until he was in Grade Eleven... (lines 71-72,S1; narrative p.4)

My brother and I kept it completely to ourselves. (line 134,S1; narrative p.6)

But Kim did not confide everything to her brother.

I didn't even tell my brother until I was in Grade Ten or Eleven. (line 202,S2; narrative p.18).

Despite the fact that Kim has to some extent moved away from her brother, the way in which they support one another makes me realise that it is possible for siblings who have lived through these kinds of experiences to remain open and supportive towards one another. Tom and Danielle also support each other by asking one another what is happening to their mother because they have been going through the same incidents.

No, I think she understands everything. She was, like, my big buddy back then. She used to tell me everything. I was amazed at how much she knew. I used to think, 'Hey! How the heck did you find out all this stuff?' (lines 338-339,S2; narrative p.25)

Sometimes siblings experience different levels of okayness with their situation – and this may act as a barrier that diminishes the kind of openness that would be optimal between siblings. Ryland mentions how much he would disapprove of Danielle, his sister, if she were ever to be open about their same-gendered family structure. As I indicated in Ribbon One, Danielle's reported experiences suggest a higher degree of openness than those of Ryland.

Now if Danielle (for example) goes and tells everyone, 'I've got two mothers at home', then we will have big problems to deal with. (lines 345-346,S2; narrative p.3)

Danielle mentions that although she is sensitive to the guidance that her mother gives her, she is also aware of what Tom, her older brother, thinks about things. It seems as though she tries to respect their opinions by deferring to them. This certainly suggests that these three (Tom, Danielle and Ryland) exist in a fairly complex symbiotic relationship.

Because she [mother], like, tells me. She says, 'I know that you're having these boy moments, Danielle, but I am trying to stop you because when you grow up, you will find that you will have a difficult time... She says that I will start doing all those things that normal teenagers do, all those mad things like drinking and taking drugs and all those kind of things, and I am very scared of doing that. I don't want to do those things... I just don't want to do that. My brother really cares about that and he doesn't want me to do those kinds of things either. It's like, if you're a girl, then you won't do those things. He says that if you're too much of a girl, then you won't turn out like that. (lines 92-102,S2; narrative p.7)

As I noted above, apart from the relationship that exists between disclosure and openness, openness may also be experienced in family relationships. Even though this is not the main focus of my inquiry, reflection on this topic does add a richness to what I have learned about the experiences of children who grow up in same-gendered families.

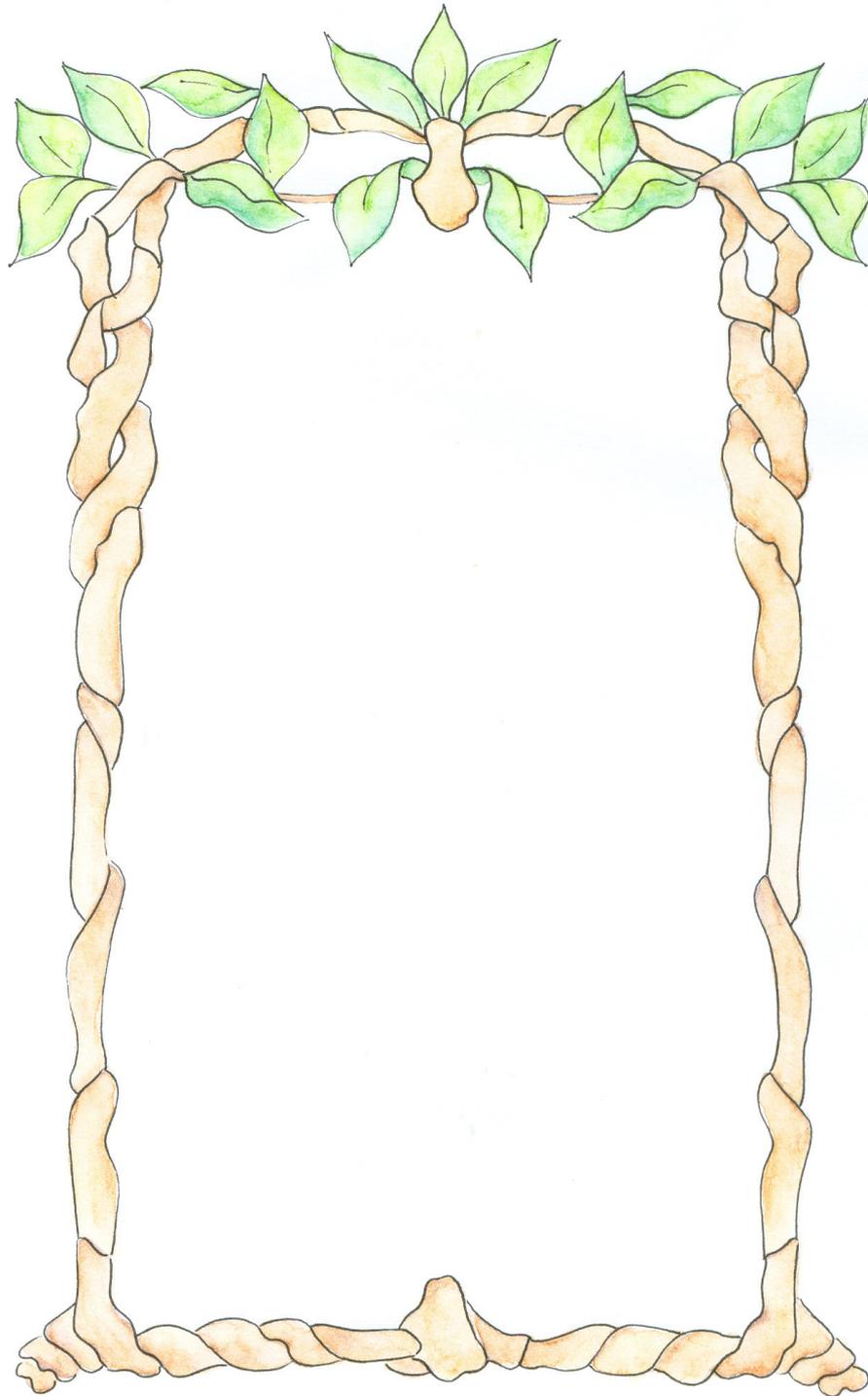
As I tie up this ribbon, I would like to list the contextual factors that I discussed. They were divorce and adoption, schools, the effects of changing schools, how age influences the interactions among of the children of same-gendered families and other children in schools, and openness in family relationships. My exploration of contextual factors situates the experiences of the children whom I interviewed in a social context, and serves to emphasise that simply making sense of their experiences can never be effectively accomplished without also focusing on those background factors that have significantly influenced their experiences.

In Bubble Five, I have reflected on the question that I originally asked: “What have I learnt from these children? What do I now know that I did not know before?” I answered these questions by discussing “three Ribbons” or aspects that emerged from the experiences of the children in my sample who grew up (or who are growing up) in same-gendered families. The first thing that struck me was just how okay nearly all of the children in my study are about growing up in same-gendered families. Their okayness cannot be isolated from the interactions that they have with other people. It was because of this that the strong linkages that exist between okayness and disclosure (and non-disclosure) emerged. For most of the children, some “critical incident” has happened in their lives that has significantly influenced the way in which they have learned to negotiate challenging situations. These challenging situations were usually (but not necessarily) linked to the mothers’ sexual orientation. I have discussed these critical incidents in Ribbon Two. Finally, I introduced contextual factors that have elaborated and broadened our understanding of the construction of the experiences of children who grow up in same-gendered families.

*So my dear King, Queen Academia and fellow listeners, I would like to bestow a special gift upon you. I have mirrored the reflection of different **Bubbles** that constitute the journey that I have followed as I have listened to and co-created the experiences of children growing up*

in same-gendered families. I would therefore like to present this Mirror to you. But, before I present it, I need to explain something very important about this gift to all of you...

...the frame...



Bubble Six

Framing my findings

Visual pointers to Bubble Six...

- How can we conceptualise the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families? p.408
- The process of unravelling and building my intellectual puzzle p.428
- Postscript: revisiting the iterative and emerging process of analysis and interpretation p.432

”Framing my findings”

(Bubble Six)

How can we conceptualise the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?

In focusing on conceptualising the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, I would like to recall that the lens of my inquiry focused on the individual children who were part of a family in which the two parents responsible for the family are of the same gender. That was my point of departure. But no family can be understood in isolation, because every family exists in the context of a local community, and these networks of communities constitute a society of which a family is (for most people) the most basic unit of social organisation. The children who were my research partners allowed me to obtain glimpses (and sometimes extended views) of what happened to them when they moved from the security of their homes into the “world”, and how they negotiated the difficulties inherent in inviting the “world” (in the form of their most intimate friends) into their family homes. The children also reported their experience to me in terms of their interaction with their close friends, classmates and peers, other significant adults (such as their friend’s parents), and other adults somewhat more peripheral to their lives (such as school teachers or ministers of religion).

Because of the current topicality and visibility of same-gender parents in South Africa (mainly as a result of intense media interest in some high-profile Supreme Court cases in recent years), and because same-gendered families are a “new” concept for most people in society (both in terms of family structure and the homosexual sexual orientation/ preference of the parents), how the children involved would perceive their families and construct the acceptability of their families in the community and society was a matter of intense interest to me. I

wondered whether the children would see their families as (in essence) no different from other families, or whether they would perceive their families as being different – and, if so, how they felt about it. As my research activities gained momentum, I soon came to realise that there are no clear-cut answers to any of these questions.

I did find that all the children without exception were indeed *aware* that people in general hold different points of view, perceptions and feelings about same-gender parents and same-gendered families. The children of same-gender parents thus experience a whole spectrum of reactions that range between rejection and prejudice (at one end of a continuum) to tolerance, acceptance and a belief that same-gendered families are just another variation in family structure (at the other end of the continuum). Because their own experience has made these children aware that people's reactions to their same-gendered families vary from enthusiastic acceptance or indifference to intense hostility, they have all (in varying degrees) become cautious about how much they are prepared to reveal about their same-gendered families – and sensitive about how this information might be received by others. This awareness leads them either *not to disclose* or *to disclose* the fact that they have same-gender parents.

Before I describe the different ways in which children of same-gendered families disclose, I would like to note that *awareness* is not the only factor that is relevant to disclosure. The level of okayness that the children experience, as well as their openness in relationships (something that derives at least in part from their okayness), also influences the disclosure process. While disclosure may be construed as a way in which these children offer support to their friends, they themselves, as children of same-gender parents, also obtain support from other sources.

I shall now analyse these statements in order to explain the interactions and links between awareness, disclosure, okayness, openness, and support, as I understand these terms.

We have already seen in Bubble Five that there are different kinds of okayness that children growing up in a same-gendered family experience. One kind of okayness is the different levels of being okay. These different levels may be placed on a scale that ranges between **being not okay** to **being okay**. The other kind of okayness ranges between **being okay to disclose this information** and **being okay to withhold it**. The **green** and **blue** lines in Figure 6.1 represent my understanding of these two types of okayness.

The children in this study growing up in a same-gendered family will at times **disclose** or **not disclose** the fact that they have two mothers. As I have already noted in Bubble Five, none of the children takes up an *absolute* position on this issue. My research shows that a continuum exists between disclosure and non-disclosure, and that (as one might expect) no child consistently takes up a definite position on the continuum, but will react in various ways to different circumstances. Thus while children may on occasion disclose quite openly on some occasions, they will choose at other times to disclose in a “minimal” or “masked” way. The extent and method of their disclosures are designed to deal with the circumstances with which they are confronted.

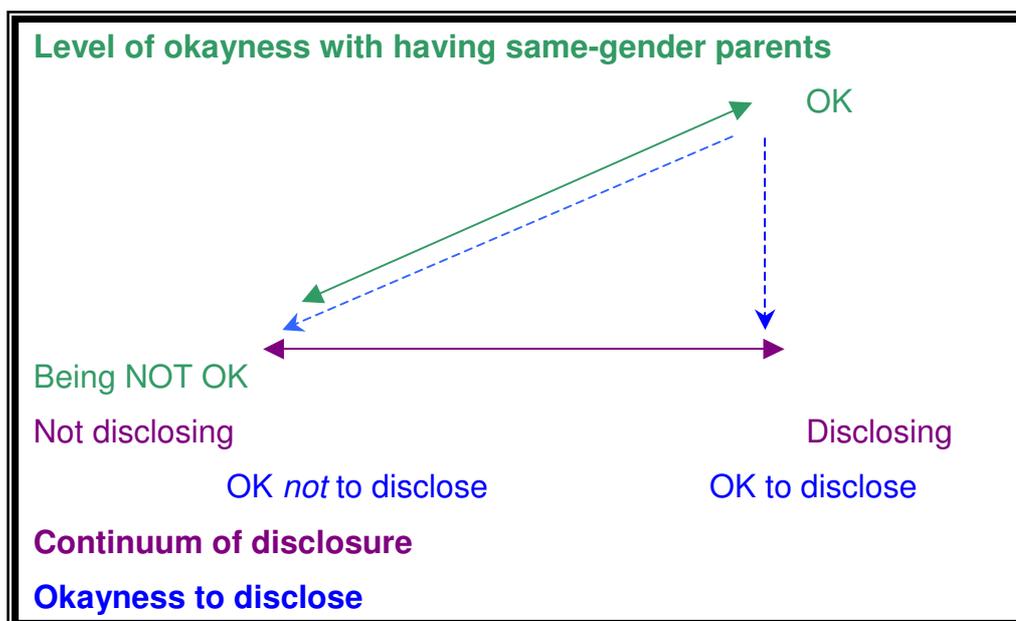


Figure 6.1: Okayness, okayness to disclose, and disclosure as experienced by children growing up in same-gendered families in this study

Figure 6.1 indicates that there are different degrees of disclosure, indicated on the graph as “**continuum of disclosure**”. The children in this study also show different degrees of okayness to disclose, indicated on the graph as “**okayness to disclose**”. The placement of okayness on the graph was elevated to indicate the being okay to disclose, as well as being okay not to disclose. The okayness however implies another kind of okayness, namely being okay or being not okay with having two mothers. This is indicated by the “**level of okayness with having same-gender parents**”. The **being okay to disclose** also coincides with the **being okay with having same-gender parents**, and therefore this “okay” position also needed to be elevated. This also created a visual indication of the increased openness that exists and that was reported by the children in this study (I will elaborate on this later in this text).

With regard to *being not okay* with having two mothers, I had to accept that it is highly unlikely that a child will state explicitly that s/he is not okay with having same-gender parents, and that it is even less likely that s/he would express such reservations to a researcher. The sign that probably indicates most notably that they are not okay is the fear they express should someone find out that they have two mothers. I could therefore deduce their being okay/ being not okay from the way in which they disclose (or do not disclose).

Children growing up in a same-gendered family are confronted with prejudices against their parent’s sexuality, and with hostile societal discourses that construct what and how a family ought to be. Some of the children in this study reported that they were afraid that someone would find out about their family structure. They therefore construct their having two mothers as a secret that could shame them and their families if it were revealed. Previous experiences of being teased and mocked has sensitised them to the perception that they cannot simply disclose to people at random and without careful consideration because in society as we know it there are people would reject and hurt them (or worse) should they learn the family “secret”. The secrecy and silence of these children are therefore part of the effort they make to protect themselves. The children from same-gendered families in this

study have become aware of the divergence between the dominant narrative in society, and what they personally experience at home. For some, the only way to manage, negotiate and reconcile this divergence is by keeping quiet, hiding, and not disclosing.

Once again, this protective response is neither fixed nor invariable among all the children all the time. Some do not want people to find out by accident or by chance, and are adamant about retaining the right to choose whom and when to tell. But even this insistence on the right to choose signifies that they are capable of moving towards a slightly more okay level as they themselves become more okay with having same-gender parents. There are also times when even though some of the children are not willing to disclose their family structure to just anyone, they are okay when someone finds out incidentally or by chance. This signals yet another higher level of being okay with the family structure and with disclosing – even though the occasion and means of such disclosures might be passive, indirect and incidental.

The children from same-gendered families in this study seem to be aware without exception of the perceptions and worldviews of people “out there in the world”, and they seem to accept as a fact of life that while some people will be blunt and outspoken in their aversion against gays, others will be more polite, tolerant and circumspect. While yet others will be sufficiently open-minded and open-hearted and open to accept the diversity inherent in human nature. These children realise more clearly as they mature that many important, trustworthy and admirable people are prepared to celebrate diversity and uniqueness. As this happens, their recognition of open-mindedness in others, their awareness, their openness, and their willingness to disclose all work together in their lives to create a coherent and reliable ideology of growing up in same-gendered families.

This may be the reason why some children are okay *not* to disclose: their experience has given them the ability and maturity to see that other people might not be ready to be confronted with this information. Some of the children from same-gendered

families in this study reported that they were sometimes unsure of the other person's openness and therefore wanted to get to know the other person better before disclosing. Such uncertainty serves the useful purpose of enabling them to see when non-disclosure might be a more appropriate strategy than disclosure in a particular situation. The children in this study are also quick to recognise and understand the (sometimes quite subtle) signs that indicate that another person might not be okay with a disclosure of this kind. Apart from clearly indicative and relatively crude signs such as outright prejudice and discriminatory remarks, there is a whole body of more subtle and diffuse indicators that they are more likely to encounter among their friends, that act as cues either to disclose or not disclose. Such indicators would include emotional discomfort, unfamiliarity and uneasiness or (in terms of body language) they might see their friends looking around with suspicion and observing transactions between their same-gender parents with a kind of withdrawn vigilance. Such behaviour often constitutes a cue or sign for the children of same-gendered families in this study to intervene and to disclose because they *need* their friends to be as okay as possible with their same-gendered family. Disclosure then serves the purpose of establishing and legitimising okayness, and of enhancing the quality of openness between them and their friends (and between their friends and their same-gender parents).

I have constructed an interior dialogue of how I imagine one of the research participant children might think in a situation where s/he is confronted by a new friend who is not yet familiar with same-gendered families and alternative sexual orientations in parents. It illustrates the kind of process that children in these situations undergo and the syllogistic logic to which they subject the progress of new relationships with other children. Here it is:

Will I tell you? Or will I wait until you ask me what is happening? Is it okay if you don't ask and I don't tell? If we are both open to diversity and you feel okay to be around gay people, then, yes, we can continue our friendship. But if you're not okay, and I'm not sure whether I'm okay with your being not okay, I must take into account that these two women are my parents and that I can never be disloyal to them. What then can I do in such a

situation? I suppose that we could continue our friendship and just never talk about it – provided that your parents continue to allow you to play with me. But if it is an issue for them or an issue for you, then I'll have to let you go and terminate our friendship.

Even though I did not explore the experiences and reactions of the friends, peers or “other people” that the children of this study came into contact with, the children reported that certain of their friends seemed more open-minded and more okay with the phenomenon of same-gendered families than did others. Some mentioned how other children (such as classmates) would talk about other people while assuming that they (the children) shared the same racist or conservative premises as the interlocutors. This kind of disjunction of sensibility is quite common among relative strangers in a society where a wide range of opinions exists among people who otherwise seem similar. The indicators or markers that the children in the study used to establish conclusions about whether their classmates would more likely to be open-minded and tolerant included the way in which their friends (but also other classmates) interacted with them, whether or not they asked questions of a pertinent kind, whether they were willing and happy to come for sleepovers or not, and how they reacted in the presence of their two mothers. (I hypothesise that these “other” children also experience degrees of okayness and open-mindedness that vary from time to time and place to place in their lives.)

It seems that when a child in a same-gendered family is open about having two mothers and perceives that her or his friends are open-minded and tolerant of sexual diversity, disclosure might enhance the authenticity of the relationship. There is no doubt that the children in this study *want* to establish straightforward and honest relationships with their friends and other significant people, and that they therefore feel the need to disclose, either fully or in a masked or minimal way. In propitious circumstances, disclosure enhances openness while the ideal of openness enhances the quality of disclosure. In addition, openness is valued as an ideal by the children in this study because of their awareness and appreciation of the importance of open relationships. The support that the children in this study offer their friends through their acts of disclosure, augments and enriches the

quality of openness in their friendships and relationships. Openness serves the purpose of facilitating and deepening feelings of reassurance, reliability and trust among friends. They also signal okayness in the friendship, and okayness with the same-gendered families. The more okayness there is in a relationship, the more openness there is likely to be. Okayness and openness therefore enhance the quality of authentic relationships. Even if the family structure of having same-gender parents is never explicitly discussed, openness about other things is still possible in friendships where open-mindedness, tolerance and okayness prevail as personal values. A point may thus be reached where it might even become irrelevant to even talk about the parents' sexuality, especially among young people who are less conditioned by heteronormative ideologies and who are more influenced by the pervasive tolerance of dissimilar life styles that prevails in some "alternative" Western-influenced youth cultures. (One might note that some modern "alternative" youth cultures – although representative of a minority – are characterised by extreme intolerance of difference and diversity. This is a disturbing feature of contemporary Western culture.)

The position of being okay not to disclose will probably result in a lesser degree of openness because the other person will have to come to conclusions on their own. In such situations, their adaptation to the family structure will depend partly on their own open-mindedness, okayness and familiarity with alternative family configurations. Interactions among children in same-gendered families and their classmates or friends were at times characterised by the friends or classmates asking questions for different reasons. The reasons included being unsure or mere curiosity and interest. But it was the *process* of asking questions that furthered openness among them. Openness in most cases thus engenders authentic relationships, and both of these are connected to okayness, awareness, support and disclosure. I consequently visualised their processes of interaction as being similar to those of children in same-gendered families, as illustrated in figure 6.2.

The other person's (e.g. a friend or class mate) process of asking questions or inquiry into the same-gendered family structure is termed "**preparedness to ask**",

where I propose that the friend’s willingness to ask or inquire can also be plotted on a continuum ranging between *okay to ask* or *okay not to ask*. Similar to children growing up in same-gender families, I also propose that this stem from an *okay* or *not okay* point of view, thus presenting a continuum of “*level of okayness*” once again. The okayness is derived from the *perceived open-mindedness* of the friends (ranging between being *open-minded* and *not open-minded*).

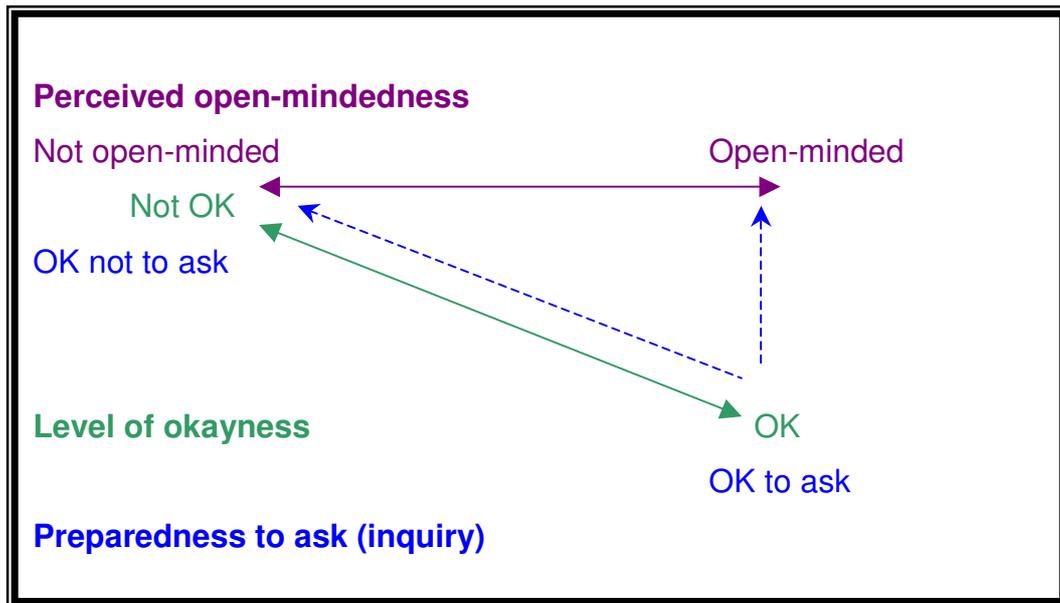


Figure 6.2: *Perceived open-mindedness, okayness and preparedness to ask, as reported by children growing up in same-gendered families in their interaction with others*

Thus far I have examined the relationship between awareness of the okayness and perceived open-mindedness of other people by children from same-gendered families and how the interaction they may or may not have will influence their relationships. But these children also exhibit different modes or styles of interaction with others apart from the kind of non-disclosure that indicates silence and secrecy.

I deduce from my findings that disclosure may happen in four different ways:

Style 1: I am OK to disclose – You ask

Style 2: I am OK to disclose – You are NOT asking

Style 3: I am OK NOT to disclose – You ask

Style 4: I am OK NOT to disclose – You are NOT asking

		“Others”	
		Ask	Not asking
Child of same-gender parents	OK to disclose	<i>STYLE 1</i>	<i>STYLE 2</i>
	OK <i>not</i> to disclose	<i>STYLE 3</i>	<i>STYLE 4</i>

Figure 6.3: Schematic presentation of the four styles in which disclosure happens

Style 1: I am OK to disclose – You ask

This is probably the style in which the most openness, clarity and mutual honesty will be found. Although it depends on who tells or asks first, it is characterised by an open sharing of the two-mother family structure. Spontaneous disclosures may also occur. This for example, happened to Carl when a friend spontaneously asked him which church they attended. Carl then shared with his friend that his parents are gay (the church they attend is predominantly run for gay people although it also actively welcomes heterosexual people). Carl is able to do this because he is okay about sharing his family structure with friends.

Tom (another example) is okay about disclosing and is of the opinion that his friends only ask anyway to confirm *what they already know*. Tom therefore welcomes their questions. Style 1 therefore includes situations where friends might enquire *before* any disclosure has happened.

This may also be the style in which children disclose more easily because they sense that some people are more open-minded than others. An example of this would be Kashni who realises that she *has* to tell if she wants to build and maintain enduring relationships.

Since disclosure is usually always a one-off event with a particular person, this style cannot be used repetitively because when “I’m okay and you’re okay”, the need to ask or disclose becomes redundant.

Style 2: I am OK to disclose – You are NOT asking

The example above of Kashni links with Style 2 in which children in same-gendered families, sensing an uneasiness in their friends, do not even wait for their friends to ask. This uneasiness may be conveyed by a feeling (intuition) that they have about their friend’s situation, or they may deduce it from the behaviour or facial expressions of their friend. They see this uneasiness as a sign that the friend may not be that okay with their family structure, they then conclude that if they disclose to the friend, s/he might be helped to progress towards the end of the continuum that represents being okay. As I have noted above, children in same-gendered families disclose because they want their friends to be okay. Disclosure serves to strengthen and establish their friends’ okayness, and to enhance mutual understanding, openness and honesty in the relationship.

Some of the children will disclose to their friends in a straightforward manner even before they ask. Others wait until they sense the uneasiness of the other child and then they intervene. The timing and manner of disclosure also depend on the personality and temperament of the child. Kashni, for example, discloses in a direct manner to some of her friends. Or else she sometimes decides to wait until she senses or observes their uneasiness. Although Tom disclosed spontaneously to his whole class, he only discloses once he senses or observes their uneasiness once he has invited a friend to his home. Carl disclosed his family structure to his girlfriend before she even asked or raised the topic.

The children of same-gendered families will usually support their friends’ processes as they come to terms with this new information by asking them if they are alright and by inviting any further questions they might have. They will also sometimes offer suggestions about how these friends might in turn tell their parents. Tom, Kashni and Carl all explained to me how they implemented this process of

supporting friends to whom they had disclosed. Most of them (Carl, Tom, Luanne, Kim) take the position that if the person to whom they disclose does not want to continue with the friendship after they have disclosed, then it was not a worthwhile friendship in the first place.

Kim's experiences at the camp also fall in this category because she shared her mother's sexual preference with camp mates who were unknown to her as people. She also supports her gay friends when they wish to disclose.

Style 3: I am OK NOT to disclose – You ask

When the friends of children of same-gendered families in this study ask questions and they (the children) are *not* prepared to share, they make use of what I call a "masked" disclosure. Masked disclosure is usually motivated by discretion and respect for the friend's beliefs and/or sensibilities because not everyone in society feels able to accept gay people. In such situations, the children therefore construct the co-mother as an "aunt" or "friend" of their biological mother.

Research participants from my study who practise "masked disclosure" are Kim, Luanne, Ryland and Danielle. Sometimes masked disclosure does not satisfy the friend's curiosity or their desire to know more, and they will probe further. This happened to Danielle when her friend asked her if her mothers sleep together. She was then "forced" to disclose more fully.

The children in the study might also utilise Style 3 when they sense that the other person is merely curious – and that they probably do not accept the okayness of same-gendered families. The children in this study reported that they will then tell such inquirers as little as possible to answer their question, and that they will not elaborate extensively or share more than is needed to answer the question. This is what I have called a minimal disclosure strategy. Sometimes they will also phrase their answer in such a direct (or even aggressive) manner that it discourages any further questions. This strategy was described by Danielle and Erid. In contrast to this, the children might disclose fully even though they had not made any decision

to do so. This happened to Carl when his classmates posed a question to him in a group. But then Carl is more comfortable and willing to disclose to his friends than to more unfamiliar persons such as classmates.

When the children use Style 3, they exhibit a more passive role in their interaction with their friends. Style 3 presupposes that they do not act pro-actively but that they wait for their friends to ask them questions. In such cases, the children from same-gendered families usually operate from the unspoken assumption of “If you want to know, then ask me”. We have examples in the narratives of how Erid, Luanne and Carl used this technique. Kim also observed that she will disclose if an unfamiliar person confronts her with a question about her mothers being partners, but that she is more reluctant to do this when it comes to her close family or friends.

Style 4: I am OK NOT to disclose – You are NOT asking

Style 4 occurs when children of same-gendered families do not see the need for disclosure. As far as they are concerned, disclosure is not necessary. This usually happens when they are of the opinion that their family is just an ordinary family. Because of this, they refuse to take responsibility for creating a situation (by means of disclosure) in which another person who encounters their family might have an issue or problem about their same-gendered family structure.

Erid expresses this in terms of his beliefs about friendship when he defines friends in part as “those who do not ask questions”. Carl noted that if someone has a problem with his family, then that would be *their* problem – and not his. Luanne reports that none of her friends confront her with questions about her family, and that if they have, she cannot remember it happening. She does not see the need to disclose. Even in an intimate relationship such as that with her boyfriend, she did not see the need to disclose – and he did not ask. According to her, she left it to him to work it out for himself. And although one of Kim’s friends (Jane) does not know, Kim is adamant that she does not *need* to know. Kim has therefore not disclosed to Jane and Jane has not asked anything. Kim bases her preference for non-disclosure on the fact that people have different opinions about same-gendered parents and

that one is bound therefore to encounter negativity or hostility eventually if one keeps disclosing. It seems as though she uses non-disclosure to protect herself, her friends and their friendship.

One could hypothesize that using Style 4 might undermine authentic communication and that it could compromise openness and understanding in relationships. Conversely, this style could work well for both parties, especially if one's friends do not regard same-gendered families as something different, questionable or negative.

Why would children be okay not to disclose (Styles 3 and 4)? One could speculate that these two styles are caused by personality factors. Thus some children may be more introverted and private than others, or they may need to be surrounded by a greater degree of discretion than other children. Perhaps these styles also protect them and others from feelings of embarrassment and uneasiness. Or they might feel that they need to protect *themselves* from the possibility of rejection or from getting hurt, especially if they have been rejected and hurt before. Sometimes these children view disclosure of their family structure as a personal decision that needs to be taken by their mothers. Such an attitude may indicate that they are aware of how disclosure might harm or impact negatively on their mothers. Such children have somehow accepted and learned that it is best not to disclose, and they are okay with that. Some of the children simply do not see why disclosure would be necessary because all the people they know have never known them as anything but a same-gendered family. Some of the children in a same-gendered family view their family as just another ordinary family. For them disclosure therefore becomes irrelevant.

In conclusion, the following figure summarises the possible disclosure processes that a child growing up in a same-gendered family may adopt. The figures also show how awareness, levels of okayness and open-mindedness are interrelated.

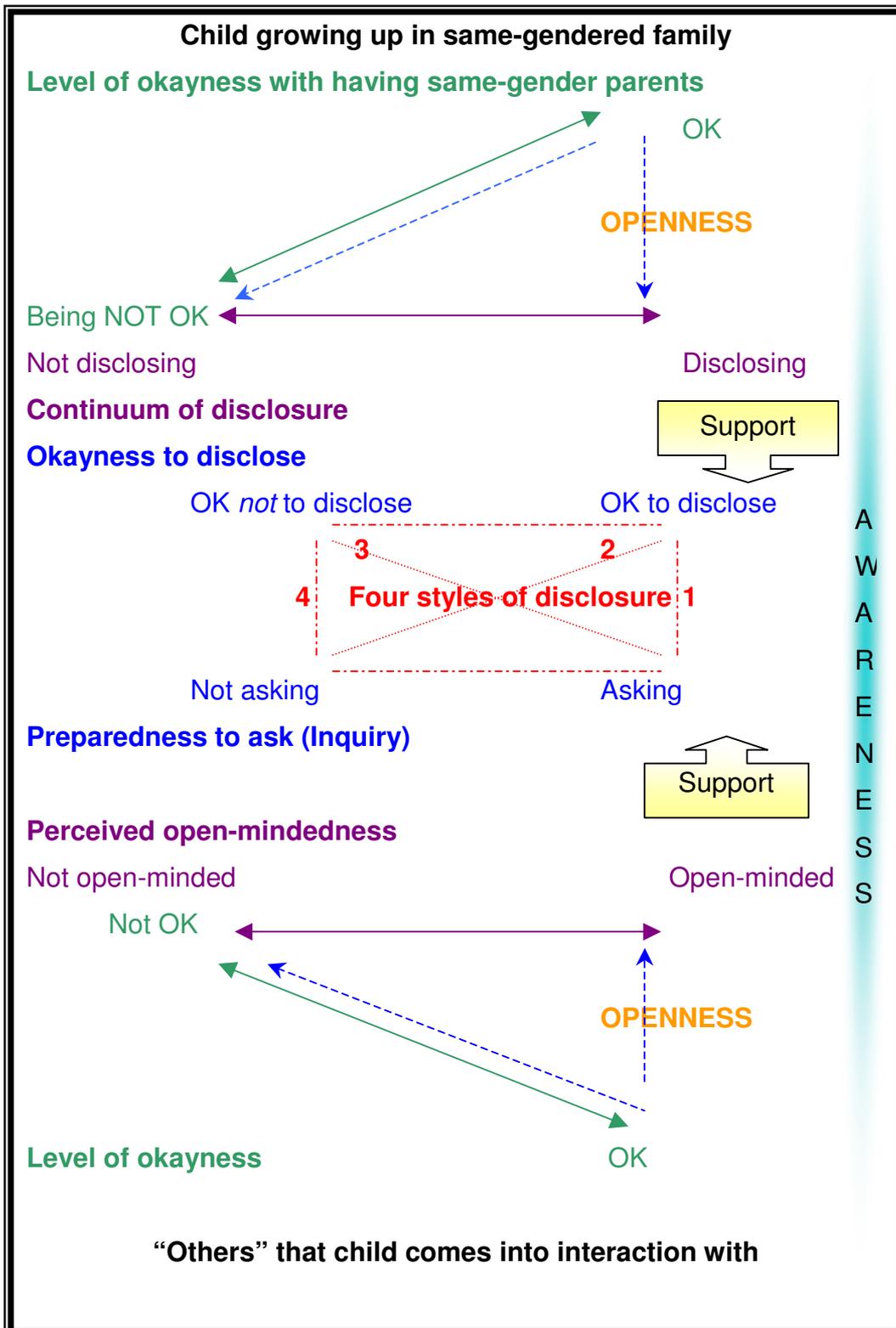


Figure 6.4: Visual representation of the conceptualisation of the disclosure processes of children growing up in same-gendered families

The focus of the discussion thus far has mainly centred around disclosure, awareness, levels of okayness, openness and open-mindedness. I have looked at the ways in which children growing up in same-gendered families are aware of the dominant discourses and narratives in society and how this awareness influences their interaction with others. I have elaborated on various styles these children adopt to either disclose or not disclose. I have also described how the methods and styles of disclosure that these children adopt are influenced by their perceptions of the open-mindedness of the people whom they meet and interact with, as well as their own levels of okayness with having two mothers. Another factor that influences these children is “support”. I shall now describe what I understand this term to mean.

While this research has shown how disclosure serves as a support to same-gendered families by helping *others* to reach a better understanding and awareness of same-gendered families, it also reveals how the children in same-gendered families in this study receive an immense amount of support from different sources. This in itself enhances the okayness and openness that these children who grow up in same-gendered families experience. Their parents, for example, support them in various ways. Sometimes this support takes the form of active and direct intervention (as when, for example, Kashni’s mother, Anriëtte dramatically intervened to deal with an incident in which Kashni was insulted and teased at school). Sometimes their parents discuss the family structure beforehand with appropriate school officials so that the child will not bear the brunt of having to explain the family structure to teachers. At other times, parental support takes the form of being emotionally available to their children and of being willing to discuss the various viewpoints (both positive and negative) that people in society hold. Finally, but not least, the parents of these children support them by encouraging and making their support clear to the children on a daily basis.

Children growing up in same-gendered families also receive support from their friends. This kind of support includes firstly, being okay and not rejecting them, secondly, continuing to visit them, playing with them, and sleeping over at their

houses, thirdly, not asking questions when questions are not welcome, and fourthly, being accepting and realising that it is sometimes difficult for children from same-gendered families to disclose only in a minimal or masked way. This support from friends strengthens the okayness that children from same-gendered families feel because they experience it as positive feedback from their peers. Such positive experiences might also encourage openness in children from same-gendered families as they interact with new people because they will be able to model relationships with previously unknown people on these successful encounters.

Schools that foster open-mindedness as a communal value and that nurture diversity in culture and religion are experienced by the children in this study as being supportive. According to the children's reported experiences, the absence of aggressive, negative comments from other children and the value that such schools place on tolerance and diversity in the school community as a whole all contribute to the children's feelings of openness and okayness and create an atmosphere of normality and ordinariness in which these children can relax and benefit from what such schools have to offer.

Siblings offer one another tremendous support. They share their concerns with each other and discuss among themselves new and challenging circumstances. In this study specifically those families where the children were born into the context of a heterosexual marriage, they supported each other as to how to come to terms with their mother's "new" sexual identity. Some of the siblings are protective of one another, and older brothers or sisters are especially protective of their younger siblings. But such support is not always necessarily welcome – especially when siblings disagree about how much disclosure is appropriate.

Another source of support for the children is knowing that there are other gay families and being able to talk to, exchange experiences with, and perhaps even form friendships with other children who are also growing up in a same-gendered family. This kind of support from children in similar circumstances can be

enormously helpful to children who find it difficult to come to terms with a parent's newly visible sexual orientation. Some of the children in this study thought that they would experience more difficulties at school or in life generally after their parents had come out. But the reality is that *other* children from same-gendered families (children not included in this study but their friends) told some of the children in this study that life for them had become far more pleasant and relaxed under their same-gender parents than it had ever been when they had lived as the children of a heterosexual couple. This in itself was a great encouragement. At other times, the children were supported by knowing that they could contact, befriend and relate to other children in similar situations. The companionship of children in similar circumstances also helped my research partners to discover and participate in new and supportive family activities such as attendance at gay-friendly or gay-oriented churches.

I shall summarise this discussion by focusing on the interconnectedness between the key aspects that have emerged (visually represented in figure 6.5). As I focused on the way in which children growing up in same-gendered families experience their family in the context of a heteronormative society, the one aspect that received more attention and which therefore emerged most strongly in my analysis and interpretation was their *interaction with others*, which, in their context, means, mainly, *disclosure*. This does not negate the importance and relevance of the other four aspects and their interconnectedness, and their significance for children growing up in same-gendered families.

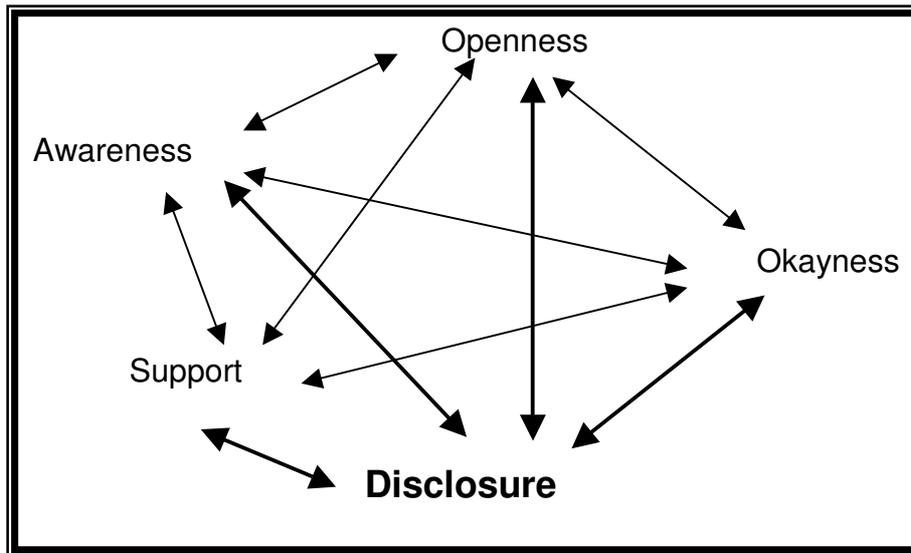


Figure 6.5: The interconnectedness of key aspects of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families in this study

Because the support that children receive from by parents, friends, siblings and other children also growing up in same-gendered families enhances the children's openness and their sense of okayness, it influences the ways in which they conceptualise and practise (or do not practise) disclosure. Disclosure in turn seems to increase and empower okayness and openness in others. Disclosure acquires a positive value for these children when they see how it has contributed to the okayness and openness of others in situations similar to their own. The children in this study are also aware that openness between them and others has a potential to enhance authentic and healthy relationships. When they realise that a prerequisite for authenticity between them and their friends is that they have to be more open in their relationships, they tend to be far more appreciative of the value of disclosure. This in turn encourages them to be more supportive of their friends. Because they see that these qualities contribute to mutual understanding, the children are aware of the benefits that accrue from being open and honest. This in turn facilitates the growth of healthy relationships.

Children from same-gendered families in this study disclose when they become aware that their friends feel uneasy about their same-gender parents. Their disclosure then serves as an intervention that helps their friends to feel more at ease

and okay with the reality of their same-gender parents. Disclosure and okayness are thus directly linked because okayness increases the frequency and utility of disclosure. Being okay with having two mothers implies that one might be more willing to disclose that information. Conversely, being not okay will diminish the frequency of disclosure because it is obvious that a person is less likely or willing to disclose from a position of fear. Fears of this kind are grounded in memories of prejudice and other painful or embarrassing experiences that were precipitated by disclosure. Once children have successfully disclosed to friends or peers and the outcome of the disclosure has been favourable, their okayness is augmented. The satisfaction they feel once they have carried out successful disclosures probably also enhances okayness in their friends because the children of same-gendered families disclose as a result of having become aware of their friends' uneasiness, and they intervene to make their friends feel more okay. Thus okayness once again leads to openness between friends and openness in other significant relationships, in which the focus on the family structure of a same-gendered family might become less central in the awareness of everyone involved.

As I reflected on why disclosure had emerged so strongly in my analysis, I came to retrace my steps through a full circle in my research process. This movement led me specifically to contemplate the design that informs this whole study. As I translate my reflections into graphic terms, I find that the following diagram reflects the process of how I unravelled and built up my intellectual puzzle.

The process of unravelling and building my intellectual puzzle

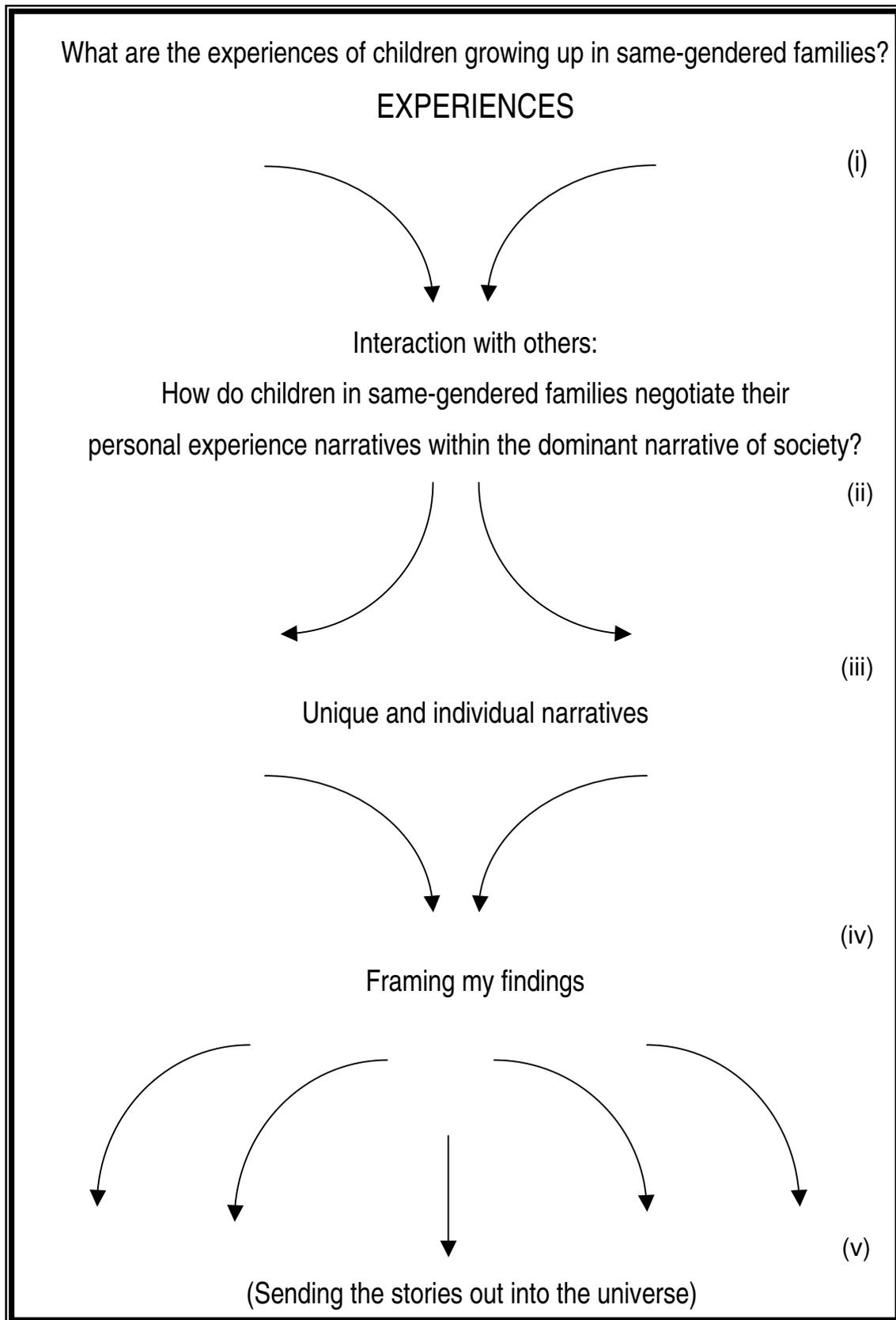


Figure 6.6: A graphic depiction of the journey of unravelling and building my intellectual puzzle

Because I began with a broad focus on the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families, my research question was “What are the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?” (Position i).

For me, the “experiences” entailed “*erlebnis*”, experiences lived in terms of the dynamic processes of subjectivity, of being affected by events and circumstances that the children of same-gender parents undergo. I set out to understand the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families in terms of how they think about, feel and perceive their lives, and in terms of their accounts, interpretations, memories, thoughts, ideas, opinions, understandings, emotions, feelings, perceptions, behaviour, practices, actions, activities, conversations, interactions, secrets, their inner selves, and so on.

I had to bear in mind that I was only being allowed access to the *reported* experiences of children of same-gendered families. These were their subjective accounts of the experiences that they considered meaningful and were willing to share with me. In spite of this, I came away with the conviction that they had honestly shared with me various aspects of their inner lives, their thoughts, their feelings, and their daily activities.

Apart from these experiences, I was also interested in finding out how the children growing up in same-gendered families experience their own (same-gendered) families relative to the heteronormative image that society projects of what a (“normal”) family should be. I wanted to know whether they experienced same-gendered families as similar to – or as a different from – non-same-gendered families. Because I had constructed the heteronormativity of society as my working assumption, I assumed that same-gendered families are constructed as “different” by society. A review of the viewpoints of the children whom I interviewed might illuminate this assumption of mine.

My assumption was that because these children were confronted with heteronormative discourses as the dominant narratives in our society, they were

compelled to negotiate, reconcile and manage the differences and the challenges that these difference created through their interactions with other people. This led me to another critical question in my intellectual puzzle. I asked the question: How do children growing up in same-gendered families negotiate their personal narratives within the dominant narrative of society? (Position ii).

Although my focus on how they negotiated the dominant heteronormative discourse of society narrowed the focus of my inquiry, I was still not satisfied and something continued to bother me. I realised that if I concentrated *only* on their interactions with others, this focus would basically entail narratives about disclosure and non-disclosure. And although there were only a few references in the literature to research into the disclosure strategies of children growing up in same-gendered families, I kept returning to the theme of *experiences* because I felt that a focus on negotiation and their interactions with others would be too narrow.

This realisation influenced my data creation process because I then deliberately utilised an open and conversational style in the interviews as I tried to elicit as many experiences as possible from the children growing up in same-gendered families. My intention was not to contain or limit their stories in terms of any predetermined framework of my own. Similarly, I had no wish only to hear narratives about how they managed their disclosures. My intention was therefore to be as open as possible to *anything* that these children growing up in a same-gendered family might be willing to share with me (Position iii).

As I sat down to analyse the data that I had created on the basis of these premises, I realised that I had accumulated more than just (non)disclosure-experiences. In front of me were glimpses into eight unique and individual lives that were being lived by children in same-gendered families. And so my perspective and the focus of my inquiry once again shifted outwards as I constructed narratives for each of the children I had interviewed. My subsequent interpretations arose out of and were grounded in these narratives.

In making sense of the storied lives that I constructed and presented, I realised that I had to look beyond the individuality and uniqueness of each story in order to construct interpretive propositions about how the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families are constituted. But the narratives were always the source that inspired and shaped my interpretations even though I now realised that my focus could not longer remain as broad as it had been when I was writing up the narratives (Position iv). For this study to be amongst other things, transferable, I had to move beyond the individual narratives. Those who use this research will probably be alert to the possibility of transferability as they make connections between the concepts in the interpretation and their own experience.

Once that had been done, I wanted to take the analysis and interpretation one step further and provide a framework in terms of which the findings of my study could be read. I also hoped to provide a framework that other researchers in the field of children in same-gendered families could use as the basis for their own research. It was during this process of conceptualisation that five interrelated concepts emerged. These are disclosure, awareness, support, openness and okayness. Among these, disclosure once again emerged as the dominant concept and narrowed the focus by positioning itself as one of the main experiences of children growing up in a same-gendered family, especially when such same-gendered families are viewed against a backdrop of a heteronormative discourse. Even so, the centrality of disclosure does not negate the importance of the other four concepts because all these concepts are interconnected, both in theory and in practice.

As the study comes to an end, the stories of the children that I wrote up will be read by a wider audience, who will construct their own meaning and interpretation apart from my own. This entails the notion of transferability as already mentioned, where the audience can relate the narratives and findings from this study to their own experience (Position v).

Methodological postscript: Revisiting the iterative and emerging process of analysis and interpretation

As I noted in Bubble Three (the Third Link), and mentioned briefly above, I used grounded narratives as an interpretive tool to develop “interpretive themes” in Bubble Five. Once I had individualised, unique, specific and contextualised narratives, I proceeded with the interpretive phase of this study. In this phase, my purpose was to find out what significance I could derive from the narrative accounts and what themes I might extract from the contexts that were presented in the narratives themselves and from my subjective understanding of the children’s experiences of growing up in same-gendered families. I therefore confronted the narratives with the question of significance – of what meanings might be derived from the narratives as a whole.

As I read through the narratives, one theme that emerged with prominence was that of a “being okay” and “okayness” with having two mothers as parents. I took each story and selected specific supporting evidence (quotations) in order to test this developing explanation (Mason, 2002:199). A continuum with different degrees of okayness emerged, and this tentatively suggested that some children were experiencing a greater degree of okayness than others. Tom and Luanne, for example, shared more experiences of okayness than Ryland. I reflected on this theme and questioned my own role in “seeing” this theme emerging. I questioned my influence on the interpretive process. I decided to search for the opposite, for examples of not-okayness among the children. When I did this, the theme of “protection”, of a need to protect themselves from the heteronormativity of society, emerged strongly. While Ryland’s story supported this theme very strongly, Tom’s story supported the contrary. I then realised that while experiences of *okayness/not-okayness* among the children did indeed exist on a continuum, the data from my study revealed stronger indications of okayness among the children. In addition, the theme of protection was negated when the data revealed another significant

type or kind of okayness, namely *the okayness to disclose/ not to disclose*, which did not necessarily arise out of any need for protection.

I realised that my conclusions as I contemplated the intellectual puzzle were consonant with the data, that I had interpreted them in a reflexive manner, and that I had shown a sensitivity to the whole range of interpretations and voices in my data. I also remained aware of the influence of my own personal opinions by constantly questioning and critiquing my own conclusions and suppositions. Both discussions with my supervisor and sharing aspects of my findings with interested people made this questioning process enormously valuable. Listening to diverse opinions and questions about my findings helped me to develop a critical interpretation.

Another feature that emerged quite early on, when I was still busy with the data-creation process, was that in almost every story a specific incident of central importance to that narrative occurred. This led me to posit my second interpretive theme, that of the “critical incident” that demonstrates how the children handled challenging situations in a way that usually effected significant changes in their lives. Pursuant to this, I once again examined each individual story, and analysed and interpreted them so that I could isolate and describe the unique critical incident that had occurred.

The third meaningful aspect was contextual factors that influenced the experiences of the children in this study. This highlighted aspects of the social context in which the children in this study function. I analysed the stories in this section in a more cross-sectional way as I gathered evidence from across all the narratives to support the themes of divorce, adoption, the school context, the changing of schools, age, and openness in family relationships.

When I looked at my data in this way, I saw that some of the quotations were used more than once because they served to confirm more than one theme. Such single quotations might support a level of being okay, illuminate a school context, and

simultaneously illuminate a part of a critical incident. After I had written the first draft, I used coloured pens (a different colour for each interpretive theme) to highlight each quotation that I had used from the narratives. I scrutinised the quotations that had been used repeatedly. I then either shortened some of them in the discussion, or removed those that occurred in cases where three of four others had already been used, when it did not deter from serving as supporting evidence. In some cases, they simply had to be included in two or even all three of the Ribbons. By highlighting all the quotations I had used, I was able to see where I had overlooked an important quotation that supported the evidence. These I then automatically included.

In taking the analysis and interpretation one step further, I made full use of the advantages inherent in narrative research by focusing on *individuals* as well as on the social context.

When we listen carefully to the stories people tell, we learn how people as individuals and as groups make sense of their experiences and construct meanings and selves. We also learn about the complexities and subtleties of the social worlds they inhabit. We gain deeper understandings of the social resources that they draw on, resist, and transform as they tell their stories (Chase, 2003:80).

Working with narratives enabled me to shift the focus of my inquiry and look with great intensity at whatever was small, minute, specific, and individual. This approach allowed me to illuminate the uniqueness, the specificity and the individuality of each child in this study while at the same time situating their experiences within their social context.

After immersing myself in the narratives of the children that I had interviewed and after I had presented their interpretative themes, I developed a framework of how I proposed to conceptualise the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families as I neared the end of my process of inquiry. This framework could serve as an emerging theoretical forestructure (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:414) against which the findings, interpretations and narratives could be viewed.

As explained in Bubble One, my purpose was to enter the field in as open a way as possible so that I could hear the stories of the children without the contamination of a conceptual or theoretical framework. Since I had not at that stage explored theoretical constructs about the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families (such as, for example, concepts about disclosure or okayness), I was able to explore more freely and range more widely. Had I begun by focusing on one person's framework, I might have deprived myself of the richness, diversity and uniqueness of working in a narrative frame by structuring my interviews with the children in terms of that framework. As it was, I was free from any such artificial theoretical restraint during the interviewing process.

Although the framework that I present in this Bubble does extend the specificity of the narratives, it remains grounded in the narratives themselves. This framework is an integration and synthesis of the linkages and relationships between the emerging concepts of disclosure, openness, okayness, support and awareness.

“Now that I have explained what the Frame means, the time is drawing near when our journey will lead us on another path – one on which we will once again have an opportunity to manifest another dream...”

“So let us all walk outside, breathe deeply the cool air of the evening, and embrace the sunset of this day.”



Bubble Seven

Sunset

Visual pointers to Bubble Seven...

- Criteria for quality^{p.440}
- Summarised view of findings of the study^{p.445}
- Reflecting on possible strengths and limitations^{p.449}
- Directions for further research^{p.451}
- Directions for training and the educational-psychological profession^{p.453}
- The departure^{p.455}

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 are 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).



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Addenda

Addendum A

Consent form

"The experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families"

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Consent

I hereby consent to participate in the above research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may change my mind and refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. I may refuse to answer any questions or I may stop the interview. I understand that some of the things that I say may be directly quoted in the text of the final report, and subsequent publications, but my name will not be associated with that text.

I hereby agree to participate in the above research:

_____	_____	_____
Parents	Print name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Parents	Print name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Participant	Print name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Print name	Date

Addendum B

Example of first attempt at writing Luanne's narrative

She has a close circle of friends who grew up with her since pre-school. In terms of these friends Luanne is very adamant that they do not discuss their parents and the central message is that her particular family structure is not even a consideration. The parents shared the fact that they approached the primary school and asked the principle whether their orientation would be a problem for them and he said no. Luanne even became the headgirl of her primary school and the parents and Luanne experienced the primary school very favourably. The biological mother shared that the children used to say that she was a very "cool" mom. There had been one child who had been forbidden to come for sleepovers or visits, but since high school that particular child is allowed to visit their home for school related assignments. Luanne is also aware that the current principle and teachers know (lines 24-38, L S6:1) and therefore she does not expect any questions or comments, and is uncertain whether the fact that she has two moms need to be shared with anyone (lines 39, 30 :L S6:1).

This correlates with the literature that the earlier you introduce the children themselves to the fact that their parents are gay, and the friends automatically becomes part of family life, then it is easier accepted/ incorporated (Patterson (1992:50).

...

¹C: I do not know if you contemplate this, but if someone realise that they are gay, and they are a Christian, then it can be a struggle for them in terms of what the Bible says and the way in which the minister talks about it. How badly do you think about it?

¹ C: Ek weet nie of jy baie daaroor dink nie, maar as iemand self besef hulle is gay, en hulle is 'n Christen, dan is dit nogal 'n ding waarnaem hulle worstel oor wat die Bybel sê, of hoe die dominees daaroor praat. Hoe erg dink jy daaroor?

L: Ek dink nie baie daaroor nie

C: ek wonder nogal daaroor of kinders van gay ouers, amper dieselfde is soos kinders wat self gay is, wat wonder oor gaan die samelewing my aanvaar, oor die Bybel se goed en so

L: sy frons, ek weet nie, imm, uhh,

C; Het jy ooit gewonder of bly jy wonder oor (52-60, L S6:1,2)

L: I don't think about that a lot

C: I wonder sometimes if children of gay parents are almost like children who are gay themselves, if they ever wonder whether society will accept them, because of the stuff in the Bible and so

L: (frowning) I don't know, imm, uhh,
(52-60, L S6:1,2)

For me this brought up the issue that she is also negotiating the outside world with her private inside world. That what sometimes get said 'out there' does not necessarily reach the inside nucleus of the family. Even if she forgets about it over a period of time and the awareness is not that conscious any more, I cannot see how this cannot influence the way she relates to her mother. It is however an efficient strategy to manage the situation, at least for now, to forget about it and not too think about aspects like the religious debate.

Addendum C

Example of a format of Ryland's narrative

One Thursday evening in March I met a beautiful young boy, along with his brother and sister, but as this is his story, I will mainly focus on him. I met a beautiful boy with a soft voice, very gentle and extremely well mannered. He loves playing rugby with his friends and at times reluctantly stopped playing to engage with me. During our second conversation he opened up and shared quite a lot of information, in contrast to our last meeting when he resisted more and mentioned that "the whole talking is finished" (lines 16, 19, R S3). At times, Ryland became emotional and spoke in a soft, fragile voice. Every time I think of him I remember him saying "I'll run away", and for me this is the essence of his story.

Keeping it a secret	<p>C: Does anyone know that you have two moms (line 15, R S2:1)</p> <p>R: shakes his head no (line 16, R S2:1)</p> <p>R: I don't tell anyone (line 56, R S3:2)]</p> <p>R: Only my teacher knows about my other mother², we had to tell her, but I didn't tell her about Auntie Sandy</p> <p>C: Okay</p> <p>(adapted from 15-22, R S2:1)</p> <p>C: What about when you talk about family lessons in school? (adapted line 85, R S2:2)</p> <p>R: I don't talk about it (line 84, R S2:2)</p> <p>R: I will just talk about my mom and dad, cause it's none of their business ...like when they ask questions then I just keep quiet and I just say I don't wanna talk about it (86-88, R S2:2)</p> <p>C: Okay (line 89, R S2:3)</p>
Big problem	<p>R: No one talks about it 'cause no one knows about it, it's only my family that knows about it, and other people like Anna. It's not, nothing's wrong. No one tells the children at school and that's fine.</p>

² This "other mother" refers to his dad's fiancée

Addendum D

Example of a format of Kims' narrative

Original transcript	Narrative
<p>Kim, Elina se dogter (14:30 -) 24 Maart 2004</p> <p>Gesels lekker vooraf Ouboet nie opgedaag vir ma se koffie-afpspraak nie Baie van die gesprekinhoud wentel rondom ouer broer, verskil jaar of wat ek dink...</p> <p>Praat oor ma wat vir haar bloese kop, smaak redelik, sy leer Praat oor Desember vakansie – lekker weggebreek vir 3 dae – loop rond en shop saam – eerlike verhouding ma en dogter Praat mooi met ma oor pa, sal sy kant probeer stel, Elina luister Trots op dogter –Kim swat Kommunikasiebestuur Nog nie lisensie – werk by Dros, ma rondry London – verpleeg - skoolstelsel Sal nie in straat afluop met sigaret nie... oor opmerkings or broer se meisie Broer groot frustrasie vir hulle albei</p> <p>Vertel van ma se vriende wat by Dros gekuier het, en een van hulle is baie "opsigtelik", butch – en toe van die ander waiters opmerkings maak, het sy hulle teruggekap..</p> <p>Ek gee agtergrond oor my studie: C: Ek kyk na kinders se ervarings, imm children's experiences, imm, as hulle gay ouers het... experiences is nogal 'n moeilike woord want dit omvat alles, hoe jy voel, hoe jy dink, daai inner voice, daai binne-gesprek, en wat vir my nice is, is dat jy ouer is en kan teruggink ... dat jy nie meer jonk is nie waar dinge dalk nou met jou gebeur, wat vir my nice is dat jy kan terugkyk en sê op daai ouderdom het dit gebeur of was daar iets...</p> <p>K: ...en dis nogal interessant omdat ons twee kinders is want my broer is nogsteeds die donner in oor die</p>	<p>I sit down with my coffee and wonder how this interview with Kim will go. To break the ice, we begin to chat about all kinds of things: the December holiday with her mom, about her mom's work in England, about the openness that exists between Kim and her mother, about how Kim's mom told me how proud she is of her "student" daughter. Finally, the conversation veers towards Kim's brother and the contrast between her and her brother that has so embittered Kim, about how he is caught up in drug addiction, and about how he neither works nor studies – despite everything Kim's mother had done to give him the opportunity to join her in England, arrangements that cost her more British pounds than she cares to remember.</p> <p>My reference to the experiences of children sets Kim off.</p> <p>"I find it incredible," says Kim, "that we are both children of the same mother because my brother is still extremely angry about everything that happened.</p>

<p>storie is en hy kan nogsteeds nie my ma aanvaar nie en weet ma hy bly ma, dis my ma se skuld dat hy uitgedraai het soos wat hy is</p> <p>C: Okay</p> <p>K: En ag, ek sal my ma nie op enige ander manier verkies nie, en dis nou my point of view, imm, en my broer, verstaan, ag, dis heeltemal anders</p> <p>C: Dit sou nice gewees het as mens sy dele ook kan inbring, dit sou ideaal gewees het as ek met hom ook kon praat</p> <p>K: Ja</p> <p>E: Hy sal ook nie eers teenoor jou afpak nie</p> <p>K: Nee hy's nog altyd dan, soos hy nou met my praat, hy't mos so vir ma ook eenkeer gesê né, hy't vir my ma gesê nee sy's sy vriendin, toe ons op die plaas was, sê hy vir my gaan kry vir daai ma van jou 'n stoel; ek sal hom met 'n plank slaan, en hy't altyd</p> <p>E: Wanneer was dit, was dit nou, Desember?</p> <p>K: Nou toe ons op die plaas was, en toe, imm, toe gaan, toe my ma hier kom bly het, toe bly sy nou by my pa vir die eerste keer en dan bel ek my ma so nou en dan, jy weet sy't altyd uitgefit omdat ons haar nooit baie gebel het nie, maar ons het nooit my pa ook baie gebel nie verstaan? Ons was baie gewoon daaraan om haar rondom ons te hê. En hy't haar nooit gebel nie en dan as my ma by my kom dan is sy so sad omdat hy haar nie gebel het nie en dan kom ek by die huis en dan vreet ek hom uit van 'n kant af en dan 'ek wil haar nie bel nie' en 'tirrr' dan gaan hy aan en anyway, hy maak altyd sy probleme erger as ander s'n. en,</p> <p>E: Ag ek weet nie</p> <p>K: Hy sal, hy's een van daai mense wat 'n ongelooflike f-op sal uitdraai</p>	<p>He still cannot accept my mother as she is. He constantly blames my mother for the way in which <i>he</i> has turned out. He constantly maintains that <i>she</i> is totally to blame for everything that <i>he</i> has become. I, on the other hand, would not choose to have my mother in any other way. Well, that's my point of view anyway, but my brother sees it completely differently."</p> <p>What I notice immediately is the anger in Kim's voice, and how frustrated and angry she is with her brother. <i>She even admits that she would like to hit him.</i></p> <p>But I also hear in Kim's talk the great care and concern that she feels for her mother. She confirms these conclusions by telling me that her brother never telephones their mother, and how sad their mother becomes when the brother does not phone her. Then Kim tells me how she chews his head off because he never phones their mother, and he merely replies, "I don't <i>want</i> to phone her." And this makes their mother terribly sad.</p> <p>"But my brother always implies that <i>his</i> problems are far worse than anyone else's, and he blames everything, every little thing, on someone else. And, of course, he imagines that every bad experience that he has is because of what she is."</p>
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<p>en hy sal alles maar alles, elke liewe dingetjie blame op iemand anders</p> <p>C: Anders</p> <p>K: Dis omdat sy dit gedoen het, dit is omdat ek dit nou doen</p> <p>C: Imm</p> <p>K: En dat sy gay is, honestly, enige persoon wat so dink moet 'n klap kry</p> <p>Sug, Kyk dit was moeilik gewees op 'n stadium</p> <p>En ek het gehoor mammie sê nou-nou net, iets oor my relationships, julle sê mos ouers weet alles, né, imm, toe ek begin rook het, ag ..pa was by toe ek my eerste trek gevat het maar hy het eers twee jaar na die tyd vir my gesê jy kan nou eers begin rook, verstaan, ouers weet alles wat hulle kinders aanvang en alles en alles, ma't mos gesê ons het nie voor die tyd geweet nie, maar kinders weet net so meer alles van hulle ouers af (lag).</p>	<p>There is deep frustration, resentment and anger in Kim's voice. "I mean, honestly, to blame <i>everything</i> that <i>he</i> does on my <i>mother</i> just because she happens to be gay.... Any person who believes nonsense like that deserves a damn good slap!"</p> <p>"Look, it certainly was difficult at a stage," Kim continues with a sigh. "Mom, I remember once overhearing you say that we children didn't know anything about you before the matter became public. But I can tell you that children know almost everything about their parents." She laughs, embarrassed by the profound truth of what she has just revealed.</p>
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Addendum E (CD-Rom)

Narratives with reference to original transcripts

This addendum carries the narratives with reference to the original transcripts in the footnote section. This shows what aspects of the original transcripts were used, and how it was applied in forming the narratives for each individual child. An example from one of the narratives follows (Extract from Tom's narrative).

Please take note of the following:

- All direct quotations are preceded by a footnote-indicator, and not after the last sentence as usually done.
- Where a certain word or phrase needs clarification, the relevant footnote-indicator appears at the end of the word or phrase.
- Extensive footnotes are given of the original Afrikaans transcriptions, where an interview was conducted in Afrikaans. The original transcripts of the English interviews are also included for easier referencing.
- The footnotes to the original transcripts are written in the following format, e.g. 34-38:2,S2
- This indicates that the section is quoted from lines 34-38, on page 2, of Session 2 of the relevant child, be it Kim or Luanne or Ryland etcetera.
- All the names of persons and institutions have been changed to ensure anonymity. In some cases the names or any other potentially revealing information have been blocked out.

“You’re trying to put together your puzzle. . .”

Tom walks in, juggling a rugby ball, and then, with one leap, he jumps over the back of the couch and onto the seat next to me. “Hmm,” I think, “here is someone filled with self-confidence.” He is probably a bit annoyed by the fact that he has had to leave an informal game of rugby with his neighbourhood pals to talk to this “researcher”.

We begin by chatting informally about rugby trials and what pseudonym we will use for him. He has the same name as his father and grandfather, and he is proud of his family legacy. This is the second time that I am interviewing Tom. On the first occasion, I interviewed him, his sister and brother. So now, to get the conversation rolling, I refer back to something that he had told me on the first occasion.

³ “You told me last time that, basically, all your friends know about your mom and your Aunt Sandy... That, it’s like general knowledge among them. How did that come about?”

“Oh yes. I don’t know, to be honest. I think that I told about half of them. The others, they just seemed to know. Some, like, just ask me. When they hear about the set-up, they’re fine. They’re cool with it. It’s fine. It’s normal. It’s nothing.”

He emanates that same nonchalant and unconcerned vibe that I remember in him from our previous interview. I remember that when I had asked him then about what he thought about my research topic, he had replied in that cool,

³ 11-15:1, S2

C: You’ve told me last time that basically all your friends know about mom and auntie Sandy, that you... ja, like general knowledge. How did that happen?

T: Ag ja, I don’t know I think that I told half of them and the others, they just know.

C: They don’t

T: No they just like come over and they just ask me. It’s fine, it’s normal, it’s nothing.

matter-of-fact voice: ⁴ “Hmm. It’s okay. It’s fine. Interesting – because I guess you won’t find many researchers who write about that.” Now he is using the same vocabulary of approval: ‘It’s nothing. It’s fine. It’s normal.’

⁵“I see,” I say as I collect my thoughts. “But, do they actually ever ask? I mean, they wouldn’t come here for some time and say nothing surely... So, at some stage...”

Tom cuts me off with a flicker of a grin: “Yes, they ask – but only to confirm what they already see.”

“They confirm. They are making sure.” I reflect his statements back to him. I am really trying to reach him at some deeper level so that I will be able to understand him as sympathetically and accurately as possible.

Tom, undeterred, continues: “Half of my friends who come here think it’s... You know... That it’s supposed to be like that.”

I find this very interesting. I am surprised and excited by my breakthrough. This is the first time that Tom has come up with something really valuable on a deeper level.

“Is that right?” I ask.

“Yes. Because most of my friends never knew me when my dad lived here. My dad just wouldn’t allow anyone to come and visit us.

⁴ 106-107:2, S1

To: I thought it was interesting cause you don't get many writers that do that, so for me it was like wow

⁵ 16-25:1, S2

C: Okay, but then they do ask? It's not like they come here and it is like mmm okay?

T: Ja,

C: So, they at some stage

T: To make sure

C: Confirm, make sure, confirm.

T: No, half of them think it's, you know, it's like suppose to be like that.

C: Really?

T: ' cause most of my friends knew me with my dad and he never let them come over.

⁶ So, when my mom and my dad still lived here together, I just never had any friends at all because, well, no-one came over, and we never did anything that involved other people. I was friends with the next door neighbour's daughter," he says with a smile. "But I never even brought her around. I suppose I was what you might call your neighbourhood nerd.

⁷ "So, naturally, my friends from school – they are all totally in love with this new arrangement."

What a way with words he has. Tom, starts to laugh, and I laugh too. "This new arrangement. What is it? Having two mothers?" (I bite my tongue. I know that I should never lead with a ready-made answer like that. I lecture myself briefly in silence.) Tom just nods pleasantly in agreement.

⁸ "Okay. So how do you handle the situation when your friends come over here and find two women who are both your parents?"

"It's no problem because my mom told me that she would behave normally – and she does."

⁶ 114-126:3, S2

T: Okay, when my mom and my dad were together I never had any friends.

C: Mmm, okay.

T: Because no-one came over, no-one did anything. I was friends with the next door neighbour's daughter. She was like dead. And she was like uh...

C: And at school? How were things there? Were they fine?

T: No, if you had friends at school you like wanted to visit teach other more often, just like now we're so use to it.

C: Did you invite friends and when they came over it was like a terrible atmosphere here, with dad? Or did you just decide that you're not going to, you weren't going to invite anyone over?

T: I didn't, I didn't want them to know about anything.

C: So you were like the...

T: I never brought them around, I was like a real nerd

⁷ 26-27:1 S2

C: Okay, so.

T: They are totally in love with the new thing.

⁸ 310-314:6, S2

C: Okay, so how did you handle your friends coming over and there's this lady or ladies in the house.

T: No my mom told me she would act normal.

C: And what does that mean? Act normal?

T: Like, they're like friends.

Addendum F: CD-Rom

Original transcripts

Guidelines:

- All the names of persons and institutions have been changed to ensure anonymity. In some cases the names or any other potentially revealing information has been blocked out (e.g. ■■■■).
- All the individual data creation-sessions are in separate folders for each child. The interviews conducted with the parents are separately saved, as well as the combined session of the first interview of Tom, Danielle and Ryland.
- The phrases where I spoke are indicated with "C:", except in the transcripts of Carl, where he is "C:" and I am "I:", indicating "interviewer".
- As indicated in Bubble Three, some of the transcripts are memory sessions.
- Symbols used in transcripts:
 - - - Poor sound quality, no transcription possible
 - Pause by a specific speaker
- **Content of folders:**
 - **Carl's** folder contains 4 sessions
 - **Kim's** folder contains 2 sessions
 - **Luanne's** folder contains 7 sessions, as well as a file of my reflections as from January to March 2004
 - **Kashni's** folder contains 3 sessions
 - **Erid's** folder contains 2 sessions

- Kashni and Erid are brother and sister, therefore there are two files containing my diary notes on the two sessions I had with their **parents**, namely:
 - "Erid Kashni Parents Session 1"
 - "Erid Kashni Parents Session 2"

- **Tom's** folder contains one session
- **Danielle's** folder contains 2 sessions
- **Ryland's** folder contains 2 sessions
- Tom, Danielle and Ryland's first session is a **combined** session, namely "Tom Danielle Ryland Session 1";
- as well as a session that is my reflection on meeting their **parents**, namely "TDR Parents session 1"

Addendum G

References to “grounded narrative”

Grounded Narrative verwysings

EW English (South Africa)

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From: Clarisse Venter
Date: 21 February 2005 11:06 AM
To: Carien Lubbe
Subject: Grounded Narrative verwysings

Carien -

ek kon vir jou h/d verwysings met die term "grounded narrative" opspoor.
Hoop dit help!

Clarisse

Record 1 of 1 in PsycINFO (1998-1999)
AN: 1998-00354-003
DT: Peer-Reviewed-Journal
AU: [Ben-David-Amith](#); [Good-Jla-Jasani](#)
TI: Ethiopians and the Hmongs: A comparative study in cultural narrative from a family therapy perspective.
SO: [Journal-of-Family-Psychotherapy](#), 1998; Vol 9 (1): 31-45.
IS: 0897-5353
AB: There is a growing recognition that family therapy has an obligation to meet the unique needs of ethnic minorities within a given population by offering services which are culture-sensitive. This becomes even more critical when the minority clients are governed by fundamentally different cultural ethos from those that drive the dominant culture. The US and Israel (each an embodiment of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-cultural society) offer interesting possibilities for a comparative study. The Ethiopians in Israel and the Hmong in the US are 2 distinct cultural entities whose unique needs necessitated that the professionals question the efficacy of the existing therapy methods. This article has 2 overlapping themes. Firstly, it explores some basic characteristics which the 2 groups share in common and as such validate the case for a comparative study. Secondly, it offers guidelines for creative **culturally-grounded narrative** approaches. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2003 APA, all rights reserved)
[View Complete Record](#)

INTERNET:

Narrative, action, and collective memory
[DRAFT MANUSCRIPT, NOT FOR QUOTATION](#)

Start | Grounded Narrative v... | Addendum G - Microsoft ... | 01:00 PM

“It doesn't bother me...”

1

Penny:

Start at the beginning.

Susan:

No! That's too far back.

Penny:

Well, then, what about the first time we met?

Susan:

This session is supposed to be about Carl, remember?

Carl:

When you had that “afro” hairstyle!

Penny:

Carl, don't you start! [She smiles at him and then begins her story.] We had real problems in the beginning and they caused big fights. If Carl wanted to do something and Susan had said “No”, he would come and ask me and I would say “Yes”.

¹ 60-75:2, S1

P: Begin by die begin ...

I: Hoekom nie?

P: Toe ons ontmoet het en...

S: Dit gaan oor Carl hoor...

C: toe jy so 'n 'afro' gehad het

I: [lag] Vertel laat ek hoor, dit raak juicy

P: Nee moenie so begin nie

C: ...gaan jy dit in jou boek sit, dan sny ons net die gesigte uit

I: Dit klink vir my na 'n goeie plan

P: Nee jissie, He uhh

P: Ons het baie probleme gehad in die begin hoor. Ons het baie baklei daaroor. As hy byvoorbeeld, imm, iets wil doen, dan sê sy hy mag dit nie doen nie, dan kom hy na my toe, dan sê ek hy mag dit doen. Dit het later beter geraak, maar in die begin, ten minste vir twee jaar, omtrent twee jaar. Ek het baie kwaad geraak. Kyk dis my kind die en jy los my kind uit, sy moenie inmeng nie. En umm... ons het al altwee... ons het maar 'n harde paadjie saam geloop.

As time went by, the situation improved. But in the beginning! It really used to make me very angry indeed. I used to feel that Carl is my child – and I felt that no one – not even Susan – had a right to interfere with the way in which I brought up my own child. So obviously I resented Susan for that. In one way and another, we have all walked a long, hard road together.

2

Susan:

Straight people should understand that our relationship is just like any other relationship. We have all had our difficult times, but they have brought us all closer together, and God was with us during all those times.

It was fifteen years ago that I first prayed for something to happen, and my prayers were answered. I didn't want a husband, you see, but I did want children – although I didn't want to bring them into the world myself.

² 699-713:13, S2

Susan: Straights kan weet dis soos enige ander verhouding – net soos hulle, moeilike tye - ons nader aanmekaar gebring. God was heelyd daar...

Susan wat nie man wou gehad het nie, maar wel kinders, maar wil hulle nie self hê nie (ons spot almal lekker oor die kraamscene – sy't te veel TV gekyk sê ek, Penny maak sulke "push-push" geluide; in bad gesit en vir God gevra, vir haar man stuur of vrou met kind

Ek het 15 jaar terug gebid daarvoor en ek het dit gekry

Was 6 jaar alleen voor hulle; lief vir kinders...

("Stuur dan nou vir my 'n man, of 'n vrou met 'n kind")

En volgende dag of week later - stap Penny in

Klink of vir Penny vreemd was, uit moeilike abusive verhouding, met kind...gebroke, seer, deurmekaar

Sy't my mooi laat verstaan dis haar kind (Susan se woorde van Penny)

Ek wil hom nie vat nie ek wil hom net graag saam met haar grootmaak. (S)

En ek wil haar iets aandoen, los die kind, dis my kind....(Penny)

So, one night, as I was sitting in the bath, I prayed to God. I asked Him, “Please send me either a man, or a woman with a child.” And Penny walked in the next week!

But she quickly made me understand that Carl was her child. She used to say things like, “Leave the child alone. He’s my child!” So I told her, “I don’t want to take him from you, Penny. I just want to have a part in his upbringing.”

3

Penny:

We really endured some hard times together. But things have got better in a way that we could never have imagined.

4

Susan:

Now we are one, happy family. Of course we are not immune to pain, sadness and difficulties. But I would say that – as a family and as individuals – we are very stable. I personally think that Penny and I have brought Carl up very well.

³ 321-322:7, S1

P: Ons het harde bene gekou maar daardie bene begin nou sag raak, hulle is nou nie meer hard nie

⁴ 40:1-56:2, S1

S: Ek dink ons is, imm, een happy familie, ons het ons pyn, ons het ons hartseer

C: Ons baklei baie...

S: Ja, ons twee ons 2 kan baie baklei. Dan word sy kwaad vir ons omdat ons baklei. Dan is ons twee lankal weer pelle, maar dan is sy nog kwaad vir ons [lag]. Ek dink ons is baie stabiel sal ek sê. Ek dink ons het hom goed grootgemaak, na die beste van ons vermoë. Ons sal byvoorbeeld nie as ons by die skool is aan mekaar hang nie, of hom in 'n swak lig stel nie, al van laerskooldae af...

I: Umm

S: Even voor ons families, hulle het al vir ons gesê hulle waardeer dit... Dit is heeltemal anderster as ander mense, ons hang nie aan mekaar nie. Hulle weet ons is in 'n affair en hulle aanvaar dit honderd persent. My broer en sy vrou, hy is my pa se kleinseun. Hulle is nou sy Oupa en Ouma, hulle het nie probleme met ons nie, glad nie, en hulle waardeer dit dat ons nie aan mekaar hang nie. Ook voor hulle kleinkinders.

I: Umm

S: Dis soos ons sal nie in die straat loop en hande vashou nie. Ons sal nie konfrontasie ontlok nie.

Certainly, to the best of our ability. Penny and I, for example, would never dream of holding each other affectionately in public places such as his school or shopping centres. We understand boundaries and the limits of public toleration. We've certainly never embarrassed Carl. And we're now talking about over ten years – since Carl was in primary school. We would also never hold hands if we were walking down a road, and we never get involved in confrontations. No, there is never anything like that, and our families appreciate that. For example, my brother and his wife privately thanked us for not holding one another affectionately, especially in front of their grandchildren, although they totally support our relationship.

5

Penny:

I agree. We are very careful in front of other people, especially when Carl's friends come to visit. Sometimes we might slip up and call each other something like "my angel" or some other term of endearment. But we are constantly vigilant about the ways in which we interact, and about the possible consequences of our behaviour in places where it might cause offence to others.

⁵ 82-85:2, S1

P: Ja, 'n mens is mos maar bietjie skrikkerig voor ander, van sy vriende kom hiernatoe en dan kom daar nou en dan glipsies deur om te sê soos Engel of Spook, of iets van die aard. Maar, ek dink tog ons is baie [- - - hoesery saam – dink iets van respek of bedag daarop]

6

Susan:

Sometimes we do slip up.

Penny:

But we try not to give anyone any reason
to tease Carl.

7

Carien:

Carl, would it
bother you if one
of your mothers
were to say “My
angel” to the other
in the presence of
your friends?

Carl:

Of course not, it would never bother me.
But it might bother them.

8

Carien:

Carl, what would
happen if Penny
and Susan
decided to “come
out” about their
sexual orientation
– and show it
publicly in their
behaviour? Like in
front of the pupils
at your school?

⁶ 268-271:5, S3

S: Maar dis nie hoe mens dit wil doen nie, of hy moet dit self doen, ja ons kry partymaal glipsies
hy

S: Ons probeer altyd dink aan hom

P: Ons wil nie hom in 'n gespottery inbring nie

⁷ 390-391:8, S1

I: Is dit vir jou erg as hulle vir mekaar 'Engel' sê?

C: Nie vir my nie..maar hulle

⁸ 353:7-359:8 & 365:8, S1

Carl:

They would never do that! They keep to the rules. Of course, here at home, as far as I am concerned, they can do whatever they want.

Penny:

Don't worry, Carl, we would never do anything like that.

Susan:

It's all about respect really.

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Penny:

In fact, Carl himself was the one who came out about our relationship. It happened at his high school!

Susan:

We were both completely astounded when he got into the car one day and said, "Okay! Now everybody knows."

C: Ek het net my ma-hulle gesê en hulle weet nou daarvan, maar hulle hou by die reëls
I: Wat dink jy dit sal gebeur as hulle anders doen as hulle hierdie absolute out-mense raak en aan mekaar hang of net hande vashou by die skool, wat sal die kinders doen?
C: Nee, hulle sal niks doen nie
C: Hier by die huis kan hulle doen wat hulle wil. By die huis.
P: Toemaar ons sal nie.
S: Dit gaan oor respek...

⁹ 87:2-105:3, S1

S: Hy is die een wat dit nou, op hoërskool het hy dit self uitgebring.

I: Okay

S: Ja, ons was geskok toe hy in die kar klim en sê 'almal weet nou.'

Weet wat. Dat julle gay is. Hu!

(Lag)

I: Sonder hulle toestemming

C: Ja

S: Ja, net die leerlingraad het almal daar in 'n kring gestaan. Toe sê oubaas vir jou, wat (vra vir Carl), toe vra hy net vir hom nou wie is jou ma en wie is jou stiefma? Of wat,

C: Ja

S: En toe antwoord jy, toe sê jy vir hom nou waar wil jy nou wees, dis my pa en my ma.

Almal lag

I: Umm. Wanneer het dit gebeur toe jy st 6 was of nou..

Almal: Nou

I: Met die leerlingraad. Alright. Ek dink dis baie braaf hanteer.

S: Ek sê mos, dit was baie braaf. Hy kon sy baltie verloor het, hy kon alles verloor het, hy was baie braaf

So, of course, we both shrieked, “Knows what?”

And he replied, “Knows that you are gay!”

[Everyone smiles.] Can you believe it?

Carien:

Please tell me the story.

Carl:

It happened last year, at our inauguration as school prefects for the new year. Susan was standing quietly there near the door because she didn't want to be part of the group photograph. Penny, my birth mother, was already standing in the group for the photograph. So I called over to Susan, and said, “Come on, Susan!” So she came over.

¹⁰ After the photos had been taken, a few of us were standing around in a group. Then one of the guys (they were not exactly afraid, but you could see the apprehension in their eyes), asked me “Do you have two mothers, Carl? Or is the one lady your mother and the other lady your step-mother?” Something like that. I can't really remember their exact words now. So I said, “No, Penny is my mother, and Susan is my dad.”

¹⁰ 431:8-445:9, S2

I: So daar toe die prefekte saam was. Dit was 'n ander outjie... Vertel my weer die storie.

C: Ons het daar gestaan, ons het daar gestaan by die deur. Toe... eers toe ek uit gaan toe gaan my ma en Susan uit. My ma is uitgeroep, maar Susan wou nie, toe sê ek Susan kom, toe... en hulle het fotos geneem.

I: O dit is nice, is dit toe julle aangekondig is.

C: Ja, nie toe ons aangewys is nie, toe ons ingehuldig is. Toe gaan ons toe ons klaar is en ons staan ons daar en my vriende roep my. En hulle vra vir my ... nie vrees nie, maar daai verwagting... het jy twee ma's of is dit jy en jou ma en jou stief ma of so iet, ek kan nou nie meer onthou nie en... ek sê ek vir hom nee, een is my ma en een is my pa. Toe sê hy dit is 'n vrou. Toe sê ek so.

I: Ek dink jy het dit great hanteer.

C: Hulle het my nie eers verder vra gevra daarvoor nie. En nou hulle worry nie daarvoor nie, hulle kom slaap by my nog steeds. Ek dink my ma hulle sal hulle self gedra.

When they had recovered from that shock, they said, “But she’s a woman!”

And so I said, “So?”

After that, they never again asked me any other questions about my parents. You see, they don’t think it’s any big deal. And they still come to our house for sleepovers and so on. My mothers behave, you see. [He smiles broadly at his joke, and we all laugh.]

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Carien:

Have you always been allowed to have friends sleep over at the house?

Carl:

Yes. I suppose they must have had questions that they wanted to ask me. But they never asked! Except this one friend who asked a few questions. They obviously all know the set-up by now, but they don’t ask me. They are too scared! But, I mean, it’s must be totally obvious to anyone who knows us well enough because my moms sleep together. But if they want to know, they must ask me the questions – if they have any – and then I will answer them.

¹¹ 446-454:9, S2

I: Okay, en voorheen het pelle hier kom slaap.

C: Ja, hulle het vra gehad, maar hulle het nooit gevra nie. Soos my een vriend, ek het gesê. Hy het my na die tyd ‘n paar vra gevra. Maar ek dink hulle almal weet al, maar hulle wil my nie vra nie, hulle is te bang. Maar dit is so obvious, want my ma-hulle slaap bymekaar, so... Hulle moet vir my vra vrae sal ek hulle antwoord. Hoekom moet ek dan vir hulle lieg?

I: Nee.

C: As hulle my nie aanvaar oor my ma-hulle gay is nie, is dit okay, ek het hulle nie nodig nie. Ek het baie vriende, so

Why should I lie to them? If someone doesn't want to accept me because my parents are gay, then that's okay. I've got lots of friends. I don't need people like that.

Carien:

Tell me about your friend?

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Carl:

My parents were away for the weekend, and I was alone at home with him. I think he had his suspicions about the situation. But he said nothing to me about them. Then a friend of my mom's came over, and she introduced herself to him by saying, "Hi, I'm Estelle, and I'm a lesbian."

He didn't respond to the way in which she described herself. But when she had left, I said to him: "So, ask now what you want to know?" He replied that he had obviously suspected it, but that he had been too scared to ask me. But now he knows.

¹² 375-389:8, S1

C: Hulle sou weg gewees het, en ek was die naweek alleen. Hy het sy vermoedens gehad, maar hy het niks vir my gesê nie. Toe kom Estelle hier in en toe sê sy 'Hallo my naam is Estelle en ek is 'n lesbiën.'

[lag]

C: Hy't nie geworry nie en toe hulle weg is toe't ek het vir hom gesê vra nou jou vrae wat jy wil vra

I: Okay, dis nice, en wat het hy gevra, mag ons weet, jy hoef nie te sê nie.

C: Nee, dis fine, hy het net gesê hy het dit vermoed, maar hy was te bang om my te vra. En nou weet hy

I: Ja, en was dit vir jou nicer gewees na die tyd, of bietjie weird, of dieselfde?

C: Dieselfde, hy het sy vermoedens gehad en..

S: Ek dink hulle het almal het maar hulle vermoedens gehad, maar

P: En ek maak nou en dan 'n blaps en skree 'Engel'

C: Ja hulle weet hier is een dubbelbed en

S: Ja, hulle weet ons slaap in een kamer en ons deel 'n huis

Carien:

So how did you feel after that experience? Did you feel the same? Or better? Or a bit weird?

Carl:

I didn't feel any different. They obviously all have their suspicions.

Penny:

And then sometimes I slip up – and call Susan “my angel” in front of visitors.

Carl:

And my friends have seen that there is only one double bed in that room.

Susan:

Yes, and they know that Penny and I sleep in one bedroom – and that we share the house.

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Carl:

Oh, and my ex-girlfriend also knew.

Carien:

Did you tell her?

¹³ 403:8-410:9, S1

C: My, ja, my eks, sy het geweet daarvan.

I: Het jy haar gesê?

C: Ja. Ons het so op die bed gelê en gesels toe sê ek ek wil haar my grootste secret vertel en toe vertel ek haar

I: Okay.

S: En wat was haar antwoord

C: Net o

S: En solank ons net nie inmeng nie, (C: o ja) dis wat jy vir my gesê het

546:10-550:11, S2

C: Ons was by my een vriendin gewees en toe gaan haal ek haar en toe lê ons net daar en chat en, ons sou 'n movie gekyk het. En toe gaan my vriendin en haar boyfiend uit, na 'n ander kamer toe of iewers. Toe vra ek net vir haar wat is jou grootste geheim, toe sê ek net vir haar, wag ek sal jou my grootste geheim eerste vertel, my ma-hulle is so en sy't nie 'n probleem daarmee nie

Carl:

Yes. We were lying on the bed chatting, and I told her that I wanted to share my biggest secret with her. Then I told her, and all she said was, “Oh.”

Susan:

She also said, “Well, as long as they don’t interfere with me.”

Carl:

Oh, yes. She also said that. But she didn’t have a problem with it.

¹⁴ I also have a friend who lives near here. Her parents were also gay. They recently broke up, but I’ve heard that they’re back together again. We used to visit each other quite a lot. But her new boyfriend doesn’t like me, so I don’t go around there anymore.

But one day I asked her: “Are your mothers gay?” and she replied “Yes.” Then she asked me whether my parents were gay, and I said “Yes.” This created a strong bond between us and we were able to go to the gay church together with our parents. They gave her an excellent upbringing – just as my parents gave me. Her birthday falls in the week after mine, and we share the same interests. Her friends also accept it. I suppose that some of her friends might have gossiped about it, although I don’t know all of her friends.

¹⁴ 551-586 & 590-591:11, S2

I: Okay, en haar ma-hulle, en ander, jou pelle se ouers

C: Hulle het miskien vir hulle ouers vertel

I: Maar niemand het nog gesê hulle mag nie hier kom kuier nie

C: Uh-uh/ eh -he, 2 van my vriende se ma-hulle het hulle al uitgegooi...

maar hulle gaan nie... hulle is nie lief vir... hulle gaan na vriende wat hulle ken, hulle sal nie sommer na wildvreemde mense toe gaan nie.

I: O, okay. Maar dis nice

C: Soos my een vriendin ook hier onder, my eks vriendin. Haar boyfriend het ons..like nie as ek by haar gekuier het nie.

I: Okay, umm.

C: Ja, haar ma-hulle was ook gay gewees, okay. Ons het altyd, dan kom kuier sy by my en die dag toe vra ek... toe vra ek haar ma, toe vra ek is jou ma-hulle gay toe sê sy ja te sê sy jou ma-hulle ook, toe sê ek ja. Toe het ons eers gejel, toe gaan sy saam met my kerk toe, haar ma-hulle het saam gegaan. Nou onlangs toe breek hulle dan breek haar ma-hulle op..

I: Dis sad...

Carien:

I think that everyone accepts it in the end. If there's a problem, it's usually just in the beginning because some people are uncertain about how to react. And then they say nothing and leave it.

Carl:

I agree. Most of my friends never even raise the question. If any of them have a problem with my mothers' orientation, then it is their problem. Not mine.

C: Ja, haar ma en ...

I: Die ander ma...

C: Maar blykbaar gaan hulle weer saam, gaan goed aan. Daai is ook net 'n lang verhouding, hulle het haar ook groot gemaak soos ek groot gemaak is. Verjaar presies 'n week na my. Selfde interests gehad. Toe kom haar boyfriend daar aan. Ek en hy het nooit ooghare gehad vir mekaar nie.

I: O, jy moet jy nou bietjie jou afstand handhaaf.

C: Ja, ek het haar nou basies afgeskryf.

I: Het jy en sy ooit bietjie gechat oor hoe is dit met haar en met haar pelle en so...

C: Ons het nogal. Haar vriendinne aanvaar dit ook.

I: Ja..

C: ---

I: Dit klink anderse

C: Ek dink daar is 'n paar wat sit en geluide gemaak het. Ek het nie al haar vriendinne geken nie.

I: Ek dink almal aanvaar dit aan die einde. Ek dink dit is net daai begin dink... o, jinne, ek weet nie wat gaan.. jy weet nie wat die ander ou se antwoord wees nie, weet nie hoe die ander ou gaan reageer nie. En ek dink partymaal bly 'n mens dan eerder stil en los dit amper.

C: Meeste van my vriende ook, hulle gaan nie op die subject in nie.

&

C: Ek dink dit is oor dit vir hulle 'n issue is. As dit vir hulle 'n issue was, dan is dit hulle probleem.

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Penny:

But none of his friends have changed at all. They remain as friendly and relaxed as they ever were. They certainly haven't written him off because of us. They still visit us a lot.

Carl:

If anything, they visit us even more now because no one here hassles them – as many of their parents do.

Penny:

If anyone acts in a way that we don't like, we will just kick them out. [They all laugh.]

Susan:

Yes, Carl's friends are great! They always greet us both most respectfully – including, of course, the ones who know our set-up.

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Carl:

Oh, I need to tell you. Tiaan has found out that you are partners.

¹⁵ 102-107:2, S4

P: Maar ek dink nie dit het verander nie, hulle is nog dieselfde, presies dieselfde, maak grappies en so

S: D het my nog altyd met die hand gegroet en nou dat hy weet groet hy my nogsteeds met die hand

Vra uit oor voor die tyd ongemak, - niks nie

Penny sê as hulle snaaks is met haar sal sy hulle in elk geval uitjaag.

111-112:3, S3

P: Hulle skryf hom nie af nie, hulle kom nogsteeds kuier, en dis vir my nice

I: Hulle kom eintlik juis kuier, want...(mompel)... iets van hulle word nie gepla nie

¹⁶ 77-96:2, S3

O, en nuwe disclosure insident: Tiaan, maat wat naby bly; was in dieselfde kerk voorheen:

I: Vertel vir ons van wat gebeur het

C: Toe't ons hier gestaan, toe vra hy vir my of ons nog in daai kerk is, want hulle is nou in 'n ander kerk. Toe vra hy of my ma-hulle nog in daai kerk is, toe sê ek hulle gaan nou na 'n gay kerk toe

M (maat:): Na 'n gay kerk toe, en hy kyk my so, stil

C: Weet jy nie my ma-hulle is gay nie

Susan:

What? How?

Carien:

Tell us what happened, Carl.

Carl:

We were here one day and Tiaan asked me whether my moms were still attending that church, because they attended the same church for a while, and I said, “No, they are going to a gay church now.” He looked at me in amazement, and said, “To a gay church?” So I said “Didn’t you know that my moms were gay?”

And he said, “Oh, don’t talk nonsense!” And he kept on denying that it was possible until I went and got some family photographs to show him.

Susan:

One would think that Tiaan would have realised long ago that Penny and I are in a relationship.

Carl:

Yes. Even I was quite surprised by his reaction. But, in the end, he just said, “Okay”, and that was that.

M: Moenie met my strooi praat nie

C: Hy deny dit heelyd, toe't ek fotos gaan haal

[Lag, stemme gelyk]

I: En hoe't jy gevoel toe hy sê man moenie met my strooi praat nie

C: Ek was verbaas gewees

S: Jy't gedink hy't gaan meer breins as dit en dit al agtergekom het

C: lhim

I: En toe wat sê jy vir hom om hom te oortuig

C: Serious, en ek wys hom die foto's

I: En wat was sy reaksie toe

C: Nee hy't toe niks gesê nie, net gesê okay, en aangegaan

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Carien:

Do you feel that you should “come out” to other people about your mothers’ relationship, Carl?

Carl:

I only tell people that I can trust. I’m certainly not going to shout about it from the rooftops. But I’ll tell my friends.

Carien:

Do you feel that you must tell them, Carl? Or do you leave it unsaid because it does not have to be said?

¹⁷ 114-136:3, S3

I: Dink jy dis 'n ding wat mens moet sê

C: Ek vertel net mense wat ek kan trust. Ek gaan nie van die verhoog af skree

P: My ma-hulle is gay

C: Maar my vriende sal ek sê

I: Is dit 'n moet? Dat jy moet sê, of is dit soos jou een pel wat weet maar niks word gesê nie? Dit gaan net aan

C: Nee, dit pla my nie meer nie, nie baie nie, dit pla my glad nie meer nie

I: Dit klink asof dit jou wel gepla het op 'n stadium.

P: Ja, ek wou nou net ...

I: En dis nie verkeerd nie, want dis wat so great is nou dat jy ouer is en kan terugdink

C: Ek was toe ek jonger was bang vir konfrontasies

I: Okay

C: Mm

I: Hoe oud was jy toe

C: Laerskool, st 1

Van graad 4,5 het ek bo die ander kinders begin uitreik en toe't hulle bang vir my geraak en toe back hulle af

I: O okay

S: Maar jy's nog nooit gespot oor ons nie

C: Ih ih (soos in nee), Behalwe in graad een, maar ek kan dit nie onthou nie

P: Maar ek dink nie basies dit was 'n gespottery oor ons nie, hulle het gesê hy't nie 'n pa nie. Ek dink nie graad eentjies weet van gay nie...

Carl:

No, I don't feel compelled to tell them.

And, no, it doesn't bother me anymore.

Not much, anyway. No, in fact, it doesn't bother me at all.

Carien:

It sounds to me as though it might have bothered you at some stage?

Penny:

Yes, I was also going to bring that up...

Carl:

Yes. When I was young, I was afraid of confrontations.

Carien:

I see. How old were you at that stage, Carl?

Carl:

Hmm. Let me see. That was in primary school. In Grade 3. But in Grades 4 and 5, I began to outgrow the other kids and became the tallest in the class. So they began to be a bit afraid of me, and they would back off.

Susan:

But you were never teased about us, were you, Carl?

Carl:

No. Except once. In Grade 1. But I can't remember the details.

Penny:

But I don't think that they were teasing you about us.

Carien:

Could you tell me about that?

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Penny:

Yes, the kids teased him because they said that he didn't have a dad. I mean, Grade 1 kids don't even know what "gay" means. But they were giving him a hard time. So Susan and I went to the school and sorted things out. We explained the circumstances and from then on things were much better.

Carien:

How did you both find out that Carl was having problems at school?

Susan:

Didn't he cry that day?

¹⁸ 75-80:2, S1 & 215-231:5, S1

P: ...maar 'n harde paadjie saam geloop. Baie probleme gehad met hom, op 'n stadium met die skool in graad een. Met die kinders wat hom gespot het, hy't nie 'n pa nie en

I: Ja

P: Toe het ons dit nog met die skool uitgesorteer met die skool en vir hulle die omstandighede vertel en dit. Van daar af was dit toe baie beter gewees.

&

I: [lag] Ja, jy moet oppas. Ek gaan nou weer inzoem op die graad een insident. Hoe het dit uitgekom by die huis, was daar probleme by die skool?

P: Weet jy, hy was...

S: Het hy nie gehuil die dag nie?

P: Ja, hy was baie hartseer die middag toe hy van die skool af kom. Toe het hy in die bad gaan sit. Toe vra ek hom seun wat's fout. Toe begin hy te huil. Toe was hy nog klein. Toe het ek op die toilet gaan sit en met hom gepraat. Toe begin hy vreeslik huil en sê vir my daar is kinders wat hom spot. Toe sê ek vir hom nou wat sê hulle vir hom. Nee hy het nie 'n pa nie. Toe sê ek vir hom sê vir hulle jy't nie 'n pa nie maar jy is baie bevoorreg want jy het twee Ma's. En ummm. ... Toe't ek na sy juffrou toe gegaan en met sy juffrou gepraat en die omstandighede verduidelik en gesê hy het 'n pa maar ons is geskei van mekaar af en ...dis die omstandighede en hulle moet seblief dat hulle my kind weer spot nie, want dit kan'n groot terugslag in sy lewe wees

I: Umm

P: En van daar af nooit weer nie. Hy het nooit weer hartseer een dag van die skool af gekom nie.

Penny:

Yes, he seemed very sad that afternoon when he came home from school. He went to the bathroom to take his bath. When I asked him what the matter was, he started to cry. He was still very young at that stage. So I sat on the toilet seat next to the bath and began to talk to him very gently. Then he began to cry most bitterly, and said that the kids at school were teasing him. So I asked him, "What do they say to you?" And he replied, "They say that I don't have a father."

So then I said to him: "You might not have a dad, but you are very lucky because you have two mothers."

Then Susan and I went to visit his teacher. She was very nice and accommodating. I explained the circumstances and told her that Carl does have a father, but that we were divorced. And that, under the circumstances, the kids should please not tease him because it could have a negative impact on his life. She must have told them to lay off because, after that, he never once again came home looking sad – from that day to this.

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A lot of people said that he would never make it, but look at him now. He has done well academically. He has been selected as a prefect. He has been awarded provincial colours for cricket. So he has showed everyone that he can do it.

¹⁹ 106-107:3, S1

P: Ag en weet jy baie mense het altyd vir ons gesê 'n kind sal nooit ... slim en...

C: Wie't dit gesê

112-126:3, S1

P: En akademies het hy baie goed gevorder. Met krieket het hy baie goed gevorder. Hy was prefek laerskool gewees... het het ummm... met die krieket het hy, wat

C: Noord-Transvaal kleure gekry.

I: Geluk!

P: Hy het medaljes gekry vir krieket. Hy het nou weereens gewys en leerlingraad geword. So ek dink hy het vir baie mense het hy ...

I: Gewys... ummm

P: Ek kan dit doen. En ek sal dit doen. En daar's hy vandag

S: En hy is straight.

P: Ja, en hy is straight, seblief.

I: Damn... jammer is die res van ons nou

Almal: [lag]

P: En jy weet baie straight mense dink dat as 'n kind by twee gay ouers grootword... jou kind gaan 'n moffie word of 'n lesbiën word en klaar..

C: Eintlik is ek mos 'n lesbiën

.../vlg.bl.

Susan:

And, in addition, he
is straight!

Penny:

Yes, please, for heaven's sake, he is
straight. You know, so many people think
that if two gay parents raise a child, the
child will turn out to be gay.

Carl:

Actually, I am a lesbian. So who said that
I wouldn't make it? [All laugh.]

Penny:

Just after Susan and I had got together, someone close to me
said that my child would be a disaster – just because I am a
lesbian. So I said to him, "Susan and I together are going to
bring this child up in a proper manner. So, if you have a
problem with me being gay, please don't make your problem
mine."

But, yes, Grade 1 was quite an experience for all of us. I was
rather nervous at first, to be honest.

20

Susan:

Carl used to refer to me as his "step-
father". I said to Penny that we had
better put a stop to it because it could
create problems.

40-47:1, S4

P: Hy't gesê, omdat ek nou 'n lesbiën uitgedraai het, dink ek nie my kind gaan nou 'n moffie
uitdraai nie, ek gaan dit vir jou nou net so sê soos hy gepraat het,

I: Ja, doen seblief

P: Nie hy sal dit uitdraai nie. Toe sê hy vir my, dink jy nie hy gaan 'n "f..op" wees op skool nie.
Toe sê ek net nee ek dink nie so nie. Toe sê ek net my kind sal nie, as ek en Susan hom reg
groot maak, toe sê ek nee ek dink nie so nie. Toe sê ek vir hom maar as jy 'n probleem
daarmee het moenie jou probleme myne maak nie. Ek bly nou by haar en ek en sy gaan
Carl saam grootmaak.

²⁰ 196:4-208:5, S1

P: Graad 1 was 'n, nogal 'n ondervinding gewees, hoor, 'n groot ondervinding, wel ek was baie
bang, ek was...

S: Maar hoekom, want hy't vir my gesê stiefpa... en ek het vir jou gesê ons beter die kind afleer
om so te sê, dit gaan by die skool moeilikheid veroorsaak... As ek hom in die middag gaan
haal "Hallo stiefpa." (skree uit). Krui ek weg agter daardie stuurwiel..

.../vlg.bl.

When I used to pick him up in the afternoons after school, he would come running up to me and shout, “Hi, step-father!” I used to try to duck behind the steering wheel...

Now that he’s in high school, he’s taken to calling me “Dad”. Not often. But...

Carl:

Only at home, and in front of friends.

Susan:

Of course he would never say that in front of the extended family. But only when we’re at home. Or at the gay church. Then he calls me “Dad”. But now, I enjoy it.

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Carl:

We’re close, you see. Susan is like my “male” figure, if you want to call it that. She and I go fishing together. When Penny’s dad was alive, he used to show me things and teach me stuff, like mechanical things. He had his own workshop and company.

I: Trek jy nie vir jou ‘n das aan en sit vir jou ‘n hoed op jou kop nie [lag]

S: Nee, hierdie een vat my aan die hand..Nou dat hy weer in die hoërskool is begin hy met Pa, ook nie altyd nie, maar

C: By die huis, voor vriende

I: Soos by die kerk

S: Hy sal nog voor my familie, want hy’s ... en dan as ons by die huis kom is dit Pa. En ek like dit nou.

²¹ 427-442:9, S1

C: Hulle is.. hoe kan ek sê? Ons is close, daar is nie 'n pa wat, soos in, ons vang vis, sy is my male-figure, ons gaan vang saam vis. Ek moet self, nou nie self leer nie.Toe Penny se pa geleef het, my oupa... het hy my goeters gewys, nou nie karre nie

I: Sulke meganiese goed

C: Dan leer hy my

S: My pa was 'n gentleman, dan sê ek pa, ek wil net gou 'n gat in die muur boor, wys my, dan sê hy my kind, jy hoef nie

I: Jy hoef dit nie te weet nie, jy brand meanwhile om te leer.

C: My oom leer my ook baie

.../vlg.bl.

Susan:

My dad was a real gentleman. If I wanted to drill a hole in a wall, I would ask him to show me how, but he would never let me do it.

Carl:

My uncle also teaches me. During my holidays, I go and work for him. I am going to make a success of my life. I want to show the world that I can do anything. ²²I will be the first of the nephews that finishes the final year of school.

²³

Susan:

And he's doing so well!

I: Okay

S: Hy gaan werk vakansies daar, dan leer hy baie

I: Ummm

S: Ons is 'n baie gehegte familie, make-up. So ons is gereeld bymekaar.

C: Ek wil nou soos, nou nie uitstaan nie, maar ek wil wys ek kan enige iets doen. 'n Sukses van my lewe maak

²² 283-284:6, S2

C: Nee, hulle wou. Skool is maar... Ek wil eintlik 'n prestasie haal, want as ek matriek behaal is ek die eerste een in die S familie wees wat dit behaal.

²³ 571-598:12, S1

[Gedeelte oor skoolvakke en punte]

S: Maar hy het goed gedoen.

Praat oor hoe hy swakker gedoen het aan einde van die jaar – by maats gehoor jy kan nie st. 9 druipe as jy prefek is nie, maar besef toe teen einde dat sy punte baie sleg is, en hy begin bekommer....

P: Hy't verlede jaar bietjie geskrik....

...

P: Hy sal enige iets met haar oopmaak. Ek en hy kan nie, sy geheime, ek en hy kan dit nie doen nie. Hy deel glad nie sy goed met my nie. Alles met Susan. Maar ek waardeer dit, want hy...

I: Jy is te close

C: Sy's te

I: Objektief nie.

C: Hoe kan ek sê

I: Te emosioneel, te involved.

P: [lag]

S: Dit is asof sy dit anders opvat as wat dit is. Ek dink meer soos jy, en jy dink meer soos ek.

I: Wie sê julle twee is reg?

[almal lag]

.../vlg.bl.

Penny:

Last year Carl got a bit of a fright.

Carien:

What happened?

Carl:

I had begun to fall behind with my school work because I wasn't working hard enough. And my marks reflected this. So of course I started to worry. I tried to talk to my mom, but it just started a fight. So I said to her, "Okay then. Just leave it."

Penny:

Carl can open up to Susan about anything. But he can't do that with me. I guess we are too close in many ways. So he doesn't share his stuff with me. He shares it all with Susan.

P: Sê hulle

S: Ek dink oor ek meer rustig en kalm met hom praat. Sy raak nogal erg. Die stemmetjie raak hoër. Dan dink hy sy wil nie meer met hom praat nie. Ek is meer kalm en ...

I: Ummm

S: Dan begin hy dan begin sy.

P: Ek los hom maar uit dat hy maar met Susan gaan praat.

206:4-227:5, S2

C: Soos hierdie jaar ook, nee, dit was verlede jaar, ek het bietjie opgeslip met die skoolwerk, en almal het gesê as jy prefekraad is dan sal hulle jou oorsit. En toe begin slaplê en slaplê en toe begin my rapport my te vreet.

I: O-ho, wat het jy gedoen.. vertel my eers dit

C: Ek het net begin, imm, huiswerk het ek nog gedoen maar leerwerk. Dan skryf ons die volgende dag miskien 'n groot vak, dan leer ek daai aand miskien net so bietjie, die volgende oggend dan gaan skryf ek

I: En watse punte begin jy kry

C: Daai laaste, okay my punte het bietjie gedaal, maar daar's wat opgeklim het ook. Maar ek het begin worry. En toe begin ek met my ma te praat en toe begin sy my so, en toe sê ek vir haar okay los dit. En toe spat ek kamer toe en toe bel ek vir Susan. En sê vir haar ek moet haar sien, toe gaan ek na haar werk toe en toe gaan praat ek met haar, somer daar in haar kantoor, somer daar voor almal maar dis okay

I: Shame, waar werk sy

C: Sy werk by die [REDACTED] gebou, [REDACTED] straat. Toe ry ek met die bus soontoe, toe vertel ek haar alles

I: Spill the guts; toe's sy okay?

C: Toe sê sy nee dis reg, jy weet, ons moet net vir God bid en goeters, en toe bid ons

I: Dis nice, en

C: En ek's deur, ...ek's deur, baie spanning, ja

But I really appreciate it – the fact that he has someone in the family to share it with.

Carl:

My mom's too, how can I say...?

Carien:

Too close, perhaps? Too emotionally involved?

Susan:

I think that because Penny and I are so different, we have different ways of handling problems. Fortunately, Carl and I tend to share the same opinions about most things. He seems somehow to have internalised my character. For example, I have an ability to listen more calmly. Penny gets worked up very quickly, and once that happens, they can no longer talk calmly and rationally. When I hear her voice getting more and more shrill, I just know that she is becoming more and more emotionally entangled. But I just remain calm and listen.

Carl:

Anyway, I phoned Susan and told her that I needed to talk to her. And she immediately said, "Come." So I took the bus and went to her office. We talked right there, in front of everybody else.

But I didn't mind. I got everything off my chest. Then she just said, "Everything will be fine. We just all need to pray" – and stuff like that. We all prayed, and things came right. I did pass eventually. I was extremely anxious, but I made it.

Susan:

I could sense that something was wrong. He was moody the whole time. And then I got a text message from Penny saying, "Please talk to your child". And at the same time, I got a text message from Carl saying, "Dad, can I come and talk to you because I can't talk to Mom?" So he came to my work, as he said, and we talked it through. He cried a lot, and kept saying how he was going to disappoint everybody. But in the end he didn't do too badly.

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Penny:

At times like that, I don't bother him. I know that he can talk things over with Susan. He told me the other day that if Susan and I ever broke up, he wouldn't come with me. Can you believe it? When he's away, he will never send me a text message saying, "Mom, I miss you and I love you." No. But there will be one for Susan.

²⁴ 185-194:4, S1

P: Hy sal nie vir my 'n SMS stuur Ma ek mis jou, ek is lief vir jou nie, nee dis altyd net vir Susan.

S: Wat?

C: Ma' sy kan mos dit oordra

I: Immm.

P: Maar jy moet vir my ook

P: Hy't mos vir my gesê die dag wat ek en Susan uitmekaar gaan, kom hy nie na my toe nie

Carl:

But she can tell
you.

Penny:

It's not the same, Carl. You should send
me one as well.

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Carl:

Sometimes, while I'm just sitting here
quietly, Penny will come and sit next to
me and say, "Oh, please, Carl, just hold
me for a minute." I'm her son, for
heaven's sake! And here is her husband,
large as life, sitting with both of us on the
couch.

Penny:

What's wrong with you just holding me a
bit, Carl? Look, Susan's holding you now.
Sometimes I just ask him to hold me a
bit. People can think what they want!
After all, we are mother and son.

Carl:

Then you should see her in the shopping
malls. Then she wants to hold my hand.
What if a pretty girl walks by? She will
think that Penny's my girlfriend!

Susan:

Oh, she just wants a bit of love from her
son, Carl. A hug from her son.

²⁵ 606:12-614:13, S1

C: Dan partymaal dan sit ek rustig hierso, en dan sê sy, Ag kom hou my net bietjie vas. Ek's haar seun, hier sit haar man. Hier lewensgroot op die bank.

S: Maar sy wil bietjie liefde van haar seun hê, wil bietjie hê haar seun moet haar vashou

P: Wat is fout daarmee? Om my bietjie vas te hou. Kyk daarso, sy hou jou vas. Dan sit hy daar en dan sê ek hou my bietjie vas, die mense kan dink wat hulle wil, dis ma en seun

C: Dis soos in die winkels, nou wil sy my hand vashou, netnou dink hulle dis my girlfriend, en dan, netnou loop daar 'n mooi meisie verby en dan

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Carien:

Why do you enjoy
calling Susan
“dad”, Carl?

Carl:

Because she's my father figure.

Carien:

And how does that
work for you,
Susan?

Susan:

Well, I mean, since I'm the “butch”
partner in this relationship, I naturally
tend to think of myself as the father
figure – as “dad”. I certainly try to be!

Carien:

What does the
concept “father
figure” mean to
you, Carl?

²⁶ 165-190:4, S3

I: Hoekom is dit so, ek sit en dink as 'n straight persoon dit moet encounter, vir die eerste keer moet hoor, dan is dit vir hulle vreemd. Waarom is dit so, wat is die funksie, hoekom is dit vir jou nice om haar pa te noem

C: Want sy's my vaderfiguur

S: Imm

I: En vir jou Susan?

S: Wel, ek meen ek's die butch in die verhouding so ek neem aan ek's die vaderfiguur, ek moet die pa wees... Ek probeer altans

[Almal praat]

S: Gelukkig het hy my geaardheid aangeleer

I: Carl wat is vir jou vaderfiguur, as jy daardie woord bietjie kan ontleed

C: Vaderfiguur is iemand jy deel als met hom, eek en omdat ek die seun is, deel ek alles

I: Okay, nou wat was eerste die hoender of die eier..

I: Is dit oordadig jy baie nice met haar share dat jy dink, ja, ek's 'n seun, ek moet dit met 'n pa doen; dink jy nie daar is seuns wat met hulle ma's nice goed share nie

C: Ek praat met my ma ook oor baie goed en, maar meestal met Susan

I: En daarom is sy vir jou soos 'n pa

C: Ihim

S: Kom ons sê so, dinge wat seuns graag wil weet, praat ek met hom. As ek nie weet nie dan sal ek gaan uitvind of vir hom sê gaan vra vir Oupa [redacted] of vir een van sy ooms of nefies. Maar die meeste van die tyd help ek hom self met dingetjies wat hy wil weet

Carl:

Let me see. A “father figure” is someone with whom you can share everything. So, because I’m the son, I share everything with Susan. Of course, I talk to my mom as well. But mostly, I talk to Susan.

Susan:

Let’s put it this way. I can talk to him about things that a young man would want to know about or discuss, and if I don’t know the answer, I will go and find the answer by talking to his Granddad or one of his uncles or cousins. Mostly, I can help him with whatever he wants to know.

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Carien:

Would it make any difference if Carl were gay – and not straight?

²⁷ 62-86:2, S4

I: En dan hoekom is dit so belangrik dat hy straight moet wees?

P: Dan sou ons hom so aanvaar het, weet jy, ek sê né, en ek het dit nou die dag vir hom gesê, as hy besluit hy wil rook, kom na my toe, kom wys vir ma en pa ek rook, as hy na my en Susan toe kom en sê hy's gay, dan gaan ek nie my kind by die deur uitjaag nie; as hy met 'n swart meisie wil uitgaan, ek gaan hom nie jaag nie, wat hy ook al wil uitdraai dit is mos nou sy keuse. Ons elkeen het 'n keuse in die lewe, so dit pla my regtig nie. Regtig.

I: Dit was amper by hom so van, kom ons sê "ek is straight", en mens wonder nogal wat beteken dit, is dit regtig 'n ding want ek dink dis baiekeer so van gay ouers dat, want dis die algemene ding, soos julle gesê het, die samelewing wat sê ja nee, hulle gaan ook gay wees

P: Ja jou kind gaan ook gay wees

I: Maar ons almal kom uit straight huwelike en ons is gay

P: O ja

I: Maar ja

S: Daar is baie kinders wat in gay verhoudings is wat tog gay uitdraai, ek het al gehoor van kinders... ek weet nie of dit dalk...onderlangs in die onderbewuste dat jy hom toe maar wel bietjie pressure om straight te wees, ek weet nie

I: Dis nogal iets waaroor ek wonder

S: Want ek het baie vir hom gesê 'check daai cherrie', kyk daai mooi meisie, kyk ek het altyd aanmerkings gemaak oor meisies om hom attent te maak op meisies, hoekom weet ek nie, seker maar...kan ook wees, seker maar oor ek die pa-rol speel, seker as ek nou mooi dink, want as 'n straight pa en seun in die straat afloop, gaan die pa tog vir hom sê kyk daai cherrie, is dit nou nie 'n outlike meisie daai nie, sulke goed..dit was seker nou deel van my rol gewees.

Penny:

None at all. We both just accept him exactly the way he is. I told him just the other day that each of us has the right to make our own choices in life, and that we will never put any kind of pressure on him.

Carien:

It seems to me that there is quite a lot of pressure on gay parents in this regard. It's as though society is sometimes saying, "Do you think that their children will also be gay?"

Penny:

Yes, it's as though people assume, 'your child will definitely be gay'.

Susan:

But it seems to me that there are quite a lot of children from gay relationships that turn out to be gay. Well, I've heard of some. I don't know. Perhaps this is something that we all do unconsciously – we put pressure on our children. Perhaps we put pressure on Carl to be straight. I've sometimes wondered about it.

There have been so many times when I've said to him: "Check out that lady!" or "Look at that pretty girl!"

I've always made comments about pretty girls in Carl's presence, and I draw his attention to them because I notice them. Why? I don't really know. Perhaps because I play the father role? I suppose that when a straight father and son walk together down a street, the father would say things like, "Look at that girl!" or "Isn't that a pretty girl?" Things like that. I guess I just saw that as my role.

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Carien:

Carl, what advice would you give to a boy who is just entering Grade 1 and who might be afraid that some of the classmates will tease him?

²⁸ 535-5552:11, S1

I: Carl, wat sal jy vir 'n seuntjie sê wat nou graad een toe gaan en hy het ook twee mamma's of twee pappa's? En hy is verskriklik bang? Oor die maatjies wat dalk gaan spot of die TV wat sê dis...

C: Op daai ouderdom... Hy gaan hulle in elk geval oor sewe jaar uit die skool, en hulle nooit weer sien nie. Hy hoef niks te sê nie, dit net los, in elk geval, mense het niks te sê nie. En op die ou end gaan dit so, hoe kan ek sê, afgesaag word hulle gaan dit in elk geval los.

I: Dis dalk vir 'n dag of twee.

C: So 'n week

I: Dan is dit ook oor. Okay

S: Imm. Ek dink veral as jy dit ignoreer gaan hulle sien, ons kry nie konfrontasie uit hierdie ou nie, kom ons los dit maar

C: Ek worry nie daaroor nie.

I: Umm

S: ...[- - -]

I: Hy't net baie respek dink ek. Maak jou nie moeg met gemors nie.

P: Hy sal nie sy hande vir iemand lig nie

S: Hy sal sy man kan staan.

Carl:

At that age? First of all, he won't be seeing them again in seven years' time because they will all be moving on to high school. So he doesn't need to say anything. He should just say nothing. In any case, people (in my experience) really have nothing worthwhile to say anyway. And, in the long run, they themselves will drop the topic. Why? Because it's boring! It's of no interest. Well, it might be for a week or so.

Susan:

It's far better just to ignore it. Once they see that they're not going to get any reaction out of a guy, then they themselves forget about it.

Carl:

I certainly don't worry about it.

Penny:

Carl would never lift his hand to hit anyone...

Susan:

He certainly would if he needed to!

Carien:

A lot of people who are gay say that they have to "come out" – go

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²⁹ 414-430:8, S2

I: Weird naam. En baie keer sal mense sê hulle moet soos uitkom, coming out. Dink jy dit is vir jou ook nodig om uit te kom en

C: Op 'n ouer stadium ja.

I: Umm

C: Op 'n jonger stadium dan as kinders jou spot dan kraak dit jou baie vinniger af.

I: Okay.

C: Maar nou soos in nou, maar hulle noem my in elk geval nie name nie. Ek dink dit is nou die beste tyd om uit te kom. .../vlg.bl.

through the
“coming out”
process. Have
you, Carl, ever felt
that you needed to
come out about
the fact that your
parents are both
gay women?

Carl:

When one’s older, yes. When you’re younger and children tease you because of it, that can really get to you. But now they wouldn’t risk calling me names. And I think that I am now at the right age for “coming out” about my gay parents.³⁰Next year, in any case, you don’t see them anymore.

Carien:

When you speak
of younger, Carl,
how much younger
do you mean?

Carl:

I would say about Grade 9. Not in Grade 8 because then one is still too young and inexperienced. About in Grade 9 or 10 is okay. I only came out about my gay moms last year. And then not to everyone, but only to my friends. On the night of the the inauguration.

I: Umm, okay. En as jy praat van jonger, hoeveel jonger? Laerskool, of voorskool of?

C: Om uit te kom?

I: Ja.

C: Ek sal sê so teen standerd sewe. Nie standerd ses nie, mens is nog jonk en onervare. So standerd sewe of agt. Ek het nou eers laas jaar, nee ja, laas jaar, laas jaar uitgekom, nou nie vir die hele skool nie, net vir my vriende. Maar

I: Okay, en het jy nou voor die tyd besluit jy gaan nou maar iets sê of?

C: Nee, dit het net uitgekom.

³⁰ 363:8, S1:

C: Volgende jaar sien jy hulle in elk geval nie weer nie

Carien:

And did you
decide beforehand
that you were
going to do so?

Carl:

No. It just happened.

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Carien:

You mentioned
earlier, Carl, that
some children in
primary school
called you names.
Did they call you
names to your
face – or did you
just happen to
hear about it?

³¹ 485:9-515:10, S2

- I: Jy het netnou gesê in die laerskool kan kinders miskien die name noem of... Het dit gebeur of ...of het jy gehoor.
- C: Toe ek jonger was, ja. Soos my ma hulle vir my sê gesê het ek het ek baie huis toe gekom en gehuil en goed. Soos ek ouer geword ... ek dink hulle is bang... nie eintlik bang nie... oor ek basies eintlik die grootste in die laerskool was, ek is nou amper die grootste in die hoërskool is.
- I: O, okay.
- C: Ek dink in daai opsigte... ja ek dink hulle is bang, bang ek reageer erg en ek slaan hulle miskien of iets. Maar, in die laerskool, toe ek jonger was ...dit was rof
- I: Jy kan nie onthou nie. Ja, dit was rof In die begin dalk maybe. Wat dink die kinders daarvoor. Wat is die kinders se persepsie? Dink hulle dit is 'n goeie of 'n slegte ding?
- C: Ek weet nie, ek dink vir hulle is dit seker maar inbetween. Ek het voordele wat hulle nie het nie.
- I: Soos wat? Daarin is ek nou baie geïntereseerd.
- C: Ek kry nie pak soos hulle nie. Hulle pa's slaan hulle nou nog met rottange en met die vuig en sulke goeters. Hulle pa-hulle suip baie... die kinders by die skool. My ma-hulle doen dit nie. In opsigte is dit nou weer anderse van, hulle pa doen dit vir hulle, maar doen dit ook vir my.
- I: Soos wat?
- C: Soos met die karre ding, soos as jy een ma het dan sal sy nie vir jou 'n kar leen nie. Sy sal te ...
- I: Eh-he.
- C: Maar Susan trust my en goeters. Ek vat haar kar dan gaan ek skool toe, funksies en goed. Hulle pa... party van hulle pa's doen dit nie eers nie. Ek het 'n vriend... maar hy is 'n kennis. Sy pa het die ander dag staan hy so, toe het hy per ongeluk iets laatval op die kar of iets, toe slaan sy pa hom met die vuig. Laat hom niks toe. Sy pa is baie baie streng.
- I: Umm
- C: Bad goed. So ma is darem baie rustiger met my.
- I: Al die benifits om twee ma's te hê

Carl:

When I was younger, yes, they used to say these things to my face. My moms mentioned earlier that I used to come home crying a lot. But as I grew up, I don't know... I think maybe they became scared of me because I was the biggest boy in the primary school. Even now, I am still one of the biggest guys in high school. I suppose they're scared of me because of that. Yes, maybe they think that I will react violently and beat them or something like that.

Carien:

What are the children's perceptions or beliefs about having gay parents, Carl?

Carl:

I'm not really sure. I think it varies. They can see that I have advantages that they don't have.

Carien:

Like what for instance?

Carl:

Well, I don't get hidings like they do. Their dads beat them with canes and with their fists, and so on. A lot of their dads also drink a lot. My moms don't do that! And my moms allow me to do things that their dads don't normally allow them to do.

Carien:

Like what?

Carl:

Like, my moms allow me to take the car and go to school functions. Their dads... Well, some dads don't even allow that. I have this one friend, for example. The other day he accidentally let something fall onto his dad's car. And so his dad punched him in the face with his fists. His dad is very strict. My moms are certainly strict, especially when it concerns school matters, but they're calm.³² And I'm conscientious! Well, sometimes I'm a bit lazy about with my household chores. But I'm well mannered and friendly. And I keep things light with jokes. I make a lot of jokes. Of course I have my bad days too. But then, everyone has their bad days.

³³

Carien:

Are there children at school who have already realised that they are gay and who have come out to others?

³² 465-469:9 & 516-518:10, S2

C: Maar ek is pligsgetrou, ek is partykeer lui om in die huis joppies

I: Maar jy weet dit ook

C: Maar skool toe gaan ek, tensy ek rêrig siek is, dan sal my ma my by die huis laat bly. En hulle is streng op my skool.

&

C: En eintlik... hoe kan ek sê, ek dink dis hoekom my ooms ook lief is vir my. Ek is meer volwasse partykeer as my nefies en... ek is altyd vriendelik, ek is gemanierd...

525-533:10, S2

C: Dit is only jokes. Ek maak baie jokes, ek is 'n baie vriendelike persoon.

I: Ja, jy is, ja, baie nice kwaliteite.

C: Ek het my af dae. Dan is ek baie geïrriteerd is

I: Ja, natuurlik.

C: Dan sê my ma net iets verkeerd...

I: Dan voel jy jy kan ontplof?

C: Dan is ek weer reg deur die dak, dan gaan ek na my kamer toe.

I: O

C: Maar almal kry hulle af dae.

³³ 489:10-517:11, S1

I: Is daar kinders in die skool wat self begin agterkom het dat hulle gay is en dit, al geopper .../vlg. bl.

Carl:

None of them have come out to me personally. But I know that Michelle and Ruan are gay. I know that there were also some gays among the matrics who have finished school. Then there was also this red-headed girl in our church. But she has left.

Carien:

How are they coping at school? Are they being teased? Do people gossip about them?

Carl:

No, everyone knows about Michelle. The girls hug each other. Our school doesn't have a problem.

het? Want dis 'n ding wat mens al meer en meer sien. Dat die kinders self agterkom hulle is gay. Dat daar 'n meisie is wat click sy is verlief op 'n ander meisie, of 'n ou wat agterkom hy is verlief op 'n ou?

C: Hulle kom praat nie soos in reguit met my nie. Ek weet van Michelle en ek weet van Ruan.

I: En weet hulle van hulle self?

C: Michelle weet ja maar Ruan weet nie. Maar ek dink hy weet, want hy praat met daai handjie (wys) – almal lag.

Ek weet van matrieks wat nou uit die skool is. Daar was ook een keer in ons kerk wat in ons skool was, so rooikop dogtertjie. Maar sy's nou weg.

I: En hoe gaan dit met hulle op die skool? Is die kinders meer rustiger deesdae of is daar maar 'n geskindery en 'n gespottery?

C: Nee, almal weet vanMichelle, maar met Ruan, want hy wil dit nie erken nie.

I: Ummm, die oomblik wat hy die handjie en meer verfynd is..

C: Ja, want op 'n stadium praat hy met iemand, en dan op die ou end sê hulle het jy gesien..

P: Dis eintlik lelik, dit maak seer.

I: Nou sal jy iets sê of los jy dit maar of...

C: Ek ignoreer dit. Dis nie my saak nie. As hy is dan is hy, of nie. Maar ek dink hy is,

S: Ja dit kan wees ... baie mans is verfynd...

I: Umm

P: Daai meisie wat so is, spot hulle haar?

C: Almal weet sy is.

P: En hulle los haar uit?

C: Umm. Die meisies in ons skool het ook nie 'n probleem nie, hulle druk mekaar...

I: Dit is eintlik nogal nice.

P: Die kinders is meer oop, meer oop...

I: Absoluut. Vyf jaar, tien jaar terug sou dit nie gebeur het nie, nee.

Penny:

Young people are much more open
these days – much more open.

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Carien:

Yes, for sure.
Now, what advice
would you give
other families? For
other children who
also have two gay
moms or two gay
dads as parents?

Penny:

The advice I would give is: “Just be
open.”

Susan:

Be yourself!

³⁴ 519-533:11, S1

I: Ummm. Okay, watse advice het julle vir ander families? Vir kinders wat ook twee ma's of twee pa's het?

P: Weet jy my ... my raad wat ek kan gee is, wees net oop.

S: Wees jousef.

P: Wees jousef. Wees lief vir jou kind. Moet dit nie eers vir hom probeer wegsteek nie. Wees oop met hom en as daar probleme is sorteer dit uit op 'n mooi manier. ...Partykeer weet ek fight ons ook

I: Hello, dis 'n given, alle gesinne fight.

P: Maar ek sou vir hulle sê, hulle moet dit face, en openlik met mekaar wees. Ons is daar deur..So ek weet, en dit skeur nie die verhouding nie, dit skeur die kind, op die ou end maak dit die kind seer, jy maak nie jousef seer nie, jy maak die kind seer

Mens moet mekaar vertrou en hy moet ons ook vertrou. En kan praat. Okay, hy praat nie met my nie, hy praat met Susan

I: Ten miste met een

P: Ja, ek bly maar stil

Penny:

Yes, be yourself. Love your child. Don't even try to hide it from him or her. Just be open with him or her, and when problems arise, sort them out in a reasonable and sensible way. But I also want to add that we should all face it, and be open with one another. We've all been through this. Hiding one's gayness may not affect the adult's relationship, but, in the end, it will tear the child apart. Hiding one's orientation will only damage the child in the end. We need to trust each other, and our child needs to trust us. He should be able to rely on us.

35

Carl:

But just don't make an issue out of things!

If it is an issue for other people, then let that be their problem.

I have received many benefits from having same-gender parents, we are a close-knit family.

³⁵ 599-591:11, S2

I: Maar ek dink dit is oor jy so rustig is daaroor. Dit nie 'n issue maak nie.

C: Ek dink dit is oor dit vir hulle 'n issue is. As dit vir hulle 'n issue was, dan is dit hulle probleem.

593, 596:11, S2

C: Baie benefits.

C: Ja ons is close.

*“If she’s my best friend,
then I’ll share my secrets with her.”*

Danielle sits next to me on the couch, and eagerly begins to talk about her day. I am getting used to this. We have met twice before and from the beginning she has talked easily and freely about her friends, birthdays, the burglary of her bedroom, prospects for the coming holidays, the fake nails that they are now allowed to wear to school, the current fights that she and her friends are having with the boys and with each other.

We talked for quite a while about mathematics, about her grades and how she likes group work, her secret scrapbook, and many other topics. It is sometimes hard for me to interrupt her flow or to interpose a definite question that relates to my research. She seems oblivious of the primary reason why I am there. As she continues telling me about her day, I remember her description of her reaction to her parents’ divorce in our first session.

She said: ¹ “It’s weird. For over two years I was, like, everybody could torture me and make me very unhappy – but now *I* am the biggest torturer in the class. I, like, give out this vibe of “Just don’t even *think* of touching me!”. They used to pick on me and I used to get so angry. But I knew that I just couldn’t let them

¹ 189-198, 204-208:4, S1

D: It’s weird, for over 2 years I was like everybody could torture me and everything like that and now I’m the biggest torturer in the class, like don’t you touch me..

C: Okay, is that after the divorce, that, or that they picked on you

D: They’ve used to pick on me and I’ve used to get so angry

C: What did they say

D: But I knew I can’t use my stress on them, I start to get angry all the time and I hold it in and then I used it

C: Ja, I think it’s good

D: Now nobody picks on me

&

D: So nobody had to pick on me and everything

C: What would they pick on?

D: Like when they stole into my house and then they just find out and then they were teasing me, and I said stop that, and you’re not supposed to do that and I’ll hit you

stress me. So I started to get angry and say stuff like, 'Stop that!' or 'I'll hit you!' Now nobody picks on me." Danielle smiles.

Danielle confirms what her brother, Tom, had said about the divorce. She also mentions that there was a feeling of relief in the family home after the parental divorce and their father's movement to other accommodation. ² "I will be honest with you. I only found out that my father had moved out because suddenly all his things were gone! So I thought to myself, 'Wow! Now we are going to be much happier! No fights!'

"When my parents fought, we used to hear my mom crying, and then me and Tom used to sit in the kitchen. So I was very happy when my dad left. ³ When the new lady – my mother's friend – moved in, my mother said that they're "together". Then we all talked about it in a nice and soft way, and I said, 'I understand, mommy! It really is much better now than it was when you were with dad.' I think that made her very happy, and we all cried a little. But we were crying with happiness."

As I listen to Danielle's almost compulsive talking, I realise that I will have to begin to provide coherent structure for our sessions together. I therefore say to Danielle:⁴ "So please tell me, Danielle, more about what it is like to live with two moms?"

² 228-231:5, S1

D: I have to be honest know the way I found out is all my father's .. things were gone, and I thought, I guess I'm going to be much happier now, no fights, when they're fighting we heard my mom crying and then we had to sit in the kitchen, I was actually happy when he left

³ 253-259:5, S1

D: We just saw her move in, come more often, just come, we thought ? that there's a reason there... and then she start to move in and they told us and then she moved in and then my mom told me

C: Okay, and what did mom say?

D: My mother said that they're together and then she said, and then we talked about it and then I said I understand mommy and it's feeling much better than when you were with daddy

⁴ 57:2, S2

C: Ja, Okay, tell me some more what it is like to live with two moms?

⁵ She instantly corrects me. “I now have three moms!” she exclaims.

“Okay,” I am very intrigued by the information that she is offering about having three mothers. But I want to verify my conclusion, and so I say: “Who are your three mothers, Danielle, because you haven’t mentioned that to me before?”

“My mom, Aunt Sandy and Auntie Thea.”

“So you feel that Auntie Thea is also your mom?” I ask.

“Yes, she is actually my Auntie.⁶ But my dad can be a very different person with Auntie Thea. It’s, like, an amazing difference. Now they are engaged. They will be married as soon as they have saved enough money. They say they are going to have “a perfect wedding”. She says she is going to make me... They’re going to make me... Make me wear a dress.”

I am suddenly intrigued because Danielle is a beautiful girl with long golden brown hair. I can plausibly imagine her looking most alluring in a beautiful dress, especially her prospective role of bridesmaid.

“What do you have against dresses?” I ask suddenly.

⁵ 347:7,S1 & 231-234:5, S2

D: We’ve got three mothers

&

D: Yes, and now I've got three mothers.

C: Okay, and who are your three mothers, because you mentioned that before?

D: My mom, Aunt Sandy and Aunty Thea.

C: So you also think of Thea as your mom.

⁶ 329-340:7, S2

D: Oh, then I hoped he weren't as strict as my dad. but my pa can be a very different person with Aunty Thea. It is like amazing difference.

C: So Aunty Thea is mom's, ag is dad's girlfriend,

D: Yes, but now they are engaged.

C: So she is his fiancé.

D: They are getting married as soon as they saved. They say they are going to have a perfect one.

C: I don't think anything can be perfect, but a beautiful one.

D: She says she is going to make me... they're going to make, make me wear a dress.

C: What do you have against dresses?

D: You can't do boy things.

Danielle answers.⁷ “I am a girl. But I don’t like wearing girl dresses. But I do sometimes because it makes my mom happy. I also make them happy when I wear a girl’s T-shirt and a boy’s pants. And I’m pleased when they’re happy because I feel comfortable in boy’s clothes.

⁷ 62-107:2, S2

D: ... I am a girl but I don't like wearing girl dresses. But I do things to make my Mom happy, and I make her happy like wearing a girl T-shirt and my boy pants. So I make them happy, because I feel comfortable in boy clothes. ...And my mother, and my father last week we went to a wedding last weekend and my father bought me so short skirt and I thought I can't wear it I can't wear it, oh no, they're torturing me. And he bought me a girl T-shirt and these high shoes. I don't want to wear these.

C: Not comfortable

D: Ja, too much of a girl.

C: So you like, like boyish clothes you say.

D: Ja, I like boys things you do.

C: Like what is that.

D: And sometimes I like doing girl things like do your nails.

C: Okay, Like you your hair maybe...

D: And like when you are a boy you don't do much. So I do boy and girl things Like I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments.

C: What's a boy moment?

D: I build things and I play with my brothers rugby...and all those stuff

C: And girl things are like hair

D: And nails and make-up, I don't like make-up.

C: And your clothes, what do you wear? If you could pick your clothes, what would you wear?

D: If I have to pick my clothes, I lend from my brother, my big brother, cause my mother won't buy me their clothes. Okay, I lend from my brother sometimes, and for civvies; I wear these long baggy things and a cool T-shirt. Then I wear tekkies or something.

C: And then why does mom have a problem with that?

D: She wants me to come out like a girl. Be like a little girl.

C: And how do you know that?

D: She says like... She tells me...I know you're having those boy moments, but I'm trying to stop you, because when you grow up you going to have difficult.

C: Did she explain that?

D: She did, she doesn't like it that much. But now she is fine with it.

C: Okay. But what does she mean by it is going to be difficult when you grow up?

D: Then I am going to do those things like normal teenagers do, those mad things like drink and take drugs and all those things, and I'm very scared doing that, I don't wanna do that

C: Umm

D: I just wanna do that, and they say if you too much of a girl, and my brother cares about that he doesn't want me to come out like that. And as well if you're a girl then you won't, if you're too much of a girl then you won't come out like that. Then if you dress up like when you 're a teenager and all those sweet things. I want to try to come out like that, but I thought, I want to come out like that to make my mom happy so I change, I am going to try and not come out like that ... I won't go like to rock and roll parties and that, I'd rather go to movies.

“Like last weekend we went to a wedding, and for the wedding my father bought me a skirt that was so short. And so I thought, ‘I can’t wear that! I just *can’t* wear it. They are torturing me with this outfit.’

“My father also bought me a girl’s T-shirt and a pair of high-heeled shoes. But I don’t want to wear these things! They’re too girlish.”

Danielle shrieks with disgust. Then she continues: ⁸“If you are a girl, you are not allowed to do things that boys do. I remember once when we ate at Spur. I was wearing a dress, and I tore my dress so badly as I was climbing over a chair.”

“Was it then that you decided that you didn’t like dresses?” I ask.

“Dresses are *yechhy!*” she exclaims.

While I would love to find out a bit more about Danielle, I know that she is too young to understand any theory about the construction of her femininity and masculinity. But for me this topic is very interesting and significant in the context of the literature on gender roles. Especially when it is articulated by one who is so young.

So, with a playful smile, I say to her:⁹ “So then, are you saying that you prefer boy’s clothes?”

⁸ 339-345:7, S2

C: What do you have against dresses?

D: You can’t do boy things.

C: Like ... okay so you can’t jump and climb trees.

D: When I was a girl and I we ate at Spur, and I tore my whole dress like that when I just tried to climb over a chair.

C: And then you decided dresses were out.

D: Dresses are 'eww!'

⁹ 72-107:2, S2

C: So you like, like boyish clothes you say.

D: Ja, I like boys things you do.

C: Like what is that.

D: And sometimes I like doing girl things like do your nails.

C: Okay, Like you your hair maybe...

D: And like when you are a boy you don’t do much. So I do boy and girl things. Like I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments.

C: What’s a boy moment?

D: I build things and I play with my brothers rugby...and all those stuff

C: And girl things are like hair

D: And nails and make-up, I don’t like make-up.

C: And your clothes, what do you wear? If you could pick your clothes, what would you wear?

.../next page

“Yes,” she answers. “I like boy’s things.”

“What do you mean by that, Danielle?” I ask.

“When you are a girl, you can’t do much. So I do boy *and* girl things. Like, I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments.”

“What is ‘a boy moment’?” I ask.

“Oh, I build things, and I play rugby with my brothers, and all that sort of stuff.”

“Girls like to make styles with their hair...”, I suggest.

Danielle completes my line of thought by saying, “And they paint their nails and put on make-up. I don’t like make-up,” she asserts rather defiantly.

“And your clothes? What do you wear? If you could pick all your own clothes, what would you wear?” I ask her. I want to obtain as clear a picture as possible of what she constructs as “girlish” and “boyish”.

“If I could pick my clothes, I would borrow from my brother, my big brother, because my mother won’t buy me their kind of clothes. So I sometimes borrow from my brother. And, for civvies¹⁰, I wear these long baggy things and a cool T-shirt. Then I wear ‘takkies’ or something.”

D: If I have to pick my clothes, I lend from my brother, my big brother, cause my mother won't buy me their clothes. Okay, I lend from my brother sometimes, and for civvies; I wear these long baggy things and a cool T-shirt. Then I wear tekkies or something.

C: And then why does mom have a problem with that?

D: She wants me to come out like a girl. Be like a little girl.

C: And how do you know that?

D: She says like... She tells me...I know you're having those boy moments, but I'm trying to stop you, because when you grow up you going to have difficult.

C: Did she explain that?

D: She did, she doesn't like it that much. But now she is fine with it.

C: Okay. But what does she mean by it is going to be difficult when you grow up?

D: Then I am going to do those things like normal teenagers do, those mad things like drink and take drugs and all those things, and I'm very scared doing that, I don't wanna do that

C: Umm

D: I just wanna do that, and they say if you too much of a girl, and my brother cares about that he doesn't want me to come out like that. And as well if you're a girl then you won't, if you're too much of a girl then you won't come out like that. Then if you dress up like when you 're a teenager and all those sweet things. I want to try to come out like that, but I thought, I want to come out like that to make my mom happy so I change, I am going to try and not come out like that ... I won't go like to rock and roll parties and that, I'd rather go to movies.

¹⁰ Very casual wear

“So why would your mom have a problem with that?” I ask.

“She wants me to look like a girl. To look like a little girl.”

“How do you know that?” I ask.

“Because she, like, tells me. She says, ‘I know that you’re having these boy moments, Danielle, but I am trying to stop you because when you grow up, you will find that you will have a difficult time.’ “

“Did she explain that?” I would very much like to know what she understands by her mother’s statement.

“Yes, she did. She doesn’t like it very much. But now she is fine with it.”

“Okay,” I reply tentatively. Danielle has not really answered my question, and so I probe gently. “Do you know what your mom *means* when she says, ‘It’s going to be difficult for you when you grow up’?”

“She says that I will start doing all those things that normal teenagers do, all those mad things like drinking and taking drugs and all those kind of things, and I am very scared of doing that. I don’t *want* to do those things,” she says with some emphasis.

I murmur quietly, but do not interrupt her because I hope that she will continue.

“I just don’t want to do that. My brother really cares about that and he doesn’t want me to do those kinds of things either. It’s like, if you’re a girl, then you won’t do those things. He says that if you’re too much of a girl, then you won’t turn out like that. But I don’t want to do all those ‘sweet’ girl things. But I really do want to make my mom happy, so I will try not to turn out like that. I won’t go like to teenage parties and all that, I will rather go to movies instead.”

I wonder whether these social scripts influence her friends as well, so I ask,¹¹

“So what kind of clothes do your friends wear, Danielle?”

“Okay,” she replies, “Cherese wears girl’s pants because she doesn’t have so many boy moments.

¹¹ 108:1-110:2, S2

C: And what kind of clothes do your friends wear?

D: Okay, Cherese wears pants like that, cause she doesn’t have so much boy moments.

¹² “I am the only one who wears boy’s clothes when I am with all my friends. It’s so nice walking in them. It looks so cool! And they are all walking so lady-like.” Danielle imitates a very feminine way of walking.

“So walking is also part of it, The way you walk. So there are things that you do, and things that you wear, and then there’s the way that you walk.”

“Yes! And my friends are so, like, ‘Oh, I’m such a lady!’ “ Danielle now imitates their high-pitched girls’ voices, and then continues, “ I feel so, like, ‘I don’t think that I can wear lady-like clothes like that for two minutes’.

¹³“Anel was in our school for one year, and we had civvies, and I wore boy clothes. Se didn’t know that I had boy’s things. And she looked at me and said ‘You look like a boy.’ And so I said, ‘I am sorry. I have these boyish moments, thank you very much.’ And then she teased me and then I began to cry because...”

“How did she tease you?” I ask.

¹² 134-139:3, S2

D: No, and then I am the only one who is wearing boy clothes between all my friends. And walking so nice so cool and they walk so lady-like

C: So walking is also part of it. The way you walk. So there are things you do and things you wear and the way you walk.

D: And my friends are like, so Oh, I'm a lady (mock voice – high pitch), ohh – and I'm like aagh, I don't think I can wear that like for two minutes

¹³ 149:3-165:4, S2

D: No, I am not going to tell them. But Anel was in the school for one year and we had civvies and I wore boy clothes. And she never knew of these boy things

C: Imm, because you looked very girlie.

D: And she looked at me and said “you look like a boy” and I said “I am sorry I have these boyish moments, thank you very much” and then she teased me and then I began to cry because...

C: How did she tell you? How did she tease you?

D: It’s like, “Danielle, you, I didn't knew you were like that, and I'm to much of a girl so you can't play with us anymore.”

C: What is “To be like that”? What did she imply by that.

D: She’s like...Okay she is in the bathroom, she turns around looking at me like that and she says “I am not going to play with you anymore”. I am like “Why?” She is like “Because you like have boy clothes, and I can't hang out with a boy.” And then I say, and I begin to cry and I say “A, why do you say that? Do you have boy moments. Do you have a problem with that?” and she said “I thought a..a..I thought you... I thought that you knew that I thought you look nice.” I can't exactly explain that.

“She said, ‘Danielle! You! I didn’t know that *you* were like that. I am too much of a girl to play with you anymore’.”

I hear these vague words – often emotionally laden but nevertheless vague – from most of the children whom I have thus far interviewed. I therefore probe to try to uncover some of the hidden meanings. “What does ‘to be like that’ mean? What was Anel trying to say?” I ask.

“She’s like... Okay, she is in the bathroom, then she turns around and looks at me in this funny way and says, ‘I am not going to play with you anymore’. Then I say, ‘Why?’ And she says, ‘Because you, like, wear boy’s clothes, and I can’t hang out with a boy’.

“Then I begin to cry and say, ‘Why do you say that, Anel? Don’t you also have boy moments? Do you have a problem with that?’ Then she says, ‘I thought that... I thought you... I thought that you *knew* that I thought you look nice.’ “ Danielle looks directly at me. “I can’t exactly explain that,” she adds.

Danielle tells this story with so much passion and emotion that it is not always comprehensible. But I certainly sense that she is quite upset. So I just answer, “Okay” so that she will feel reassured. I then decide to leave this topic, and inquire more closely into possible incidents of disclosure that have happened in her family. Possibly the children she associates with link her boy moments with her family structure. It would be most interesting and worthwhile to find out.

¹⁴ “What I am wondering now, Danielle, is whether your friends know about the fact that you have two moms?”

“No, they don’t, and I am not going to tell them,” Danielle replies promptly and directly.¹⁵ “I’m not going to tell anybody,” she adds. “It’s a secret.”

¹⁴ 147-149:3, S2

C: Now I am wondering. Does you friends know about the fact that you have two moms?

D: No, I am not going to tell them.

¹⁴ 418:8, S1

D: I'm not going to tell anybody, it's a secret

¹⁶ “Why don’t you want people at school to find out?” I ask. “Why are you afraid of that?” I wonder if I am not perhaps being too direct. I also sense that she is afraid. I have picked that up in her voice. She is defending strongly against some or other fear or fears.

“They will tease me,” Danielle says. “It is difficult. There are not many people that are like that. And it’s just... They will do something to me, like kill me or something. Or they would say, ‘At least *my* parents are better than yours’.” She mimics the mocking voices of the children who tease her, and enacts how they would tease her, and I can hear the anger rising in her voice.

“Okay, you said just now that there are not a lot of people like *that* – like your mom. What did you mean by that, Danielle?”

“She is my mom. She is a good person. I trust my mommy.”

She has not answered my question satisfactorily, so I continue to probe by saying, “What do you mean when you say, ‘There are not a lot of people like that?’ I mean when the other kids tease you and tell you that their parents are better and all that.”

¹⁶ 261:5 – 280:6, S2

C: Why can’t people at school not find out? Why are you afraid of that?

D: They will end up teasing me. It is just difficult, and not much people are like that, and it’s just they’ll do stuff to me. Cause, they, they make me, make like killing me or something like that.

C: Okay, ja, so that...

D: At least my parents are better than yours (voice of other kids teasing her)

C: Okay

Speak about Aunty being teased at school (the one 1 year older) – she teased her with friends.

C: So then why are you afraid that other kids tease you if you tease them?

D: I don’t tease them, they tease me and then I get upset and I push them around. I don’t really push them around, I just say “don’t you tease me, I’m going to get you”

C: Okay, you said just before that there are not a lot of people like that, like your mom. What did you mean by that?

D: She is, my mom is a much better person, I trust my mommy

C: In the context that kids will tease you and tell you that their parents are better and ja, that there are not a lot of people like that?

D: I don’t know, I don’t actually know. I don’t actually know if they’re *going to* do that, it’s a *feeling* that they’re going to do something

“I don’t know, I don’t actually know,” she replies with touching honesty. “I don’t actually know what they’re going to do. I just get a bad *feeling* that they’re going to do something.”

I smile sympathetically at her. I deeply appreciate her sensitive awareness of what various non-verbal cues might mean – not to mention her intuitive awareness that other people might indeed do something that will hurt her or her parents. Danielle’s responses remind me of something that I read in the literature just a week before. It was an assertion that a minority group may fear prejudice more than the fact that the prejudice or discrimination may lead to some kind of action. But such fears are not unfounded, and certainly incidents do occur that reinforce the fears. Danielle continues, as always, by merging one story into another.

¹⁷ “But when, Alicia, one of my best friends, came to stay for a visit, I felt, like, I had to tell her. When someone’s my best friend, then I always share my secrets

¹⁷ 283-309:6, S2

D: But when, Alicia, one of my best friends, when she come I feel like I have to tell her, but I am scared that she’ll tell her mom and then I scared her mom don’t talk to my mom again which is scary, I can’t tell the future, if I could then

C: (laugh) Then none of us would have a problem, then you would be the richest girl on earth and the wisest.

[laugh]

D: Okay, you are gonna have three children [laugh], thank you. Three hundred rand.

C: Definitely. Do you have sometimes sleepovers and things like that?

D: Not on school nights, only when

C: Ja, only on weekends. And then what do you tell your friends when they come over, who’s Sandy?

D: I say she is a friend. I say she actually lives with my mom cause they are best friends.

C: Okay, and what is your friend’s reaction. Do they ask more questions?

D: Ja, Alicia asked me, are they together, do they sleep together? And I am like aggh, ja, where else would she sleep, and she catch me there.

C: Ja, it is like a bit of a personal question.

D: And I’ll have to explain to her that my mom

C: You don’t have to explain that, you can just answer yes.

D: I’ll just, if I’m going to have to tell her, if I’ll tell her they’re together and just explain all the times that and all those things that they sleep together and just, and I’m going to tell her I’m sorry that I’m a liar. It’s just very personal to me and I can’t share all my personal things and I would, if she can understand I would be very happy.

C: Sounds like a good thing.

D: Only my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me.

with them. Only my best friends know. *Only* my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me. But I was also scared that *she* would tell *her* mom. Then I thought, ‘What will happen if her mom doesn’t ever talk to my mom again?’ That is scary. Now, if only I could tell the future, then I could...”

I start to laugh and add, “Then none of us would have a problem, now, would we? You would be the richest girl on earth – and the cleverest.”

She and I laugh together, and then Danielle begins to act out what seems to be a private satire or personal joke with the words, “Okay! Would you like to have three children? Thank you. Now that will be three hundred rand, please.”

I watch her in admiration for a while and then I say, “Do you sometimes have sleepovers and things like that?” I sense that she wants to share an important

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176-187:4, S2

D: Yes, she knew, cause I had to tell, she was one of my best friends, only my best friends know

C: Okay, you had to tell her. What made you tell her?

D: Ja, I thought, if she's my best friend, as well, then I share my secrets with her

C: So how did you tell her? Can you still remember.

D: I said to her my mommy and Auntie Sandy are together is that fine with you, and she said ja, and she is still my best friend and all those nice things she said to me and I began to cry.

C: Ag, shame. Ja, because I think you were very, how did you feel before you told her?

D: I feel like I had to tell her because she was my best friend and I told her and I begin to get heart sore

80-96:2, S3

D: No, she like, I was, I was thinking and all that stuff and then she said that, and she heard ... and my mother and them were talking about them two together and then she heard everything.

C: Oh, tell me?

D: Okay, its like, I was with my brother playing with something -

C: Oh, so you weren't near her.

D: ...and I was playing with my brothers. So then I just tried to sort out a problem and then she, and they were talking and I said Alicia, just wait here and she heard them talking.

C: Who was talking?

D: My mom and auntie Sandy .

C: Oh, okay. And she overheard them?

D: Yes, and she asked me, “is it true?” And I said “yes, its actually about time that you must hear it.”

C: Ja, how did you feel in that situation?

D: Like Ah (sigh - benoud). “So you don't have a dad you have like three mothers.” And I say its like cool hey, but that's all I'm saying.

incident, and I am scared that she will lose the thread of her story. So I hope that I am not now distracting her from sharing whatever it is that she wanted to say about Alicia and her real need to tell her best friends her secrets.

“Not on school nights. Only during the weekends,” Danielle answers.

“Then, Danielle, what do you tell your friends when they come over? What do you say about Sandy?”

“I say that she’s a friend. I say she actually lives with my mom because they are best friends.”

“Okay, and then how do your friends react? Do they ask more questions after that?”

“Oh yes, like, Alicia asked me, ‘Are they together? Do they *sleep* together?’ Then I was, like, ‘Umm, yes. Where else would she sleep?’ Alicia really caught me with that question.”

I am intrigued by her reaction at this point, and I promptly ask her, “What happened then, Danielle?”

“I was thinking,” Danielle replies. “I was thinking that I would have to explain to her that my mom... That if I tell her, if I’ll tell her that they are together, and just keep explaining all those things, like they sleep together and just...”. She hesitates and then adds, “I’m sorry that I’m a liar. It’s just that this stuff is very personal for me, and I can’t share all my personal things’. If I could tell her, and she could understand, then I would be very happy.”

“To me that sounds like a good way of dealing with it,” I interject affirmatively. I am touched by her honesty, and astonished at how well prepared she is to deliver appropriate answers.

“Then Alicia told me that she heard my mother and Auntie Sandy talking about themselves, about the two of them together, and that she had heard everything.”

“Oh?” I say. “Could you tell me about that please?” It sounds now as though Danielle’s best friend has found out her secret even before she, Danielle, had an opportunity to tell her herself.

“Okay, I will tell you. It’s like this. I was with my brothers. We were playing together”

“Oh, so Alicia wasn’t near you when this happened?” I am trying to obtain more clarity about this incident.

“No. I was playing with my brothers at the time. I was trying to sort out some problem with them. I said to her, ‘Alicia, just wait here’, but she wandered off and then heard them talking somewhere.”

I have difficulty following her train of thought. So I ask: “Who did she hear talking, Danielle?”

“It was my mom and Auntie Sandy that she heard,” Danielle answers rather abruptly.

“Oh, okay. So she overheard them? She was listening to what they said?”

“Yes! Then she came and asked me, ‘is all this true?’ So I said, ‘Yes, it is true, and it’s about time that you should hear it.’ Then I told her, ‘My mommy and Auntie Sandy are together, is that fine with you?’ And she just said, ‘Yeah, and *you* are still my best friend.’ She said such sweet things that I began to cry. When I told her the truth, I began to feel so heartsore.”

I express my deep sympathy and support in my body language, and ask, “That is a beautiful story, Danielle. How did you feel when that was happening?”

“Like, ah...” Danielle sighs and breathes deeply. “My friend said, ‘So you don’t have a dad. Instead, you have like three mothers.’ And I answered: ‘Yes! It’s, like, hey, cool, but that’s all I’m saying!’”

“And was she happy to know?”

“Well, obviously. But I don’t know if my mother knows.”

¹⁸ “Do you think Alicia’s mom will mind if she knows that your mom and auntie Sandy are together?” I ask.

“I don’t think that she will mind,” Danielle answers thoughtfully. “But her mother knows that we are best friends, and we are always staying over at each other’s place.”

¹⁸ 104-107:2, S3

C: Ag shame. Do you think her mom will mind that she knows and that mom and auntie Sandy are together?

D: I don't think so. But she knows that we are best friends and we always stay at each other's place.

¹⁹ “Did Alicia tell you what she overheard? What exactly your mom and Auntie Sandy said to one another?”

“Yes! She said... But now I can hardly remember what it was because I was only in Grade Three. She said something to me like, “Hmm. Now they will go to this place where other women like them go, and all stuff like that.”

“Okay. What do you mean, Danielle, when you say, ‘Like that?’” I ask. She is once again using these euphemisms and circumlocutions, and perhaps she needs to.

“But Alicia’s also very clever. So she, like, she overheard that my mother is hanging out with a couple and with two women who are “together”, who are sleeping with the other woman – and then she knew that my mother is one of them... .”

I am still wondering about the precise dynamics of Danielle feeling that she ‘has to tell’. She mentioned in the beginning that she felt Alicia should know. So I probe further.

²⁰ “Danielle, do you sometimes feel you simply must tell?” I ask.

¹⁹ 112-125:3, S3

C: Did Alicia tell you what she overheard? What exactly mom and auntie Sandy ...

D: Yes, she said, I can hardly remember because it was when I was in Grade Three.

C: Okay so it was a long time ago.

D: Ja, she said to me, imm, she said that she heard that that imm, they were going to go to this place with other women like them and all that

C: Okay.

D: And then she heard that they were also like that.

C: Okay, what does "like that" mean....

D: But she's also very clever. So she, Like, if she's hanging out with a couple, with two women together and you know that my mother will be one of them. And she's sleeping with the other woman.

²⁰ 188-196:4, S2

C: Ah, that is nice, okay... ummm, do you sometimes feel you have to tell?

D: Ja

C: Okay. In what circumstances, when do you feel you have to tell?

D: When I was feeling, I had this feeling that like pushes those words out of me, and I don't understand that and I don't know what I say I just told me and I go like, okay, so it just came out that I had to say something.

C: Okay

D: So it just came out and I have to say something. Like with my teacher, I just put up my hand and say something, and then, where did this answer come from?

“Yes.” She answers with some conviction.

“Okay. Now, in what circumstances do you feel that you have to tell?”

“I get this feeling... I get this feeling that, like, pushes the words out of me. I, I don't understand it. I often don't know what I am saying. I just speak. It just comes out. It even happened with my teacher. I put up my hand to say something, and then it all just came out.”

Danielle re-enacts the whole classroom scene. She waves her hands as she tries to explain to me how it happens when she feels that she loses control over her impulses to disclose. Her mention of the teacher reminds me that it is possible that other children in her school are also talking about same gender parents.

So I ask her:²¹ “Alright. Do the kids at your school talk about women like that? Women...”.

Danielle interrupts me quickly. “They don't even think about it. Because it's very dumb.”²² She continues with an anecdote about a boy that once hit her in class, and how that developed into a huge fight.

I let her continue for a while, and then gently ask:²³ “If you find yourself speaking, and you find that you can't control what you say, do you sometimes

²¹ 130-131:3, S3

C: Alright. Do the kids at school talk about women like that, women

D: They don't even think about it. Because it's very dumb.

²² 136-137:3, S3

D: ...No he hit me over some other girl name [REDACTED] and I fell and she looked to D and I said sorry and she said you stupid new girl

²³ 197:4-233:5, S2

C: So how do you keep from telling that, ja, you have two moms?

D: Excuse me.

C: How do you keep... If you like answer so easily and sometimes answer and then you realise ooh, I have just answered. Doesn't it sometimes happen that you just say ooh?

D: Ja.

C: So, hasn't that happened, that when you just informal, spontaneous talked about...

D: Imm, ahh,

C: Would you like say this is secret and you don't share secrets.

D: I don't actually share my secret, I just like hold them and if it, if she became my best friend, like only Shirley and Alicia that I tell, but Shirley knew before me. That my mother and her mother was together.

realise afterwards that you have actually said something about your two moms?”

“No,” replies Danielle. “I don’t actually share my secret. I only share that secret with my best friends, like Shirley and Alicia. But Shirley knew what was happening even before I did. That my mother and her mother were together.”

Now I am fascinated. “Oh, that is very interesting, Danielle. So how did that happen? Did she tell you?”

“No, she didn’t tell me”, Danielle replies. “She only said: ‘I know a secret that you have to ask your mom’. I thought about this, and then I said, ‘What must I ask my mom?’

“And Shirley replied, ‘Just ask your mom whatever comes into your mind...’. And so I did that. I asked my mom about what was on my mind. And my mother listened, and then she said ‘Yes. It is all true’.”

How strange that must have been, I think to myself. Imagine how she must have felt. Her friend giving her such a strange and cryptic instruction. I wonder to myself how Danielle’s mother reacted – and what must have gone through her mind when her little girl asked her this question straight out of the blue.

C: Oh, that is interesting. So what happened there, did she tell you?

D: No she didn't tell me, she said “I know a secret that you have to ask your mom” and then I said what must I ask my mom “Just ask your mom whatever comes into your mind” and it just came into my mind and I asked my mom and she said yeah.

C: What did you ask your mom?

D: Are they together? And she said “ja”. I asked this question and she said “Yes, how did you get it right”

C: Okay, alright. And imm, how did Mom explain that to you? Because last time you mentioned that you talked a bit about...

D: How did she tell me, I asked her and she told me who with she was all before with...before she was with, before she was with [REDACTED]

C: Okay

D: It's hard to remember, I think it is last year or the year before, or the year before that.

C: Okay, and how did you feel when she told you?

D: I thought aghh no, and then I thought oh, is it Auntie T, and she said ja and then okay, I'm fine with that. She had these twins.

C: Oh ja, you spoked about the kids. Isn't it like a different kind of thing that happened?

D: Yes, and now I've got three mothers.

C: Okay, and who are your three mothers, because you mentioned that before?

D: My mom, Aunt Sandy and Aunty Thea.

“What exactly did you ask your mom, Danielle?” I ask so as to gain further clarity.

I just asked her: “Are you together?” So she replied, ‘Yes. How did you know?’

I remind Danielle that in another interview she had mentioned that she had spoken to her mother a bit about the whole matter.

Danielle interrupts, “I just asked her everything. And she told me all the women that she had been with before... .”

“Okay.”

“It’s actually hard to remember all the facts. I think that this happened last year or the year before. Or maybe even the year before that.”

“Okay. But how did you *feel* when she told you all that stuff?” I ask.

“I just thought, ‘Oh! Are you with Auntie Theresa now?’ And she replied, ‘Yes.’ So I said, ‘Then that’s okay by me. I’m just fine with that’. Auntie Theresa had these twins.

“Oh yes, I remember that you mentioned the twins before.” All three of them elaborated extensively in the first session on how terribly destructive the twins were and how they had really to struggle to adapt to accepting other strange children as a part of their family. I really do not want to hear more about that, so I try to cut that topic off.

But Danielle continues.²⁴ “Do you want to know how Shirley found out?” she asks.

²⁴ 204:4-221:5, S3 & 232-236:5, S3

D: You want to know how Shirley found out?

C: Ja

D: She found this other book in her mom’s room and then she locks the door, her and her brother go sit there and read the book and her mother knocks on the door “wake up”, ‘cause she always locks the door when she sleeps and she said “yes, mommy”.

C: Okay, so she was a bit naughty. What was in the book?

D: I can’t remember.

(interruption)

D: There’s nothing such things in my life, because there’s a photo in the book with my mom in it with glasses, cause she used to wear glasses.

C: Okay so it was like a photo album?

D: Not like a photo album. It only had one picture in it and a PS chocolate. But not the chocolates only the wrapper.

C: Okay, okay.

D: And little poems about my mom.

C: Where did you, where did you saw that? In that book?

D: Yes.

.../next page

“Yes,” I reply, thinking that this might provide some insights, and it will also tell me about another girl’s experiences, even though the information will come to me from a third party. Although I don’t want to get stuck in trivial gossip, this story might just provide something of value.

Danielle seems keen to tell me. “She found this book in her mom’s room. She takes it. And then she and her brother go into the room and they lock the door. Then they read the book together. But then...! Her mother knocks on the door while they are reading. And her mother calls, ‘Wake up!’ because Shirley always locks the door when she sleeps. And so she calls, ‘Yes, mommy’.”

“Okay, so she was a bit naughty,” I observe mildly. “So what was in the book? Was it a photograph album?”

“I can’t remember exactly. No, it was not a photograph album. It only had one picture in it – and a PS chocolate wrapper.”

“Okay, okay.”

“And short poems about my mom.”

“Okay. So did she talk to her mom about the book? Did she ask, ‘What is this book all about?’ “

Danielle whispers, “No! She didn’t talk to her. She only told me about it. When her mom eventually told her, she acted like she didn’t know anything.” Secrecy again, I think to myself. How do these children *manage* their own process of dealing with all these events?

&

C: Oh, and so she saw the love letters and things on the page.

D: Ja.

C: Okay, and then did she ask her mom what’s this?

D: (whispers) No, she didn’t talk to her. She only told me about that, so that’s why, imm, when her mom told her she acted like she didn’t know.

²⁵ “Danielle, when did you realise that mom liked other women?” Danielle has spoken extensively about her friends, but I wonder what process she went through before she could accept the new situation.

“Oh, it was when she was involved with Auntie Tersia and my mom and us were at Auntie Theresa’s house, her old house. And then I asked them if they were together. It happened like this. We all went to Auntie Theresa, and Auntie Tersia came with us. So I said to my mom, ‘I don’t believe you.’ And then she said, “Well, if you don’t believe me, go and ask Auntie Tersia.’ So then I asked Auntie Tersia. I said to her, “Aren’t you going to tell Karen,” and Auntie Tersia replied, ‘No. She’s not old enough to understand yet.’”

“So Karen is Auntie Tersia’s daughter?”

“Yes.”

“Did they ask you not to tell her or...?”

“Yes, they asked me not to tell her.” Danielle smiles at the memory.

²⁵ 152:3-180:4, S3

D: Ja, Okay, but when did you realise that mom liked other women?

C: Oh, when she was with auntie Tersia and she, we were at auntie Theresa’s house, her old house there. And I asked them if they were together and then we went to auntie Theresa. And auntie Tersia came with us and I said to my mom, “I don’t believe you” and she said, “go ask auntie Tersia”, and then I asked her. I said, “Aren’t you going to tell Karen” and she said “she’s not old enough”.

C: Okay, so is Karen her daughter?

D: Yes,

C: Did they ask you not to tell her or?

D: Yes, They said that I mustn't tell her.

C: She's too young, Okay. Why do you smile?

D: Because I told her. (laughs) I couldn't hold it in, I had to tell her.

C: Ah, how old was she then? She’s my best friend, but not always, she always hang out with my brothers, but I’ve beginning to like her a lot.

C: Okay, because you’re all getting older now. What did you tell her?

D: What age?

C: No, well, how old was she in any case when you told her. How old was she then?

D: Ah, okay. I was eleven and she was ten.

C: Okay and what did you say to her?

D: I said (whispers) Karen did you know that our mothers and them are together and she said, “UHH!” (ahh like shock and surprise) and I said, but I’m not supposed to tell you and you don’t know that anymore

C: And then did she ask her mom?

D: No, but I think her mom told her.

C: And how do you think, what was her reaction, when her mom told her?

D: She didn’t tell me.

C: Oh, okay.

D: I wasn't with her. She told them when mom and her broke up.

I reflect her statements by saying, “I understand. She’s too young to understand.” I remain quiet for some time, and then look at her. Danielle’s face lights up with a smile. “Why are you smiling?” I ask in a friendly way.

Danielle looks slightly embarrassed. “Because I did tell her,” she confesses. Then she bursts out laughing. “I couldn’t hold it back! I just had to tell her!” “How old was Karen then?” I ask.

Danielle is evasive. “She’s my best friend. But not always. She is always hanging out with my brothers. But I’m beginning to like her a lot.”

“Okay, I see that. You are both getting older now. What did you tell her?” I am professionally curious about how she would frame the situation to another child because that knowledge might reveal some of her own process to me in managing this unusual situation.

“What do you mean, ‘How old was she?’ Danielle does not understand my question.

“How old was she when you told her? How old was she then?”

“Oh, alright.” She thinks for a moment. “I was eleven – and she was ten.”

I am a bit relieved, I thought that they had both been much younger. I ask, “Okay, and what did you say to her?”

Danielle whispers. “I said to her, ‘Karen, do you know that our mothers and all of them are, like... *together?*’ Danielle mimics Karen’s expression of shock and surprise. Then Karen said, like, ‘Ooo-oo!’ Then I told her, ‘But listen, Karen. I am not supposed to tell you what I have just said, now. Remember that. You have not heard what I have said.’ ”

“Do you think that Karen *did* tell her mom?” I ask. I wonder about all this secrecy, and whether or not this child will also confront her mother, as Danielle did.

“No, she didn’t tell. But I think that her mom told her.”

“What do you think that her reaction was when her mom told her?”

“She didn’t tell me, “ Danielle says simply.

“Oh, okay.”

“I wasn’t with her at that time. Her mom told her when her mom and my mom broke up.”

I begin another line of inquiry. ²⁶ “What I am thinking now is, ‘What does the word “mom” mean to you? What is a mother? I remember you said that you have boy moments and girl moments. So what does the word ‘mother’ mean to you?’” I am trying a new line of questioning without knowing whether or not it will work. Perhaps Danielle will not understand. This might be too abstract for her.

“For me my mom is somebody that I just love so much. And I trust my mom. I love her. It is difficult to explain. I just love her a lot.”

I am quite surprised at her answer and I am really glad that I asked it. So I continue to probe. “Okay. Now your *real* mom, your birth mother, and Auntie Sandy, Danielle. Is there a big difference between Auntie Sandy being a mom to you, and Auntie Thea being a mom, and your own mom?”

“There’s no big difference,” she says.

““Okay. I see that, for you, they are almost, basically, the same?”

“I must say that my real mom feels more like my real mom to me.”

“In what way?” I inquire.

“I think that I just love my mom more than the others. She *feels* more like a mom to me than the others do.”

“Did you and your brothers ever discuss what was happening with Auntie Theresa or Auntie Sandy?” I ask.

²⁶ 246-260:5, S2

C: Oh okay, now I am thinking the word mom, what does it mean to you? What’s a mother? Like you explained about having boy moments and girl moments, what is a mother for you?

D: I actually, I actually, my mom and don’t actually have a meaning for that, but I know what for me mom means actually my mom is somebody that I loves so much and I trust my mom I love her, it is difficult. I just love her a lot.

C: Okay, now your real mom, your birth mother and Auntie Sandy, is there a difference between Auntie Sandy being a mom, Auntie Thea being a mom and Mom.

D: There’s no big difference

C: Okay, It is almost, basically the same

D: It feels like almost, my real mom feels more, my real mom is more real to me

C: In what sense

D: Like I love my mom more than them, she feels like more mom to me than the others

²⁷”Well, we did agree that Auntie Sandy is much better than Auntie Theresa. And that her children are a big pain. You are not even safe in your room when they are around. The other weekend when I was with my dad, I heard they took my rat and put it on the pool table, and they hit the poor rat with the pool things.

²⁸ But Auntie Sandy... I like her a lot. Last year, we were against each other quite a lot. Now, all of a sudden, we are very nice to each other.”

“What was it like last year?” I ask.

“Last year I wasn’t used to house work. But now I am used to it. Now I know what to do, and how to clean. ²⁹She asks us all to clean up. Imagine what our house would look like if she weren’t here. ³⁰ I like it when she says, ‘Please clean up your room.’ Then I go and clean my room. Before that I never used to clean my room much. And when you get to know her, she’s actually a very nice person. But it’s very hard to get to know her.”

²⁷ 183-188:4, S3

D: We say that auntie Sandy is much better than auntie Theresa. And her children are irritating.

C: Oh ja

D: You can't even go into your room. I heard that, the other weekend I was with my dad and they took my rat and put it on the pool table and they hit it with the pool things.

²⁸ 271:5-278:7, S1

D: I like her a lot, imm, Auntie Sandy, last years we were against each other, now all of a sudden now we're very nice with each other

C: Okay, we'll talk about that

D: So it's coming out very well

C: How was it last year?

D: It's it's I felt like ...Cause I wasn't used to work, now I'm used to it, now I know okay must clean now...

²⁹ 365-366:7, S1 & 58-59:2, S2

D: She tells us to clean up, if she wasn't here imagine how our house would look like &

D: It is nice. I imagine if she's not here this house would be like spider webs and all those weird things.

³⁰ 61-62:2, S2

D: It is actually nice that when she says “clean up your room” then I know I must go and clean up my room cause I don't clean up my room much.

&

277-279:6, S1

D: Cause I wasn't used to work, now I'm used to it, now I know okay must clean now...And when you get to know her she's actually very nice. But it's very hard to get to know her

We continue to chat for a while about her untidiness, and about how she and Sandy used to have differences about how clean and neat her room should be. Danielle explains how she used to get tired of washing the dishes. Then she wanders onto the topic of her friends and their sleepovers.

As I begin to wrap up the conversation, Danielle raises an important issue. She asks,³¹ “When you write that book that you are writing, could we please read it? And I want to know who will be reading that book as well because I am scared that some children might read that book and find out who my parents are. But I do really want to be in your magazine.”

I smile gently at her, and try to reassure her. She must be reassured that I will respect strict boundaries about disclosing their family’s privacy and their anonymity.

“It’s okay,” I say. “No one will ever know who you are. I will give all of you different names, and I will change a few things so that no one will ever know that it is about you.”

“I like the name Danielle,” she says in her inimitably sweet manner.

³¹ 401:8, S1 & 407-412:8, S1

D: When you imm, write down the book can we please just read it
&

D: Cause I'm just scared that children take, buy my books and they say that my parents are and they find out who my parents are, but I really want to be in the magazine

C: Ja, but they won't know it's you, they won't know it's Danielle, you'll have a different name like whatever you want to

D: I like Danielle

“If they want to know, I will tell them”

Erid walks into the sitting room. Standing in front of me is the most endearing nine-year-old boy, clean and fresh after his evening bath. He begins our conversation by giving me a detailed account of his new DVD, a Christmas present from his cousin. He had earlier bought his cousin exactly the same DVD for his birthday, so for him, this is a point of interest. He then tells me about the history examination that he will shortly be writing, and the new pens he has acquired that will help him to summarise his work.

I am pleasantly surprised at how easily he engages me in conversation. As he talks, it occurs to me that this might be a good moment to begin to direct the conversation towards my focus of research. So I ask,¹ “What is it like being in this family?”

¹ 14-51:1, S1

C: Okay, So just tell me what it's like being in this family, just generally, I'll ask specific questions later on

E: Nice

C: Okay, wat is nice

E: As mens persente kry

C: Ja, en kersfees kom

[Erid chat oor geskenk wat gekry het by nefie, Matrix unloaded DVD, 7 maande later eers, en hy't ook toevallig dieselfde vir nefie gekoop]

C: En vir jou?

K: Dis ook lekker

C & K: ja (lag al 2)

C: Wat is lekker?

K: Ja dis net, ja, ons is 'n liefdevolle familie, soos in, 'n huis vol liefde, ja, maar ons het ons argumente, lag

C: Lag, dis okay, so wat is 'n tipiese argument, waarom gaan dit

K: Ek wat grumpy is, en

C: O okay

K: Uhm, as ek en my boetie baklei

C: Ihim

E en K: praat gelyk

K: No man, that's the arguments

E: I love getting money

C: Ye right

E: I love it

C: Ja...okay

E: 'n Maatjie van my wou vir my R250 gegee het. R250 sommer net so

.../ vlg. bl.

Erid seems eager to tell me. “It’s nice,” he replies, and in answer to my probing about what he means by “nice”, he avoids the central issue by pointing out that it’s pleasant to receive presents at Christmas time. In answer to further questions from me, he adds: “Oh, and I love getting money!”

Erid then shares with me and with Kashni, his fifteen-year-old sister, who is sitting with us, a story of something that had happened at school.

“A friend of mine at school offered me two hundred and fifty rand – for nothing, with no strings attached.” He turns to his sister. “Would you have taken it, Kashni, if you had been in my place?”

Kashni looks uncompromising and shakes her head. “No,” she answers without hesitation.

“Why not?” Erid asks.

“You just don’t,” she says.

Erid tries to undermine her certainty by saying, “But he offered it to me for nothing, with no strings attached!”

I suggest quietly that nothing is ever given for free and likewise never comes without some strings attached.

“Why is that?” asks Erid, refusing to let the point rest.

“Nothing is ever given for nothing,” Kashni agrees, using what I had said to justify her point of view.

But Erid is dissatisfied with such an unsubstantiated opinion, and challenges her again by asking, “Why would you not have taken it?”

E: R250 wou hy my gegee het, sommer net so,

E: Could you have taken it Kashni, R250?

K: No

E: Why not?

K: You just don't

E: He offers it to you for free, no strings attached

C: Nothing comes for free without strings attached

E: Hoekom

K: Niks verniet

Kashni firmly terminates this exchange by stating, “*You just don’t.*”

Kashni then looks at me and asks, “Would you like to talk to him now?” I sense that she also realises that Erid has things of importance that he could tell me, and I tell her gently, “Thank you, Kashni. Yes. I’ll talk to you again a bit later – if that’s OK.” Kashni nods and leaves the room.

I look into Erid’s large brown eyes and pursue a lead that he gave me at dinner. It involved an incident in which he hit another boy.^{2 & 3}

“So tell me about that boy you hit. Why did you hit him?”

“He said things about my mom, so I became angry,” Erid says defiantly.

“Did he tease you?”, I ask.

Erid reacts strongly. “No. He didn’t tease *me*. He said things about my mom.”

“Oh”, I reply. “He said things about your mom.” I reflect his words back to him.

“How is that different from teasing *you*? Or is it the same?”

Erid looks thoughtful. “It’s the same, *and* it is different,” he replies.

“Okay, that makes sense. It wasn’t about you, but about someone who belongs to you. How many times has this happened?”

“Only a few times in this school, but lots of times in the other school.”

² 54:1-61:2, S1

C: Vertel van die outjie wat jy geslaan het?

E: Hy’t goeters gesê, van my ma gesê, en toe word ek kwaad

C: Ihim, ek kan nogal dink ja

C: En kan jy onthou wat hy gesê het, jy hoef nie te sê as jy

E: ek wil nie,

C: wil jy eerder nie, dis fine

³ 85-92:2, S2

C: Ons het laas bietjie gepraat en toe’t jy gesê daar’t ietsie 'bad' by die skool gebeur, toe die kinders jou gespot het, okay, wat ek ...

E: Nie my gespot nie maar my ma

C: Jou ma gespot het, so dis verskillend of of, amper anders

E: dis dieselfde en anders

C: Oraait, maak nogal sin. Dis nie jy nie, maar dis iets van jou.

Hoeveel keer het dit al gebeur?

E: Dit het 'n paar gebeur in hierdie skool maar baie keer in die ander skool

⁴ “What do you think would have happened at that other school if you had stayed there?”

“They would have stopped, or else I would have kept on hitting them until they did stop.”

I am angry with myself for having missed a cue to explore the children’s concepts of sameness and difference. It is my anxiety that is causing me to miss opportunities to probe crucial areas. Even though this is my first interview, I am not at all satisfied with the way in which I am handling it. I cast around for something else to ask Erid.

Eventually I say, “Can you remember what you said to this boy?” Then I add, “You don’t have to answer that question if you don’t want to.”

Erid closes that avenue by saying, “I don’t want to say.” I let it rest.

I am beginning to feel that the interview is not going well. Although my questions and remarks are apposite and appropriate, I do not want him to feel that I am putting pressure on him. So instead of pursuing the matter further, I offer him confirmation for his refusal by saying: “It’s quite OK if you don’t want to talk about that.”

I find it interesting that Erid prefers not to elaborate or give me a fuller version of the incident because one of his parents has already done so. But I now realise that that won’t be happening at this time.

After dinner, while Erid was taking his bath, one of his moms, Zané, had told me about the incident. She said: ⁵ “A few weeks ago a boy in school said to him, ‘Your mother wants to be a man,’ and so he beat the boy up.

⁴ 109-113:3, S2

C: What do you think would have happened at the previous school if you would have stayed at the previous school

E: Hulle sou opgehou het

C: Okay

E: Ek sou hulle aanhou slaan het

“As soon as he got into the car when we picked him up after school, he confessed to us what he had done because he knows that I don’t approve of him doing that kind of thing. But Anriëtte [Erid’s other mom] contradicted what I said by saying that, in her opinion, it is indeed necessary to act in that way under certain circumstances. Erid then told us that he couldn’t have let such a situation pass without doing something. He said that he had to defend his mom’s honour.”

Back in the interview, I pick up Erid’s cue about the differences between the two schools, and I begin once again to probe.⁶

“Why do you think the two schools are so different?”

He looks at me and just says, “I don’t know.”

Inwardly, I warn myself to take it slowly and remind myself that he is only a nine-year-old boy. So, for a while, we continue to chat about this and that. Then another opportunity for probing arises. We happen to be talking about what happens when the children have to move to a new school.

⁷ “Let’s say that you have moved to a new school. What would go through your mind if your teacher were to say, ‘Today we are going to talk about our families?’”

⁵ 54-57:2, Erid Kashni Parents S1

And that a few weeks ago a boy in school told him – your mother wants to be a man – and he gave the boy a beating – and confessed the moment he climbed into the car – as Z. doesn't like that, while A tells them that at times its necessary – and he told them that he couldn't let it stay like that, he had to defend his mom's honour.

⁶ 93-94:2, S2

C: Hoekom dink jy verskil die skole so?

E: Weet nie

⁷ 77-84:2, S1

C: Say for instance like when you move to schools, and you move to a new school

E: Jip

C: and now you know, at one stage, we are going to do lesson about "my family", what goes through your mind if the teachers say "Today we are going to talk about our families?"

Erid looks down and begins to play with his hands. “Um... I have never really thought about it. I would only say that we have moved. I wouldn't say much.”

“Okay, so you prefer to say less rather than too much in that situation, and then they have to ask you if they want to know more?”

Erid agrees emphatically. “Yes.”

At that point, we are interrupted by friends of Erid and Kashni's parents who have come to say goodbye.

Later, when we are alone again, I continue with questions about school life.

⁸ “Do the teachers – in the first week or so after school has started – ask you what you did during the holidays and other questions about your family?”

“They just ask you what you did during the holidays,” Erid replies.

Although Erid is clearly not exactly delighted with my repeated questions, I need to get a clear picture of how he copes at school, especially since he will soon be entering a new school yet again.

“Once you've moved to a new school and everyone gets a chance to stand up in class and tell the class about themselves, would you tell the class that you have two moms?”

E: Uhm, just, I don't think much, I just say that we've moved, I don't say much

C: Okay, so you rather say less than too much, and they must then ask

E: Yes

⁸ 132-142:3, S2

C: ...Do the teachers still in the first week or so when school start ask you what you did for the holiday and tell us about your family?

E: No, they ask what you're going to do

C: Okay, but now, you think when you get to the new school would you then stand up in class and say we've moved and "dara lalla da" and say you've got two moms

E: I won't say that, I would just say, we've moved

C: I think it's just like other kids won't say, oh I've got a mom or dad, share their family structure

E: Ja, they have to find out

C: Imm

Erid answers with great determination: “I would *not* say that. I would just tell them that we have moved.”

I signify my agreement with his statement by nodding. I think to myself that it is almost like a strategy of minimal disclosure, of only answering only what is being asked. What incentive does he need for elaborating further? In an attempt to create some basis for consensus, I suggest: “I think you are absolutely right. Of course the other kids would never say, ‘Oh, I’ve got a mom or dad’. It would not be necessary. It wouldn’t make sense, would it?”

Erid agrees wholeheartedly. “Ja. They have to find out if they want to know.”

These last words of his make a strong impression on me. I sense that secrecy, or at least an avoidance of spontaneous self-revelation is a necessary part of his defences. So I ask,⁹ “Do you sometimes feel that you just *can’t* tell?”

Erid looks confused. “Tell?” he asks inquiringly.

“Yes. Tell them that you have two moms. Do you feel that you must keep that a secret?”

Erid answers quite dispassionately. “If they want to know, I will tell them.”

I then realise that the actual telling or disclosing is not a vital issue for him, but it is also not information that he will casually tell or share. It makes perfect sense that he will not carry this “interesting” information on his sleeve, and there is certainly no need to do so. I marvel at the insight of this great little man with a big soul.

⁹ 93-96:2, S1

C: Do you sometimes feel like you can't tell?

E: Tell?

C: That you have two moms that you must keep it as secret

E: If they want to know then I will tell them

¹⁰“But would you not be a bit scared to share this information in a new school? This is something that I am curious about.”

Erid answers, “Well, yes and no.”

I am now intrigued by the fact that he seems willing to disclose something more than I have hitherto obtained. “Could you explain what you mean by that?” I ask. “It’s like this,” he replies. “I don’t... I don’t talk much. But if I get to know somebody well, then, yes, I will tell them.”

“Thank you for answering that,” I say encouragingly. What he has just said does not confirm my previous conclusion that someone has to ask him specific questions before he will give specific information. I now see that he is willing to share voluntarily. I therefore ask him, ¹¹ “With whom would you be willing to share more information?”

Erid looks up. He seems slightly irritated. “I don’t understand what you mean.” So I elaborate. “Would you share this information with really close friends?” I ask.

“No, I wouldn’t say anything.”

¹⁰ 123-131:3, S2

C: Imm, is dit partymaal so, want dis nogal iets waaroor ek wonder, soos nou wanneer julle [redacted] toe gaan, would you be like not scared, but apprehensive, like keep it to yourself

E: No, half-half

C: Can you explain that more?

E: I don't, I don't talk much,

C: Okay

E: But if I get to know somebody then ja

C: Okay

¹¹ 177-183:4, S2

C: Okay, that's a good answer, and for whom would you tell more or share more info?

E: But I don't have that

C: Okay, ja, really close friends?

E: Not, I wouldn't say anything

C: And they, sometimes asks you questions, maybe in the beginning?

E: That's why they're my friends, they don't ask questions

C: (laughs) Don't ask you any stupid personal questions! Okay

I continue to probe and hope that he does not feel that I am nagging him – although it is already being to feel to me as though I am more or less extracting information from him.

“Do your friends sometimes ask you questions? I mean when you first get to know them?”

Erid delivers his most powerful answer yet. “That is why they are my friends. *They don’t ask me questions.*”

I cannot help but laugh, and it seems to break the ice somewhat. It seems as though he has directed this answer straight to me. I answer by nodding my head in amusement and saying, “OK. I won’t ask you any more stupid personal questions.”

Erid smiles back at me. Once again I get the impression that he simply cannot see what all the fuss is about. As far as he is concerned, he has two mothers and that is that. For him there is no need to share this rather insignificant piece of information about his life with every person he meets. If they ask him, he will tell them, but he will only give them the information they want – nothing more. This is exactly what he has been doing with me up to now. I see that my closed questions are certainly not helping to elicit much information from him.

¹² “What do you think would happen if you have a close friend whom you have not told, and he comes to visit you? Do you think that having two moms would suddenly become a problem? Or would you tell him before he came to your house?”

Again Erid answers me firmly. “No.”

¹² 143-146:3, S2

C: What do you think would happen if you have a close friend and you don't tell him – and you just say come and visit me, do you think it would be an issue? Or do you feel like you have to tell them?

E: No

¹³ “What about the friends you have now? If they come to your house to sleep over, would they say something like, ‘Oh, this is, like, weird...’?”

“They’re my friends. They don’t mind. They love playing here because our place is so big.”

I decide to delve more deeply into his attitudes and decide to ask him how he would handle it if one of his friends turned out to be gay.

¹⁴ “If one of your friends realises that he is gay, how would you feel about that?”

“It would be fine.”

“Hmm. But let’s say that he has a problem with being gay. Or perhaps he doesn’t want to be gay, or else he struggles with being gay. What advice would you give him? How do you think you would be able to support him?”

“I would just let him know that I am there for him because it’s okay,” he answers simply.

I suddenly feel tremendously excited by and appreciative of Erid’s gentle acceptance of an aspect of human nature that he clearly does not regard as a problem – even if others might.

¹⁵ “What advice,” I ask Erid, “would you give to other kids of your age who have two moms or two dads?”

¹³ 85-86:2, S1

C: And your friends, if they come for a sleepover are they like oh this is like funny or

E: They’re my friends they don’t mind. They love playing here because it’s so big.

¹⁴ 192-198:4, S2

C: If maybe one of your friends realise that they’re gay, how would you feel about that?

E: It’s fine

C: Imm, and say they’ve got an issue with themselves they don’t want to be gay or they struggle with that, what advice could you give them or how would you think you would be able to support them

E: Just let them know that you are there, cause it’s okay

¹⁵ 147-148:3, S2

C: What advice can you give other kids, your age who have two moms or two dads?

E: Advice? Just to be like a normal kid

“Advice?” he asks quizzically. “I would tell them just to be normal kids.” He is obviously surprised by my question about “giving advice”. But his answer clearly demonstrates yet again that he regards being gay as nothing out of the ordinary. His attitudes also serve to emphasise what his mom, Zané, told me about him being a “no-fuss guy”.¹⁶ “He just flows,” she had told me.

In spite of this, the critical social constructionist side of me immediately realises that Erid’s answers conceal an underlying assumption of, or at least an awareness of, the dichotomy of normality-abnormality, even if he never consciously thinks much about it. The humanist side of me analyses the situation at its face value. I see that he waits for his class mates to ask him directly before he discloses (minimal) information to them about his same-gender parents. But with his personal friends, he seems to be easy and natural. I hypothesise that as a sense of trust develops between them, a space opens up for him to disclose as and when he needs to.

I continue by asking him about other possible scenarios in which he might find himself.¹⁷ “Okay, if someone asks about your family... If they ask you how many brothers and sisters you have...”.

Erid quickly cuts me off. “I just tell them,” he answers in his characteristically straightforward way.

“People usually ask questions,” I continue, “like, ‘What does your mom do? What does your dad do?’ How do you answer those questions?”

“I just say ‘I don’t know.’ “

¹⁶ 67-68:2, Erid Kashni Parents S1

Erid is very loveable, free, no-fuss, just flows from one situation to another.

¹⁷ 149-157:3, S2

C: Okay, if someone ask about your family, how many brothers and sisters do you have, or

E: I just tell them

C: I think people usually ask what does your mom do what does your dad do? What do you answer then?

E: I just say "I don't know"

C: Okay, and you start off by saying I don't have a dad

E: That's what I used to say. And then they say but how's that possible that you don't have a dad? And I say I'm adopted by two mommies

I wonder if such an answer would satisfy a curious child, so I elaborate on my previous question. “Okay. So you start off by saying that you don’t have a dad.” “That’s what I used to say,” he replies. “But then they say, ‘But how’s it possible that you don’t have a dad?’ Then I say, ‘I’m adopted by two mommies.’ “

Although I am filled with admiration for his simplicity and directness, I focus narrowly on his words, “That’s what I used to say”, which raises a number of new questions in my mind. I wonder whether his original responses to other children (“what I used to say”) elicited teasing from the other children or gave rise to further inappropriate or uncomfortable questions?

¹⁸ And so I ask, “Do some children ask more questions or give comments – like ‘How does it work?’ or ‘That’s impossible?’ “

Erid answers: “Yes. I don’t always answer questions like that. But sometimes they do ask me, and I just say to them, ‘I don’t feel like telling you now.’ “

I am filled with admiration for how well Erid manages to navigate his way around people’s curiosity, even mine, with a few direct, honest and open answers, and with how he gives just enough information that contains no unnecessary detail.

I am also curious about the adoption and how it affected him.

¹⁹ “Okay. Do children sometimes ask you questions about your adoption, and about where you were before you were adopted?”

Erid nods. “Yes.”

¹⁸ 173-176:4, S2

C: Do some children ask more questions like how does it work or it's impossible?

E: Ye, I don't always answer that

C: Ja, just almost let it slip away

E: Sometimes they ask me and I just say, I don't feel like telling you now

¹⁹ 158-162:3, S2

C: Okay, do children sometimes ask more questions about the adoption? How does that feel or where were you before this?

E: Ja

C: Is that sometimes hurtful or bad memories?

E: Sometimes, okay, but I don't tell them

“Does that sometimes bring up hurtful memories?”

“Yes, sometimes. But it’s OK. I just don’t tell them.” While Erid begins to play with his Tazzos,²⁰ I wonder how all of this affected him and how the children with whom he interacted reacted to his information about his adoption and him having two mommies. Is it the content of the disclosure or is it the way in which I am prying into his “private affairs” that dictates the way in which he answers questions? Perhaps he is just irritated by all the questions, most of which must seem ridiculous to him. I remember what his mom, Zané, observed about him: that he is carefree and his motto could be “Just be who you are.”

I continue by asking about the reactions of other children.

²¹ “How do other kids react when you tell them about your two mommies?”

Erid answers: “Most people act normally. Some are nice. Others are not. They are the bad ones.”

I remained focused on his answer. “What do they do?” I ask.

“They tease you – like that other one boy did – and so I hit him,” Erid replies with a flash of anger. He is recalling the incident about the boy who made derogatory remarks about his mother, and I realise that this is the only time when he reacted violently.

²² “Do you think it will get worse as you get older? I mean the teasing. From those bad kids that you just mentioned?”

²⁰ Game played with plastic and metal discs

²¹ 166-172:4, S2

C: Imm, and how do kids usually react when you they hear the news, what or if you can maybe put them in little boxes, some kids are like this and others like that, what's the feedback you get, or reactions you get?

E: You get, most people are normal, you get the nice ones being so nice to you; and then the bad ones

C: And what do they do?

E: They tease you like the other one and so I hit him

²² 184-188:4, S2

C: Do you think it will get worse, the teasing, if some kids find out like say the bad ones that tease you, as one gets older?

E: It gets better

C: Okay, Why do you think that?

E: I don't know cause they then get more sense and they're not so stupid any more

Erid responds in a much calmer voice. "It gets better," he says quietly, and then remains silent.

"Okay, I see. Why do you think that it will get better?"

"I don't know. Maybe they will get more sense. Maybe they will not be so stupid when they get older." Then Erid proceeds to show me how to play Tazzos, and we begin to talk about other more general issues. I decide to leave it at that for this session.

Later on, while I am talking to both parents in the kitchen, mom Anriëtte remarks that it would be unrealistic to imagine that their children would not be teased at one stage or the other.

²³ "I know that it is a big irony, but because we decided to be open, we also opened up ourselves to be discriminated against. One still encounters a stigma in society, and that is where the problem lies. Think about that incident at school. That ten-year-old boy must have heard something negative about gays and lesbians somewhere. Perhaps from his own parents or from some other adult. Okay, it also depends on the context. You find healthy and unhealthy families... Obviously people in positions of leadership in their community won't say anything stereotypical, hateful or discriminatory because they know that it's not acceptable or tolerated in terms of official policy. But the 'ordinary' man-in-the-street does not normally have to be careful about what he says in private."

As I leave them later that evening, Erid gives me a big hug. I sense that he is growing up in a very special and safe home where he and his sister are surrounded by love, acceptance and wisdom, and that these two mothers are raising exceptional children who will make a big difference in the future.

²³ 75-80:2, Erid Kashni Parents S1

A agrees that there is still a stigma – and that its evident through the example of the incident – that that 10 year old boy must have heard it somewhere – his parents – but that it depends on the context – you get healthy and unhealthy families... and that people that's the leaders of their community won't say anything stereotypical or hateful or discriminatory as they know it's not acceptable/ tolerated in terms of policy and so forth, but that the 'ordinary' man does not have to "screen" what they say.

Addendum E (CD-Rom)

Narratives with reference to original transcripts

This addendum carries the narratives with reference to the original transcripts in the footnote section. This shows what aspects of the original transcripts were used, and how it was applied in forming the narratives for each individual child.

Please take note of the following:

- All direct quotations are preceded by a footnote-indicator, and not after the last sentence as usually done.
- Where a certain word or phrase needs clarification, the relevant footnote-indicator appears at the end of the word or phrase.
- Extensive footnotes are given of the original Afrikaans transcriptions, where an interview was conducted in Afrikaans. The original transcripts of the English interviews are also included for easier referencing.
- The footnotes to the original transcripts are written in the following format, e.g. 34-38:2,S2
- This indicates that the section is quoted from lines 34-38, on page 2, of Session 2 of the relevant child, be it Kim or Luanne or Ryland etcetera.
- All the names of persons and institutions have been changed to ensure anonymity. In some cases the names or any other potentially revealing information have been blocked out.

"If they know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all"

I enter the kitchen and am greeted by the cheerful sight of a family of four having their dinner. The family consists of two adult women (both parents of the same gender or "moms", as we all refer to them), a girl of 15 and a boy of nine years old. The girl immediately moves up one chair and offers me her place so that I can be seated next to her and one of her moms.

The girl hands me a cold drink and sets a placement on the table in front of me. They all invite me to join them for dinner and this immediately makes me feel at home. One of the mothers, Anriëtte, introduces me to the children¹.

"This is Kashni" she says, indicating the girl, "and this is Erid", she says, indicating the boy. I greet them both with a smile.

"Hi, Kashni. Hi, Erid."

"Hallo!" they call out in unison. They both greet me with big smiles.

Anriëtte says to the children: "Carien is here to look at gay families, gay parents with children, and mothers who are lesbians. Is that right, Carien?"

I almost choke on my food as she mentions the word "lesbians" in front of the children. I was preparing myself to discuss the issue of appropriate vocabulary first alone with the parents, before I spoke to the children. But now I could see that that was not necessary. To all of them, these words – that to us may be so laden with positive and negative emotions – are to some people just a natural part of their lives and conversation, and are not in any way a problem.

"Yes," I answer. "I am here to focus specifically on the experiences of the children."

¹ 15-17:1, Kashni Erid Parents Session 1

This is who this 'tannie' is and this is what's she's doing. Looking at gay families, gay parents with children – and asking me if she was correct, and I said yes, but also looking at the children's experiences.

Kashni immediately responds to this by saying, “I am definitely not a lesbian.” Mom Zané says softly, “Yes, we all know that, Kashni,” and the family continue their conversation without so much as a flicker of ill feeling or tension. Everyone talks and laughs and teases together, and Anriëtte tells me above the hubbub what excellent cooks both Erid and Kashni are. The household consists of the humans, cats, and (rather surprisingly) one pig. I have heard in the past what excellent pets pigs make (clean, loyal and intelligent). As we eat and talk, I am intrigued by the openness and easiness that exists among them.

After dinner the two children go off to study for their forthcoming examinations. Anriëtte, Zané and I then talk in a general way about the experiences of gay families in South Africa. They also ask me some questions about my study. It is an exciting moment for me to be able to share ideas, insights and anecdotes with “real” same-gender parents who have so generously agreed to help me by sharing their privacy for the sake of my academic research.

Mom Anriëtte says something that resonates strongly with me.² “It would be totally unrealistic in every way for us to imagine that our children will not at

² 33:1-61:2, Erid Kashni Parents S2

- A:maar ek het vir hulle gesê hulle moenie vir een oomblik dink ek is nie trots op wat ek is nie, wat dit ook al is nie, want ek dink nie dis verkeerd nie en hulle moet nie, ek wil nie hê hulle moet êrens in hulle harte dink ons is verkeerd nie, en dis hulle eie morele oordeel later en ek sal dit ook later vir hulle sê, en hulle kan besluit is dit reg of verkeerd, maar ek wil nie hê hulle moet oordeel nie. Maar die gemeenskap oordeel ons, Sanger sê: gays gaan hel toe, né,... 'oe ek is nie 'n lesbiën nie'. Weet jy, dit maak my seer as jy dit doen, want dis is so oe, ek is nie soos my ma nie, nie so nie, verstaan jy. En ek dink nie Kashni het dit besef toe sy dit doen nie, en ek was saggies met haar en ek het net vir haar mooi gesê. Want ek het skielik net besef dat mens moet daai persepsie, dat daar dalk, wat dit sal, en ek verstaan dat jy by die skool of voor ander mense moet wegstroom, maar in jou hart moet jy nie so voel nie, dat dit oor jou eie ma is nie, want dan gaan dit nie lekker wees vir jou eie ma nie en jou ma gee jou al daai baie liefde en goedjies and if you want to accept that you have to accept the reality of the situation en dit is, en en ons glo nie dat wat ons doen is nie verkeerd nie. En ek kon dit nie help om te sê nie en ek dink buitendien dis belangrik om dit vir kinders op heirdie ouderdom te sê want hulle begin met 'n mite, hulle wil mos vir jou kwaad wees. En ek wil nie hê Kashni moet kwaad wees omdat ons gay is nie, sy kan eerder iets reg pick
- C: En haar tiener tantrums daarop uithaal
- A: Want dit sal verwerping van ons wees, onregverdig ook so, en toe sê ek vir haar en een belangrike faktor, reg of verkeerd, as ek en Zané nie gay was nie het ons .../vlg. bl

various times in their lives be teased about the fact that they have two mothers as parents. If same-gender parentage is problematic for some people, then they inherited their problem from a society – many of whom judges us and regards us in a most unfavourable light. Just look at these newspaper clips, from this week alone. She reads out aloud one of the headlines: ‘Singer says: gays are going to hell’.

“Many people,” Anriëtte continues, “have not yet realised that their own decisions about morality are not always universally applicable. They judge from own their point of view, either without knowing the facts or without even being willing to examine the position of others in a dispassionate way. Even though all four of us live open, carefree and responsible lives, we are always aware of the possibility that we might be unconsciously sending covert messages to our children that maybe it is better to be straight.”

At this point, Mom Zané interjects rather heatedly, “And that is definitely not OK.” I nod in acknowledgement.

Anriëtte continues. “I don’t want them to believe for one second that I am not proud of who I am – whatever that is.” They both laugh. I just don’t want them to feel – even in some small place in their hearts – that we are wrong in any way.

“Even though they will be free to make up their own minds about these issues later on in their lives, and even though they are sometimes compelled to hide these facts in front of other people or at school for the sake of peace or expediency, I never want them to feel like that at home and in their hearts – certainly not about their own mothers.

ons eie kinders gehad met 'n man, maar ons het gepick om mekaar te hê, ons het gepick om hulle te hê en dis hoekom hulle ouers het. Maar dit gaan nie eintlik daaroor nie, maar om genuine trots te wees op wat jy is, want ek skaam my nie dat ek gay is nie, en ek wil nie hê hulle moet dink ek skaam my nie, of dat dit reg is om te sê 'ag, ek is nie so nie', ek kan verstaan in alle gevalle nie waar ek nie by is nie, maar waar ek by is...

“They have to accept the reality of the situation as it is,” Anriëtte continues. “This is especially important currently for Kashni, who is experiencing her teenage years. Sometimes teenagers pick fights. But I don’t want them to use the fact that we are gay against us. That would be unfair. If Zané and I had not been gay, we would doubtless have married men and had our own children. But even that is not the real issue. The fact remains that we freely chose each other out of love, and we freely chose to have them as our children through adoption. All this is about being genuinely proud of who we are – and of who they are.”

We talk a bit about the adoption, and I can hear a note of passionate conviction in both their voices. Anriëtte adds another important observation.³

“Although it is difficult at times to have to deal with having two moms, the real emotional issues – of separation from the mother – occurred between them and their biological mother, and those emotional scars are grounded in their biological mother’s rejection of them. A lot of the fights that occur between them arise out of what happened to them in that context.”

At this point, Kashni comes back into the kitchen. Anriëtte turns to me and asks, “Ah, now perhaps you two can talk a bit – if you want to.” She looks at Kashni, who nods graciously. “Maybe the sitting room will be the best place for your talk,” Zané suggests.

When we have settled in the sitting room, I tell Kashni a bit about the reasons for my study and research. Then, after a few minutes of friendly small talk, I ask her,⁴ “Tell me... When you (for example) go to school in the beginning of the

³ 36-40:1; Erid Kashni Parents S1

And they’re very passionate – for them its really an urgency to adopt and offer a child so much more – and this becomes evident throughout the conversation, that yes, although it is difficult to deal with having 2 moms at times, the emotional issues lies with their birth mother and her rejection of them and the fights/ struggles between the 2 kids because of what happened to them...

⁴ 57-86:2, S1

C: Imm, vertel my van, as mens bv. as jy skool toe gaan, aan die begin van die jaar, of as jy uitgaan met pelle, is daar partymaal dat jy voel dis anders of dis glad nie, dat jy dink: o, gaan iemand dalk iets dink want ek het 2 ma's, dat dit dalk deur jou kop gaan, of..

.../ vlg. bl.

year, or when you go out with your friends, are there times that you feel that you are different in some way? Or don't you think of it in that way at all? Or do you perhaps think to yourself: 'Is someone going to ask me about my parents or think something about the fact that I have two mothers?' Do thoughts like these ever go through your mind, or..."

"Yes, they do," says Kashni, forestalling more unanswered questions.

"Please tell me about it," I ask her respectfully, realising that closed questions will not get me the information I am looking for.

Kashni answers at some length. "Some people are just uncomfortable with it, and, yes, that can sometimes create a difficult situation. Especially, you know, when the people who are feeling awkward or embarrassed are your friends. Then I have to make a decision about my friendship with them because obviously it's not going to work out if I have friends who are not on the same wavelength as I am. But most of them are quite okay with it. If they know about my family and it's not a problem for them, then there's no problem at all."

Both Kashni and I consider what she has said in silence for a few moments.

K: Ja

C: Vertel bietjie

K: Ek bedoel, party mense is nou maar net ongemaklik daarmee en dit kan partykeer 'n moeilike situasie wees veral, jy weet, en ek het vriende né, okay né, en ek het vriende gehad wat so was, en toe besluit ek dit help nie veel ek is vriende met hulle as hulle nie met my wil soort van, jy weet, ja maar meeste van hulle is okay daarmee; en as hulle daarvan weet dan is dit nie 'n probleem nie, dan ja

C: Dan gaan dit aan soos normaalweg – dis amper asof dit aan die begin so 'n ding is

K: Ja

C: Hoe sense jy hulle ongemak?

K: Mens kan dit voel as hulle soos in oor jou ouers praat, en jy voel so, as, sê nou jy nooi hulle om na jou huis toe te kom, mens voel die ongemak dat hulle nie wil nie of so, ja

C: En wie maak gewoonlik die eerste move om dit te hanteer

K: Ekke, ek sê net vir hulle, luister hier, um, twee 2 ma's okay, en dan's dit soos in, o, okay,

C: Kan jy dink aan 'n aan 'n keer wat dit nice was, om iemand te vertel

K: Meeste van die kere is dit so, um, dit was baie okay in Rodcrest College want ek bedoel baie mense daar is openminded en dit was lekker. Maar nou by Festive School is dit bietjie, moeiliker, moeiliker want baie mense is meer konserwatief

C: Imm ja

Then I ask her another question. “How do you sense or come to realise that they are uncomfortable with the situation?”

“I can feel it sometimes when I talk about my parents. Or, if I invite them to my house and then sense that my invitation has made them feel uncomfortable. Or sometimes I invite them and I can see that they would prefer not to come.... Yes, that’s how it happens.”

“So who, in that situation, makes the first move to resolve the situation?”

“Me,” Kashni answers without hesitation. “I just say to them upfront: ‘Listen, I have two mothers, okay.’ And then, it’s like, ‘Oh, alright then,’ and then there’re no problems after that.”

The dogs suddenly come rushing through the sitting room, barking loudly. When they have subsided, I ask Kashni, “Can you think of a time when it was actually a pleasure to tell someone?”

“Most times it’s cool,” she responds. “It was really great in Rodcrest College because most of the people there are very open-minded and that was nice. But now, in Festive School, it’s a bit more difficult, difficult because many of the people are more conservative.”

I agree with her observation. She continues, ⁵ “Like, on this one particular day we were all standing at the bus stop, and a guy comes walking past, with his

⁵ 5-36:1, S2

K: Ja, Festive school is freaking konserwatief, regtig, dis erg, sug, ek het vir tannie vertel van die biddery en so en dat alles van die Here afkom. Ek gee nie om daarvoor maar hulle moet nie hele tyd half en hulle is rassisties. En dit irriteer my

C: Dis sleg

K: Jis, dit irriteer my en meeste van die kinders is so, wat het dit nou.. dis mos nou nie reg nie toe eendag toe kon ek dit nie meer hou nie toe se ek luister hier as julle so wil praat, dan praat julle nou nie voor my so nie, ja, eintlik ja, en dis nou eintlik, ja, dis oor en verby. Maar dis eintlik die ouers...En hulle is baie...En Rodcrest College is glad nie rassisties nie, daar's Muslims.. jews, swartes

C: En dis die ergste vir jou – jy kom uit so kosmopolitaanse, so mixed, hulle sien nie eers meer ras nie

K: Ja

C: Dit was seker nogal 'n Kultuurskok by Festive school, wat het jy daardie die eerste week gedink?

K: Erg. Ja, en ek bedoel soos in ons het soos daar by die busstop gestaan, en toe loop .../vlg. bl.

arm around a girl. One could see that they were, like, together. Maybe even married or something like that. Then some of the girls started making spiteful comments and noises. Why? Because the guy was black and the girl was white. Then I remembered my previous school where we white girls dated black guys and it didn't matter at all.

“So I stood there thinking to myself, ‘If race is such a big issue for you guys, and you can't handle that, then how on earth will I be able to tell you that my parents are gay?’

“I looked at them,” Kashni continues, “and I thought to myself: ‘Do I really want to be friends with any of you?’

“So I pick my friends very carefully, and I don't hang out with children who are like that. If I have to be with them, I just keep quiet and I say nothing. It's better that way. This new school is far more conservative. They're “freaking” conservative and religious. I don't mind all that stuff. But they're racist as well. Even when I'm with them, I sometimes find that I just can't keep quiet about their racism. So, one day, I just said to them: ‘When I'm around you, don't say things like that’.

'n swarte , uhm ja, die man was swart en die vrou wit, maar hulle is saam en getroud. En almal oee en jis en jy. En Rodcrest College, ons laerskoolkinders, ons gaan met 'n swart ou uit of

C: Dit gaan oor die mens

K: Hulle is net woes erg

C: Dis bad

K: En nou, as as hulle so erg is oor jou ras, wat moet ek nou vir hulle sê dat my ouers gay is

C: Exactly

K: En dan kyk ek hulle so en jissie, en uhm, wil ek met een van hierdie kinders vriende wees as hulle so is

C: Uhuh – is hier ooit plek vir my.. Is dit soos hulle moet net nie uitvind nie

K: Uhm, ek sê net nie iets nie

C: Dis seker bad, dat mense nasty kan wees daaroor

K: Ek praat nie, ek hang nou nie juis met daardie mense uit nie, ek pick my vriende

C: Mens moet seker nogal fyn kyk

K: Ihm

“But I think that it comes from their parents. ⁶ Rodcrest College is not racist at all. There are Muslims there, and Jews and blacks. Schools really make a big difference. ⁷ In Rodcrest College everyone was, like, tolerant and open-minded because there were children from different religions like Islam, and there were also a lot of children from overseas. It is also a private school. It was really nice.

“But Festive School is more difficult. You know, I also believe in God and I think that I’m more spiritual. But Festive School is, like, Christian. You have to be a Christian, pray three times a day and so on, and every morning the school opens with readings from the Bible. I don’t mind that kind of thing, but they are, like, heavy about it and they are not tolerant about other religions. They only

⁶ 12-13:1, S2

K: En Rodcrest College is glad nie rassisties nie, daar's Muslims.. jews, swartes

⁷ 207:4-234:5, S1

C: En is daar vir jou 'n verskil van die laerskool na hoërskool

K: Ek dink verskillende skole maak dit anderster, okay want, [REDACTED] (laerskool) was, jy weet, die local skool hierso, was fine tot daai insident en toe was dit weer fine. En toe gaan ek Rodcrest College toe, en daar was nie juis probleme nie, want weet almal is soos in oop en openminded want daar's verskillende uhm, religions, soos in Muslims, en soos in, uhm

C: Internasionaal amper

K: Ja, verskillende kinders, soos in as hulle ouers soos in van oorsee kom en in Suid-Afrika bly daan gaan hulle gewoonlik Rodcrest College toe en daai mense het gewoonlik baie geld, uhm, en omdat dit ook 'n privaatskool is, soos, ja, so dit was lekker daar. Maar Festive school, dis bietjie moeiliker daar, uhm, baie, soos in, jy weet, ek glo ook in die Here en alles maar ek's meer spiritual as wat ek, maar Festive school is soos in Christen, jy moet 'n Christen wees en bid drie keer 'n dag en soos in, jy weet, in oggende open en Bybel en alles, en ek gee nie om daarvoor nie maar hulle is soos in heavy daaroor en nie baie openminded met ander godsdienste nie, hulle glo net in Christelike...

C: Waardes

K: Ja soos dit maak dit ook daar moeiliker omdat dit daar in die Bybel staan dat dit verkeerd is en alles, uhm, ja, ek bedoel, ek dink, met die kinders is dit eintlik okay, maar dis met die ouers, soos in, my een vriendin, uhm, eers sy was fyn daarmee, maar sy't toe ook vir haar ouers gesê van my ouers en toe kon sy nou nie eintlik by my huis kom slaap het nie, jy weet, ek kon by hulle huis gaan slaap het maar sy kon nie by my kom slaap het nie en jy weet soos, uhm

C: En wat het sy vir jou gesê

K: Mens kon dit eintlik agterkom jy weet sy't uhm sy't soos in excuses, hele tyd 'n ding dat sy nie kan kom nie, en dan weet ek, jy kom dit agter

C: Het jy vir haar gesê, luister ek dink dis dit, of het jy dit gelos?

K: Uhm, toe gaan ek uit die skool uit, toe... nooit weer iets van haar gehoor nie

believe in Christian, um, values, and that's also what makes it so much more difficult there, because the Bible says that it's wrong and everything."

Kashni is making some really major disclosures, and so I encourage her to continue by listening in an open, sympathetic and attentive way.

"But, um, yes, I mean, I think the children are okay about it. But their parents.... Like there was one friend of mine who – at first – was fine with everything. Then she went and told her parents about my parents, and suddenly she couldn't come for sleepovers anymore. You know, I could still go to her house for sleepovers. But she never came to me anymore." Kashni remains silent and thoughtful.

After a while, I ask her, "What did she actually say to you?"

"Nothing specific. But I could just sense it. She always had excuses. There was always some or other reason why she couldn't come. Then I knew. You suddenly realise what is really happening."

I listen to her in awe, as her story pours out. She is giving me so much, that my head is spinning with all the detail. But this is her story, and so I let her continue talking for as long as she wishes.

⁸ "What is the worst experience you've had – the one in which you felt most uncomfortable?"

⁸ 87-111:4, S1

C: Wat was vir jou die badste experience- wat jy heavy ongemaklik gevoel het

K: Wat ek..?

C: Wat jy heavy ongemaklik gevoel het

K: Ek het van hierdie outjie gehou, uhm, ons het goed oor die weg gekom, en nie geweet hoe hy oor my voel nie. Um, En toe jy weet moes ek vir hom sê, want dit kan net nie nie werk as hy nie weet nie. Maar ek bedoel as jy straight met hom is en soos in die waarheid vertel dan's dit okay en hy was fine daarmee

C: Oraait, so dalk daar aan die begin het jy dit bietjie stilgehou

K: Ja, soos in, ek weet nooit, partykeer, weet, is daar is 'n sekere tyd wat jy dit kan sê, en ja, soos in, ja, en partykeer kan jy dit net dadelik sê

C: En wat bepaal dit, ek weet dis nou moeilik om te sê, wanneer is dit makliker om te sê, as dit oop is, of ander kere moet jy half die situasie lees

K: Um, as 'n vriend van jou soos in baie oop is en sy's so, dan, dan kan 'n mens dit um, .../vlg. bl.

“I liked this one guy,” Kashni answers. “We got on very well, but I didn’t know how he felt about me. So I decided there and then that I just had to tell him because it simply couldn’t work if he didn’t know and accept it. I knew that if I were straightforward with him and told him the truth, then it would be okay. I was very worried,” she laughs. “But he was fine with it.”

I sense that it had not been easy for her, and I begin to wonder how long she hesitated before she told him. So I say. “So you kept quiet about your parents in the beginning of your relationship?”

“Yes, I did,” Kashni replies. “Sometimes one just doesn’t know. Sometimes an opportunity comes up and then you can tell them about the situation. And sometimes you can just tell another person about it all immediately.”

“How do you decide that? I know that this might be a difficult question for you to answer, but when is it easier to speak out? Do you have to sense the right moment?”

“If a friend of yours is, like, very open and tolerant,” Kashni replies, “then you can speak out without any problems at all. Or if you can see where a person is coming from, and they are not hostile, you can talk to them openly. But some people are not easy to “read”, especially (for me) if it’s a boy and I don’t know

doen, um, as mens die persoon dadelik kan leer ken jy weet,. Maar sekere mense, soos in veral met 'n seun, want ek weet nou nie hoe hy is nie, so ek moet hom eers leer ken jy weet, verstaan, hoe is hy, en, soos in wat se soort persoon, ek bedoel as hy soos in 'n heavy konserwatiewe persoon is dan kan ek mos nie eintlik, is, dan gaan dit mos nie werk nie, maar um, en dan ja.

Dit het al gebeur, en dan los ek dit, dan kan dit nie. Maar andersins um, ja, dan dan lees jy dit en jy sê dit vir hom of haar.

C: Wat is oop?

K: Hoe bedoel jy nou?

C: Jy sê die mense is oop

K: Hulle is net soos in openminded – um, hulle gee nie eintlik om nie –hulle is maar gemaklik met enige situasie of, ja

him very well. I first have to take some time to get to know him and to understand him – what he is like and what kind of person he is – before I can explain our family situation.

“If he is, like, heavy conservative,” she continues, “then I don’t tell him because it simply won’t work out. So then I have to leave him. But in other cases, where they are open, you just tell him or her straight away.”

“What do you mean by ‘open’?” I ask Kashni. Although I don’t want to interrupt her train of thought, I would also like to hear more about this ability of hers to observe and sense other people’s feelings, behaviour and thoughts. I am intrigued by her ability (in some cases) to anticipate what the reactions of others will be after what is only a short acquaintance.

“By ‘open’,” she answers, “I mean open-minded, tolerant. They are not judgemental about things and they are comfortable with most situations.”

⁹ “How are things in the beginning of the year?” I ask Kashni, “when you walk into a new class – especially now that you are in Festive School?”

“Um, well, you know what it’s like. It’s the whole Grade Eight scene! Everyone is new. So you get to know certain people and you make your own close friends. But then I have other friends, certain friends I’m not really close to. I mean, I am

⁹ 181-193:4, S1

C: Hoe's dit in die begin van die jaar as jy nou in 'n nuwe klas instap, veral nou soos na Festive school toe

K: Uhm, okay jy weet almal is maar so-so, want dis standerd ses, ek weet nou nie, soos jy jou vriende leer ken en vriende maak, [- -] sekere vriende wat nou nie so goeie vriende is nie, ek bedoel, ek's vriende met hulle, maar ek praat nou nie die hele dag met hulle nie, en dan, en hulle kom nou nie juis na my huis toe nie, dan pla dit my nie. En as hulle hoor dan 's ek fine daarmee, en dan's hulle ook gewoonlik fine daarmee. Maar soos in my goeie vriende, vriende wat ek elke dag mee praat, sal ek vir hulle sê

C: Is dit amper dat jy voel jy moet dit share, jy kan dit nie net los nie,

K: Ja want anders sit ek met die ongemaklikheid, sê nou hulle kom na my huis toe, dan verstaan hulle nou nie die situasie nie dan kan hulle ongemaklik wees met die hele, weet, soos in 'n sleep-over

friendly with them, but I don't talk to them the whole day and they don't come to my home. Which doesn't bother me," she adds. "If they hear about my parents it's fine. They're usually fine with it as well. But in the case of my best friends, those friends I talk to every day, then I must tell them."

"Do you feel like you have to share, and that you cannot just leave it?" I ask.

"Yes," she answers, "otherwise I just feel uncomfortable. If they come to my home and they don't understand the situation before the time, then it could be very uncomfortable for them, especially if they have come for a sleep-over."¹⁰

"What do your friends say when they come to sleep over?"

"Nothing. They're just fine with it", she replies. "They just call my moms 'Aunty Anriëtte' and 'Aunty Zané'. No, they're quite happy with it."

"Has anyone ever made, you know, some special comments about your parents, like, 'I think it's so cool!' or 'I think it's so weird!'?"

"Hmm. Yes. Some people say it's cool, it's just got to be cool – having two mothers as parents. But," and here Kashni takes a deep breath before continuing,¹¹ "I have had a few problems."

¹⁰ 121-127:3, S1

C: Wat sê jou maats, as hulle hier kom oorslaap

K: Niks nie, hulle is fine daarmee, hulle hulle noem hulle Tannie Anriëtte of Tannie Zané of, jy weet, hulle is fine daarmee

C: Het iemand al ooit iets, jy weet half 'n spesiale comment daaroor gehad, soos, of dis cool, of dis weird

K: Ja party mense sê dis cool, dit moet cool wees dat jy 2 ma's het- maar ja daar was al soos in probleme by die skool, imm ja,

¹¹ 127:3 -162:4, S1

K: ... imm ja, en ag, okay, ek het 'n paar probleme gehad en toe een dag, né, toe hak hierdie seuns nou net uit, né en sê hulle ja jis jy's 'n lesbiën en jou ma's is nie lekker nie en sulke dinge né en toe sê ek nou vir my ma, en wraggies, toe gaan sy nou skool toe en toe gaan praat sy nou met die hoof en juf [redacted] en toe praat sy so voor die hele klas, né, en sy roep hierdie seuns, en dis nou ma Anriëtte, okay, en sy roep hierdie seuns, né en sy sê, as ek weer hoor dat julle noem my dogter 'n lesbiën noem né, dan, jy weet dan gaan ek julle ouers bel en dan jy weet, dan gaan ek julle aankla van, jy weet, wat as mens iets, as mens name noem, dan

C: Naamskending

K: Ja, imm, ja, dan gaan julle ouers hierdie hofgeld en wat moet betaal, uhm, ja en jy weet, en net vir hulle gesê dis nie Kashni wat jy weet, 'n lesbiën is nie, dis ons, toe, .../vlg. bl.

She then begins to describe a major incident.

“One day these boys were having a go at me and they just went too far and they said things like ‘You are a lesbian’ and ‘There’s something funny about your mother.’

“So I told my mother, and – can you believe it? – she (it was mom Anriëtte), went to school and she talked first to the principal, and then to my teacher, and then she came and spoke to the whole class. Then she called those boys to the front of the class and said, ‘Okay, if I ever hear that you have called my daughter a lesbian, I will phone your parents, and then I will lay charges against you for libel. And your parents will have to pay all the legal fees of the court action.’ “

ja,

En as julle probleme daarmee het dan moet julle vir ons kom sê en toe was dit nooit weer 'n probleem nie (lag)

C: Okay

K: Ja

C: En hoe't jy gevoel toe ma daar instap (o, ek wens ek kon nou daai gesig afneem)

K: Heavy embarrassing, my arms was oor my kop gedurende die hele ding

C: En ja, oho ja

En daarna, het mense nog iets weer gesê

K: Hulle het nie gewaag om iets te sê nie

C: En body language wise, kinders wys dit mos verskillend, hulle het mos nie nodig om iets te sê nie

K: Imm, nee, nee...

C: En toe dit gebeur het nog voor jy by die huis gekom het, voor jy vir ma-hulle gesê het dit het gebeur? Wat het deur jou kop gegaan? Hoe't jy gevoel?

K: Soos in toe

C: Daar soos in die situasie

K: Uhm, ek het ongemaklik gevoel en so imm dis nie 'n lekker gevoel nie, uhm, soos in, ek weet nie juis hoe om te verduidelik nie, baie huilerig en jy weet, soos in stil. Okay ek is nie 'n stil persoon nie, [lag], ek is 'n persoon wat soos in heavy loud is en ek praat verskriklik baie in die klas, en ja, ek kan nogal 'n klas onderbreek met grappies en ander goed aanvang en ja, toe's ek net stil; en vir niemand iets gesê nie

[onderbreek ma Z – Erid gaan bad]

65-67:2, S2

K: Ek praat verskriklik baie, ek gee net my opinie vir die juffrouens en party hou niks daarvan nie, ek's altyd die eerste een wat hulle ken.

Kashni pauses and then adds, “And then she said, ‘And – by the way – it’s not Kashni who is a lesbian. It’s us! If you ever have a problem with that, then you come and tell us.’ Of course it never was a problem again.”

Kashni laughs at the memory. But I wonder to myself how she felt inside about Anriëtte’s brave handling of the situation, and about how much of an impact it made on the children and the culture of education at that school.

So I ask Kashni how she felt when one of her moms walked into that room. Kashni’s facial expression tells it all. But she answers and says, “It was ‘heavy’ embarrassing. I had my arms over my head during the whole thing. I felt very uncomfortable. I don’t really know how to explain it. I felt kind of sad. Tearful, and emotional. But I also felt very quiet and silent inside.

“Now I’m definitely not a quiet person. I’m actually a very loud person. I talk a lot in classes and give my opinions and sometimes the teachers don’t like it. I interrupt their classes with jokes and all that kind of thing. But I’m always the first one they get to know. But when that happened, I was just very quiet, and I didn’t say anything to anybody.”

“Did any of them ever risk saying anything like that to you afterwards?”

“Oh, no.”

¹² “So that was probably the first time that something so serious happened?”

¹² 175-180:4, S1

C: Dit was seker die eerste keer wat so iets erg gebeur het

K: Ja, eerste, maar die laaste

C: En dit was in die laerskool

K: Ja

C: Watse ouderdom

K: Ja dit was graad 5 in die begin van die jaar

196-205:4, S1

C: Okay, as jy can recollect, hoe't gevoel om vir jou maatjies..

K: Graad 3 of graad 4, dan maak dit mos nou nie so woes saak nie, dan sê jy en dan weet jou hele klas en ja, imm, hulle het nie 'n probleem nie. Maar soos hulle ouer word en jy verstaan

.../vlg. bl.

“Yes, and the last. In Grades Three and Four, nothing happened. It was fine. You just tell the whole class and they have no problems with it. I had lots of parties and everyone was at my home and both my moms were always there. So of course there were no problems. But as they get older, things begin to change.”

To relieve the tension that has built up as a result of this major disclosure, I change tack and ask Kashni, ¹³“So, then, what’s nice about having two mothers instead of a mother and father?”

Kashni laughs. “I guess one gets more attention. It’s usually the mother in a family that gives more attention to the children, and so you get a lot of attention in your family. But sometimes you get more attention than you want because mothers can also be very overprotective. If there is one parent who is overprotective, it will usually be the mother.”

We both laugh and continue to chat about Kashni’s love for horses, and for her love for her art. She invites me into her room and she shows me some of the paintings that she did at school. Kashni’s trust and openness, and her willingness to share so many areas of her personal life with me in such a short space of time, have impressed me enormously.

C: Ja, dis interessant wat jy nou daar noem, want jy't gesê in graad 5 was daar die insident,

K: Ja,

C: Okay, so toe jy in graad 1,2 en 3 was daar niks

K: Okay, niks nie, fine. Ek het baie partytjies gehad en almal was by my huis en al 2 ma's was by die huis, so, uhm, ja

¹³ 112-119:3, S1

C: Wat is, wat is nice hiervan, wat dink jy maak dit beter as 'n gewone, van 'n pa en ma

K: Imm, lag lekker

K: En imm, ek dink 'n mens kry soos in soos in meer aandag, want 'n ma, ma's dink ek, is meer mense wat meer aandag gee imm, in 'n familie, en dan kry jou nou meer aandag, maar partykeer kan dit te veel aandag wees wanneer hulle overprotective is, want dis meer die ma's wat meer overprotective is

C & K: Lag

Then Erid, fresh from his bath, joins us and he begins talking about the Christmas present that he got from his cousin. Kashni and I realise that he also needs an opportunity to talk, so I walk back into the sitting room with him to talk.

“I would not choose to have my mother in any other way”

I sit down with my coffee and wonder how this interview with Kim will go. To break the ice, we begin to chat about all kinds of things: the December holiday with her mom, about her mom’s work in England, about the openness that exists between Kim and her mother, about how Kim’s mom told me how proud she is of her “student” daughter. Finally, the conversation veers towards Kim’s brother and the contrast between her and her brother that has so embittered Kim, about how he is caught up in drug addiction, and about how he neither works nor studies – despite everything Kim’s mother had done to give him the opportunity to join her in England, arrangements that cost her more British pounds than she cares to remember.

My reference to the experiences of children sets Kim off.

¹“I find it incredible,” says Kim, “that we are both children of the same mother because my brother is still extremely angry about everything that happened. He still cannot accept my mother as she is. He constantly blames my mother for the way in which *he* has turned out. He constantly maintains that *she* is totally to blame for everything that *he* has become. I, on the other hand, would not choose to have my mother in any other way. Well, that’s my point of view anyway, but my brother sees it completely differently.”

What I notice immediately is the anger in Kim’s voice, and how frustrated and angry she is with her brother. ²She even admits that she would like to hit him.

¹ 28-33:1, S1

K: En dis nogal interessant omdat ons twee kinders is want my broer is nogsteeds die donner in oor die storie is en hy kan nogsteeds nie my ma aanvaar nie en weet ma hy bly ma, dis my ma se skuld dat hy uitgedraai het soos wat hy is

C: Okay

K: En ag, ek sal my ma nie op enige ander manier verkies nie, en dis nou my point of view, imm, en my broer, verstaan, ag, dis heeltemal anders

² 40-41:1, S1

K: ... ek sal hom met 'n plank slaan

But I also hear in Kim's talk the great care and concern that she feels for her mother. She confirms these conclusions by telling me that her brother never telephones their mother, and how sad their mother becomes when the brother does not phone her.³ Then Kim tells me how she chews his head off because he never phones their mother, and he merely replies, "I don't *want* to phone her." And this makes their mother terribly sad.

"But my brother always implies that *his* problems are far worse than anyone else's, and he blames everything, every little thing, on someone else. And, of course, he imagines that every bad experience that he has is because of what she is."

There is deep frustration, resentment and anger in Kim's voice.⁴ "I mean, honestly, to blame *everything* that *he* does on my *mother* just because she

³ 47-50:1, S1

K: ... En hy't haar nooit gebel nie en dan as my ma by my kom dan is sy so sad omdat "N" haar nie gebel het nie en dan kom ek by die huis en dan vreet ek hom uit van 'n kant af en dan 'ek wil haar nie bel nie' en 'tirrr' dan gaan hy aan en anyway, hy maak altyd sy probleme erger as ander s'n.

⁴ 53:1-85:2, S1

K: en hy sal alles maar alles, elke lieve dingetjie blame op iemand anders

C: Anders

K: Dis omdat sy dit gedoen het, dit is omdat ek dit nou doen

C: Imm

K: En dat sy gay is, honestly, enige persoon wat so dink moet 'n klap kry. Sug, Kyk dit was moeilik gewees op 'n stadium. En ek het gehoor mammie sê nou-nou net, iets oor my relationships, julle sê mos ouers weet alles, né, imm, toe ek begin rook het, ag ..pa was by toe ek my eerste trek gevat het maar hy het eers twee jaar na die tyd vir my gesê jy kan nou eers begin rook, verstaan, ouers weet alles wat hulle kinders aanvang en alles en alles, ma't mos gesê ons het nie voor die tyd geweet nie, maar kinders weet net so meer alles van hulle ouers af (lag). Ja, baie kwaad vir ma. En toe daai koerantberig uitkom toe, toe's dit...toe's dit nou, wat nou, by die skool het ek ongelooflike baie strooi gehad en my broer het niks gehad nie want hy's mos 'n seun, en toe issue hulle hom nog nie, maar dit was hoekom ek Festive School toe is in hierdie situasie

E (Ma interrupt): ek dink nie hy hy het nie strooi gehad nie, hy hy't nog nooit daaroor gepraat nie.

K: Hy het nie, ek was mos saam met hom standerd vyf, standerd ses, toe was ons...nie saam nie, ek bedoel, ons was toe nog goeie vriende gewees, want tot en met standerd 9, toe my broer standerd nege was was ek en hy baie baie goeie vriende gewees en toe begin hy te veel dagga rook en "hirr-hirr" en wat ... en toe besluit ek nee wat, ek skuif alle lelike goed uit my lewe uit, as far as possible. Ja en .../ vlg. bl.

happens to be gay.... Any person who believes nonsense like that deserves a damn good slap!"

"Look, it certainly was difficult at a stage," Kim continues with a sigh. "Mom, I remember once overhearing you say that we children didn't know anything about you before the matter became public. But I can tell you that children know almost everything about their parents." She laughs, embarrassed by the profound truth of what she has just revealed. Translated, it means that when children see the truth that lurks behind parental façades and deceptions, they have a certain hold over their parents. "Parents think that their children do not know about certain things – when they do," says Kim defiantly. "I was very angry with you," Kim tells her mother, "when that newspaper story came out." Then Kim falls silent, perhaps stunned by the rawness of the wounds that she is once again bringing out into the light of day.

As I watch and listen, creating as best I can, a sympathetic, containing and completely non-judgemental space for interaction, I begin to recall the details of the story that appeared when the "secret" of Elina's⁵ lesbianism came to light and subsequently made headlines on the front page of a Sunday morning newspaper. I also begin to feel, as far as I can, the anxiety, pain, stress, anger, hurt and bewilderment that accompanied this cruel public revelation of what should have remained a very private affair. These are events and situations that should definitely never have been placed under the harsh glare of public scrutiny. But public cruelty is alive and well, and will continue to be so long after we have gone.

imm ja toe was ons baie jy weet, so gewees. En toe's hy al in Festive School gewees so toe die *&^ die fan gestrike het, nou bejammer ek myself, né dis alles (wys so asof sy iets opblaas en sê "bhoë") in die koerant gewees, dit was in die koerant gewees en almal is soos, jy weet en Alene, die arme kind, sy was, ek weet nie wat nie... sy's die eerlikste mens wat ek ken. Sy't nie eers gewet van die ding nie, twee maande na die tyd toe kom Lilly na haar toe, hoor hierso, is jy nie bang om na Kim se huis toe te gaan nie, en Alene soos in hoekom, want Kim se ma is so en so, is nie man, jy lieg. En toe vra Alene my daaroor en toe sê ek ek gaan nie vir jou lieg nie, maar dit is so. En weet jy sy't nie gechange nie, sy't nie, sy's een van die dierbaarste mense en sy ken als van my, van hier, hmm tot daar.

⁵ Elina is Kim's mother.

Kim rallies to her point. “When that newspaper story became public, I got one hell of a lot of negative feedback. But my brother got none because naturally he’s a boy, and no one would pick a fight with him. But that is the reason why I had to enrol in Festive School, because of public antagonism.”

Elina says quietly, “I don’t think your brother got any flak. If he did, he never said anything about it to me.”

“Of *course* he didn’t,” Kim snaps irritably, as though such a fact should be blindingly obvious to any but the most obtuse.

“I was with him in Grade Seven and Grade Eight. In fact, we were good friends until he was in Grade Eleven and began to smoke too much “dagga” [marijuana] and... I won’t say what else.

“It was then that I decided, ‘Oh no. Let me get all these dreadful things out of my life. Well, as far as I can anyway.’

“But he was already in Festive School when the sh*t hit the fan... Now I am really feeling sorry for myself... It was in all the newspapers.”

Kim’s mother interrupts. “I think that your brother had problems as well, Kim. He just never talked about them.”

I am amazed at the honesty and frankness of Kim’s self-revelation under such painful circumstances. I feel a deep empathy for the loneliness and anguish that she must have experienced.

“Everything was in the newspapers,” she repeats, “everything! And everyone... There was poor Alene. She’s my best friend, Carien, and she is the *most* honest person I know. Even two months after the story broke, she still didn’t know that anything out of the ordinary had happened. Then, two months after the newspaper reports, Lilly, another girl who was in our class, came to her and said, ‘Listen, aren’t you scared to visit Kim’s home?’ Then Alene asked, ‘Why should I be?’ And Lilly said, ‘Because, you know, Kim’s mother is *like that*.’

“Again Alene said, ‘You are lying.’ Then Alene came and asked me what was going on, and I said, ‘I am not going to lie to you, what Lilly says is true.’

“Then do you know what? Alene didn’t change at all, not one bit. She is one of the most endearing people I know. She knows everything about me – absolutely everything.”

I am amazed at how spontaneously and honestly Kim shares her memories about the painful events of her family’s first collective “coming out” experience. I note also the contrast between the two children’s reactions to these events. I sense how painful it must have been for Kim to have been ostracised by some of her peers – and how grateful she must have been to have been supported by those who simply – and without any fuss – accepted her and her family for what they are.

I gently probe a bit further because I want to know more about the differences in the reactions of her peers to her revelation of her mother’s sexual orientation.

⁶“Kim, did anyone at school know about your mother’s sexual orientation?” I ask.

⁶ 131-163:3, S1

C: Okay, vat my bietjie terug na die koerantstorie toe, ek weet nie of jy lus is om dit weer te revisit nie (rig na Elina), maar vertel dalk vanuit jou perspektief (rig op Kim), het niemand by die skool geweet nie?

K: Niemand, niemand niemand ek en my broer was so vir onself gehou. Nee ek was in standerd 5, en my broer was toe uit die skool uit, ek bedoel nie uit die skool uit nie, uit die laerskool uit.

Toe kom die rapport uit, sjoe, toe vra my ma my moet ek jou nie uit die skool uithaal nie. Toe sê ek, dit was iewers rondom die middel van die jaar gewees en toe dog ek by myself, weet jy nie, dit is nou so en, weet jy, ek gaan nou regtig nie uit die skool uitgaan in die middel van die jaar nie net omdat hierdie storie en frankly ek het nie gedink dit gaan so aandag trek nie.

En jy weet hoe's die kleintjies, iets vir almal om oor te praat, want ek was mos toe nog in die laerskool gewees. En ja, toe's almal soos in jy gaan soos jou ma word en dit is hierdie on..., hierdie, sondige Satanskind, verstaan en ja, en almal, maar dis okay, ek's daardeur.

C: Was dit oor jou naam in die koerant was of het hulle jou ma geken?

K: Naam, adres, foto

C: Kan jy nog onthou toe jy by die skool aankom

.../ vlg. bl.

Kim replies with some emphasis: “No! No one, no one, no one. My brother and I kept it completely to ourselves. At that time, I was in Grade Seven, and my brother was already in high school. Then the newspaper hit us with their story. Oh, my goodness!” She sighs at the memory of their pain and shock. “When my mother saw the effect that it was having on me, she said, ‘Would you like me to take you out of that school?’

“I thought about that for a moment, then I thought to myself, ‘It’s the middle of the year, and I am *really* not prepared just to go and leave my own school now because of this whole drama’. You see, I honestly didn’t think that it would attract so much attention. But you know what young kids are like! There’s nothing they love more than something sensational to gossip and snigger about. And I was, of course, still in primary school. But, yes, some of the children were saying things like ‘You are going to become like your mother’ and ‘This girl is a sinful child of Satan.’ But that’s OK. I survived.”

⁷ “Did they start to make trouble for you because your name was in the paper? Or did they know about your mother?” I ask.

K: Weet jy, al wat ek kan onthou is Peter wat vir my in die Geskiedenis klas vir my gesê het jou ma' s mos gay, en sy is so en so en so en wat, jy gaan soos sy word weet en jy moet net nie met ander mense praat nie, want net nou maak jy vriende of wat, en ek kan nie onthou wat ek vir hom gesê het nie, toe tel ek 'n stoel op en toe slaan ek hom amper met die stoel, maar ek het nie, ek het hom so 'getap' op die enkel, ek het met fors die stoel opgetel en toe stop ek so in die helfte toe slat ek hom net so hier onder sy been, los my uit los my uit.

Daarvoor was ek vir ma baie baie kwaad gewees, want toe weet almal en dit was net so hoe, kan jy dit aan my doen, weet ma hoe kan jy, jy het nog altyd boyfriends gehad, jy't met pa getrou, as jy gay is moes jy nie kinders gehad het nie (verhef stem), dit was my siening, ek was baie baie kwaad vir haar vir baie lank gewees... maar ek het dit nooit vir haar gewys nie, nooit nie, ek is nog altyd soos even met close family.

⁷ 167-184:4, S1

K: En toe in standerd agt toe gaan ek op 'n seminaar, toe gaan ek eers hoekom ek, hoekom hoekom hoekom. Weet, dis my ma en alles. Toe kom dit nou, toe clear ek dit nou op

C: Is dit ma wat so gesê het of het jy dit gewonder (ek dog sy wonder hoekom is sy gekies vir die seminaar – sy bedoel sy't deur haar issues gewerk)

K: Ek het dit gewonder, hoekom ek, hoekom nie almal nie, hoekom ek

C: Watse tipe seminaar

.../ vlg. bl.

“Everything was there,” Kim answers laconically. “Name, photo, address.”

“Can you still remember any specific reactions when you arrived at the school after the story broke?” I ask.

“To be honest, all I can really remember clearly is this one guy in the history class. He said to me: ‘Your mother is gay, she is like this and does this-and-that and so on, you are going to become like your mother, and maybe you should not talk to other people because you will make friends...’.

“I can’t remember exactly what I said to him. But I picked up a chair with great force and was about to hit him with it. But then I stopped myself with the chair in mid-air. Instead, I just kicked him on the leg, and screamed at him: ‘Leave me alone! Leave me alone!’

“After that I was very, very angry with my mother because then everybody knew. I said things to her like, ‘How could you do that to me? How could you? You’ve always had boyfriends. You married dad! If you’re gay you should *not* have had children.”

Kim’s raises her voice angrily as she speaks, but then just as quickly she quietens herself down again. Then she adds calmly: “Well, in any event, that was *my* opinion. I was extremely angry with you, mom, for a long time. But, Carien, I never let her see my anger. No! That’s not the way I am. Certainly not with my close family.

K: Dis 'n christelike seminaar vir kinders wat probleme het, daar's verskillende ouderdomme, maar dis baie nice, daar is mense wat jou help, deur jou probleme. Die volgende ding was om vir my ma en daai ... uitskuisel van 'n vroumens te vergewe, ja dit was ook moeilik gewees maar dit het ook gebeur en weet jy van daar af is dit soos 'n ding van my skouers af is. Ek kan met my ma praat wanneer ek wil, en niks wegsteek nou nie, so dit was nogal nice. Maar, wat ek op daai kamp geleer het is om te vergewe en te vergeet, en te maak asof niks gebeur het. Sjoe (fluit-sug), daai Linda vroumens....

E: Ja, dis sy wat die oorsaak was dat die koerante

C: O, ja-ja

E: 'n Baie slegte ondervinding gewees

“Until Grade Ten. Then I went to this seminar. Before that I just thought, ‘Why me? Why? Why? Why? It’s my mother! Why did it happen to me?’ But then I resolved it.”

“What kind of seminar was it?” I ask.

“It was a Christian seminar for children of different ages who have problems. It was actually very nice. There were people there ready to help those who had problems. So I had to try to face forgiving my mother and that ... that woman. Linda. Yes, that was certainly difficult.

“But it happened! From that time on, I can tell you, it was as though a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Now I can actually talk to my mother when I want to and I don’t have to hide anything. So it was good. What I learned on that camp is: *forgive and forget*, and go on as if nothing has happened.”

Kim sighs heavily. “But that woman, Linda...”

Elina, Kim’s mother, clarifies this point. “She was the one who contacted the newspaper and gave them the story. It was nightmarish.”

“It sure was,” Kim agrees sadly.

Because neither of them offers any more information or comment about that incident, I decide to leave it for the moment and return to it later. We continue the conversation about Kim’s friend, Alene, who has been very supportive all along.

At this point, Kim shares her views about the issue of disclosure.⁸

⁸ 91:2-127:3, S1

K: ... ek sal ek sal, nogsteeds nie vir almal.. gaan .. sê nou maar Mary kom kuier hier en Ann kom tel my op en sy vra vir my wie's dit, ek gaan nie vir haar sê dis my ma se girlfiend nie, ek sê dis my ma se vriendin, verstaan, want ek weet nie hoe my ma voel daaroor of sy wil hê dat almal moet weet nie, en frankly ek wil nie hê dat almal moet weet nie, verstaan dis nie van oe, dit gebeur met my nie. Dis 'n persoonlike ding, (E: dis persoonlik), jy weet nie almal hoef te weet nie en as hulle nou weet dan's dit maar nou net so what. Want Jo, een van my vriende by die Technikon, dis vir hom verskriklik moeilik om te sê hy's gay, maar weet jy, jy kan hom so sien van die kant af, so, (wys flap-handbewegings), maar hy's adorable en net om hom so bietjie te laat disclose toe sê ek vir hom luister my ma is ook gay so jy weet,
.../ vlg. bl.

“I still wouldn’t tell just anyone. Let’s say that Mary comes for a visit, Mary is my mom’s partner, and while Mary is here, Ann comes to pick me up. If Ann then asks me who Mary is, I would *not* tell her that Mary is my moms’ girlfriend. I would just say, ‘She’s a friend of my mother’s.’

“You see, I don’t know how my mother feels about the situation – whether or not she wants everyone to know. Quite frankly, *I* do not want everyone to know, because then it’s like, ‘Oh, now this is happening to *me*.’ No. As far as I am concerned, disclosure is a personal matter – and should be dealt with by the person concerned.”

Elina nods in support. “Yes, I agree. It should be a purely personal decision.”

Kim continues, “Not everyone needs to know. And even if they do get to know, then it is, like, ‘So what’s the big deal?’

“It’s like in the case of Jo, one of my friends at the Technikon. I can see that it’s incredibly difficult for him to come out to others as a gay man. But the weird thing is that *anyone* can see at a glance that he is gay.” At this point Kim gives

moenie dink ek gaan jou stenig of iets of jou by die kerk aangee nie, so, jy weet, vir hom het ek gesê en vir P het ek gesê (wie’s P) en nog so ander ene, maar dit was ook so deel van 'n conversation gewees

E: Was hy ook daar

K: Hy?

E: Waar's hy?

K: Ook by die Technikon, baie baie goeie outjie. Hy is net een van die's wat ongelukkig femme is, hy is nie gay nie, hy's net baie femme

Al 3 praat gelyk

C: En die gesprek, hoe't dit gebeur?

E: Weet jy, ons het in Barchello's gesit, toe, ek kan nie regtig onthou nie, dit was, ons het gepraat oor sy families iewerster langs, toe praat ons oor een van [REDACTED] se, dis nou 'n ander outjie, nou hy's ook gay en sy suster is gay ook en toe praat ons van sy familie en hulle families wat bietjie bymekaar gekuier het en alles en toe praat ons so en toe sê ek vir hom, ja, wow, alles kom daarop neer is, imm, yes, ek is ook net 'n klein bietjie gewoond aan dit (fluister), ja, so dit is omtrent die enigstes wat ek vertel het. Jane weet nie en sy't ook nie nodig om te weet nie, verstaan, as mense my kom straightforward vra luister hier, ek het dit en dit en dit gesien, is jou ma gay (heftige stem)? .. (stilte) ja (saggies), jy weet so as jy so my gaan aanval dan gaan ek jou eerstens 'n klap gee, en tweedens, dis al. (Skud kop soos ja). En in elk geval het ek nie 'n issue as mense dit weet, wat nie vir my saak maak nie. Verstaan as hier nou 'n Boesman langs die straat kom afstap "is jou ma gay, ja, gaan verby", maar verstaan mense wat in die omtrek is en aan ons raak en wat, verlangse vriende, verlangse familie, kennisse, warrawarrawarra, hulle hoef nie almal te weet nie, want dit is 'n persoonlike ding om hierdie, in ons ou wêreldjie, hulle kan aangaan, ja, ja

us an amusing but kindly demonstration of how Jo unconsciously gestures all the time in that loose-wrist way that a very small number of gay men affect without being able to prevent themselves.

“But he is adorable!” Kim continues. “So, just to give him an opportunity at disclosure and to help him to feel more at ease, I said to him, ‘Listen, Jo, my own mother is gay, so I just want you to know that I won’t ever betray you or tell people in the church.’”

“So I told him, and there were also two other friends I told. But the telling always took place naturally and in the context of friendly conversations.”

Elina interjects: “What about that other guy – the one who is so “femme” [effeminate in manner] – but who is not gay?”

Now I am interested because studies have shown that some heterosexual boys in school are often cruelly persecuted for being gay when they are not at all. I ask Kim if she would care to share this story with us.

“We were all sitting in Barchello’s,”⁹ she says, “and we were all just talking about families. One of the guys is gay, and so is his sister, so we were all listening to their stories about family visits, and we were also discussing the whole issue in a more general way. Then, at one point in the conversation, I said to all of them, ‘I am also a little bit used to that situation.’”

Kim imparts this last sentence in a whisper. This leaves me wondering what the significance of her whispering these words is – and also why she is now openly using the word “gay” when before she has habitually used rather arch euphemisms such as “like this” or ‘it’ or ‘like that’. But she continues nevertheless.

“So yes, those are about the only people I have told. Jane doesn’t know and she doesn’t need to know.” Then Kim raises her voice and continues in an

⁹ Restaurant

almost aggressive tone, “If people come to me in an open and straightforward way and say, ‘Listen here, is your mother gay?’ “

Kim pauses for a while, silent. Then, in a quiet voice, she says: “You know, if people attack me in that kind of way, first, I will smack them, then I will say, ‘Yes.’

“In any case I don’t mind if people that I don’t care about know or not. If some crazy stranger came up to me in the street and asked, ‘Is your mom gay?’, then, yes, I might say, ‘Yes. *Now go away.*’

But people in our closest circle, those people who matter to us, our friends and family – not all these people need to know *because this is a personal matter*. It’s our own small world – and *they* must just accept it or lump it.”

Kim suddenly announces that she has to terminate the interview because she has to get ready to leave for her part-time job as a waitress. So we quickly make arrangements for another interview. I also tactfully inquire whether it would be possible for me to see Kim alone next time. What I am keen to find out is whether she will report her experiences differently if her mother is not present and listening. For the time being, in any case, my plan is to focus more on Kim’s story and less on her brother’s. But even as I speak, I am wondering whether I should involve the brother as well. It could be a revealing exchange. On the other hand, I sense that I have a sufficient number of research partners for the time being, and Kim’s mother is manifesting some resistance to me contacting him – which is obviously meaningful in itself. But if that proves to be important in any way for my research, I can always follow it up later.

As I realise that my thoughts have wandered off on a tangent, I feel Kim’s stare resting on me. I say my goodbyes and express my gratitude, and as I walk out, I feel a sense of satisfaction at what has been achieved. Both Kim and her mom have welcomed me most warmly and sincerely, and Kim has a real ability to share spontaneously regarding her and her family. So I leave, looking forward with anticipation to our next meeting.

When Kim and I meet up again, about two or three weeks later, she seems quite relaxed and also unconcerned about the tape recorder. She asks me a few questions about the process of writing and, then, after some general polite conversation, we begin to discuss her parents' divorce. She shares her anger about the fact that her mom ever got married at all.¹⁰

"You know, I'm not sure, but I think that my dad is extremely hurt. I'm not even sure if I should tell you this, but just the other day my mom told me that my father *knew* that she was gay even before they got married. From what I can gather, she had a sexual experience – and then promised herself in remorse that she would never ever become involved in such evil and satanic things again. Then she married my dad. I think that's just terrible."

I immediately pick up on her last remark in spite of the crucial information she has just given me. "Why terrible?" I ask.

"My mother knew that she was never attracted to men," she asserts with some vehemence. "She told me that my father knew that she was gay even before they got married," she repeats.

We continue to discuss the various reasons that people have for getting married. In retrospect I realised that perhaps I was I trying to reframe her feelings of the "terrible-ness" of what her parents had done in a way that would make it a more positive way for her.

¹⁰ 387:8-402:9, S2

K: Ek is nie seker nie. Weet jy ek dink my pa is baie seergemaak en alles maar nou die dag het my ma vir my gesê, ek weet nie of ek "suppose" is om dit te sê nie maar my ma het vir my gesê dat my pa het geweet dat sy "gay" is toe hy met haar getroud het

C: Okay,

K: "Stupid"

C: So, sy het geweet voordat sy getroud is

K: Ja, soos wat ek kan aflei het sy 'n "experience" gehad en mmm toe belowe sy haarself nooit weer sal sy in hierdie ewelse, duiwelse goeters deelneem nie.

C: Okay

K: Jy weet en toe trou sy met my Pa. Dit is verskriklik.

C: Hoekom is dit verskriklik?

K: Hey

C: Sy het net hierdie een experience gehad

K: Maar sy het geweet sy is nie "attracted" tot mans nie. Sy het vir my gesê my pa het geweet sy is "gay" toe hy met haar getroud is.

Then she herself offers me this compassionate insight about the reasons why gay people might marry.¹¹ “I am glad that my parents are divorced because everyday one hears stories about people who everyone knows are gay, but who remain married. These people are ruining their own lives! I mean, come on, just get divorced,” she proclaims in her “no-nonsense” voice. Then she becomes more muted and adds: “You should not do it. It is just so unfair! It is unbelievably unfair – to the other person, and to the children, and what a dreadful example! Of course, the children know everything. Children *always* know everything about their parents.”

I remember that she made this assertion in our previous meeting as well. This assertion must therefore be deeply significant for her. Why is she so keen to make me understand that children “know” and that parents cannot hide or pretend? She becomes quite adamant on this point. “Even a one-year-old baby can sense, listen, and feel that something is not right in such situations. You

¹¹ 350-353:7, S2

K: Ek weet nie, maar dit, ek is bly my ma-hulle is geskei.

C: Okay

K: Want ek hoor elke liewe dag van mense wat almal weet is “gay” maar hulle is getroud...verstaan, jy is besig om jou eie lewe te verniel

357-371:8, S2

K: Skei net bietjie want, weet dit is, “come on”

C: Mmm

K: Jy kan dit nie doen nie weet jy. Dit is so onregverdig teenoor daai ander persoon. Ongelooflik onregverdig. Dit is so onregverdig vir jou kinders, ‘n prentjie voor te gee.

C: En kinders weet

K: Kinders weet alles

C: Dit is so waar

K: Soos ouers alles weet van hulle kinders, kinders weet alles van hulle ouers

C: Mmm

K: ‘n Babatjie wat so groot is wat ‘n jaar oud is kan aanvoel, luister hier is nie iets reg nie. Dit is so want kyk nou die “shit.” Jy kan nie probeer voorgee, daar is nie so iets nie

C: Mmm

K: Dit is verskriklik

383:8, S2

K: Ja-Nee. Daar is nie ‘n “pretend” soos, ha-ha-ha

cannot pretend because there is just so much that is wrong... You can't put a good face on it. It just doesn't work. It really is terrible."

Here is her "terrible-ness" again. But perhaps this insistence is Kim's way of expressing her anger, confusion and her longing to be heard. But Kim is not yet finished with her "the-children-always-know" theme, and she elaborates.

¹² "Last time when you were here, I heard my mother say that we did not know anything before that story got into the newspapers. Can you believe it? As if we didn't know!

"If Linda were staying over for a weekend and they were taking (say) an afternoon nap, my brother and I used to crouch in front of their bedroom door... and we would peep through the keyhole. We were utterly intrigued. What was all this? Of course it was something completely new to us, and neither of us really understood completely what it all meant. But what we *did* know was that it was not the same as it used to be between my parents....

"So, yes, we knew what was going on. But of course we never said anything at all." As I listen, I think to myself, "Hmm, so even though children might not know the details, you can never fool them."

Kim then elaborates on her first encounter with her mom's first real relationship with a woman and her feelings and thoughts about how it was different. I sense the aura of secrecy that surrounded these events, the difficulty they had as they

¹² 45:1-54:2, S2

K: ... En toe ewe skielik toe sit ek daar in die huis en ek hoor sy sê ons het nie geweet nie, ja ons het nooit geweet voor die koerante nie. In my lewe! Ek en my broer sit daar altwee voor my ma se kamerdeur en loer deur die sleutelgat.

C: Ah, okay, as wie daar agter die deur is?

K: Ek weet nie, want dan as Linda of iemand daar oorslaap, dan vat hulle 'n middagslapie of iets en dan letterlik dan sit ek en hy voor die deur, dan sit ons nou daar, en wat nou, jy weet dit was "completely new" gewees maar weet ek dink nie een van ons het volle begrip gehad van wat aangaan het nie maar ons het geweet dat iets nie dieselfde as wat dit altyd was nie.

79:3, S2

K: Ons het geweet dit gaan aan, maar ons het dit nooit gesê nie.

tried to clarify for themselves exactly what was happening, and adjust their lives and feelings to their new circumstances.

¹³ “It was so damned confusing,” Kim says, “because my mom had two or three boyfriends.¹⁴ And then they would go and eat out, and not take us along. Or if we were visiting friends, then they would go out.¹⁵ But after Linda arrived, we never had my mother to ourselves again. Never! Linda got all the attention – and her child, Rhyno. He was the naughtiest brat you could imagine. When he got up to mischief, which he did a lot, then we would always get into trouble. Always.

¹⁶ “There was one time when I had a bad stomach ache, and my mother didn’t even open the door. All these little things. I think that she failed us there. She never rejected us. No, ‘reject’ is too strong a word.¹⁷ But we were completely uninformed.

¹³ 37-38:1, S2

K Ja, en dit was wat so “damn confusing” was, want toe het my ma twee of drie “boyfriends” gehad.

¹⁴ 102-105:3, S2

K My ma het ons nie afgeskee, glad nie afgeskeep nie. Afgeskeep is heeltemal, ’n kras woord. Maar dit sulke goedjies soos die deur klop en die maagpyn en sulke goed, jy weet, baie sulke verskriklike klein goedjies. En dan gaan eet hulle uit, dan vat hulle ons nooit saam nie. En net as ons by vriende is gaan hulle uit.

¹⁵ 115-117:3, S2 & 120-122,127:3, S2

K: ... vandat Linda daaraan gekom het, het ons haar nooit weer vir ons self gehad nie. Nooit nie. Sy was altyd die een wat aandag gekry het, en R■■■■ haar kind.

&

K: Die stoutste klein bliksim wat jy al in jou lewe ontmoet het. Jy wil nie, jy kan nie huis hou met daai kind nie. Ons het altyd raas gekry vir sy probleme, altyd-altyd-altyd. Weet, sulke goedjies wat nie lekker was nie.

¹⁶ 84-90:2, S2

K: Ons altwee het net soos...ons het eenkeer, my ma, weet jy ek dink my ma het ’n oorval gekry, ons het eenkeer, toe pyn my maag, né, nou baie sulke klein dingetjies het, dink ek het my ma verkeerd gedoen. Soos dan pyn my maag, soos rêrig en dan klop ek aan haar deur en dan sê ek vir haar ma my maag pyn, né, dan wil geen mens, as jou ma in die kamer lê, klop aan die deur, honderd en sewentig keer, “ma my maag pyn”, ek is amper in trane. Slaap ma. Verstaan, dit werk nie.

¹⁷ 175:4, S2

K: Ja, ons was completely oningelig

¹⁸ “She would just always tell us that her friend was staying over or whatever.

¹⁹ “We never knew when Linda would come or when she would leave. Sometimes she would stay for up to a month. But then, quite suddenly, she was staying with us permanently, and, of course, it’s my mother’s house – so we couldn’t say a word. ²⁰My mom was very low-key about it. But she never explained anything to us until it reached the newspapers. I think that really affected my brother because he likes to be in control of things.”

I am interested in their concepts of knowing and not-knowing, of their intuition that something was new and different from what it was before, so I probe as to whether she and her brother ever talked to each other about it.

²¹ “Did you ever get into deep conversations about these events with your brother?” I ask.

“Not at all,” Kim replies. “We *knew* of course what was happening, but we never put it into words. Never. I just couldn’t find it in myself to say to him, ‘You know what? *This* is actually what is happening.’ “

Kim also elaborates on how she found out for the first time, and how she did not know how to handle it.

¹⁸ 163-164:4, S2

K: ... sy het net altyd gesê my vriendin bly hierso of “what ever“

¹⁹ 177-181:4, S2

K: Ons het nie geweet wanneer sy kom en wanneer sy gaan nie en wanneer sy gaan bly want partykeer bly sy vir ‘n maand, en toe ewe skielik toe bly sy net by ons, okay, weet dit is my ma se huis ons kan nou rêrig niks sê nie. En soos, ja ek weet nie. En ek dink dit is nog ‘n ding wat aan my broer gevat het want hy “like” dit om “on top van things” te wees

²⁰ 185:4, S2

K: Onder deur, nooit “up front” totdat dit die koerant bereik het nie

²¹ 76-82:2, S2

C: Julle het nooit “heavy gechat“ daaroor nie?

K: Glad nie.

C: Jy en jou boetie

K: Ons het geweet dit gaan aan, maar ons het dit nooit gesê nie. Nooit nie.

C: So as jy self sê, jy het dit self agter gekom.

K: Ja, nee, dit was nie, ek kon nie vir hom gesê het, jy weet wat, dit gaan nou aan nie.

“The very first time I found out, I simply didn’t know how to handle it,” she confides.²² “It happened when I was in Grade Six, and we had all gone on holiday to Franschoek. My brother and I were relaxing on the beach, and I decided to go back to the house to surprise them... You know, to give them a fright, to scare them. It was really just a practical joke.

“So I tip-toed in very, very quietly. As I came to the door of the lounge, I saw them both lying on the couch, and, well, I will leave what I saw to your imagination... I just stood there for a moment, absolutely silent, unable to move, just to take in what the hell was going on – because I had never actually seen anything like that in my entire life. And, of course, one of the people involved was my own mother.”

Kim starts to giggle, probably because she is embarrassed by the memory. But her laughter comes as quite a relief for me too because this is such extremely personal information. “Once I had got my head together, I tip-toed back very, very quietly, and went back to the front door. From there, I turned around, stood still, and shouted very loudly, ‘I’m back!’.

“It was a shock. But that’s how I found out. Obviously, after that, I *knew* – or at least, I had some idea – about what this whole scene was about. I didn’t even

²² 185:4-208:5, S2

K: ... Eerste keer wat ek dit uitgevind het, het ek nie rêrig geweet hoe om dit te hanteer nie, mmm, ons was in standerd vier gewees, né, toe gaan ons mmm, Franshoek toe

K: (in) een van haar doktersvriende se huise, en ek en my broer kom van die strand af en my ma-hulle het by die huis gebly en ek gaan hulle nou “surprise”, jy weet hulle skrik maak

C: Mmm-mmm, en toe

K: En alles...en ek stap so saggies in die huis in en alles en daar lê hulle op die bank. Ek sweer vir jou ek het seker vir ‘n minuut so gestaan om te “recollect” wat te moer gaan hiervoor my aan want ek het dit nog nooit in my lewe gesien nie, dit is my ma daai. En (giggel), ek weet nie, jy weet, en toe draai ek net om en toe gaan staan ek by die voordeur en toe skreeu ek “ek is hierso.”[giggle]

K: Jissie, so dit was bietjie erg gewees

K: En dit is hoe ek uitgevind het. En toe weet ek nou “obviously.” En ek het nie eers vir my broer gesê ek het so uitgevind nie, toe ek so standerd nege was, nee standerd agt. Ek het dit baie stil gehou en ek wil dit nie rêrig vir my ma sê nie want ek dink dit sal bietjie aan haar kou. Sy voel nog steeds skuldig daaroor. Ons weet dit en sy moet ophou maar. Sy kan nie die res van haar lewe skuldig voel nie. Oor alles. Sy kan haarself nie vergewe nie. Dit is verskriklik mmm, dit is vir haar baie hard.

tell my brother until I was in Grade Ten or Eleven. Fortunately he had not followed me into the house, or else who knows how it may have ended? I kept very quiet about it, and I don't really want to tell my mom because it will obviously upset her. In any case, she *still* feels guilty about her orientation. We know that. My feeling is that she should just let go of her guilt. She can't feel guilty for the rest of her life! But it seems as though she can't forgive herself. It's terrible. It's really very, very hard on her."

Kim continues her narrative.²³ "My mother and this Linda woman had real bitch-fights. My mom's other girlfriends were really nice, and I liked them all a lot. But Linda! So when I read in the newspaper that she had denied that they ever had fights, I became very angry.

"Apparently on the night when they broke up, she smashed our glass door. And then she went to the newspaper because my mother had told her that it was not working out."

"I cannot believe," I say to Kim, "that a newspaper would actually be interested in printing such a story."

But Kim is quick to put me in the picture. "Things were very different in those days. It was like, 'Do such people exist? Stone them to death!' It wasn't like it is today. It was terrible."

²⁴ "What about the time when your mother *had* to tell you about their relationship because of the newspaper story? She must obviously have thought

²³ 150:3-156:4, S2

K: Ja, nee, alles het "geburst" toe my ma vir haar gesê het, luister die "stuff" gaan nie werk nie.

C: (praat oormekaar) Hoe sal 'n koerant nou belangstel

K: Nee dit was mos daai tyd mos was dit

C: Dit was a "major" ding.

K: Bestaan daar sulke mense, weet, stenig hulle. Weet dit was nie soos vandag nie. Dit was vreeslik gewees.

²⁴ 157-159:4, S2

C: Okay toe die koerante nou uitvind toe dink jou ma nou dit is die eerste keer wat julle iets "click"?

K: Ja, en ek het haar maar so laat dink. Verstaan.

that it was the first time that you were being given this information?” I steer the conversation back towards the themes of secrecy and disclosure that are such an integral part of all of these events.

“Yes. But I just acted as though it was the first time we were finding out anything that we had not known before.”

I am more or less satisfied with the information she has given me about the newspaper story and her own process of finding out that her mother is attracted to women. I see her acceptance of her mother’s sexual orientation, and how strongly she desires her mother simply to accept what has happened and not to feel guilty anymore. I recall to myself how crucial that seminar was for her in Grade 10 or 11 when she came to accept her mother and the events that involved Linda and her mother. But I sense a lot of anger and frustration in how and what she says, even though she tries to hide it. I would now like to know something about what happened in the years in between. So I ask,²⁵ “Please tell me about that period before the Grade Ten camp when you were not able to accept and forgive your mom.”

Kim begins once again to reminisce, and once again I am astounded at the richness of what she is telling me. Although I am quite aware that I am deviating somewhat from the main line of my inquiry, I feel for the first time in my interviewing process that I am obtaining material that resonates with the narrative literature that I have been reading. Kim, in any event, is unaware of the theoretical dimensions of my research.

²⁶ “Look,” she says, “I have always been pleasant to my mother. As I said last time, I simply cannot be unkind to my closest family. So my mother never knew

²⁵ 211-212:5, S2

C: Okay dan, toe vertel vir my die stuk tot by die standerd agt kamp waar jy haar toe vergewe het en begin uitreik het

²⁶ 215-230:5, S2

K: Kyk ek was nog altyd “nice” met my ma, ek het laas keer mos vir jou gesê ek kan nie vir my “close-close relatives” mos sê, “jy dit en dit.” Ek kom altyd baie-baie “nice” voor. So my ma het nooit geweet ek is kwaad vir haar nie, nooit-nooit-nooit nie. .../vlg. bl.

that I was angry with her. Never. Never. Never.” She pauses, and I wonder at her emphasis.

“In those four years after I first found out – from between Grade Six and Grade Ten – I didn't once pray, I didn't once read the Bible because I was talking to God in my heart and saying, ‘You have harmed me! Why are you doing this to me? Why me? Why *me*?’ “

My heart goes out to her. The shock and denial that culminated in her anger is so painfully evident. So I say, “And so you were not only angry with you're your mother, but also with God?”

“Oh yes,” Kim agrees, “extremely angry. Bitterly angry. Then I decided to go on this camp. That was in Grade Ten. Yes, I went once in Grade Ten and once in Grade Eleven. It was at about that time, more or less. I went the first time because I wanted to be able to forgive these people. I was in a mess! I just wanted to get to a place where I would be able to forgive God, to forgive Linda, and to forgive my mother – because it was all just getting too much for me. And it was there that I found someone to whom I could talk to and with whom I could work through all this stuff.”

What Kim has disclosed has given me a much clearer understanding of what she was going through before she went to the camp. But I need to know more about how she managed to cope under such unbearable strain for so long without any help from anyone.

Ek het vir daai vier jaar, vandat ek uitgevind het, van standerd vier tot standerd agt toe nie eenkeer gebid nie, nie bybel gelees nie, want jy het my skade aangedoen, hoekom doen jy dit aan my, jy weet, hoekom ek. Goed.

C: Toe is jy nie net kwaad vir jou ma nie, maar ook vir Liewe Jesus.

K: O ja, verskriklik.

C: Okay

K: Baie kwaad. Toe besluit ek, ek gaan op hierdie kamp gaan. Dit was in standerd agt gewees. Ja, ek het eenkeer in standerd agt gegaan en eenkeer in standerd nege gegaan. Of ek was twee keer in standerd agt daar.

So daar rond. En die eerste keer het ek gegaan om hierdie mense net te vergewe.

Asseblief tog. Ek moet die Here begin vergewe, ek moet hierdie Linda vrou begin vergewe, my ma begin vergewe, want dit raak 'n bietjie teveel vir my. En ek het gegaan en ek het dit uitgepraat met iemand

²⁷ So I say, “Kim, I’m sorry to interrupt your flow of thought, but could you tell me how you came to realise that what was happening inside you was becoming too much for you?” If Kim can answer this question coherently, I will have some invaluable research information. I just hope that Kim will take this cue and not side-step the question as she sometimes does. My luck holds, and she elaborates as requested.

“It was, like, I couldn’t even look my mother straight in the eye because, you know, every time I made a real connection with my mother, I would just crack up. I would think, ‘This is my mother *and I hate her.*’ That was actually what was tearing me apart. The fact of the matter is that, at heart, I am deeply Christian in my attitudes.

“So I continued to attend Sunday school, and I would sit there listening to the sermon, and think to myself, ‘Mr Minister, everything you are saying is a *lie*. I mean, how can a person as wonderful as my mother do that to me? *You are lying.*’ I got into the habit of being cynical about everything that I came into contact with. I was a terrible... I was so incredibly mad at the world.” The recollection of her pain is making Kim incoherent, and she makes a tightly clenched fist with her hand. It is indeed an apt and powerful symbol of what she feels.

²⁷ 231-249:6, S2

C: Hoe het jy...skies, ek gaan jou nou in die rede val, hoe het jy agter gekom dit raak nou te veel vir jou? wat het binne jou aangegaan?

K: Dit was soos, ek kon nie my ma reguit in die oë kyk nie, jy weet, want elke keer wat ek my ma sien dan breek ek. Dit is soos, dit is my ma hierdie, weet ne, en ek haat haar. Dit werk nie vir my nie. En die feit, ek is ongelooflik Christen Christain groot gemaak. Ek het nog steeds altyd sondag skool toe gegaan, dan sit ek in daai sondag skool klas dan dink ek healtyd, dominee wat jy sê jy lieg. Ek bedoel, hoe kan so wonderlike persoon dit aan my doen. Jy lieg. So alles waaraan ek geraak het, het ek afgekraak. Ek was ‘n verskriklike... ek was so...so vir die wêreld.....
(wys vuis)

K: Ek het ‘n regte gat in die deur ingeskop. Verstaan dit was ‘n ...ek was ‘n baie haatvolle mens gewees. En toe dog ek so by myself, toe sit ek net eendag en besluit ek net, luister hier, nou moet jy bietjie ophou want, jou ma gaan verewig hier saam met jou bly, die Linda vrou kan jy nie vir die res van jou lewe haat nie, sy is nou uit jou lewe uit maar hier moet jy iewerste rond nou ‘n “change” begin maak. Vergeet, vergee, vergewe die vrou, “let it go”, dit is nou in die “past”, en dan moet jy jou verhouding met die Here begin regkry. Goed, so gaan op die kamp.

As happened in our first meeting, I sense the incredible underlying anger that Kim allows to surface in the safe, containing conditions of our interviews. “I really was very destructive. I had so much hatred inside. Then one day I took some time off to be alone and think about the situation. I spoke to myself in more or less these words: ‘Now listen here, Kim. You just have to stop this, because your mother is going to be with you forever, and you cannot go on hating Linda for the rest of your life. In any case, she is out of your life now. It’s just high time that you made a change in your life. Forget and forgive. Forgive that woman. Just let it go. That is all in the past. And once you’ve done all that, you should straighten out your relationship with the Lord. Okay? So now, get ready to go on this camp.’ “

I continue to be deeply moved by the quality of Kim’s self-talk and the remarkable way in which she regulates her thoughts and feelings as she attempts to rationalise and make some sense of the events of those deeply stressful times and situations. I am also struck by her willingness to be independent, to accept responsibility for herself, and to take control over her life – and to stop casting herself in the role of victim.

Kim interrupts my thoughts as she begins to talk again with a mixture of amazement and excitement.²⁸ “That camp was really great! It just helped me so much – in a way that I didn’t dream were possible. I can still remember that when I got back from the seminar, I immediately ‘phoned my mom. I started crying and said to her, ‘Mom, I have forgiven Linda!’ So she said to me, ‘*What?*’ ‘Mom, I said that I have forgiven Linda! It is just so amazing.’ I think she must have been collecting her thoughts (it must have been quite something for her to take in so quickly), but she eventually said, ‘Okay! That is just great...’ and whole lot of other things that I can’t precisely remember now.

²⁸ 334-339:7, S2

K: ... Dit is verskriklik "nice." Dit het my ongelooflik baie gehelp. Jis, ek kon onthou toe ek terug kom van die seminaar en ek bel my ma. Ek begin "huil", ek sê vir haar "ma, ek het vir Linda vergewe", sy sê vir my "wat"? "Ma, ek het vir Linda vergewe, dit is "amasing." Sy sê "nee, maar dit is goed en alles en alles", jy weet. En almal het toe vir my gesê van daai seminaar is ek, is ek is vriendeliker.

“But the best thing of all was that, since I went on that camp, all kinds of people began to say to me, ‘You know, Kim, since you went on that camp, you have become a much friendlier person.’ “

²⁹ “Kim, could you please tell me more about how you actually managed to forgive those people, especially your mother?” I am very interested in the fact that she was able to forgive, and in the phenomenon of forgiveness generally because this is something that so many people (even sincerely religious people) struggle to achieve and establish at a deep level – and not only in relation to matters that concern sexual orientation and sexual acts.

What Kim tells me certainly is revealing. “You know what, after thinking about it more clearly, I realised that being gay is not a disease. It is not like HIV or AIDS or something that could have destroyed my mother’s life. It is just the way my mother is. Sure, it is something different from what the majority of people do, but it is totally “normal” for her and for people like her. That’s just how they are.

“Once I got clear about that, I could think about my mother and Linda more clearly. I realised then that my mom is still the same wonderful person who, on her own and without help, baked lasagne for the whole congregation of people who attended the gathering after my grandfather’s funeral.

“I realised that my mom was still the same lovable mom that she had always been before...”.

Kim stays silent for a while, before she continues. “She is just bisexual. Some people are just like that. Okay, it may be different from what most other people are, but no two things in this world are alike.

²⁹ 415-422:9, S2

C: Mmm. Hoe het jy dit reg gekry om hulle te vergewe, veral nou vir haar?

K: Weet jy, ek het besluit dit is nie 'n “disease” nie. Dit is nie “aids” wat my ma gaan laat verkrok en vergaan nie. My ma is nogsteeds dieselfde wonderlike persoon wat ek, weet jy ek weet nie, wie se begrafnis, oupa se begrafnis, uit haar eie uit, ek weet nie hoeveel bakke Lasagne gemaak het vir almal nie. My ma is nog steeds dieselfde liefdevolle ma, wat sy nog altyd was ...”she is just bisexual”, so bietjie anders. En weet jy, “go for it” hoekom moet jy dit “fake” as jy dit anderste “prefer.”

“So then I thought, ‘So why shouldn’t she just go for it? Why should she fake it, and pretend, and lie – like so many other people do just because they are too frightened to be who they really are?’ If that is your preference, you should have the courage to go with it.

³⁰ “So then I decided: My mom is my mom. She is the one who has pulled me through when the going was tough. She is the one who has always stood beside me, no matter what. So why should her sexual preferences destroy my love for her now? Why should it matter? Is this thing going to change our lives?

“I can remember one night... It was after that seminar. We were just sitting and talking about this and that. And as she spoke, I realised that my mom still behaves in *exactly* the same way towards me now as she did when she was still married to my father. My mom even looks exactly the same, and she still dresses in the same way.” Kim smiles. “She is still an incredibly efficient and well organised person. It was then that I came to the conclusion: *My mother is my mother*. Why shouldn’t I continue to love her in exactly the same way that I always used to do when she and my dad were still together?”

“It was such a strong realisation. *My mother is my mother*, end of story. That, I think, is what my brother should also realise.

³⁰ 437-450:9, S2

K: So toe besluit ek net weet jy né, “shit” soos ek gesê het, my ma is my ma, sy gaan altyd daar wees, sy gaan die een wees wat my deur alles gaan trek, is die een wat my nog altyd bygestaan het, verstaan, en hoekom, hoe, wat maak haar nou anders? Ek kan onthou ek het een aand so gesit en toe begin ek en my ma nou praat en alles en alles en alles na die seminaar nou toe dink ek by myself, weet jy wat, my ma praat nog presies dieselfde met my as toe my ma en pa nog getroud was.

K: My ma lyk presies dieselfde, sy trek presies dieselfde aan, sy is presies, nou hoekom kan ek nie presies dieselfde lief wees vir haar as toe sy en my pa saam was nie. Verstaan soos

C: Mmm

K: Ek het net besluit weet jy, my ma is my ma. Sy is my ma en dit is dit. (En dit is wat my broer moet oorkom)

³¹ “And that is why I actually admire gay people. They say, ‘F*** you’ to the unwritten laws of society. Of course everyone knows that a man and woman should establish a relationship and everything. People just stampede into marriage and other-sex relations without even thinking. But gay people (if they are honest enough to face what they really feel) will rather follow their hearts. They think for themselves, and they will turn to that kind of relationship which their heart tells them is true for them.

“Most people suffer from a kind of tunnel vision, and they will simply go where society expects them to go. It can cause a tremendous amount of sorrow and heartache. I suppose people are afraid of...”

“Labels”, I add.

But it sounds as if Kim has found her vision of reality and continues with passion. “I have great respect for people who have enough courage to walk on a road that is different from the road that everyone else seems to be walking along.”

She pauses a moment, and then adds, ³² “But the world has its own rules, and people should be aware of how those rules work. Do you understand what I mean?”

Silently, within myself, I answer, “No, I don’t understand, Kim. Where are you coming from now? Just a moment ago, you were telling me about how you

³¹ 422-427:9, S2

K: So wat ek “actually quite” van “gay” mense “admire” is hulle sê “f-you” vir die “unwritten laws to society.” Jy weet dat jy moet, jy moet man en vrou verhouding en alles, en hulle dink bietjie vir hulleself en hulle draai na die kant toe wat hulle “actually” wil gaan. So baie mense het hierdie “tunnel vision” van hoe ‘n mens moet lewe, van hoe ‘n mens moet aantrek en die in skoene is dit

C: Die “labels”

³² 428-435:9, S2

K: En verstaan. Mense wat afwyk van daai paadjie af, ek het jare se respek vir jou, maar soos wat, so dit is nou maar net soos dit is en hulle moet dit bietjie toe hou, verstaan. Twee vroumense wat in die pad hand-aan-hand af stap, staan my nie aan nie, moenie dit doen nie, want dit is nog nie, dit kom daar. Kyk dit kom daar, twee vrouens met twee meisie kinders wat in die straat gaan afkom, al vier hand aan hand. Dit kom daar maar dit is nog nie daar nie, so hou dit bietjie “discreet.” Want verstaan hulle gaan aan soos hulle wil, verstaan hulle is nie, so gebind soos die res van ons nie, verstaan hulle het ‘n bietjie kop van hulle eie

accept your mother, and how you hold this enlightened view that gay people should be true to themselves. You've managed to accept that your mother is bisexual, but now you seem to be approving of secrecy and of hiding one's true nature. So now we are back to what the Americans call 'the closet'. But keep quiet, Carien. This is Kim's story, and whether or not you approve of what she reveals, what is important here is to give Kim the freedom of disclosing her own views without interference."

Kim looks at me thoughtfully before elaborating on what she is trying to get across. "I don't like it," she says quietly, "when two women walk hand-in-hand down the road. I don't think that gay people should do things like that because society is not yet ready for that kind of freedom and openness. There are places, I suppose, in cities like Amsterdam, where one can do that kind of thing³³. But not here. Not yet anyway. So I think that gay people should try to behave as discreetly as possible. They can't just behave as they would like to *in public*. We are all bound by the rules and expectations of our society. Gay people too. They can't just behave as they want to in public. They should appreciate that."

³⁴ "Okay", I say, "what would you do if you were walking with your mother and her lover in a shopping mall – and they were holding hands?"

³³ Translator's own additions, member checked/ validated by research partner

³⁴ 728-752:15, S2

C: Okay, wat sal jy nou doen as ma 'n "lover" het en sy stap in die Kollonade saam met jou en hou die vrou se hand vas

K: Ek sal vir haar sê jy sal nie. Nie nou nie. Dit is nie hoe dit is nie. Jy het respek vir ander mense se, dit is die hele ding gaan oor jy het respek vir ander mense se ...dit is in die publiek, verstaan, wat ander mense sien, jy weet, daar is 'n "limitasion" aan wat jy, dit is net so goed hulle sit 'n kaal vrou in die "pharmacy" wat "suntan lotion" . Verstaan jy respekteer wat ander mense sien en wat hulle nie wil sien nie.

C: Mmm

K: En dit is waarom dit gaan. Verstaan dit is soos as jy rondom ander mense is, dan doen jy iets wat in alle "ways" kan "flexible" gaan. Verstaan. Hulle wil dit nie sien nie. Want jy moet aanvaar in 'n "shopping center" gaan daar mense wees wat nie twee vrouens wil sien nie. So moet dit nie doen nie. Dit gaan alles oor "respect" teenoor hulle. So, ja, nee, nee los. Totdat op die "stage" kom waar dit gaan kom. Dan kan hou hand vas en gaan aan kom.

“I would just tell them not to do it,” Kim replies firmly. “Not now. That’s just how life is,” Kim continues. “You have to have respect for other people’s feelings and conventions. That’s what this whole thing is about – respect for other people’s expectations, and a shopping mall is a *public* place, you see. There are always limits on what we as individuals and groups can do.

“Take another example. Let’s say that you were to place a photograph of a naked woman in a pharmacy in order to sell suntan lotion. You just wouldn’t do it! One has to have *some* respect for what other people might be exposed to against their will. That is what it is all about. If there are people around, you have to use your judgement and common sense. It might be something that they don’t *want* to see. Not necessarily because it is wrong, but because people are just accustomed to certain public norms of behaviour. They have certain expectations, and we all abide by them. In any shopping centre, there will certainly always be people who would not want to see two women holding hands. So, then, we should just not do it. It’s about respect for others. So, yes, rather don’t do it in public until the society has reached that point where it will be something that will not offend anyone. Until we reach that stage, it is better to be discreet.”

This time I utter my thoughts aloud – not with the intent of challenging Kim personally, but with the hope that she might define her ideas even more clearly. “And so,” I say, “how do you think that society will ever get to that ‘that stage’? Also, who defines what society is? Who has the right to say that a husband, wife and children constitute an ideal towards which everyone else in society should strive?”

C: Hoe dink jy gebeur dit dat mense by daai “stage” uit kom? Want wat ek nou sit en dink, wie is “society” en wie sê jy sê ‘n man, ‘n vrou en kinders, is die ideaal?

K: Weet jy, ek weet nie. Ek dink, ek dink né dat een mens het bietjie daarmee uitgekom en toe ‘n volgende en toe die volgende en nou dat hulle “actually” mekaar gevind het, weet mekaar gevind het, hulle weet nou dat “shit, ek is nie die enigste een in die wêreld nie.” En dan, mense soos ons raak dan baie meer “relaxed” daarvoor weet want daar is boeke daarvoor, mense skryf boeke daarvoor. Elton John is hoeveel mense se rolmodel en hy is “gay” ek dink deur daai milieu begin mense dit aanvaar ook. En weet, deur sulke klein goedjies, begin mense dit so stadig aan, stadig aan, stadig aan aanvaar en dit is al op die TV, dit is oralste. Verstaan jy.

“You know,” answers Kim, “I just don’t know. I think that what happens is that one courageous person may come, then perhaps another, and then another, and then perhaps eventually all these people find each other, and make places where they can meet other people. The benefit that comes from this process is that people realise, ‘Now I know that I’m not the only one in the world.’

“Then other people gradually start to become more and more relaxed about it because people write books about their experiences and that gives others like them courage and hope. There are so many books now on this topic, and even magazines.

“Look at Elton John, he is a role model for so many people, and he is gay. I think that because of this kind of thing, and the publicity that these people receive in the media, more and more people come round to accepting gay behaviour and gay relationships.

“The cumulative effect of all these things, great and small, is that people begin slowly, slowly to accept it because they become so used to it. I mean, gay people are simply *everywhere*. You see them on television, in magazines, in clubs, everywhere.³⁵ People are far more relaxed about this whole topic nowadays. They realise that gay people are *real* – and that they will not be going away. Take, for example, that article about my mom’s relationship that was printed in the newspaper. Such an article will never make the headlines today. That is why I say that a time will definitely come...”.

I complete her sentence in a humorous way by saying, “...when you will see two women lovingly holding hands in the street – and it will be perfectly normal.”

³⁵ 716-718:15, S2

K: ... begin dit nou al hoe meer ‘n “relaxed subject” word. Verstaan as jy nou, my ma se “article” in die koerant gaan sit.....wel

722-727:15, S2

K: Dit begin baie meer oop, dit is hoekom ek sê, die tyd gaan daar kom wat

C: Dat jy sal moet die twee tannies in die straat “face”

K: Ja (ha-ha-ha)

C: (ha-ha-ha)

K: Hi, ja stap maar met julle kinders, hoe julle gekry het, sal ek nie weet nie maar, jy weet dit gaan kom so

For a moment Kim looks surprised, and then we both laugh together. Kim comments, “Yes! You may even walk with your children. But how you got them, I wouldn’t know. But that too is coming.”

³⁶ “But you wouldn’t want your mother to be one of them?” I suggest. Kim and I both laugh at this.

“Well...,” she says, and then she becomes serious again. “But I still think that people should be discreet. They should do whatever they want to do – but at the right time and in the right place.

“Take another example. If you had shown people a computer in the 1910s, and what it could do, most people would have thought that you were an alien. But the times were not ready for it. Everything happens at the right time and in the right place, and everything evolves in its own time. Like, some people ask now: ‘Why are many modern parents less strict with their children?’ Who decided that that should happen. Well, no one decided it. It just happened because of the changes that took place in society over long periods of time. I personally think that our society is getting too permissive. Many people have become too lazy to decide for themselves whether something is right or wrong. We seem to accept

³⁶ 753:15-763:16, S2

C: Jy wil nie hê jou ma moet een van hulle wees nie. (lag)

K: (lag). Dit is net so goed dat immm. Ja maar dit is “discreet” verstaan. Dis, dit is op sy plek vir sy tyd. Dis net so goed jy drop 'n rekenaar in die 1910e. Verstaan die mense gaan dink dit is alien, verstaan, dit gaan nie werk nie. En alles kom op sy plek. En ek dink, dit is soos wat enige iemand, enige iets “gerevolve” het, soos byvoorbeeld dit is net soos jy vra hoe het ouers so baie “lenient” geword op hulle kinders se opbrengs.

C: Mmm

K: Verstaan. Wie het dit bepaal. Niemand het dit bepaal nie, dit is maar net hoe dit net gebeur het. Dit gebeur maar net. Ek dink “society” raak net ‘n bietjie slap. Verstaan so. Te lui om te dink of dit reg of verkeerd is. Ons aanvaar jy is reg.

that almost anything is right.³⁷ But everything finds its own level. Goodness knows, my brother is not on the right road. There are basically three roads. There is a straight road, a detour road, and another road that twists and turns. Eventually all these roads lead to the same destination, and there is only one destination. There are not seventy destinations but only one, and that destination is the one at which we will all eventually arrive.”

“What incredibly wise words for one so young,” I think to myself. “They encapsulate a whole world view.” I ask her whether she came to this realisation on the seminar. Kim responds enthusiastically to my question.

³⁸ “You know, the first day of the seminar’s programme was devoted to the topic of *forgiveness*. When I heard that, I just went up to people at random and told them the story about my mother, and do you know how much that helped me?” She starts to giggle and imitate a certain kind of voice. “ ‘Come here please! Did you know that my mother is so-and-so...?’, and ‘Hi, please listen to me! My

³⁷ 769-774:16, S2

K: Maar, alles-alles sal uitkom. Daar is ‘n paadjie. Donder my broer is net op die verkeerde pad

C: Ag shame

K: Maar weet jy né, daar is ‘n reguit pad, ‘n om pad en dan is daar nog ‘n pad wat so loop, maar al drie daai paaie, kom op een eindpunt uit. Net op een eindpunt, nie op sewentig nie, een. En weet jy op daai eindpunt is waar jy rêrig moet wees.

³⁸ 249:5- 265:6, S2

K: Toe's dit die eerste dag en ons les is ons moet vergewe en weet jy né, toe begin ek “random” mense gryp, en vir hulle vertel hoe my ma is. En weet jy hoe baie het dit gehelp.

C: Okay

K: (Acring stem) "Kom hierso, weet jy wat, my ma is (giggel) so en so" ...kom hierso, my naam is Kim, weet jy wat. Weet jy, maar dit is net om dit van jou skouers af te kry, want jy weet jy gaan hulle nooit weer sien nie.

C: Okay

K: So

C: Dit was “safe”

K: Mmm, hulle gaan nie, hulle kan maar oor vertel maar die mense wat hulle gaan vertel ken my nie, maar ek kan nie na my skoolvriende toe gaan en vir hulle my hart gaan uitstort nie want ek weet nie vir wie hulle gaan vertel nie. Verstaan. So dit was “nice” gewees, regtig en ek het met dominee's en goeters gepraat en toe “eventually” toe kom alles reg en ons vergewe, en jy weet... daai woorde van om te vergewe beteken nie om te vergeet nie en te maak of niks gebeur het nie. Dit is nou goed op my gepas

name is Kim, and do you know what...?'. I did it, I suppose, just to get it off my chest. I suppose, also, that I realised I would never see any of them again."

"It was also a safe thing to do in that particular context?" I suggest.

She nods. "They could go and repeat it to someone else, but the person they told wouldn't know me, and so it would make no difference. But I couldn't go to my school friends and just pour my heart out to them because I would never know who they would tell. Do you see what I was doing? So that was really great. I had opportunities to talk to ministers and others, and eventually everything started to fall into place. Eventually I got to the place where I could forgive. So I did forgive my mother and others, and I did it sincerely – because I wanted to.

"Another thing: forgiveness does not mean that one has to forget and to act as if nothing has ever happened. Understanding that was very necessary for me.

³⁹We received little cards on the camp with verses on, and all of my little cards basically carried the message of, 'just accept it, you are not going to be answered, live with it, everything is okay'."

I ask Kim about the role that language played in the process.

⁴⁰ "Okay, Kim, I would like to ask you now about how you framed your experience in *words*. Did you say that your mother is 'so and so', or did you say, 'My mother is in love with another woman?' "

³⁹ 320-325:7, S2

K: Toe staan daar "mense wat nie vrae vra nie en mense wat net aanvaar sal die koningryk bekom" of wat, ek weet, maar al my kaartjies het tot op dit neergekom dat, aanvaar dit net, dit gaan nie geantwoord word nie, dit is so, lewe daarmee, alles sal "okay" wees. En dit is so sjoe, jy weet. En dit is rêrig met die vorige kamp het dit ook gebeur. Daai bekende versie van wie, verge, vergewe mense sewekeer.

⁴⁰ 266-275:6, S2

C: Okay, ek wil bietjie vir jou vra, hoe het jy dit geframe, want jy't gesê jou ma is so en so, ja, het jy gesê sy is "gay" of sy is lief vir 'n ander vrou?

K: My ma hou nie van mansmense nie (giggel), my ma hou van vroumense, nou wat nou

C: O okay

K: Ja, dit was so effective gewees

C: Wat was die reaksie gewees?

“I said, ‘My mother really dislikes men. My mother only loves women!’”

“Oh, okay”, I reply, somewhat stunned by her directness.

She picks up on my silence. “It was most effective.”

“So what were the reactions?” I ask, wondering how the other children had reacted to her frankness.

“You know, the reactions of those people were not as vehement as they were when I told people back home – because my problems are minimal compared to the problems of these people. But, even so, there was one night when we were all sharing around the campfire and I found that I simply could not stand up and share what I wanted to say in front of everyone there. So I just said something like, ‘Listen, my mother is... a bit different’. Then I added that I had forgiven my mother and left it at that.”

I hear a tone of deep disappointment in her voice, as well as enormous empathy and compassion as she shares the life story of one of the other participants.

K: Weet jy né, die reaksie van daai mense is nie so erg as toe ek vir een van hierdie mense vertel het nie, want weet jy, teen die probleme van daai mense is myne minimaal.

291:6-309:7, S2

K: maar weet jy dat ek kan nie opgegaan het en voor almal gesê het, luister, my ma is ... so bietjie anderste nie

C: Aaa,

K: Weet ek kan dit nie gedoen het nie, ek het net gesê ek het ‘n probleem en dit is vergewe en alles en alles, so

C: As jy nou daarvoor terug dink, hoekom dink jy kon jy nie en hoekom is dit okay of nie okay nie of hoe sou jy dit anders wou gehad het?

K: O, weet jy ek dink daai tyd was dit nog, omdat dit nog so ‘n anderster “subject” was, weet en ek was ongelooflik bang want, aaa, mense dink jy gaan soos jou ma wees en almal het my “different” begin “treat” behalwe Alene, verstaan so, almal het “different” teenoor my begin optree, niemand wou by my kom oorslaap het nie. Niemand wou gehad het ek moet by hulle kom slaap nie. En ek was so baie-baie bang dat dit was soos met daai mense en ek het flippen “nice” “buddys” gemaak op die kamp, rêrig nog steeds. Weet ek is nog steeds vriende met hulle en mmm, ek was bang hulle tree “funny” teenoor my op. So mense wat ek rêrig-rêrig goed geken het, het ek dit nie voor vertel nie, nie geken het nie maar met wie ek goeie vriende mee gemaak het, het ek nie vertel nie maar die mense wat so in die verbyloop “more hoe gaan dit” hulle het ek so aan die kraag gegryp “kom hierse, jy gaan nou luister, jy het nie ‘n saak nie”.

“But now,” I ask, “when you think back on that camp, why do you think that you couldn’t share it in front of everyone else? At that time, why was it okay or not okay to share, or would you have wanted it to have happened differently if that had been possible?”

Kim responds immediately, “Oh, in those days, it was such a totally alien topic. In fact, I was extremely scared because people used to assume that I was going to turn out like my mother, and then everyone started to treat me rather cautiously – except for Alene. Like, no one wanted to come for sleep overs anymore, just after the newspaper incident. I became very frightened because I began to think to myself that the people here at the camp would also begin to treat me in the same way like the people back home.

“I made some really great friends on that camp, people with whom I am still friendly today. But I was also scared that *they* would also begin to react oddly towards me. So I never told the people that I knew really well. I told them nothing! But when strangers came walking past – people I didn’t know at all – I would grab them by their coats, even if they just greeted me, and would say, ‘Come here, please. You *must* listen to me! I’m *not* giving you a choice.’ ”

I sense the relief in the theatrical violence of her acts. “You *are* going to listen now! You don’t have *any* choice in this matter!” (She must have been confronted by a few shocked faces.) I also sense the relief that she must have felt when she was at last able to break the silence and share what had burdened her for so long and talk to others about her mother.

At this point, I want to explore in more depth the different reactions that Kim had to deal with from her friends and peers at school.

⁴¹ “How did you experience the change from primary to high school? I mean, everyone in your primary school knew about your domestic situation. But then you had to face a whole new set of people in high school.”

“Well, that’s the reason why I went to Festive School. No one from my primary school was going there. I also went to stay in the hostel, and so I only saw the friends that I wanted to see on weekends. I didn’t bump into people by accident. And hostel life also changed me a lot. I was a bit overweight in Grade Seven,

⁴¹ 575:12-613:13, S2

C: Mmm. Hoe was die oorgang van laerskool na hoërskool? Almal in die laerskool het nou geweet en nou moet jy hoërskool toe?

K: Dit is hoekom ek Festive School toe gegaan het, want Festive School, niemand in my Laerskool het soontoe gegaan nie.

C: Oraait

K: En ek was in die koshuis gewees. So ek het my, my vriende wat ek “gechoose” het om te sien, net naweke gesien.

C: Okay,

K: So ek het nie per ongeluk in hierdie een in die dorp vas geloop nie en warra-warra. Koshuis het my baie verander. So, want ek was vetterig in standerd vyf. Nie vetterig nie, ek was vet. Ek het ongelooflik baie gewig verloor in standerd ses en sewe. Toe begin ek modelwerk doen en alles. So ek het verander. Soos Peter die outjie wat vir my in die Geskiedenis klas gesê jy gaan soos jou ma word en alles. Toe hy my die eerste keer standerd sewe weer raak loop, ek dog daai mannetjie donder van sy voete af. Ek sê, ag, mm. So wat nou

C: Mmm

K: Toe is hy tjoepstil.

C: Okay

K: En toe ek in standerd nege in die skool kom. Toe is ek en my vriendekring my, soos, toe ken almal my al, dit is my ou..(ouderdom) soos Alene-hulle

C: Ja

K: Alene en S [redacted]. Hulle het na ABC School toe gegaan en deur hulle het ek ander mense leer ken. Toe ek in Centerion in kom toe is dit soos wow

C: O, so toe is jy terug ABC School toe

K: Ja-ja. Ek was ses, sewe en agt in Festive School, nege ABC School en toe

C: Oraait. Hoekom is jy weer terug?

K: En toe matriek in Witbank. Want ek wou by my vriende wees

C: O, okay

K: Ja, toe is die “fever” nou al verby. Almal weet dit is...weet en toe ons daar instap toe is ek en my vriendekring die “most respected” mense in daai skool gewees.

C: Mmm

K: Dit is soos, en die mense wat altyd vir my “shit” gegee het op laerskool”wat-wat.” Dit was so lekker gewees.

C: Mmm, so niemand het meer gestir of gevra nie

K: Glad nie

C: “Never ever mentioned”

K: Mmm, nooit nie want dit was nie ‘n ongemaklike “subject” gewees nie. Almal het geweet. Ek het, en Alene praat openlik daaroor. Dit is niks “weird” en alles nie.

C: Ja

no, let's face it – I was fat. I lost a lot of weight in Grades Eight and Nine, and I even began to model. So my life changed.

“You should have seen Peter, the guy in the history class that mocked me and told me that I was going to be like my mother, when he saw me again for the first time in Grade Nine. I thought he was going to pass out! He was as quiet as a mouse.

“I went to ABC High School for Grade 11 and then to Witbank for Grade 12. But by then, I was no longer so bothered about my family background and I could cope without fear or shame with anything that arose.

“The people in ABC High School that I had known in primary school and that had caused trouble for me, were now all silent. None of them made any waves. In fact, my friends and I were the most respected pupils in the whole school and they all knew that. Alene and I used to talk openly about my situation and we did not regard it as weird in any way.

“In addition, all my friends in ABC were very open-minded about it, and no one thought anything about it.

⁴² “But there was this one occasion that I want to tell you about. As I was walking past one of my brother's best friends, he said: ‘Look! She's a lesbian’.

“I thought that they were talking about me, and, obviously, that was a topic about which I was most sensitive. I was so hurt that I started to cry. When my brother saw me crying, he came over and asked me what the matter was.

⁴² 614-627:13, S2

K: So dit was okay. Maar een ding waaaroor ek vir jou kan sê my broer. Ons was eenkeer by 'n “house party” gewees. En ek het altyd by hom gaan huil oor hierdie mense wil nie ophou oor ma se stront nie.

C: Mmm

K: En dit is toe eenkeer, toe een van sy beste-beste vriende, toe sê hy iets van “kyk, sy is 'n lesbiën.” En dit is toe ek daar verbystap. Okay toe dog ek hy praat van my, want ek was so “touchy” daaroor gewees.

C: Aha

K: Ek begin huil en alles. My broer kom daar aan en vra wat nou. En ek sê toe die mense kan nie ophou met ma se “stront” nie. Hy sê “wat” en ek sê toe “Max.” Dit is een van sy beste vriende maar hy loop na hom toe en hy gryp hom so aan sy kraag, maar hy gooi hom so op die gras ...”wat doen jy aan my suster” (loud voice). Toe was hy nog al, in daai stadium todat hy begin “swing” het na die probleemkant toe en todat ek begin aanvaar het. Toe ons altwee so half in 'n dwaal “maze” effek was, was hy “m*!&! protective” oor my gewees.

"I told him that people just could not stop making remarks about my mother's situation.

"He just said, 'Who said something?' and I replied, 'Max'.

"Even though Max was one of his best friends, he grabbed him by his lapels and threw him down onto the grass. 'What do you think you're doing to my sister?' he yelled at Max. Kim imitates the way in which her brother shouted.

"So, you see, Carien, even at *that* stage, before his problems started and before I had even accepted it and we were both still very confused, my brother was still very protective of me. I really appreciated that.

⁴³ "In Witbank, there was this one guy in our group that everyone thought was gay. We used to say to him, 'Everyone thinks that you're gay. When are you going to get a girlfriend?' But it was really just a joke, and there was nothing nasty about it. When you reach Grade 11 and 12, everyone becomes far more relaxed about this topic."

⁴⁴ "So what did you tell the people in Witbank?" I ask.

⁴³ 705:14-717:15, S2

K: ...In ABC School, al my vriende is baie "open-minded" oor dit, verstaan so niemand doen of dink enige iets daarvan en alles nie. En Witbank, wie was "gay" gewees wat in ons groep was? (Bly stil en dink) [REDACTED], ja hy was "gay", hy het nooit uitgekome daarmee nie, maar ek dink hy is "gay"

C: Het die kinders daarvoor gepraat

K: En toe, nee

C: Okay

K: Nee, ons het net altyd vir hom gesê "almal dink jy is gay, wanneer kry jy vir jou 'n meisie?"

C: Ag shame

K: Jy weet. (ha-ha-ha). Maar jy weet almal was maar nog steeds so. Hierso van standerd nege, matriek en nou, weet, van nou af, begin dit nou al hoe meer 'n "relaxed subject" word.

⁴⁴ 636-639:13;S2

K: En mmm by die skool. Toe gaan ek Witbank toe en nou is almal vriende nog steeds "hi-hi-hi." Daar nuwe vriende gemaak.

Matriek is ek Witbank toe

C: In matriek skole geskuif

661-678:14, S2

C: So in Witbank het jy toe vir die mense gesê of het jy net gesê

K: Man, nee weet jy, wie weet daar? Niemand weet daar nie. Ja

.../ vlg. bl.

“Nothing of interest, really. I would just talk about how my mother was working in London at that time, and about my dad and his new girlfriend.⁴⁵ No one knew in Festive School either. Until today no one from that school knows the story. Because it is a single-gender school, I was scared that the children would gossip if they found out. But no one mentioned it. But there are some real bigots there – the crowd who would, like, to stone gay people to death. There were a few girls who were like that, you know, gay, and I was very careful not to get involved with them. Like, if someone wanted to give me a hug when they were greeting me, I would move away. It’s not that there’s anything wrong with hugs. It’s not wrong. But I just wanted them to stay away from me.”

⁴⁶ “So what are the attitudes these days?” I ask.

C: Was daar ooit vrae van wat doen jou ma, wat doen jou pa? En dan antwoord jy net vir hulle, jy sal nie uitbrei nie?

K: Nee, my pa se “girlfriend” is hierso en my ma is in Londen en da-da-da. Ja dit was

C: En in Festive School?

K: Festive School. Niemand weet dit nie, ook in Festive School nie. (Adament voice)
Ek wou nie dat dit uitkom nie. Verstaan want dit was die direkte oorskakeling van standerd vyf na standerd ses en ek was bang dat as dit uitvind in daai skool, omdat dit ‘n meisieskool is, verstaan dan is dit nj-nj-nj (skinder geluide), jy weet, wat nou? Ja so niemand tot vandag toe nog weet nie.

C: Was daar kere wat jy byvoorbeeld op die speelgrond gestap het of in ‘n klas gesit het en kinders het net begin praat oor “moffies” of oor “gays”? Wat is die tipiese goed wat kinders sê deesdae oor dit?

K: Deesdae,

C: ja

⁴⁵ 695-705:14, S2

C: Okay en op hoërskool, want ek is nou nog al geïnteresseerd in hoe die skole verskil. Dat Festive School ‘n ander tipe “set-up” het.

K: Festive School het niemand geweet nie

C: Al weet niemand nie, wat sê die kinders, praat hulle?

K: O, nee, weet jy Festive School was dit nog, ses, sewe en agt, man dit was nog “stenig, stenig die mense.”

C: Okay

K: Moenie. Jy weet. So niemand het ooit daarvoor gepraat. So daar was ‘n klomp van hulle, van daai soort, en elke keer as hulle hallo sê (wys dan wil hulle drukkie gee), dan's dit jiss, J■■■■ So dit was maar so-so, maar niks jy weet, sy moet wegbly van my, maar niks viesliks nie.

⁴⁶ 679-694:14, S2

K: Weet jy ek het al baie, immm, anderste perspektiewe gesien soos, immm P■■■■ het gisteraand saam met seuns na Maximus toe gegaan. Nou P■■■■ is straight soos die hel en ■■■■ is ‘n vrou meer as wat ek is, nou Maximus is ‘n gay club. Ag heeslaaik, .../ vlg. bl.

Kim replies, “I have seen so many different situations. Like, one of my friends, he’s straight. But he hangs out with a group of guys who are gay. I mean, one of those guys is much more of a women than I am. Obviously, he and his friends all know. But my friend, Jane, for example. She doesn’t know, and I don’t discuss it with her. Different people have different attitudes, and you can never be sure...”.

At this point, Kim begins to talk about her brother again. I sense that she is really concerned about him, and would like to see him get better for his own and for his mother’s sake, and, of course, for her own peace of mind as well. I let her talk freely while I listen attentively and my attitude demonstrates that I am supportive of her. It is hard for me to keep my distance as a researcher and not slide unconsciously into the therapeutic role. It is as though she is expressing some of her own unresolved anger by talking about him. I can see that this information will be too sensitive and too personal to include in my research.

At one stage, Kim pauses in her narrative and looks at me in earnest and says,⁴⁷ “You know, I still don’t know exactly what you’re doing with all this information.”

Then, even though I have explained my research process and aims to her, I think to myself that she might be feeling that perhaps she has shared too much.

dan wil ek vir [REDACTED] sien in daai gay club.

C: Mmm, die mense

K: Hy wou nie alleen badkamer toe gegaan het nie. Dan sê hy vir [REDACTED], “kom saam met my badkamer toe.”

C: Shame

K: Alles is weet en Jane die vriendinnetjie wat my kom oplaai, sy is “jis”, “ji” weet dit is, mense het baie “different perspectives” daaroor. So

C: Dit is “obviously” makliker om by [REDACTED] hulle uit te kom en te sê “yes” dit is ons “set up” maar soos Jane, wat doen jy daar?

K: Ja, dit is nog al.

C: Hou jy dit maar stil?

K: Ja, nee vir Jane, sy weet glad nie. Verstaan en, maar J [REDACTED] weet, en P [REDACTED] weet.

⁴⁷ 518:11, S2

K: Ek weet nog steeds nie presies wat jy doen met hierdie goed nie.

We continue chatting about what pseudonym we will use for her, and a few other details.

As I take my leave of her, I cannot help feeling a deep compassion for Kim, for her mother, and for her brother. At times things seem to go well and they get the acceptance they long for. Then, at other times, they become the unwilling victims of society's stereotypical thinking and prejudice. But in spite of their difficulties, they show a lot of love, compassion and concern for each other, and that, I believe, is what really matters. ⁴⁸As Kim said, "some times things happen in your life, and then you overcome it".

⁴⁸ 482-483:10, S2

K:goeters begin vir, gebeur in jou lewe en jy kom oor dit.

“We don’t talk about our parents”

I am seeing Luanne again today. As I drive to her house, I recall the many conversations we have had thus far, about the varied topics that interest her. In past sessions, we have discussed yoga, music of various kinds, thrillers (films), netball, subject choices, teachers, Christmas presents and cards, calligraphy, how one writes in Chinese, school grades, and many more besides. Apart from one occasion, she has always been in a good mood, cheerful and excited about what life has to offer when I have met her. When I met her family for the first time, she was especially happy. I remember how she enthusiastically jumped up and fetched her photograph album and immediately began to share a lot of her childhood memories with me.

I clearly remember our first formal contact session. We sat on couches opposite each other in their sitting room. I began with a few questions in the hope that the direction in which *she* wanted to take the conversation would soon become apparent. This then is how this session developed.

¹ “So, then, what do you call your two mothers, Luanne? ‘Mom and Hannah’? Or what?”

¹ 94- 111:3, S1

C: So wat noem jy jou twee ma’s. Ma en Hannah of wat?

L: Ja, Mamma en Hannah.

C: Alright ag dis nice.

L: Die kinders wat ook hier bly, sê ook, waar is jou twee ma’s?

C: [lag] Okay. Dit klink asof hulle heel alright is daaroor.

L: Ja

C: Praat hulle partykeer daaroor? Of vra hulle uit of?

L: Niks

C: O, Okay, net sulke toevallige comments.

L: Mm-uhh. Nee, net waar is jou twee ma’s? Nee hulle praat nie eintlik daaroor nie.

Hierdie kleurlingkie op die hoek, het presies die van ook, kan dit nie verstaan nie, baie mense het mos dieselfde vanne wat nie familie is nie, maar dit kom tog van een mens af?

Praat oor vanne; Praat oor Skei-Nat onderwyser wat baie gelowig is wat oorboord gaan; Praat oor gelowige vrae wat aan die onderwyser gestel is; Praat oor die skepping; Praat oor hoe daar verskillende gelowige sieninge oor die skepping is.

“Yes,” Luanne answers politely. “Mother and Hannah. The children that live around here also say, ‘Where are your two moms?’ “

Pleased by the fact that Luanne has immediately focused on the people who live in their neighbourhood, I ask, “It sounds as if the people around here are quite happy with you having two mothers?”

“Oh yes,” Luanne agrees. She then lapses back into her polite, alert but expectant silence.

I am rather taken aback by her response – more by the tone of her voice than by her answer. It was as though her “Yes” expressed an unspoken observation that my question might be rather naive and obvious. But I have become accustomed to being thought to be somewhat naïve (although never in an unkind way) by my youthful respondents. They certainly do live in a world that is very unlike the world of the past. But they do it, on the whole, with panache, style and courage.

But I remain focused on my researcher’s quest because I hope to be able to elicit from Luanne some examples of discrimination, difference or otherness, if indeed they have occurred. So I ask: “Do the kids around here sometimes talk about your two moms? Or perhaps ask you any searching questions?”

“No, never,” Luanne replies brightly.

I find Luanne’s response slightly incredible, and so I say, “Really? Nothing at all? Not even any spontaneous comments?”

Luanne seemed slightly bemused. “Hmm. Sometimes they might say, ‘Where are your two moms?’ or something like that. But, no. They don’t actually *talk* about my two moms.” She begins to digress by telling me about a little girl who lives nearby who has the same surname that they have, and then digresses further into observations about different surnames. She then tells me about her science teacher at school, and about all the interesting questions that the class ask him regarding religion and the creation of the universe.

As the intensity of her talk slowly begins to diminish, I ask myself various internal questions about my own subjectivity. Am I perhaps moving too fast with

questions that probe too personally before I have given Luanne time to trust me and the process that we are both involved in? I wonder why this might be happening. I then remind myself that the two children whom I interviewed before meeting Luanne had both immediately shared their negative and positive experiences with me. I suppose that I was half expecting that Luanne would also immediately share her range of diverse experiences as well. But perhaps she *is* comfortable with having same-gender parents. Perhaps it is just adults who struggle to accept the concept of same-gender parents – two mothers or two fathers as parents. I decide that I will not probe too deeply at first, but that I will first allow a stronger relationship of trust to develop. So I remain focused on her in a friendly and sympathetic way and allow her to take the conversation in whichever direction she wishes to take it.

I realise now that in my subsequent interviews with Luanne, I pursued this aim of allowing *her* to set the pace – in topics as well as in activities.² In our second interview, we made collages together and drew time lines of our lives. She told me a range of interesting childhood stories such as of the time when she broke her arm. She explained what they were planning for their forthcoming Christmas holiday. We talked about her dad who lives in London and about her two

² 2-20:1, S2

Chat net lekker – besluit om net verhouding te stig – nie iets te vra – net te kyk wat gebeur

Seated outside

Draw time line

Chat about many friends she has

Chat about before school - 4 years: broke arm – she wanted to fly

Primary school – being head girl

Now grade 8 & 9

Goes into detail about hair of friends, names

Close knit friends

Visits her house a lot

Had to move – not that nice, but okay

Teken spotprentjies

Eet lekker ysies en super C's

Gesels oor wat Kersfees gaan gebeur

stepsisters. I smile as she accurately mimics a certain kind of British accent. In fact, we had a lot of fun. Even though young, she has been great company.

We laughed while we ate ice cream and sucked sweets. She told me that she was the head girl in her primary school, and that she belonged to a small group of about five special friends, all girls, who have been friends since before they even went to primary school. I remember that I felt that in our second interview, we discussed everything except what my study was about. Then, in our third interview, I asked her about her friends, and we fortuitously ranged over other topics and issues as well. Here is what happened in that interview (related in the present tense).

We are sitting outside, and I ask Luanne:³ “Please tell me something about your nursery school or primary school days. Did the children ever say anything unkind to you about your mothers? Were they perhaps curious? Did they ask you questions of any kind?”

Luanne answers firmly. “No, the children just carried on as usual. And it wouldn’t have bothered me if they did.”

“But do you think that it might bother *them*?”

³ 164-177:4, S3

C: ...Vertel my van kleuterskool of laerskool, het kinders ooit vir jou iets lelik gesê of nasty gesê of... gewonder of vrae gevra?

L: Glad nie,

C: Die kinders gaan net aan.

L: Pla my nie.

C: Maar dink jy dit pla hulle?

L: Vir wie?

C: Vir jou maats, of ...dat hulle net wonder

L: Nee wat, ook een van my vriendinne se, ma hulle is ook gay, maar haar lewensmaat is nou oorlede, maar hulle is lankal al uitmekaar uit, nou bly sy en haar ma nou maar alleen.

C: O, Okay. Interessant.

L: So ek is nie die enigste een nie

C: Ek dink dit raak al meer en meer, dit raak baie algemeen.

“Who? My friends? No, one of my friend’s mom is also gay. But her partner died recently, and they had anyway been separated for a long time. Now, she and her mom live alone together. So, you see, I’m not the only one.”

She smiles.

“Hmm.” I not in agreement. “This kind of arrangement is becoming more and more common.” I am hoping that my casual acceptance of the “situation” will help her to relax so that she might eventually get into a frame of mind in which she might be willing to share more. I still don’t know whether or not she completely trusts me. I am heartened however to hear that she is aware that there are other families with gay parents as well. This knowledge must provide her with some sense of belonging.

Luanne seems willing to elaborate.⁴ “No, we don’t actually talk about it. Well, we don’t talk about *that*. No one talks about their moms and dads at school. We talk about things like Sewende Laan,⁵ music, boys, and new movies. ⁶ My friends are used to the set-up.”

“Okay”, I think to myself, “perhaps I have found a case study where everything is going smoothly and where there are no problems at all – as others who know about my research have predicted I would. But I wonder about Luanne’s short, even slightly abrupt, answers when I ask her about her same-gender parents. This is in such striking contrast to her extensive elaboration on just about every other topic we touch upon. This seems to me to indicate the existence of a fairly strong defence mechanism. Or perhaps she is truly just being herself and

⁴ 199-205:4, S3

L: Nee, ons praat nie eintlik daaroor nie...ons praat nie daaroor nie

C: Okay

L: Niemand praat oor hulle ma’s of pa’s by die skool nie. Ons praat van sewende laan en van musiek en seuns. (lag)

C: Okay

...

L: En nuwe fliks

⁵ One could translate this as “Seventh Avenue”. Luanne is referring to a popular South African local television soap opera.

⁶ 31:1, S5

L: Ja, hulle is gewoon daaraan

getting on with her daily life, and quite naturally finds the topic of “parents” (of whatever kind) rather boring. Perhaps I should give her the benefit of the doubt. She is, after all, only a teenager, and it is natural for teenagers to be more interested in their friends and their own activities rather than the ramifications of their parents’ relationships – or how they impinge on their life.

⁷”Okay, Luanne. You have already mentioned to me that you were the head girl of your school. How are things at school now? Is it something that has to be discussed? What about school functions or meetings?” I recall her parents saying that they had approached the principal of the primary school and had asked him whether their sexual orientation as co-parents would be a problem for the school, and he had firmly said “No.” It seems that both parents and Luanne had experienced the primary school as an affirming place – and a good choice from every point of view. But I am wondering if the same pleasant atmosphere has been transferred to Luanne’s high school.

⁸ “Hannah sometimes goes to school functions,” says Luanne, “and on parents’ evening, they go together as my two moms.”

⁷ 31:1, S6

C: Ek wonder of dit iets is wat gesê moet word?

&

14-16:1, Reflection notes Jan – March 2004

In laerskool vir hoof gaan vra of hulle oriëntasie vir die skool ‘n probleem gaan wees, of vir Luanne en skool het hulle op hulle hande gedra. Luanne was tot hoofmeisie verkies – baie maatjies en ‘n hele groep wat van kleintyd afkom.

⁸ 23-34:1, S6

L: Hannah gaan partykeer na funksies toe

L: Ek gaan nie saam nie – geen reaksie of vrae na die tyd nie

C: As hulle sou vra

L: Die onderwysers weet

C: Hoe weet hulle?

L: Ek weet nie, maar die hoof weet, want my Netbal juffrou van die laerskool weet en dis haar man

C: O dit maak sin

C: Ek wonder of dit iets is wat gesê moet word

L: Ek weet nie

C: In laerskool toe jy hoofmeisie was het iemand iets gesê

L: Nee

Aanpassing 20/01/05:

L: Hulle gaan oueraande toe en sê hulle is my twee ma’s

“So?” I ask, urging her to say more. “Do they make any comments or have any questions afterwards?”

“I don’t go to these events with them. But no, they don’t.”

I probe further. “How would it be if anyone asked you about your two moms?”

“Well, the teachers all know. I don’t know how they know. But the principal’s wife was my netball teacher in primary school. So I guess...”.

Luanne remains silent for a moment, and then adds in a quiet voice:⁹ “But it is actually *wrong* to be gay. The Bible says so.”

I remain silent, allowing the importance of what she has just disclosed to register and be appreciated. Of course, I would never dream of engaging in a religious debate with her. I just want her to have a space to share – if that is what she wants to do. My challenge, as I see it, is to provide her with a safe and containing space in which she can freely share her thoughts and emotions – if she wants to.

Luanne continues, unaware of my private thoughts. “I think it’s in Romans, chapter 1. A teacher once told us that if you ever do ‘it’, even once, the Lord will never forgive you because He did not create women for women or men for men. He made man and woman so that they could be together. That’s why it is supposed to be a very big sin.

⁹178-196:4, S3

L: Maar dit is eintlik verkeerd om gay te wees, want dit staan in die Bybel. Ek dink dis in Romeine 1, want ons onderwyser het ons eenkeer vertel dat as jy dit eenkeer doen.

C: O, Okay

L: Want as jy dit eenkeer gedoen het gaan die Here jou nooit kan vergewe daarvoor nie, want hy het nie ‘n vrou en ‘n vrou of ‘n man en ‘n man saamgesit nie, hy’t ‘n man en ‘n vrou gemaak. Dis hoekom, dit is eintlik baie groot sonde, maar nou ja

C: En toe jy dit die dag by die skool hoor, toe was jy seker baie upset?

L: Ag, nee, dit was maar ‘n skok gewees.

C: Ja, en ek dink meer vir jou omdat jou gesin dan verkeerd is, want ek dink die ander kinders sal luister en dink ja, okay sure, maar ek dink vir jou is dit soos in, ‘n personal issue.

L: Ja

C: Want jy moet terugkom vandag en dan kyk jy vir jou ma en dan kyk jy vir jou ma en dan dink, weet sy dit, wat dink sy daarvan? Praat jy met haar daarvoor.

L: Nee, nie eintlik nie.

C: Dit sou vir my upsetting wees. Ek probeer my nou in jou skoene indink.

L: Ja, nee. Ek gaan maar net aan met die lewe

¹⁰ “I actually find that very confusing,” she continues, “because – what if two people *really* love each other? Look at this new law that parliament has passed, it makes it legal for gay people to marry. And if one take into account what the church said the other day. Sometimes I just don’t understand what’s going on.”

I wonder how Luanne must have felt in that classroom when that teacher expounded his personal, radically fundamentalist understanding of what the Bible means, perhaps (or perhaps not?) unaware that there was a child (perhaps more than one child) who might be deeply upset and alienated by his dogmatic expression of opinion.

I therefore respond sympathetically and carefully by saying, “It must have upset you quite a lot when he said that about gay people.”

Her reply is nonchalant, but I can feel a twinge of her pain. “Oh no. But it was quite a shock.”

Of course, I agree with her. I can just imagine what might have been going through her mind and heart at that moment, because she had already told me that the staff of the school probably all know about her same-gender parents. In any event, I am stunned by the insensitivity of the teacher’s remarks, especially in a country like South Africa which has become a world leader in pioneering gay rights in the Bill of Rights and legislation.

“Well, Luanne, I can barely imagine what must have going through your mind that day. I would have been very upset. I mean, some of the children there might have been influenced by what he said. But, for you, I think that this is a very personal issue.”

Luanne nods her head in agreement, and whispers “Yes.”

¹⁰ Created on 20/01/05 as part of member checking and co-construction of events.

Aanpassing 20/01/05:

L: En hulle is Christene, hulle glo in die Here. Ek weet dit staan in die Bybel, maar wat nou as twee mense lief is vir mekaar; en kyk wat het die wet nou gesê en die kerk. Ek verstaan dit nie aldag nie.

“And you had to go back home after school that day, look at your mom, and perhaps think, ‘I wonder if she knows that? If she does, I wonder what she thinks about that?’ Did you tell her what happened?”

“No, I didn’t actually.” Luanne is beginning to sound slightly defensive, and perhaps even a bit tired.

“It certainly would have been upsetting for me,” I add. “I am trying to think how I would have felt if I had been in your shoes.”

Luanne just shrugs, and says flatly, “Well, what can you do? I just get on with my life.”

I wonder how she accommodates the Christian view to her personal circumstances, and ask,¹¹ “I don’t know if you think about this, Luanne, but when a person realises that they are gay, and they are also a Christian, they can get caught in a terrible struggle because of what they *think* the Bible says and because of the negative way in which some ministers talk about being gay.

“What I wonder is whether the *children* of gay parents sometimes feel the same pain that their parents feel – even though they are not gay themselves. I wonder if the children of gay parents ever wonder if society will accept *them* – because

¹¹ 41:1-55:2, S6

C: Ek weet nie of jy baie daaroor dink nie, maar as iemand self besef hulle is gay, en hulle is 'n Christen, dan is dit nogal 'n ding waarneem hulle worstel oor wat die Bybel sê, of hoe die dominees daaroor praat. Hoe erg dink jy daaroor?

L: Ek dink nie baie daaroor nie

C: Ek wonder nogal daaroor of kinders van gay ouers, amper dieselfde is soos kinders wat self gay is, wat wonder oor gaan die samelewing my aanvaar, oor die Bybel se goed en so

L: Sy frons, ek weet nie, imm, uhh,

C: Het jy ooit gewonder of bly jy wonder oor

L: Ek dink nie baie daaroor nie, dis, dit was eenkeer ook daai meneer wat gesê het imm, 7de laan is uit en sulke goed, hy't ook daaroor gepraat, en toe't ek baie daaroor begin wonder, want ek weet nie, hy't ook die stukkie gesê ek dink dis Romeine 1, waar daar staan God het 'n man en vrou gemaak vir mekaar en nie 'n vrou en 'n vrou of 'n man en 'n man nie, en toe't ek maar net daaroor gewonder en toe't ek weer daarvan vergeet

Aanpassing 20/01/05:

L: En hulle is Christene, hulle glo in die Here. Ek weet dit staan in die Bybel, maar wat nou as twee mense lief is vir mekaar; en kyk wat het die wet nou gesê en die kerk. Ek verstaan dit nie aldag nie.

of what people think the Bible says, and so on. What are your opinions about this, Luanne?”

Luanne frowns, looks thoughtful, and then answers slowly. “I must say that I don’t really know a lot of people who aren’t Christians. But my parents are. They believe in God. Hmm. I really don’t think about that a lot, to be honest. On that one occasion when that teacher said what he said, I did think about it quite a lot. But then I thought about it less and less, and now, I don’t think about it at all.”

In the week that follows this interview, I constantly turn over in my mind what Luanne has so generously told me. I battle to find the “right way” to approach her – if such a thing as a “right way” exists. I question whether I have handled the situation appropriately by not appraising her of the opposing gay-friendly and gay-justifying views in that particular religious debate. I realise that she is also negotiating with the outside world from the point of view of her own private interior world, and that this process not only takes place from the inside to the outside. It is always a two-way process. We also construct our particular meanings, identities and solutions from what gets said and done “out there”. What sometimes gets said “out there” does not necessarily reach the inner sanctum of the family.

I cannot banish the thought that even if Luanne manages to forget about this ugly and unfortunate incident altogether, it could nevertheless remain in her subconscious and therefore negatively affect the way that she will relate to her mother for the rest of her life. What I can see however is that she has adopted an efficient strategy to manage the situation – at least for the present. To forget about it and not to dwell on this perennially virulent debate between religious fundamentalists and those who subscribe to a more compassionate view of how gay people might be accommodated in their spiritual beliefs, is essentially a practical approach to a problem that will not easily go away.

I am encouraged by the fact that Luanne seems to be able to distance herself from negative comments. I also sense that she can see and is aware of her parents' happiness. In previous interview, she mentioned many of the positive elements in her relationship with her parents. So I have come to realise that – on a certain level, at least – she successfully manages not to let cruel religious opinions about gayness to overwhelm her confidence in herself and her parents. This ability enables her to manage and continue with her ordinary day-to-day life. In our first meeting, she said:¹² “My moms always tease me by saying, ‘Love will be enough for Christmas!’ But then they always spoil me so much. I don’t think they always realise how much I appreciate it.”

At one stage, I specifically ask Luanne:¹³ “What do you like about having two mothers?”

Luanne laughed rather self-consciously when I asked this question. Then she said: “I like it because a mother is always protective, and because of that, I can see that it is not always easy for them to say “yes”. We are also so close. I think that the times I enjoy most are when we go out and have picnics together, and do fun things like that.

¹² 135-139:3, S1

L: Ek weet nie wat om vir my ma-hulle te gee vir Kersfees nie, want hulle het al alles.

En hulle sê altyd, nee, liefde sal genoeg wees vir Kersfees.

C: Ag maar dit is vir hulle bederf.

L: En hulle bederf my altyd so baie, partykeer kom hulle nie agter ek waardeer dit nie.

¹³ 47:1-55:2, S5

C: Okay, en terug my vraag van die otherness, hoe’s dit met 2 ma’s

L: Lag verleë, dis okay, dis lekker

C: Wat is lekker, wat is okay, wat is dalk bietjie minder okay

L: Imm, ‘n ma is mos altyd so beskermend, so dit is nie altyd maklik vir hulle om ja te sê nie (lag)

C: Imm

L: Maar dis lekker as ons uitgaan en piekniek hou en so

C: Hoekom dink jy is ma’s so beskermend?

L: Ek weet nie, want mens is nader aan mekaar, mm,

¹⁴ “Of course, it’s easier, I suppose, to get past them than it would be to get past a father – except that Hannah always asks me why I want to do something before she will say “Okay”.¹⁵ I can see that that is a good thing. The truth always gets out anyway in the long run. Sometimes I feel that they are handling some matter unfairly. Yes, they are both strict with me. But I can see that they are like that because they want to protect me and because they love me.”

Today will be our last session before I return for member checking. I view this session as a formality in which I will establish some closure and just spend some time with her. Some weeks have passed since I last saw Luanne. In the first few weeks, I interviewed her every week so that we would both have opportunities to establish trust and rapport. But I know that she has been busy with her netball trials and various matches, and with examinations as well. I am almost at their house, and I review in my mind our conversation of the previous session so that I will be prepared to pick up the connections. I had used that session to probe her about her friends and her relationships with her peers at school for the last time, as I sensed her frustration with my repeated probes regarding this theme. Today I brought a video with me and I am merely aiming

¹⁴ 147-150:3, S3

L: ..maar daar is ook jy moet ook altyd verby jou pa kom, [lag] so dit is nie eintlik moeilik om verby my ma te kom nie.

C: So dis jou voordeel.

L: Ja, [lag] en as ek vir H vra, sal sy eers vir my vra, hoekom wil ek dit doen.

¹⁵ 101:2, S5

L: ... die waarheid kom altyd uit

&

117-123:3, S5

L: Dit voel net partykeer of hulle dit unfair hanteer

C: Okay, soos in hoe

L: Ai, (sug) ek weet nie

C: Sê, ...ek kan sien jou kop is vol dinge

L: Hoe moet ek dit sê

C: Ek gee voorbeelde van party kids sê hulle luister nie, ander is ongelooflike streng

L: Hulle is streng, hulle is net protected oor my, ja

to informally spend some time with her. I began our previous session together by saying:

¹⁶ “We are nearing the end of our process together, Luanne. I have been going through the notes that I made during our sessions and everything that we discussed.

“What I am still wondering about is how you manage to cope so well with having two lesbian mothers. Most of the other young people I have interviewed have described incidents such as people asking questions...”.

Luanne interrupts me by saying, “When we meet someone that we don’t know and whose attitudes are unknown to us, we just say that Hannah is my aunt, so no one actually knows.”

“Is that right?” I reply. “That sounds to me like a decision that you all made together, like an ‘unwritten rule’ – although I don’t want to use the word ‘rule’.”

“Yes, it is,” says Luanne.

I ask whether any discussions ever take place at school about the different kinds of families that one finds in modern life, and whether the children talk about that independently of what is discussed in the classroom.

¹⁶ 18-26:1, S5

C: Want imm, by my het die vraag opgekom oor jou is, hoe kry jy dit reg om so okay te wees oor jou ma-hulle, imm, want baie kids het insidente wat gebeur het, soos iemand wat iets vra of..

L: Niemand weet eintlik nie

C: Ja, so dit is dalk ook 'n rede

L: Ons sê ook altyd Hannah is my tannie, so

C: Dit klink of dit so 'n gesamentlike besluit is, so 'n unwritten rule, ek wil nou nie die woord reël gebruik nie

L: Ja

Aanpassing 20/01/05:

Ons sê so as daar onbekende mense is; Hannah sal maklik sê sy is my ma, of bv. by werk sê ek is haar dogter. Net as mens weet nie hoe ander gaan optree nie, dan sê ons sy's my tannie.

¹⁷ “Children don’t tease each other any more about their parents being divorced – because just about everybody comes from a divorced family,” Luanne replies in a matter-of-fact way.

I realise that Luanne also comes from a divorced family, and I wonder if she reveals her own family identity at school.

But Luanne says very firmly: “But / am not going to say that my mother has a girlfriend. I just keep quiet.”

In my researcher’s role as “devil’s advocate”,¹⁸ I ask: “What then do you say if someone asks you who Hannah is? Would you say that she’s your aunt, or a friend of your mom’s, or what?”

“I would just tell them that she is my aunt because I never know whether they will reject me or not because of that, or perhaps become judgemental or unpleasant. It is not necessary for *everyone* to know these details. But if they ask me directly, I will tell them.”

The clarity of Luanne’s reply provides an excellent answer to my desire to know how she handles meeting new people and whether her having two mothers would become an issue on such occasions. In order merely to confirm what I have learned, I ask her about how she would handle her new boyfriend in the same situation.¹⁹ “What – if anything – would you tell him about your moms being together as a couple?”

¹⁷ 64-65:2, S6

L: Kinders spot nie meer oor geskeide kinders nie, omtrent almal se kinders is geskei; sy sal nie sê haar ma het nou ‘n girlfriend nie, bly net stil

¹⁸ 18-21:1, S6

Vriende van kleins af en hulle is gewoon, praat nie oor ouers, daar's belangriker goed, nie nuwe maats (ons is 'n hele groep wat saamkom van laerskool af)

Ek vra: As ander vra oor wie's dit, sê jy tannie of vriendin

Sy sê: Tannie

Aanpassing 20/01/05: dis nie nodig dat hulle weet. As hulle sou vra sal ek sê, want ek weet nie as ek dit sê of hulle my gaan accept of judge daaroor nie.

¹⁹ 68-70:2, S6

C: ...”wat het vir hom gesê van ma-hulle?”

L: Ek dink nie hy weet nie, maar ek dink die aand toe hy hier was toe kom hy dit seker agter

Luanne laughs. “I didn’t think that he even realised at first. But when he spent the night at our house, I think that he probably did realise it.”

It seems therefore that Luanne and her same-gender parents live with a comfortable degree of openness and acceptance, although they are wisely cautious when they come into contact with strangers whose attitudes are unknown to them. The acceptance, love and relative openness in this family seem to indicate to me that gay families are perhaps finally becoming more settled in themselves and in the communities in which they live.

Another possibility is that families with what would once have been regarded as families with atypical structures (single parents, same-gender parents, grandparent(s) acting as parents, and so on) are now so common as not to attract notice or attention – except perhaps from religious bigots and others with hostile agendas of their own.

Because Luanne and nearly all modern children grow up in families that would have been regarded as highly “irregular” a hundred or even fifty years ago, perhaps it is thus the case that Luanne and her friends no longer consciously think about family structures anymore, and that they just carry on with their lives and regard themselves as normal.

I arrive at the gate and park my car in the driveway. I am looking forward – as I always do – to this session because Luanne never fails to make me feel most welcome. It is certainly pleasant to be back once again in their now familiar surroundings. I remember during my first conversation with Hannah²⁰, Hannah mentioned that the parents of one friend had forbidden their daughter to visit

²⁰ 19-20:1, Reflection notes Jan – March 2004

Nog net een van die maats se ouers het haar belet om daar oor te slaap, maar sy mag nou wel al soontoe kom as hulle die take doen.

their house for sleepovers. But, interestingly, since they have both been in high school, those same parents now allow their daughter to visit the house again – but only if their daughters are busy with school-related assignments. I wonder whether Luanne will be willing to share something about this experience with me, or whether she has forgotten about it.

In any case, I have brought a video with me that shows a selection of American children talking about their gay mothers and their experiences, and we watch it together. When the videotape reaches its end, Luanne turns around to me and says,²¹ “Carie, last time we talked about me how I tell people that Hannah is my aunt. Do you know what happened this week? Well, there is this little girl who lives nearby us. She went and said to her mother that she also wants two mothers like me, and she asked Hannah, ‘Are you Luanne’s second mom? Or her other mom?’ “ But Hannah said, ‘No, I am Luanne’s aunt’. But the little girl refused to believe her, and she insisted, ‘No! You are Luanne’s other mommy’ until Hannah eventually had to say, ‘Okay, okay, I *am* her other mom.’ Then this little kid said, ‘Oh, that’s *so cool!*’ Both Luanne and I laugh appreciatively.

I suddenly become aware of the considerable impact that our conversations are having on Luanne’s thinking. In a previous session she had merely mentioned that she tells people that Hannah is her aunt – when there seems to be no reason for more accurate disclosure. But now she has progressed to a point where she is able to reflect on how Hannah herself handles similar situations. I feel a bit concerned.

²¹ 4-13:1, S7

L: Ons het laas keer gepraat oor ek wat gesê het Hannah is my tannie né, maar H sê dit eintlik self meer, want die meisietjie wat hier bly, sy sê vir haar ma, “mommy, I want two moms”. En toe vra sy vir H nou die aand “are you Luanne's second mom or her other mom “, en toe sê H “nee , ek’s haar tannie”, so H sê ook eintlik meer sy’s my tannie

C: O

L: Toe sry die kleintjie met haar, “no, but you’re her other mommy” toe hou sy heelyd so aan toe sê H, “okay, okay I’m her other mom”

C: Dis eintlik mooi gestel

L: Ja die kind het gesê dis cool.

As if reading my thoughts, Luanne says: ²² “But she easily says at work that I am her child, and there might be other times when she might say that she is my mom. Everyone that knows us, knows.”

“I am wondering,” I ask Luanne, “how you guys decide when to say that Hannah is not your mom but your aunt. When would you all do that? And what would influence your decision? Is it because of the pressures of society? Or is it just more convenient to say that Hannah is your aunt rather than your mother?”

Luanne answers with what seems to be a slight flash of irritation and/or defiance. “We just don’t want to *advertise* that my parents are gay. We all just want to get on with our everyday lives, and we hardly ever bring up questions like this when we are alone. In the case of this girl, I guess Hannah said “aunt” out of respect for her age. She’s so young! Not everyone is open and okay with this kind of situation. *She* might think it’s ‘so cool’. But how can we know what her parents will say?”

I ponder the good sense inherent in her reply as I wrap up our conversation. I wish her good luck with her studies and with the remainder of the week’s activities. I conclude that Luanne is happy and contented with her situation. She is surrounded by friends whom she has grown up with and by teachers who know her situation, and she has no need to constantly explain or protect herself or to process other people’s discomfort, prejudice or scruples. Luanne face radiates happiness as she waves goodbye to me as I drive off.

²² Aanpassing 20/01/05:

L: Ons sê so as daar onbekende mense is; Hannah sal maklik sê sy is my ma, of bv. by werk sê ek is haar dogter. Net as mens weet nie hoe ander gaan optree nie, dan neem ons die veiliger roete en sê sy’s my tannie.

C: Okay, en teenoor die kleinding, hoekom sal julle eerder verkies om Hannah as jou ‘tannie’ te construct?

L: Ek dink sy was maar net versigtig, nie almal is ewe oop oor die goed nie, sy’s klein, mens weet nie hoe sy daarop sal reageer nie. Ek dink Hannah het haar maar net beskerm, uit respek. Ons leef net gewoonweg, ons kry nie sulke vrae nie. Almal wat ons ken weet.

16-18:1, S7

C: .. en die kind sê sy’s jou ma, en sy sê nee, en nou kan mens vra hoekom sê sy dit, is dit oor die samelewing wat ..., wil sy dit wegsteek, is dit maar net makliker om so 'n term te gebruik

“You’re trying to put together your puzzle...”

Tom walks in, juggling a rugby ball, and then, with one leap, he jumps over the back of the couch and onto the seat next to me. “Hmm,” I think, “here is someone filled with self-confidence.” He is probably a bit annoyed by the fact that he has had to leave an informal game of rugby with his neighbourhood pals to talk to this “researcher”.

We begin by chatting informally about rugby trials and what pseudonym we will use for him. He has the same name as his father and grandfather, and he is proud of his family legacy. This is the second time that I am interviewing Tom. On the first occasion, I interviewed him, his sister and brother. So now, to get the conversation rolling, I refer back to something that he had told me on the first occasion.

¹ “You told me last time that, basically, all your friends know about your mom and your Aunt Sandy... That, it’s like general knowledge among them. How did that come about?”

“Oh yes. I don’t know, to be honest. I think that I told about half of them. The others, they just seemed to know. Some, like, just ask me. When they hear about the set-up, they’re fine. They’re cool with it. It’s fine. It’s normal. It’s nothing.”

He emanates that same nonchalant and unconcerned vibe that I remember in him from our previous interview. I remember that when I had asked him then about what he thought about my research topic, he had replied in that cool,

¹ 11-15:1, S2

C: You've told me last time that basically all your friends know about mom and auntie Sandy, that you... ja, like general knowledge. How did that happen?

T: Ag ja, I don't know I think that I told half of them and the others, they just know.

C: They don't

T: No they just like come over and they just ask me. It's fine, it's normal, it's nothing.

matter-of-fact voice: ² “Hmm. It’s okay. It’s fine. Interesting – because I guess you won’t find many researchers who write about that.” Now he is using the same vocabulary of approval: ‘It’s nothing. It’s fine. It’s normal.’

³“I see,” I say as I collect my thoughts. “But, do they actually ever ask? I mean, they wouldn’t come here for some time and say nothing surely... So, at some stage...”

Tom cuts me off with a flicker of a grin: “Yes, they ask – but only to confirm what they already see.”

“They confirm. They are making sure.” I reflect his statements back to him. I am really trying to reach him at some deeper level so that I will be able to understand him as sympathetically and accurately as possible.

Tom, undeterred, continues: “Half of my friends who come here think it’s... You know... That it’s supposed to be like that.”

I find this very interesting. I am surprised and excited by my breakthrough. This is the first time that Tom has come up with something really valuable on a deeper level.

“Is that right?” I ask.

“Yes. Because most of my friends never knew me when my dad lived here. My dad just wouldn’t allow anyone to come and visit us.

² 106-107:2, S1

To: I thought it was interesting cause you don't get many writers that do that, so for me it was like wow

³ 16-25:1, S2

C: Okay, but then they do ask? It's not like they come here and it is like mmm okay?

T: Ja,

C: So, they at some stage

T: To make sure

C: Confirm, make sure, confirm.

T: No, half of them think it's, you know, it's like suppose to be like that.

C: Really?

T: 'cause most of my friends knew me with my dad and he never let them come over.

⁴ So, when my mom and my dad still lived here together, I just never had any friends at all because, well, no-one came over, and we never did anything that involved other people. I was friends with the next door neighbour's daughter," he says with a smile. "But I never even brought her around. I suppose I was what you might call your neighbourhood nerd.

⁵ "So, naturally, my friends from school – they are all totally in love with this new arrangement."

What a way with words he has. Tom, starts to laugh, and I laugh too. "This new arrangement. What is it? Having two mothers?" (I bite my tongue. I know that I should never lead with a ready-made answer like that. I lecture myself briefly in silence.) Tom just nods pleasantly in agreement.

⁶ "Okay. So how do you handle the situation when your friends come over here and find two women who are both your parents?"

"It's no problem because my mom told me that she would behave normally – and she does."

⁴ 114-126:3, S2

T: Okay, when my mom and my dad were together I never had any friends.

C: Mmm, okay.

T: Because no-one came over, no-one did anything. I was friends with the next door neighbour's daughter. She was like dead. And she was like uh...

C: And at school? How were things there? Were they fine?

T: No, if you had friends at school you like wanted to visit teach other more often, just like now we're so use to it.

C: Did you invite friends and when they came over it was like a terrible atmosphere here, with dad? Or did you just decide that you're not going to, you weren't going to invite anyone over?

T: I didn't, I didn't want them to know about anything.

C: So you were like the...

T: I never brought them around, I was like a real nerd

⁵ 26-27:1 S2

C: Okay, so.

T: They are totally in love with the new thing.

⁶ 310-314:6, S2

C: Okay, so how did you handle your friends coming over and there's this lady or ladies in the house.

T: No my mom told me she would act normal.

C: And what does that mean? Act normal?

T: Like, they're like friends.

“Normal”, It is a word that I constantly hear and is so easy to use. But in the gay world it can have a radically different meaning. What I find the most moving and enriching of all is that, to gay people, and to those families who have adapted to their orientation, which many in the “world” might regard as abnormal, deviant and sinfully exotic, is to them the normal fabric of everyday reality. Indeed, it is a reality that they hardly ever even think about. It just is. It is just here. And now, if they have to think about it, they think, “It is our reality, and it is none of anyone else’s business.”

Nevertheless, continuing to probe, as I must, I ask, “What does ‘behave normally’ mean to you, Tom?”

He smiles. “It’s, like, they’re friends.”

⁷ “Okay. But, now, what do you tell your friends? Do you say something like, ‘Hmm. I just want to tell you that I have two moms, and they are both gay,’ or what?”

⁷ 29:1-54:2, S2

C: What do you tell your friends? Do you say that, okay I have two moms or do you say that my mom's gay, or how do you say it? What do you say?

T: I just say that my moms with another woman and if they have a problem they must just say so. And they won't do anything. And they won't do anything funny, they're just like normal people. And they say, 'Ja I know'.

C: Mmmm

T: And then it just carries on. And then we don't talk about it anymore . It's just like something long ago.

C: Ja, its just this once off, confirm, making sure and then its....

T: ...moving on

C: Okay so you know what your friends are like..and they don't ask what's going on? And how does it work? Or any clever questions after that. Okay, which is actually a bit of a relief hey?

T: Ag, I don't mind. It's normal

C: Mm ja, aaah, if you think it's that normal why do you think you have to tell them?

T: Just so that they feel more comfortable. So it doesn't help I keep secrets from them and then they feel there's something happening and they don't what to be here again. Me and my friends are very straight forward with each other, we have this big thing

C: Mmm, so its almost like you'll be hiding something from them if you don't , ja, put it out in the open. Okay. When do you decide to tell them? Just before they come or when you arrange, like for a...

T: No, when they, the moment I see they feel uncomfortable. Because sometimes they like, they just look at my mom, and just get that, you know, funny feeling. I'm not suppose to be here. It's not the right place to be. (short nervous laugh)

Now I am really probing – and I hope that he rises to the bait.

“I just say that my mom lives with another woman – and if they have a problem with that, then they must just tell me. My mothers won’t do anything, like anything funny, they are just normal people. But of course, they don’t have a problem, and they never react negatively. If I do happen to tell someone who hasn’t been here before, he will just say something like ‘Ja, I see. It’s okay’ – or something like that. But it’s a matter of no real interest to them. We don’t sit around and talk about it. It’s just like something that happened a long time ago.”

Tom is oblivious to my inner conversations with myself, and – to my great relief – seems to have no problem with answering my probing research questions in some detail.

I try to sum it up by saying, “So, if you do have to tell someone, it’s just a once-off event. They confirm. They make sure, and then they...”.

“Move on,” Tom interjects, completing my sentence.

I get the impression that in those relatively few cases where he needs to disclose, it is a one-off event – which, it seems, is a matter of no great importance to either him or to his friends. Popular youth culture, especially the world of music and DJs, it seems, has made young people accustomed to alternative sexual orientations.

But, just to confirm that it is indeed so, I continue to ask further questions. “Okay, Tom, so you know your own friends and what kind of people they are. They, of course, don’t ask questions like ‘What’s going on?’ or ‘How does it work?’ – or any such-like questions. So I guess that must make it easier for you?”

“Well, it’s not a problem if they need to ask. I really don’t mind. It’s normal.” As in our past discussions, he remains cool and unflustered by my relentless questioning.

So I take a different line. “If it’s so normal, then why do you bother to tell them?” “As I said, I would only mention it if someone were unfamiliar with the set-up in my house. When I invite my friends to my house, I want them to feel comfortable. So then, if they don’t know about my two mothers, I tell them. It doesn’t help if I keep secrets from them and then they have to wonder what is going on. But then they understand. I put them in the picture. My friends and I are all very straightforward with each other. It’s our big thing,” he says with some pride.

“So at what point would you tell someone who has not been to your house before? Before they arrive at your house, when you are arranging the visit, or at which stage?”

“No. I would tell them if I see that they are uncomfortable. Sometimes, a new friend arrives. They see my two moms. I don’t know what they are thinking, but it feels funny. It is as though they suspect something. They’re like, ‘I’m not supposed to be here, it’s not the right place to be.’” He smiles, but continues.

⁸ “When they look a bit suspicious, I just tell them quietly what the set-up is.”

Tom laughs again. Perhaps it is a nervous laugh.

“So you might see that they are feeling awkward?”

“Yes. And then I just explain what is going on. As soon I detect that they are feeling uncomfortable and not acting normal, then I tell them. I ask them what is wrong and when they withdraw a little, I ask them gently if they have a problem,

⁸ 314-328:6, S2

T: Like, they’re like friends. And then later on they like got this small suspicion and I just cut in

C: Okay, but by that stage you knew?

T: Ja.

C: So how did you help then?

T: No I just asked them what’s wrong and then when they pull back a little I just tell them. Then I ask them if they have a problem and if they feel comfortable and if I can do something for them, if it’s okay. And if they’re not sure how to speak to their parents my mom could contact them

C: Ag shame. How do you think they suspected? When you say they get a little suspicious, why do you think that’s..

T: No, they like when they play here and my mom is here, whatever and they’ll go around the corner and they’ll just think weird, say like they’re holding hands...

C: Oh, okay and you never asked your mom not to hold hands?

T: No! (verbaas)

if it's OK for them, and if I can explain how it works. Basically, I want them to feel okay. So if they feel unable to explain how we live to their parents, I tell them that my mom could contact their parents and tell them about our household – if that's what they would prefer.”

“What do you think makes them feel awkward?” I ask.

“Well, it's an unusual situation. Let's say they are staying over here,” Tom continues. “They might be staying here with me, and during the weekend, they might go round a corner and see my moms, like, holding hands. And then, because they're not used to it, they might think, ‘Wow! That's weird! Two women holding hands...’.”

This is the first time that Tom has been so open with me, so I cannot help but ask, “Okay. So have you asked your moms not to hold hands?”

“No!” Tom seems astounded that I should even ask such a question. But he explains nevertheless.

⁹ “After I explain to them what the family structure is, we all just carry on living our lives, enjoying ourselves like we always do. We relax, and go on playing –

⁹ 55-113:2, S2

C: So they'll get that feeling on their faces.

T: Ja, and I just help them out. After that they just carry on and get more comfortable like they use to and do exactly what they use to. Like, they, we always do it, we go into each others cupboards and stuff.

C: (laughter)

T: And the moment I see that they're not acting normal, then I tell them that, and then they just go back and act normal.

C: Okay, so you can see the difference.

T: Ja,

C: Afterwards , so that's like a nice, it's a yes, a confirmation that you've picked up the something's not right here.

T: Ja

C: Okay, that's interesting.

T: Cause, my friend's parents once were also, with the mom and dad, then the mom left the dad, she thought she was gay, then they went back together. So they all understand the whole concept.

C: Okay, all right, with one of the other friends or with mom?

T: No, with friend. He lives about two blocks away.

C: Okay, so that also happened to him?

T: So he knows, it's nothing.

just like other kids do. We're not any different from other kids. We go into each others cupboards and stuff like that."

We both laugh at this, and I say, "I think I begin to understand. You help them if they don't understand... If they seem uncomfortable. And when you start playing again and everything has settled down, you have this sense of confirmation that you were right in sensing that they felt awkward."

"Exactly," replies Tom.

C: Mmm and your other friend's parents? How do they react or feel or ... what in this situation?

T: Ag they, they I don't know. They don't even, I don't know, I don't think they even talk about it or know about it.

C: But no-one's got trouble with it? Like they can't visit?

T: My friends don't even tell them, 'cause it's nothing

C: Mmm, but don't you think your parents, or their parents like, drops them here and just see if everything's fine.

T: Ja, they know it, they know everything's all right.

C: Okay, all right, okay,

T: We know everything of them and they, it's like a whole big bash thing.

C: It's actually nice to have everything in the open and no secrets. To be very straightforward like you say. Um, you said you've told half a bunch last year or somewhere before, like was it like in a group? A big group of them together or did you speak to each of them individually, single?

T: Ja, single,

C: Okay, single

T: After I told my one friend, his mom had big problems and she come and spoke to my mom about what she had experienced

C: Tell me about that. This sounds interesting.

T: Okay, my parents were divorced and his parents were getting divorced and his mom had this big break down.

C: About the divorce?

T: Ja, and then she thought she was becoming gay, and she never knew, she feels that she is, but she knows that she isn't. So she's spoke to my mom and they talked

C: Alright, interesting, and she went back to her husband?

T: Ja, she didn't really talked to my mom about the gay thing. She was just trying to find where she is in the world and she got lost and now they're together again and happy. We still see each other every single day.

C: That's nice! It sounds like a nice support system. How was it before, just fill me in, about when mom got divorced. Um, met this new person in her life, with her partner, and you telling your friends. How was it before that? Because now you're in a very happy space. I can see that. It's okay, it's fine, it's normal, but somehow I sense it wasn't always like that?

T: In the beginning.

C: Ja, so tell me about that stage.

T: From when?

C: You can decide.

“Okay, that’s interesting.”

Tom continues to expand in response to my interest.

“The mother of one of my friend’s left his father. My parents were already divorced, and his parents were in the process of getting divorced when his mom had this big nervous breakdown. His mom was having a really bad time, so she came to speak to my mom to ask her about her experiences and how she had coped.

“This lady thought that she might be gay, or thought that she might be ‘becoming’ gay, but she wasn’t sure. Her feelings told her that she was gay, but her head couldn’t go there. She was in denial and conflict.

“So she talked to my mom about her difficulties. I could see that she was trying to find where and how she fitted into the world – and where she had lost her way. But she and her husband are together again, and they are happy now.”

“So the son of this lady – the one I’m telling you about – was the first friend I ever told. I felt that he needed to understand the whole concept and to be at ease with it. We still see each other every single day. He lives about two blocks away. Now he knows that it is no big deal, and he’s okay.”

I think appreciatively of this young man’s beautiful way with words. What a valuable support system for him – to have a friend who has been through almost the same experiences as he has, and, it seems, almost at the same time.

“But what about your other friends’ parents? Do you know how they react or feel?” I wonder whether other parents are quite so accepting.

“Oh, I don’t know. I suppose that they don’t even talk about it or know anything about it. My friends wouldn’t tell them because it’s certainly not important to them. They know everything is all right.”

“Okay.”

“We know everything about each other.”

“It’s actually nice to have everything in the open and no secrets,” I add. “To be – like you say – straightforward. It sounds as though it creates a really good support system.

“But how was it before? Please just fill me in, if you don’t mind, Tom. Could you tell me how you coped with the divorce, when your mom met this new person in her life, a new partner, and how and what you told your friends?

“What was it like before your lives settled down? Because now I can see that you are in a very happy space. I can see that clearly, and that’s good. It’s wonderful, in fact. As you have said, ‘it’s normal, it’s okay, it’s fine.’ But somehow I sense that it wasn’t always like that.”

“You want to know about the beginning?” Tom asks.

“Yes please. If you can tell me about that stage... .”

“From when?”

“You decide, Tom.”

“Okay, it was like this. When my mom and my dad were together,¹⁰ they constantly fought and quarrelled. It was, like, hell. My mom would be standing there, then my dad would get into a rage and punch a hole in a door. Oddly enough, my dad never hit my mom. He never ever touched her. But he would hit everything around her. There were holes in various doors – and smashed objects littered all around the house.

¹¹ “So when my dad was here, it was absolutely awful. We couldn’t even talk to one another like civilised human beings. And when my brother or sister did

¹⁰ 253-257:5, S2

C: Okay that’s the part with the weirdness. I lost you with the weirdness.

T: No, because my dad and mom fought, it was like hell. My mom would stand here and my dad would punch the door out. My dad would never hit my mom. He never touched her. So he hit everything around her. There were holes in the door and everything.

¹¹ 114-155:3, S1

To: When my dad was here it was horrible

C: Allright

D: Yes

To: We couldn’t even talk

C: Like very strict

To: Yes, and if these two did something it was always me

something naughty, it was always me that got punished. I always got blamed for everything.

“But after my dad left, his new fiancée brought about one hell of a change in him. I don’t know what she said to him, or how she did it, but he really changed quite radically. So now he gives us pocket money – whereas before we were never given pocket money like other kids.

“Now, it’s, like, you only get into trouble for the really big things. Now my dad is a much nicer person. You wouldn’t even believe it’s the same person. Now we go out with them together whereas before none of us ever even went out of the house. She’s an amazing woman, his new fiancée. The extraordinary thing is that they’ve been together for six months now – and I have yet to see her ugly side.”

D: Ihih (meaning no)

To: I always got blame for everything so I decided to turn this and blame it on them (talk about cars' wheels they broke and Danielle got accused; talk about they had to go to the bathroom if they were naughty – every week)

R: I still remember the day I got these very expensive truck and me and my brother broke it and it got blamed on my sister. When these 2 fight now I leave them

To: My dad's fiancée changed my dad a hell of a lot

C: Okay

To: Nice, he gives us like pocket money and we've never ever got pocket money, now, you only get into trouble for like the big things, now my dad is much much nicer; now we go out, we've never ever got out of the house before

(Danielle confirms) Go out and visit all kinds of places

C: So how frequently do you see him

To & D: every second weekend

To: If we want to see more we can just ask

C: And how's the change between that

Laughs

C: Is it difficult to adjust from like this home and dad's home, or do you know the setup

To: It's like natural, whatever my dad does we just go along

R: My dad's got a nice flat but sometimes it's not nice, then we can go swimming...

C: What's not nice about that?

D: Sometimes people complain.... They complain about stuff

C: So what's the stuff they complain about

R: *Talks about:* My father's noisy – listen to loud music, keen interests in musical equipment...."DJ-amp" and all that

C: What's his girlfriend like?

To: Sjoë

D: She's as kind as..

R: She'll help us keep a secret from my daddy

To: And every time my dad wants to hit us she's like no, no, come, come ...and then when, when they're like, they're very playful and they hit each other with pillows we all join in, and all those things

I am astounded at how well they have all coped with the divorce, and I say, "It's really nice to hear that, Tom, because a lot of kids that go through divorce find it's very traumatic for them. Especially when either the mother or the father or both start meeting and dating new people. There can be a lot of tension and unhappiness. But you guys are like... It's just great."

Tom looks sad, and qualifies my assessment of their experiences.¹² "Actually, when they got divorced, I was very angry. I was so angry that, a week later, I went and bought myself a punch bag because I had so much anger in me and I wanted to get it out.

"I was also having problems at school... Children would come to me and I would suddenly – without any warning – have an urge to kill them."

Tom's whole body and tone of voice have suddenly changed, and anger and grief are etched on his face.

"Why do you think that was?" I ask.

"Because somehow it seemed as though every kid in that school had found out about my parents' divorce. Then some kids started mocking me. Some in a subtle way, but others were not quite so subtle about it."

"Who mocked you? Your friends? Or your classmates?"

"No. It was those kids who had never liked me anyway. But I just hung loose."

¹² 170-184:4, S1

C: Tell me about the divorce, you said you were angry

To: Ja, when I heard,

R: Me too

To: But a week after I went and buy my punching bag, cause I was... I just wanna, I had a big problem at school...

C: ...lots of stuff going on, okay, school as well

To: They would come to me and I would just all of a sudden have "lus" and I start killing them

C: Why do you think that was

To: No, cause somehow the school found out and they were like "huhu", shame, poor you, must I hurt you know

C: Is it your friends or like your classmates

To: No it's like people who never liked me, so

C: They commented

To: Ja, and then so I just hang out loose...and then

I find it interesting that he should be teased about his parents' divorce. I wonder to myself how these same children would react if they were to find out all the details about his mother and her new partner. But it doesn't sound to me as though he has been teased about his mother's new partner. I wait for him to continue... .

¹³ "When my mom eventually divorced my dad, that was another big event. But then I also started to get more friends because I was more upset and so I ended up talking to more people."

¹³ 128:3-205:4, S2

C: Okay, all right.

T: And then later on my mom divorced my dad. Another big thing. And then I started getting more friends because I was more upset so I talked to more people.

C: Okay, so you started making friends.

T: Ja, I wanted to be somewhere else.

C: Other than at home.

T: Ja, because I was dead lonely at that moment. More lost than anyone else here. And then I started making big friends and stuff. And then in between that split I thought they might get back together, and then my mom ended up with somebody else. So then my friends came over a lot. And my mom didn't even tell me, nothing. And I always had this very big suspicion, the a whole year and I was trying to figure out everything.

C: I can only imagine, if you can look at your friends and say uh, uh something's cooking. I can just imagine how you can look at your mom and think something's up.

T: Laughs

C: Okay, so you were for a whole year trying...

T: Busy investigating

C: Laughs

T: I was on cell phones, and I would try and look at mom's cell phone for messages and peep around the corner. I don't know, I was just busy being very mischief.

C: Looking for answers. And what did you found out Mr Inspector?

T: No, I found out that my mother was seeing this other woman.

C: How did you find out?

T: I'd read most of my mom's sms's and I figured out that when she normally said that she was going out for a pizza or something that she was.... (laughs)

C: Okay, something different. So how did you feel

T: She 's like nervous and I know, she's not going to eat anything because when she eats out she must bring a doggy bag. Doesn't matter where she goes she always brings one back. So there was no doggy bag. She was somewhere else.

C: Okay.

T: And she always visits that one place, auntie T.

C: How do you know that?

T: Because we always use to go there, every single day. And this was not our house.

C: Okay, so she took you with sometimes?

.../ next page

“Okay, so you started to make friends?”

“Yes. But in reality, I wanted to be somewhere else,” he continues.

“Some place other than home?” I ask.

“Yes. Because I felt so dead lonely at that time. So, kind of, rejected. More lost than anyone here. But then I started making great new friends and stuff like that.

“Even when they were splitting, I still thought, hoped, that they might get back together again. But then my mom ended up with somebody else, with this other

T: Ja.

C: How did you feel when you read the sms's and picked up that something was going on?

T: I use to get nervous and feel all like aargg.

C: Angry.

T: Ja, like I need to know what's going on.

C: Like curious. Did you ask her? Confront her? Or..

T: No, I just wanted to know for myself, the moment I knew what was going on then my mom told me. And then it was like, old news.

C: And how did she react to that, about you knowing

T: Ah, you know, okay

C: You'll make a good inspector. And how did you feel about mom liking another lady?

T: No, I just wanted her to tell me before she did it. Then I wouldn't have felt more...more...I felt more lost, my mom didn't give us no attention, she was only out there. We were like hello, hello, how are you, there's food there and then she would say yes dear, okay bye and then she would go to her room and cry

C: Ja, left out.

T: We were all three lost. Then we started doing our own thing. Playing donker kamertjie and all those stupid things.

C: Ay, that's so nice, but ja, why do you call them stupid things?

T: Now its stupid.

C: Ja. Okay it's childish, alright, so now your angry and all lost,

T: And weird.

C: And you have this confirmation that your inspector skills are quite good. So what happened next?

T: Okay she caught me with her cell phone and everything.

C: Ja, tell me about that?

T: I was reading through her messages and I accidentally deleted half of them all. And she asked me what I was doing and I told her that was why I was not surprised when she told me.

C: And how did she react to that?

T: She was just very angry.

C: Okay and then.

T: Ugh then auntie T comes to start living here. And then we all moved in. I've never liked auntie T ever ever, since she first came.

C: What's it about her you don't like? Can you put your finger on it? Come on Inspector

T: No, I don't know, it's just

C If you think back because it's all over now.

lady. My new friends were coming round a lot. And my mom didn't even tell me! Nothing. For the whole year I had my private suspicions about what was really going on behind the scenes, and I kept trying to figure it all out."

"I can just imagine. If you can look at how other people behave and wonder about them, you must have been looking at your mother and wondering exactly how it all added up."

We both laugh, and I interject with: "Okay! So for the whole year you were...".

Tom finishes my sentence by adding, "...busy investigating. Yep. I was looking on cell phones. I would get hold of my mom's cell phone and read her text messages. And sometimes I would creep silently around so that I could spy on them when they were alone together. It was wrong of me, I suppose. But I was trying to put all the pieces together."

"You were looking for answers. So what did you find out?"

"Well, basically, I found out that my mother was having an affair with this other woman."

"How did you find that out?"

"Like I said, I would read most of my mom's text messages. And there were other things. Like sometimes she would say that she was going out for a pizza or something. Then she would seem nervous, almost, like, guilty. I figured out that whenever she said that she was going out to eat, she wasn't really doing that at all, because whenever she goes out to eat, she always brings back a doggy bag. It doesn't matter where she goes – she always brings one back with her. So when there was never any doggy bag, I figured that she had been some place else."

"Okay."

"And she was always actually visiting that one place, the lady we call Aunt Theresa."

"How do you know that?"

"Because we always used to be taken there, every single day, and that was not our house."

"Okay, so she took you with her?"

"Yes."

I am intrigued by the detail that he is now sharing with me, so I continue by asking, “How did you feel when you read the text messages and picked up that your mother was having an affair?”

“I used to get all nervous and feel all like... like, I needed to know what was going on.”

“Were you curious? Did you ask her? Did you ever confront her? Or...”

Tom interrupts, “No. I just wanted to know for myself. But, it’s strange, the moment I knew what was going on, my mom told me. But, by then, it was, like, old news.”

What I sense is that it was not necessarily his mother’s new partner that was making him feel insecure, but that his feelings of being left out, of not getting a normal amount of attention, that were making him feel unsettled. I note the meticulous way in which he traced and observed his mother’s behaviour. I wonder whether that changed their relationship. “So how did she react to that? To the fact that you already knew?”

“Oh, you know, okay.”

“How did you feel about your mom falling in love with another lady?”

“I didn’t mind that. I just wanted her to tell me what was happening. Then I wouldn’t have felt so... so... like, lost.

“You must understand that my mom was not giving us enough attention. She was always out there. We were like, ‘Hello’, ‘Hello’, ‘How are you?’, ‘Okay’, ‘And you?’, ‘Okay’, ‘There’s food for you there’, and then she would say, ‘Alright, dear. Bye!’. And then she would go to her room and cry. All three of us were so lost. So then we started doing our own things, like playing ‘donkerkamertjie’¹⁴ and all those stupid things.”

I am caught up in his story. I used to love playing ‘donkerkamertjie’ when I was a child. I react immediately, “Gee, that’s great. But why do you call them ‘stupid things?’ “

“Well, it seems stupid now.”

“Okay, it’s childish. Agreed, but then you were all feeling angry and lost.”

¹⁴ Afrikaans name for game similar to hide and seek, played at night, indoors.

“And very weird,” Tom adds.

“So what happened next?”

“My mom caught me with her cell phone and everything.”

“Can you tell me about that?”

“I was reading through her messages and then – whoops! – I accidentally deleted half of them. So she asked me what I was doing, and I told her. And that is why I was not surprised when she told me. I already knew.”

“How did she react to your snooping on her phone?”

“She was very angry.”

“Okay, and then?” He is on a “roll”, and I would like to get as much as I can out of him while he is willing to talk.

“Ugh,” he makes a despairing sound. “Then Aunt Theresa, she was mom’s first partner, she came over and began to live here. Then we all moved in. I’ve never liked Aunt Theresa, not ever, not from the very first moment that I met her.

¹⁵ “When I realised for the first time that my mother was like that, I didn’t mind. But when I met her... that shocked me, and then I became very angry.”

“I see.”

“I felt like running away and never coming back.”

“Why was that, Tom? What didn’t you like about her? Can you describe it?”

“Not really. I don’t know... It’s just...”. He hesitates, but I can see that he is thinking hard.

I give him time to think and then say, “If you think back...?” I am not sure if Tom is wondering whether he can actually tell me – or whether he just doesn’t know where to begin.

¹⁵ 263-267:5, S1

To:When I heard the first time she was like that then I didn't mind, but the person that she was with, then I got very angry

C: Okay

To:I felt like running away and never coming back

C: Why's that?

¹⁶ “First of all, I’ve just never liked her at any stage in my life.¹⁷ She never made any effort whatsoever to be pleasant to me. She always... I never... I didn’t expect anything from her, and I have never.... But she always tried to make me do stupid things – things that I hate.”

To me this sounds like early-teenager trouble, and I try to elicit his version of the story. “Things like what, Tom?”

“Well, things like looking after her children, and all that stuff. And her twins! You can see how they have broken these chairs.”

I look round at the chairs near us and I can see that they have had their fair share of wear and tear, and I comment, “Okay. So they did that, they had no respect for your mother’s furniture.”

But Tom’s thoughts have already moved on, and he adds in an angry voice,¹⁸ “I also never had any privacy. I couldn’t go to the bathroom. I couldn’t do anything. It simply wasn’t my house anymore.”

I wonder how his distress influenced his relationship with his mother, and so I ask, “Were you able to talk to your mother about that?”

¹⁶ 268-269:5, S1

To:First of all I've never liked her in my life, she's been there before I was born and I never ever liked her and still today

¹⁷ 206-211:4, S2

T: She was always not nice to me. She always, I never, I don't expect anything from her, I never have, but she always wants me to do stupid things that I hate.

C: Like what?

T: Like looking after her children and all that stuff. And the twins! You can see how they broke these chairs...

C: Okay, and that's their doing, so they have no respect for stuff.

¹⁸ 300-307:6, S1

To:But my mom's first partner, I couldn't handled that.

It was tough... , and she had twins, I couldn't have my privacy, I couldn't go to the bathroom, I couldn't do anything, it wasn't my house anymore

C: Alright, and could you talk to mom about that or

To:Imm I told her and she said I was you know, 'cause I was still small, I was in ?,

C: And she really didn't listen to you

To:She didn't knew what I was talking about, she thought I was a bit mad or something

“Hmm. I did tell her, and all she said was some stuff like... ‘They are still small, you know,’ referring to the twins. She didn’t even know what I was talking about. I think she thought I was a bit mad or something. It was really tough.” He remains quiet for a while. Then he sighs deeply and continues,¹⁹ “And it’s still like that today, it’s still going on, you can’t even put a sweet under your pillow.”

“How often do you see them?” I ask.

“A lot. Too much! Like about three times a week. But once you see them, the moment you’re with them for, like, five minutes, they begin to irritate you.

²⁰ “Just the things she did. I don’t know. She was always trying to challenge me in some way or another.” He sits quietly for a while, thinking, and then

¹⁹ 324:6-326:7, S1

To:And still like that today, it's still going on, you can't even put a sweet under your pillow

C: How often do you see them?

To:Lots of times, too much, like three times a week, but once you see them, the moment you're with them for like 5 minutes they irritate you and

²⁰ 214:4-252:5, S2

T: And just the things she do. I don't know.

C: I can see that. I'm just trying to get a picture. Is she scolding you or irritated with you

T: laughs. She tries to challenge me with something.

C: Okay, so everything you say she says something back?

T: Ja. She's there to you...

C: In your space. Ja. And never, ever a good word or a thank you?

T: No

C: Okay now I get the picture.

T: Or she'll do something nice one time just to get my mom on her side.

C: Isn't that interesting that you say that. That she moved in between you and your mom.

T: She'll push in then she will pull back again.

C: Okay and this awareness of mom not being with dad anymore and mom being now with T. How do you feel about that? And how did you think about mom.

T: No, I just, I didn't really think of anything because I was hanging out with these new friends and I wasn't use to anything like that. I thought this friend was like Kung Pow! Amazing!

C: Great, Okay. Because like some other kids they go through a phase where they feel, hey, this is not right. It's the wrong thing to do. All the moral things or school tells them something different. Did that happen to you?

T: No, I always had my friends with me. Okay, one or two's dads were like gay as well, they told me a whole other story about everything.

C: Right, tell me the story as well .

continues, “Or she’ll occasionally do something nice – just to get my mom on her side.”

“Hmm. I see. So, do you feel that she came between you and your mother?”

Tom answers instantly, “She will push in between us, and then back out again.”

I do not want to collect too much information about Tom’s mother’s first partner, and, in any case, I see that the thought of her and her children still upsets him. To me it feels like an intensely personal issue, and I would rather focus, if I can, on how he perceived his mother. So I ask, “You were obviously deeply aware that your mother was no longer together with your dad, but that she had moved on to being with Theresa. How did you feel about that? What did you think about your mother at that time?”

“To be honest, I was trying very hard not to think of anything at all and I just concentrated on hanging out with these new friends of mine. That was such a pleasure. My new friends were just too – Kung! Pow! – amazing!” he exclaims. His boyish sound effects make him look young and happy again. I have realised that he has a real talent for making and keeping friends.

“Great, okay.” Even though he is so excited, I am concerned that he might be evading my questions by turning the topic towards his friends. So I probe further, seeking clarification.

T: Ag no, they just said that they prefer that to what it use to be and they love it more then .. agh, I don't know. And then you understand everything, and you think, it's like aliens communicating. It's like baby talk...

C: Laughing. Tell me that again in that weird language.

T: You know what they're talking about but they don't make any sense.

C: Okay, I've lost you somewhere. Tell me that again.

T: No, its like, their parents were gay and they were trying to tell me how easier life is for them and I thought it's just going to be harder. I mean really, really. And they were actually more happy than before. They said they're actually in a better position, but it's not, it's not making sense to you, your trying to put your head right and you don't know what's going on. You're trying to build your puzzle, you're trying to flip over the pieces and trying to build your puzzle .

C: Okay, for your family and your new life. Ja, its like you can sense that they're happy now and its better for them, but for you at that stage it weren't.

T: Ja, ja.

“Some kids go through a phase where they feel, hey, this is not right, it’s the wrong thing to do. Like the moral things that they are taught at home. Or what they are taught at school might be different from what they are taught at home. Did that ever happen to you?”

“No. You see, I always had my friends with me, and we always discuss things that are important to us amongst ourselves. Okay, one or two of my friends’ dads are also, like, gay as well, and they would tell me about that.”

This is potentially useful research information. So I say, “Okay, please tell me about that, if you don’t mind?”

“Agh, no!” He begins to bounce about. “They just said that they prefer that to how it used to be before, and they love it. And then I began to understand everything, to get a new view, and, well, then, you know, you feel like aliens communicating.”

I start to laugh at Tom’s antics, but I am not sure what he is trying to say, and so I ask for some clarification. “Please just tell me all that again in a way that I can understand.”

“You know what they’re talking about,” he says. “But it doesn’t make any sense in terms of everything you’ve ever learned.”

“Okay, I’ve lost you somewhere. Please tell me that again.” I still don’t understand, but I am hoping that he will be patient with me because this sounds as though it may be extremely important.

“Look, it’s like this,” he says sweetly as though explaining something complex to a fairly dim child. “It’s, like, their parents are gay, and they were trying to tell me how much easier life is for them because I was thinking that it would all be so much harder. I mean, they are really much happier now than they ever were before. They told me that having gay parents actually puts you in a better position. I could hear what they were saying but somehow it didn’t make sense to me at that time. It was like ‘you’re trying to build your puzzle, you’re trying to flip over the pieces and trying to put together your puzzle.’ I couldn’t quite get it. But now I do.”

I am deeply impressed by how much insight, support and affirmation Tom received from his peers, and I remember his remark about how being open and honest with one another was the most important thing in their lives.

I respond to his explanation by saying,²¹ "Thank you. I think I see what you mean. They were trying to tell you that their lives are much happier now with

²¹ 258:5-309:6, S2

C: Ja, but just to hear that and the whole atmosphere in the house, you are almost now where your friends were at that time and it's better now. But at that time your puzzle was not working out. Okay, where did your confusion lie? What was, can you try to explain that?

T: My confusion was like, exactly how are they to do everything. Like daddy does tools and home and everything and mommy does die and "sit" and "vrek" and she's not use to working, like heavy homework. She wasn't use to anything. My dad did everything in the house.

C: So you were concerned.

T: Ja, I thought what's going to happen now, because now we were terrifying people, if we break a toy he would fix it.

C: And you were like hold on here she can't do that.

T: No, but she started and I started fixing little motors together.

C: Okay, alright, that's nice. Something else about the confusion or was it just that kind of thing.

T: Ja my mom and dad at a later stage. They use to tell me like, how they get married. It must be a boy and girl. And it made me wonder how are they going to get married.

C: Mmmm so you were worried about that.

T: Ja

C: I'm so glad you thought of that because that's a very important thing that I think every child thinks about. Okay and who answered those questions for you, or do you still have them.

T: Ja, but I've figured them out very slowly. Things like she told me that gay people don't get married they just get like things like almost engaged, they like promise each other....

C: Ja, people call it a different things.

T: Ja, I don't know what they call it, but it's there

C: Ja, ja it's like life partners. What does mom call it?

T: I don't know (laughs)

C: Okay, all right.

T: You see Auntie Sandy is more about understanding. It's like my moms got a different kind of personality and I don't know where she gets it from. Ja (laughs) but it's nice

C: I think it's your influence.

T: Ja, no when she comes here she always puts on this nice doef doef music and I think wow what good music.

C: Wow!

T: And I wasn't use to it. Before it was stuff like Rooirokbokkie and all these boeremusiek and now when we come it's doef doef.

C: You can listen to it as well.

their gay parents than they were before with their original parents. But, at that stage, you had not yet reached that point.”

“Yes, yes.”

“But at that time you were still somewhat puzzled and confused? In what way were you confused, Tom? Could you try to explain that to me?”

“Sure. I was wondering how they are going to do everything, like, divide the household tasks. But my mother, she never used to work in the house. She just never did anything. Certainly no heavy housework. She wasn’t used to anything like that. It was my dad who did everything in and about the house.”

“So you were concerned when they separated?”

“Oh yes. Because I thought to myself, ‘What’s going to happen now? Who will fix toys and things when they break?’”

“So you felt, ‘Goodness! My mother will never be able to manage.’ “

“Exactly. But then, to my amazement, she started to do things by herself. She and I actually began to fix small motors and things like that. I was totally amazed.”

“Hmm. That’s very interesting. Was there anything else you were confused about?”

“Yes, there were other things too. My mom and dad, at a later stage, they used to get me alone and tell me about marriage, and what marriage is all about. They would tell me that marriage must be between a man and a woman. So, of course, that made me wonder how they would ever get married.”

Now Tom is sharing really deep and personal stuff, and I sense some tension in the room. I certainly don’t want to lose him now, so I try my best to reflect his feelings, “Mmm. So you were worried, Tom, about that aspect?”

“I sure was.”

T: It's like something I like and when she came it's like 'Wow, what is this music'. Wow!

C: All right.

T: You expect all these people to listen to this, it's like La La La-music, Classics. But she puts all this party music and she does what we do, jump up and down and get mad. She just joins in and carries on.

C: And then, like just before you told all your friends how was it then? Because now you've made all these friends and it's all very nice but they still haven't figured out what's happening.

T:Ja, I was still trying to find out more about this thing.

“I’m so glad that you thought of that because that’s a very important question that I think every child has to face. Okay, and so who answered those questions for you? Or do you still have them?”

“Yes, I still sometimes wonder about it. But I’ve gradually figured it out. Like my mom told me that gay people never get married, but that they will make promises to each other if they are really serious.”

“Yes, people have different names for that process.”

“Hmm. I don’t exactly know what they call it.”

“Yes. I think it is called ‘life partners’.”

“That’s what I’ve heard. You see, Aunt Sandy, my mom’s partner, is more understanding. But my mom has a completely different kind of personality – and I don’t know where she gets it from.” He starts to laugh, and once more he looks so much more relaxed. “Yes, but it’s so great. When she comes over here, she always puts on this loud ‘doef-doef’²² kind of music, and I think, ‘Wow! What good music!’ Of course, I wasn’t used to it at that stage, but I really liked it, and when she came, it was, like, ‘Wow! There’s that music again!’

“In our house, we were always used to this, like, slow ‘classical’ music. But Aunt Sandy, she’s wild! She always puts on all this party music, and then she dances with us and goes crazy. She joins in! She is so much fun.” Tom makes dancing movements as he talks and it sounds as though he has really developed a good relationship with Sandy.

²³ “Okay, so how do you think you can help your younger brother and sister to reach a place where they are also comfortable?” As the oldest, he has reached

²² An expression of the beating sound of music

²³ 329:6-342:7, S2

C: Okay. Interesting. So how do you think you can help your younger brother and sister also coming to a place where you are comfortable?

T: To be honest I don't want to lead them because it's better to find out for yourself than if other people help you. Because I've figured out the best and easiest way for me . I've always got thatur you know what, what, what.

C: What do you think Ryland thinks? Do you think he understands what's going on?

T: I think, on the sexual part no. But on the other way, Ja. More or less.

C: Alright, and Danielle?

such a successful accommodation. Perhaps now he could help his siblings – almost in the same way that his friends helped him.

“To be honest,” says Tom thoughtfully, “I don’t want to lead them because I think it’s better if one rather finds out for oneself than if other people help you. I’ve figured out the best and easiest way for me to exist in this situation.”

“But what do you think Ryland ²⁴ thinks about all this? Do you think he understands what’s going on?”

“As far as the sexual side goes, no. But with regard to their relationship and their love for each other, yes, more or less.”

I am rather relieved that he thinks Ryland is okay. “Alright, and what about Danielle?” ²⁵

“No, I think she understands everything. She was, like, my big buddy back then. She used to tell me everything. I was amazed at how much she knew. I used to think, ‘Hey! How the heck did you find out all this stuff?’ “

This sounds interesting, and I cannot help being pleased at the way they support each other. “What did she tell you?”

Tom seems a bit embarrassed, but then he says, “That just like a boyfriend and girlfriend can hold hands, so a girlfriend and a girlfriend can also hold hands. They hug, you know... Just little things like that.”

“Okay, all right.”

We both look at each other and smile in appreciation. He has really opened up and shared so much with me. “Have you any questions that you would like to ask me, Tom? Is there anything that I can help you with?”

He just shakes his head and says, “Um, not really. But thanks anyway, Carien.”

T: No, I think she's got everything right. She was like my big buddy then, she told me everything. I was like wow! How the heck do you know all this stuff.

C: And what did she tell you?

T: Agh no, that a boyfriend and girlfriend can hold hands. A girlfriend and girlfriend can hold hands. They hug, you know, just stupid little things like that.

²⁴ Ryland is Tom’s only younger brother.

²⁵ Danielle is Tom’s only younger sister.

“Okay, and thank you! You were just great! I really appreciate how much you shared with me. And I think you might still have ten or fifteen minutes of daylight left if you still want to go and play rugby.”

Tom answers gently, “No. It’s alright.” Outside the darkness is gathering fast and he continues to talk about this and that, about his sore foot, his soccer and karate. His mom brings us both some cool drink, and eventually the whole family joins us. We continue making pleasant small talk, and a little while later I make my way home. As they all wave goodbye to me at the gate, I imprint the memory in my mind: two mothers, surrounded by three smiling children.

“I’ll run away”

In the following narrative, Ryland speaks in the first person and I, the researcher, interpose my reflections. Ryland is a beautiful, soft-spoken nine-year old, somewhat shy and reserved at times, but indomitably courageous – if one reflects on his perception of his world.

One night my mother told me that a lady would be coming to visit us. This lady (she said) is writing a book about “people who live together as parents”. I did not like that at all, and I told my mother: ¹ “No, I don’t like that. Mom and Auntie Sandy’s lives are private, and what we as a family do, has nothing to do with anyone else.”

But my mother went on to explain a lot of stuff about how this lady’s book can help other children and other mothers... I can’t remember all the details of what she said, but after she had explained what it was all about, it sounded more or less okay to me. But then I thought: “But why must this lady come to *us*? To visit *our* house?” I thought about how many families there are in our city. So why can’t she visit other families – instead of us?

I was also very worried in case other people should see our names in her book and know that it was us she was writing about. I even made sure to check with the lady when she came about whether my mother would also be given a different name – like those that she said she would use for us. She told me that we would all be given different names and that nobody would recognise us or the situations in the book.

¹ 20-23:1, TDR Parents S1 & 83-86:2, S1

But the youngest she said, and that surprised her, said no, moms and Auntie Sandy's lives are private, what they do has nothing to do with anyone else – and when she explained a bit further and he was okay with that, he said, but why must she come to us, to our house, will other people see their names...

&

C: Okay, so these two weren't that happy. Did they say anything when mom told them?

T: I don't want her to come here, she mustn't be here, .. talk together

D: Ryland said that

Then suddenly one night – there she was. I was quite surprised. ²She didn't look at all like the kind of mean lady that I thought she would be. She even brought a game with her for all of us to play together. The fact that I had arranged for all my friends to come over didn't bother her at all. She just mixed in with our family in a very friendly way and we all had a lot of fun.

After a while, she asked if my friends could leave. And I was thinking to myself, "Don't leave... Please don't leave...". But they did leave. That's when I decided to keep quiet and just let my brother and sister do all the talking. But after keeping quiet for a while, I just couldn't help myself anymore. I just *had* to say something.³ Like, I wanted to tell the lady how important the punching bag is that my brother bought for himself, because, if it weren't for that bag, my brother would not be as patient and quiet as he is now... I know!

⁴I also wanted to tell her about how I cried all the time after my dad left our house. I just couldn't understand how my sister could be so happy when my parents divorced. I told my sister: ⁵ "You are not *supposed* to be happy!"

When the lady asked us ⁶ "So what is so nice about having two moms?", I was the first one to answer. I quickly said:⁷ "There is nothing wrong with it. I don't

² 60:2, S1

R: I felt like, I thought like another nasty lady coming in and I did not like that

³ 212-217:4, S1

R: And if my brother never ever had the punching bag we wouldn't be alive, cause when, when he gets too much stress he runs to the punching bag and then after his finished then you can just put your finger on him and he just growls like that/ touch the ground like that???

C: Do you use the punching bag as well or?

R: Imm immm, it's just him

⁴ 224:4, S1

R: I was crying every time, it's like cause my father, they always used to fight...

⁵ 232:5, S1

R: You're not supposed to be happy

⁶ 333:6, S1

C: What's nice about having two moms?

⁷ 336:7, S1

R: Nothing's wrong, cause I don't really worry about that

worry about it.” I had hoped that that answer would satisfy her and that she would then ask us something else. But she wanted to know more. She asked me what I meant, and because my brother and sister had kept quiet, it felt to me as though I were alone with only her and that question in that room.

After I had answered her, I knew that my secret was out. But it actually felt good to share it and let it come out. I said to her: ⁸ “No one talks about it because no one knows about it. It’s only my family that knows about it, and a few other close people like Anna. It’s not wrong! There is *nothing* wrong with it. We don’t tell the children at school – and that’s how I want to keep it. Now if Danielle (for example) goes and tells everyone, ‘I’ve got two mothers at home’, then we will have big problems to deal with.”

The lady went on with her questions in a very friendly way. She asked: ⁹ “Does anyone else know that you have two moms?” I just shook my head. Then, after a while, I said, “I haven’t told anyone. Only my teacher knows about my other mother.” ¹⁰ We *had* to tell the teacher about her. But I didn’t tell her about Auntie Sandy. “

⁸ 342-346:7, S1

R: No one talks about it cause no one knows about it, it's only my family that knows about it, and other people and, like Anel, It's not, nothing's wrong. No one tells the children at school and that's fine. Like if Danielle goes and she says “I’ve got two mothers at home” (funny girlish voice) then there's a big problem.

⁹ 13-22:1, S2

C: Does anyone know that you have two moms

R: (shakes head no)

C: Okay

R: Only my teacher

C: And your teacher, oh, so she knows, and how did she found out?

R: Imm, we had to tell her, but I didn’t tell her about Auntie Sandy.

C: Okay

R: I only told her about my other mother

C: Imm, what's her name again

R: Auntie Thea

¹⁰ This “other mother” refers to his father's fiancée

The lady went on with her questions.¹¹ She asked: “How do you describe your own family when you all talk about ‘family lessons’ in school?” I got a bit angry at that point, and I said: “I don’t talk about it. If I say anything, I talk only about my mom and my dad because it is none of anyone’s business!” It’s like, if other children ask questions, I just keep quiet, or I say “I don’t want to talk about it.”

¹²The lady looked at me and asked, “Why would that be problem, do you think, Ryland?”. So I said, “I don’t want to tell the other kids because they will come and wara-wara me with questions like, ‘Ryland, tell us about your two mothers.’ I know that if I told them about my mothers, they would just keep on pestering me and talking about it all the time, and I wouldn’t even be able to go and play like rugby with my friends. If I told them, they would never stop saying, like, Ryland, this, and Ryland, that. No! They, I know, would never stop asking me stupid questions – and teasing me. You don’t know what those kids are like! I know that it would be very, very bad for us if the kids at that school ever found out because they would never stop hassling me – just like they do with other kids at the school.”

I then tried to explain to the lady how bad it is at our school.¹³ I told her, “The blacks are horrible to me and to my friends. The girls hurt us and tell us to carry

¹¹ 77-80:2, S2

C: Family lessons in school

R: I will just talk about my mom and dad, cause it's none of their business ...like when they ask questions then I just keep quiet and I just say I don't wanna talk about it

¹² 348-352:7, S1

C: Why would it be problem, do you think

R: Then the children comes 'warawara', Ryland tell us about your mothers

To:It's like.. imm.. practice

R: Then I can't go and play like rugby with my friends, then they just asking me this, and asking me that, then they ask

¹³ 41-43:1, 54-56:2, S2 & 23-30:1, S3

R: It's very bad in my school

C: Okay

R: The blacks are nasty to me

&

R: The girlies, they hurt us and every morning they tell us to carry their suitcases; and the older boys, if you bring like a tennis ball to school or something you have to give it to them forever

&

.../next page

their suitcases. The older boys... If you bring something like a tennis ball or anything like that to school, you have to hand it over and *give* it to them forever.”

I was so upset at that stage. I remember that I was almost crying, and that my voice had become very, very soft. It is really bad at our school. So when she asked,¹⁴ “What do you think your friends will do if they find out that you have two moms?”, I told her: “They will push me around and tease me. They will laugh at me and never stop saying what a little wimp I am, and stuff like that.”

In fact, I could not tell her all the stuff that they *would* say to me. The ugly language. I also said to her: “I have seen it happen to other kids at our school!

Talks about race conflict at school..

C: Ok, I just thought that maybe if you told them that you don't care that you're a whittie it would work.

R: It doesn't.

C: Oh, so you've tried that. What happened?

R: Then they said "ah, you caramel boy".

C: Have you tried to laugh at them? And then did that work?

R: Yes, and then everyone start laughing at them and their faces went red.

¹⁴ 30-52:1, S2

C: What do you think your friends will do if they find out you have two moms

R: I'll run away

C: You'll run away

R: From school

C: What would happen

R: They're going to tease me and stuff

C: That's bad hey

R: They're going to laugh and say and push me around like I'm a little snake

C: What stuff would they say

R: Like

C: Ugly stuff, (whisper – what)

R: It's very bad in my school

C: Okay

R: The blacks are nasty to me

C: Okay, why do you think the blacks would be nasty to you?

R: Imm

C: Has it happened before,

R: Imm

C: With you or with other kids?

R: Other kids

C: Okay, and what did they do

R: They were talking about stuff and that and other people heard and everyone and the one person told everyone and lot's of stuff

Like, we were talking about stuff. Then some other kid would hear. Then he would go and tell the others, and then everyone would tell everyone else.¹⁵ That's why I have to keep it a secret, so that people don't tease me." I even said to the lady,¹⁶ "If anyone finds out, I will run away!"

¹⁷ The lady also asked me how much I worry about someone finding out that I have two moms. "Well", I told her, "I worry about it everyday." Which I do! I also told her, "I don't even want to *think* about it... When I *start* to think about it, I just go out running or something like that. We also all play rugby in the square. And I've got other stuff to keep me busy. I've also got my work to think about. And other stuff. Yes, that helps me to forget."

The lady also asked me about other situations, like when there are activities at school. Like, in the beginning of the year, there is a parent's evening. She asked me if Auntie Sandy goes with my mom. I nearly went into a frenzy when she asked that! I said, "Oh no! *No!* Only *one* of them goes to those school

¹⁵ 61-63:2, S3

C: Okay, do you feel that you have to keep it a secret? How do you keep it a secret?

R: Agh no. So that people don't tease me.

¹⁶ 31:1 & 74:2, S2

R: I'll run away

&

R: Then and then I'll run away from that school,

¹⁷ 59-74:2, S2

C: Okay, when you go to school are you worrying about it a lot that someone will found out, that you have 2 moms?

R: Imm

C: Okay, what does a lot mean for you

R: Every day

C: Okay, and how does that make it feel

R: Like I don't wanna think about it and then I just go like running and like, then we normally play rugby in the square

C: That helpes you to forget

R: Ja, and then I go on with other stuff, think about my work

C: Imm, ja, that's a good idea; and when there's activities at school, like in the beginning of the year there's a parent's evening, and Auntie Sandy goes with mom

R: Uhuh (no) – only one goes to school, I don't want her to go

C: What would you say

R: Then and then I'll run away from that school

meetings. I definitely don't want both of them to go. If Auntie Sandy decides to go with my mom, I will run away from that school."

¹⁸ Then she asked me if Auntie Sandy and mom held hands in the shopping mall. Well, of course, they don't! Auntie Sandy *loves* to shop, and so she goes off shopping on her own. She enjoys shopping so much that she almost, like, *runs* around to look at the stuff.

¹⁹The lady's next question was about me. We were able to speak about why I say that I am untruthful. Well, the answer is simple. It's because I *have* to be! Then the lady asked me,²⁰ "Alright! But if a friend sees you in a shopping mall with your mom and Auntie Sandy, and afterwards asks you who they both are, what will you say?"

I told her: "I will just say that Sandy is my auntie." Then I told her what I said to my friend, the one who gets asthma. I told her:²¹ "I just say – if they ask – that Sandy is my auntie." I remember once, my friend asked, the friend who gets the asthma attack.

¹⁸ 53:1-56:2, S3

C: Okay. Say, will aunt and mom ever hold hands in the shopping mall.

R: No, they doesn't. She goes on her own shopping, like she runs around and looks at the stuff.

C: Okay.

¹⁹ When we were busy drawing the pictures, Ryland had said that he does not tell the truth.

²⁰ 51-52:1, S3

C: Okay. And if a friend sees you in a shopping mall with both of them

R: I say it's my auntie

²¹ 91-99:2, S2

R: This week a friend also had a asthma attack – he went with him to doctor/ hospital

R: I just say, sometimes when they ask I tell them she's my auntie (talks about Auntie Sandy)

C: And who ask questions like that?

R: Just once my friend asked who got the asthma attack

C: And then they're satisfied with that answer

R: They think it's true

C: Ja, and that's why you say you're untruthful

R: Smiles shyly

Then the lady asked me: “Are your friends satisfied with that answer, Ryland?” I nodded, and said, “Yes, because they think that it is true.” Then the lady seemed to understand, and I was *so* relieved! So she said, “And that is why you say you’re untruthful.” I think that I smiled at her.

Annotation

Pre-interpretive thoughts...

Ryland’s narrative clearly indicates that he does not feel safe talking about his family structure, or talking about having two mothers who are involved in a same-gender parental partnership. He feels very strongly that it is a fact that needs to be kept secret at all times. He also imagines that the only way out for him personally, if anyone should ever find out the truth, would be to run away from his school. He feels that he would not be able to face up to his peers, his teachers, or even his friends. He doesn’t even begin to imagine what the girls or older boys or blacks would say if they were to confront him with this knowledge. This is the reason why he says “Nothing’s wrong... I don’t really worry about that... No one talks about it because no one knows about it.” He feels that, as long as no one knows about it, no one will talk about him having two mothers. He therefore feels that he does not need to worry about having two same-gender parents – so long as nobody knows. But he has no guarantee that no one inside (or outside) his circle will ever find out.

Ryland tries to guarantee the integrity of his personal narrative in relation to the attitudes of the broader community by simply keeping silent. He does not tell anyone, and he even tries to avoid *thinking* about it. The information about his family that he offers is limited to the divorce and the lady who might become his new stepmother. But surely his teacher (if she is a person of integrity) should know about his mother’s partner?

He also tells his friends that Sandy is an aunt. It was sad for me to hear him describing himself in our first session as being untruthful. When he told me that his friend had believed him when he had described Sandy as his “auntie”, I could feel in him a degree of guilt and shyness.

Ryland’s coping mechanism is not to tell the whole “truth” – and also to cosmeticize some of the factual details of his life if he cannot avoid talking. The tension I feel in him as he tries to balance keeping his secret and being truthful is almost unbearable. I sense it in his voice and in the atmosphere that surrounds him when he speaks. Ryland also tries to escape any contemplation of his secret by playing rugby and keeping himself occupied with his schoolwork. This defence against reality seems to me less than effective because he says he nevertheless thinks about it almost every day.

For me, this felt very much like the situation of a person of gay orientation locked in the proverbial closet. S/he obsesses constantly about it and worries about whether anyone will ever find out, or whether their secret will ever slip out. Even before I came, and his co-parents were preparing the children, Ryland consistently reacted with resistance and hostility to the news of my possible arrival. This confirms his level of anxiety and concern about privacy and nondisclosure.

Ryland perceives his school community as being full of racism, sexism, bullying, discrimination and hostility. He has spoken a few times about the racial conflicts at school, mentioning that the blacks calls them “whities”, “boertjies” and “caramel boys”.²² The incidents with the girls, that hurt them, as well the older boys who bully them, support his perception that the environment that he perceives around him is indeed hostile and discriminatory. His observation that

²² 103, 105:2, S2 & 28:1, S3

R: Starts talking about blacks and coloureds calling them Boertjies and whities; only 3 people in class that's white, he, another guy and teacher
"hulle wil net hulleself wit hou"

&

R: Then they said "ah, you caramel boy".

children gossip compulsively (“every person tells everyone else”) indicates his sensitivity and fear about what children might say about him if his “secret” slips out. He gives the impression that anyone in that environment who is even slightly different will be gossiped about and/or teased.

My engagement with Ryland left me with feelings of great sadness, compassion and an urge to protect him from all his fears. The image of a scared young boy, bitterly afraid of other’s reactions, extremely sensitive to what others might think of him... In fact, a desperate child exhausted from hiding his secret, remains firmly in my mind.

- 1 **Carl Session 1**
- 2 C: = Carl, I: = Interviewer (Carien); P: = Penny; S: = Susan (2 Feb 2004)
- 3 J=Jenny and T – Tina, couple that introduced me to this family, also present
- 4 (Vul vorm van toestemming in)
- 5 S: So jy gaan nou basies 'n storie skryf? Dan gaan julle net skuilname gebruik?
- 6 I: Ummm... Ek wil sommer eintlik 'n gedagte toets wat ek hierdie, laas week Vrydag
- 7 by 'n vrou in Johannesburg en sy het so 'n video van Amerika, waar klein
- 8 kindertjies, man hulle is tussen sewe en elf ek dink, praat oor hulle familie en hulle
- 9 twee mammas of twee pappas en 'n teddy beer en 'n voëltjie en you name it... en
- 10 ek's nogal lus om so iets te maak, maar dan is dit baie meer konfronterend né[ma
- 11 stem saam] want dan is dit 'n gesiggie op 'n video wat almal kan sien, en ek weet
- 12 nog nie of ons reg is vir dit nie, maar hou dit in julle agterkoppe. [lag]
- 13 P: Ek's nie band om op 'n video te kom nie, ek's nie skaam nie
- 14 I: Ek dink dit kan nogal 'n goeie impak maak en ek dink ons het nogal so iets nodig,
- 15 want hulle doen byvoorbeeld opleiding met onderwysers en ander sielkundiges en
- 16 wys hierdie die video, maar dis Amerikaans, ek dink daar is nogal 'n nood in ons
- 17 land. Alright! Is julle gemaklik daarmee?
- 18 P: Umm
- 19 I: Nou ja, vandag dink ek kan ons sommer maar net chat. Dit wat in julle koppe is en
- 20 waar julle wil begin en so aan, gaan nie te veel van julle tyd ook mors ook nie [kyk
- 21 na couple wat my gebring en gelink het met hd familie], maar julle is ook welkom om
- 22 te chip... want julle is nou hier [Umm] en ja dit lyk nogal soos 'n extended family.
- 23 J: Ons het groot gedeeltes van hom sien grootword
- 24 C: Imm.
- 25 Hoesery
- 26 P: ...Nou gesels nou so 'n bietjie
- 27 I: Miskien moet Ma's-hulle begin.
- 28 C: Begin ma...
- 29 S: Miskien is dit beter as jy vrae vra
- 30 C: Imm, sy moet vrae vra
- 31 S: Wat wil jy weet, waarom moet ons praat
- 32 I: Vertel van julle gesin en wie is julle en...
- 33 C: Ek het 'n pa en 'n ma, ouderdom... [ek dink hy't gesê 70 of iets, almal lag]
- 34 Almal lag
- 35 P: Wragtag Carl
- 36 I: Ja ...[lag] Jy het al klaar die geheim uitgelaat, jy gaan nie weer nie.
- 37 Almal lag
- 38 C: En jy wil nog vanaand ry
- 39 I: Ja
- 40 S: Ek dink ons is, imm, een happy familie, ons het ons pyn, ons het ons hartseer
- 41 C: Ons baklei baie...
- 42 S: Ja, ons twee ons 2 kan baie baklei. Dan word sy kwaad vir ons omdat ons baklei.
- 43 Dan is ons twee lankal weer pelle, maar dan is sy nog kwaad vir ons [lag]. Ek dink
- 44 ons is baie stabiel sal ek sê. Ek dink ons het hom goed grootgemaak, na die beste
- 45 van ons vermoë. Ons sal byvoorbeeld nie as ons by die skool is aan mekaar hang
- 46 nie, of hom in 'n swak lig stel nie, al van laerskooldae af...
- 47 I: Umm
- 48 S: Even voor ons families, hulle het al vir ons gesê hulle waardeer dit... Dit is
- 49 heeltemal anderster as ander mense, ons hang nie aan mekaar nie. Hulle weet ons
- 50 is in 'n affair en hulle aanvaar dit honderd persent. My broer en sy vrou, hy is my pa

- 51 se kleinseun. Hulle is nou sy Oupa en Ouma, hulle het nie probleme met ons nie,
 52 glad nie, en hulle waardeer dit dat ons nie aan mekaar hang nie. Ook voor hulle
 53 kleinkinders.
- 54 I: Umm
- 55 S: Dis soos ons sal nie in die straat loop en hande vashou nie. Ons sal nie
 56 konfrontasie ontlok nie. Ek weet nie wat ek nog kan byvoeg nie.
- 57 P: Begin by die begin man...
- 58 S: Nee, dis lang terug
- 59 C: Fluit,
- 60 P: Begin by die begin ...
- 61 I: Hoekom nie?
- 62 P: Toe ons ontmoet het en...
- 63 S: Dit gaan oor Carl hoor...
- 64 C: Toe jy so 'n 'afro' gehad het
- 65 I: [lag] Vertel laat ek hoor, dit raak juicy
- 66 P: Nee moenie so begin nie
- 67 C: Dan kan jy dit in jou boek sit, dan sny ons net die gesigte uit
- 68 I: Dit klink vir my na 'n goeie plan
- 69 P: Nee jissie, He uhh
- 70 P: Ons het baie probleme gehad in die begin hoor. Ons het baie baklei daarvoor. As hy
 71 byvoorbeeld, imm, iets wil doen, dan sê sy hy mag dit nie doen nie, dan kom hy na
 72 my toe, dan sê ek hy mag dit doen. Dit het later beter geraak, maar in die begin,
 73 ten minste vir twee jaar, omtrent twee jaar. Ek het baie kwaad geraak. Kyk dis my
 74 kind die en jy los my kind uit, sy moenie inmeng nie. En umm... ons het al altwee...
 75 ons het maar 'n harde paadjie saam geloop. Baie probleme gehad met hom, op 'n
 76 stadium met die skool in graad een. Met die kinders wat hom gespot het, hy't nie 'n
 77 pa nie en
- 78 I: Ja
- 79 P: Toe het ons dit nog met die skool uitgesorteer met die skool en vir hulle die
 80 omstandighede vertel en dit. Van daar af was dit toe baie beter gewees.
- 81 S: Behalwe nou die dag, maar dit was in die hoërskool
- 82 P: Ja, 'n mens is mos maar bietjie skrikkerig voor ander, van sy vriende kom hiernatoe
 83 en dan kom daar nou en dan glipsies deur om te sê soos Engel of Spook, of iets
 84 van die aard. Maar, ek dink tog ons is baie [- - hoesery saam – dink iets van
 85 respek of bedag daarop]
- 86 I: Okay
- 87 S: Hy is die een wat dit nou, op hoërskool het hy dit self uitgebring.
- 88 I: Okey
- 89 S: Ja, ons was geskok toe hy in die kar klim en sê 'almal weet nou.' Weet wat. Dat julle
 90 gay is. Hu!
- 91 (Lag)
- 92 I: Sonder hulle toestemming
- 93 C: Ja
- 94 S: Ja, net die leerlingraad het almal daar in 'n kring gestaan. Toe sê oubaas vir jou,
 95 wat (vra vir Carl), toe vra hy net vir hom nou wie is jou ma en wie is jou stiefma? Of
 96 wat,
- 97 C: Ja
- 98 S: En toe antwoord jy, toe sê jy vir hom nou waar wil jy nou wees, dis my pa en my
 99 ma.
- 100 Almal lag
- 101 I: Umm. Wanneer het dit gebeur toe jy st 6 was of nou..

102 Almal: Nou
 103 I: Met die leerlingraad. Alright. Ek dink dis baie braaf hanteer.
 104 S: Ek sê mos, dit was baie braaf. Hy kon sy balkie verloor het, hy kon alles verloor het,
 105 hy was baie braaf
 106 P: Ag en weet jy baie mense het altyd vir ons gesê 'n kind sal nooit ... slim en...
 107 C: Wie't dit gesê?
 108 P: Mense
 109 C: Sê my, ek gaan brand hulle huis af
 110 Lag
 111 I: [lag], wow
 112 P: En akademies het hy baie goed gevorder. Met krieket het hy baie goed gevorder.
 113 Hy was prefek laerskool gewees... het het ummm... met die krieket het hy, wat
 114 C: Noord-Transvaal kleure gekry.
 115 I: Geluk!
 116 P: Hy het medaljes gekry vir krieket. Hy het nou weereens gewys en leerlingraad
 117 geword. So ek dink hy het vir baie mense het hy ...
 118 I: Gewys... ummm
 119 P: Ek kan dit doen. En ek sal dit doen. En daar's hy vandag
 120 S: En hy is straight.
 121 P: Ja, en hy is straight, seblief.
 122 I: Damn... jammer is die res van ons nou
 123 Almal: [lag]
 124 P: En jy weet baie straight mense dink dat as 'n kind by twee gay ouers grootword...
 125 jou kind gaan 'n moffie word of 'n lesbiën word en klaar..
 126 C: Eintlik is ek mos 'n lesbiën
 127 Lag
 128 I: Daarsy
 129 S: Maar daar's my kind nou. Hy het klaar sy eerste liefdesteleurstelling gekry so hy
 130 gaan vir my reguit na sy ma se kant toe..lag
 131 I: (lag) Klink eintlik vir my baie logies.
 132 P: My kind, praat jy nou bietjie.
 133 C: Ek praat mos nou.
 134 P: Jy moet ook bietjie praat
 135 I: Dis oraait
 136 I: Hoe oud was hy toe julle bymekaar gekom het?
 137 P: 4 jaar
 138 C: Die 8ste Maart en die 10 de Maart het ek verjaar.
 139 I: Okay, en wat onthou jy van daai kleintyd?
 140 C: Ek kon nie praat nie
 141 I: Alright
 142 C: Al wat ek onthou is die kos en die kos???
 143 I: Dis ook fine, die k en die k lê na aan mekaar
 144 C: Ek onthou my ouma, en as sy nader kom, dan sê ek net kos-kos-kos
 145 I: Ag shame. Dit is sulke lekker childhood memories wat 'n ou bybly.
 146 C: Maar hulle herinner my.
 147 I: Alright
 148 C: Ek't geloop in my slaap
 149 P: Een aand, hy slaap sonder 'n hemp. Nou staan hy daar, gereed om te boks, voor
 150 die computer screen. En ek vra hom wat nou! En hy's gereed om hierdie persoon te
 151 gryp

- 152 I: Oh-boy. Solank hy nie so uit die huis uit stap en in die kar klim nie. Ja, sulke dinge
153 aanvang nie.
- 154 C: Ek slaap in die buitekamer
- 155 I: Oo! Alright. Lekker vryheid
- 156 C: Party dae ja
- 157 I: [lag] Wanneer was jy so gelukkig om uit te skuif.
- 158 S: So Januarie
- 159 I: So dis onlangs
- 160 C: Hulle moan altyd hulle kan nie in my kamer kom nie, en omdat ek nie my kamer
161 skoonmaak nie
- 162 I: Daar's hy, man met 'n plan.
- 163 [chat oor kamer]
- 164 I: Brei 'n bietjie uit oor die graad een incident, want dit is ook nogal van die goed wat
165 gewoonlik...
- 166 C: Hulle het gedink ek gaan huil.
- 167 I: En toe huil hulle en nie jy nie
- 168 C: Hulle het gehuil, maar ek loop net.
- 169 I: Jy is heel happy.
- 170 P: Ja, maar ek
- 171 C: Nou is ek spyt ek het geloop.
- 172 I: [lag] Min het jy geweet.
- 173 C: nou's dit 12 jaar
- 174 S: Maar ek moet sê hy is baie... ek ken nie die Afrikaanse woord
- 175 P: Sê die Engelse woord
- 176 S: Independant
- 177 stemme: Onafhanklik.
- 178 P: Ja, hy sal byvoorbeeld somer vir 'n maand, hy het nou Desember maand, het hy
179 'n huis opgepas, ons is die hele maand weg. Ons sal vir hom kruideniers los, en ons
180 sal hom bel ...Hy is selfversorgend. Hy kan darem verantwoordelikheid vat
- 181 I: Wat gebeur met ma se hart as haar kleinding so onafhanklik is?
- 182 P: Ek moet net dink aan die ...
- 183 C:...?
- 184 I: Ag hulle gun jou ook nie 'n oomblik nie
- 185 P: Hy sal nie vir my 'n SMS stuur Ma ek mis jou, ek is lief vir jou nie, nee dis altyd net
186 vir Susan.
- 187 S: Wat?
- 188 C: Ma' sy kan mos dit oordra
- 189 I: immm.
- 190 P: Maar jy moet vir my ook
- 191 S: Sy's net jaloers
- 192 C: Ja
- 193 P: Hy't mos vir my gesê die dag wat ek en Susan uitmekaar gaan, kom hy nie na my
194 toe nie
- 195 I: O, okay, klaar gekies
- 196 P: Graad 1 was 'n, nogal 'n ondervinding gewees, hoor, 'n groot ondervinding, wel ek
197 was baie bang, ek was...
- 198 S: Maar hoekom, want hy't vir my gesê stiefpa... en ek het vir jou gesê ons beter die
199 kind afleer om so te sê, dit gaan by die skool moeilikheid veroorsaak... As ek hom
200 in die middag gaan haal "Hallo stiefpa." (skree uit). Kruip ek weg agter daardie
201 stuurwiel..
- 202 I: Trek jy nie vir jou 'n das aan en sit vir jou 'n hoed op jou kop nie [lag]

- 203 S: Nee, hierdie een vat my aan die hand..Nou dat hy weer in die hoërskool is begin hy
 204 met Pa, ook nie altyd nie, maar
- 205 C: By die huis, voor vriende
- 206 I: Soos by die kerk
- 207 S: Hy sal nog voor my familie, want hy's ... en dan as ons by die huis kom is dit Pa.
 208 En ek like dit nou.
- 209 I: Ummm
- 210 C: Ek weet waar jy bly . Ek bly naby jou.
- 211 S: Huh, wat sê jy?
- 212 P: Hy weet waar bly jy
- 213 C: Anders brand ek jou huis af (humoristies – lag...)
- 214 P: Hy wil net almal se husie afbrand
- 215 I: [lag] Ja, jy moet oppas. Ek gaan nou weer inzoem op die graad een insident. Hoe
 216 het dit uitgekóm by die huis, was daar probleme by die skool?
- 217 P: Weet jy, hy was...
- 218 S: Het hy nie gehuil die dag nie?
- 219 P: Ja, hy was baie hartseer die middag toe hy van die skool af kom. Toe het hy in die
 220 bad gaan sit. Toe vra ek hom, seun wat's fout. Toe begin hy te huil. Toe was hy nog
 221 klein. Toe het ek op die toilet gaan sit en met hom gepraat. Toe begin hy vreeslik
 222 huil en sê vir my daar is kinders wat hom spot. Toe sê ek vir hom nou wat sê hulle
 223 vir hom. Nee hy het nie 'n pa nie. Toe sê ek vir hom sê vir hulle jy't nie 'n pa nie
 224 maar jy is baie bevoorreg want jy het twee Ma's. En ummm. ... Toe't ek na sy
 225 juffrou toe gegaan en met sy juffrou gepraat en die omstandighede verduidelik en
 226 gesê hy het 'n pa maar ons is geskei van mekaar af en ...dis die omstandighede en
 227 hulle moet seblief dat hulle my kind weer spot nie, want dit kan'n groot terugslag in
 228 sy lewe wees
- 229 I: Umm
- 230 P: En van daar af nooit weer nie. Hy het nooit weer hartseer een dag van die skool af
 231 gekom nie.
- 232 I: Umm... Ummm
- 233 P: En
- 234 I: Hoe het sy dit hanteer? Want dit was ook nou al 'n hele paar jaar terug...
- 235 P: Ek weet nie. Die juffrou?
- 236 I: Ja, toe jy nou met haar praat? Was sy geskok of oorbluf of...
- 237 P: Nee, weet jy, dit was 'n nice onderwyseres gewees. Ek was mal oor daai juffrou
 238 gewees. Jy kon met enige iets na haar toe gekom het. Enige iets
- 239 S: Was dit nie daai ouerige een gewees nie?
- 240 C: Nee, dit was A by wie ek in graad twee was.
- 241 S: Was dit A.
- 242 I: Okay,ja, maar dit was daai tyd.
- 243 ... { stuk oor kleuterskool en hy maak grappies bv. dat jy nie met rooi kryt kan eks skryf
 244 nie – almal leg lekker vir sy verspotte aanmerkings...
- 245
- 246 I: Okay, ek gaan nou bietjie op jou inzoem. Omtrent nou hoërskooltyd, want dit is nou
 247 die ander crucial ding in 'n mens se lewe. Dan gaan jy nou van standerd vyf na
 248 standerd ses toe...Het dit ooit 'n issue geword dat jy iets moet share van jou
 249 familie?
- 250 C: Met my memory kan ek nie onthou nie.
- 251 I: Dan moet 'n mens maar skryf, ek gaan vir jou 'n mooi dagboekie koop, dan kan jy
 252 elke dag se memories neerskryf.
- 253 S: Dit lyk my hy gaan ook moet begin onthou.

- 254 I: Hy sal ook moet begin onthou. [lag]
 255 C: Ek was vet gewees en ek het 'n kantpaadjie gedra
 256 I: Okay. Was jy vet, ek kan nie dink dat jy kon vet wees nie.
 257 P: Hy het 'n lekker gewiggie gehad aan hom.
 258 I: Wie het jou so rond gevoer?
 259 C: Die mense op straat.
 260 I: Oo!
 261 [lag]
 262 C: [---] want hulle het my mangels uitgehaal en toe maak hulle my eet
 263 Almal lag
 264 I: (lag) Jou mangels het niks met jou gewig te doen nie
 265 C: Toe begin ek eet en eet en eet
 266 S: Hy was 'n baie sieklike kind
 267 C: Ek het al my kindersiektes op een slag gehad
 268 I: Ag shame.
 269 C: En toe haal hulle my mangels uit. En toe kom hulle agter ek is doof ...
 270 S: Jy kan darem so paar jaar terug onthou.
 271 I: Ummm. Nogal
 272 C: Ek het so 50% gehoor gehad in die een oor. Toe opereer hulle my. ...
 273 I: Umm
 274 C: En toe bly my ore skeef
 275 [lag]
 276 I: Niemand se ore is gelyk nie.
 277 C: Ja, maar as jy 'n bril opsit
 278 I: Maar dit lyk nie so op...
 279 C: Nee, die een is dikker as die ander een.
 280 S: [lag] Dis waar hy het my die ander dag gewys...
 281 I: Fyn nuanses, dis waar mens kyk na onder, mens kyk nie na bo nie, ja [stem saam]
 282 I: Penny, jy het gemention party mense het gese hy kan ek maar sê gaan 'n "wash
 283 out" word of niks bereik nie, (Carl – wie) Jy kan later vir haar vra. Imm, Is daar
 284 mense gewees wat jou aangemoedig het en gesê het dit is great... of wat amper
 285 ondersteuning gegee het en reassurance?
 286 P: Nee, ek ... Nee, nee.
 287 S: Nee ons het net ons gatte aan hulle afgevee
 288 I: Umm Okay ja
 289 P: ... Ons het gebattle, hoor. Ons het regtig
 290 I: Soos in hoe?
 291 P: Finansies... Daar is partykeer nie geld, kyk sy, umm, ek wil nou nie sê sy pa nie,
 292 want dan trap hy my nou weer uit, ummm, okay, hy betaal nie onderhoud nie, hy
 293 ummm, hy het sy kind afgeteken en dis dit, so ons het finansiële bietjie swaar gekry
 294 en ummm...jy weet soos die skoolfonds is duur, die skoolklere is duur en
 295 I: Boeke en sport..
 296 S: Ek kan net vir die Here dankie sê, die afgelope twee jaar, het sy oupa en ouma
 297 gehelp, dis nou Susan se broer ... so haar boetie en sy vrou, het ons hierdie jaar
 298 baie gehelp; hulle het ons deur die jare baie bygestaan. Hulle almal. Susan se ma
 299 en pa het ook vir 'n paar jaar by ons gebly. En ons finansiële baie bygestaan. Kos
 300 gekoop. As hy klere nodig gehad het, het hulle altyd vir ons 'n paar rand gegee,
 301 gaan koop klere. So, ons het swaar gekry met hom, maar ons is baie trots op hom.
 302 Hy het gewys hy kan dit doen. So, maar hy het baie swaar gekry saam met my ex,
 303 hy het hom gebrand met stompies, en jy weet, ons altwee het swaar... So en toe ek
 304 by haar ingestap het was ek omtrent 'n alkoholis ... en umm

Carl Session 1

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- 305 C: Net polonie en kaas geëet
 306 I: Wat mompel hy?
 307 Klomp stemme - lag
 308 I: Of moet ek dit liewer nie eers hoor nie.
 309 'n Klomp gelag
 310 I: O dis 'n saak tussen ma en seun hierdie
 311 C: As jy in ons huis instap. Elke dag dan koop sy kaas en polony en dan eet jy dit alles
 312 op, op een dag.
 313 P: lag 'embarrassed'
 314 I: Gelukkig weet ons hy kan dit nie onthou nie, so...
 315 C: Nee dis...
 316 P: Maar onthou ek het swaargekry ...
 317 [lag]
 318 S: Die aand voor ek by haar ingetrek het, het hy my weer goed geslaan en...en toe
 319 vat ek my goed.en van toe af is ons saam
 320 I: Dis great
 321 P: Ons het harde bene gekou maar daardie bene begin nou sag raak, hulle is nou nie
 322 meer hard nie
 323 [lag]
 324 [- - -]
 325 I: [lag] Ummm
 326 S: Ons stres nou al, wat gaan van hom word. Hy weet lankal al wat wil hy word. Hy wil
 327 dollars maak.
 328 I: Wat gaan jy maak om daai dollars te verdien?
 329 C: Ek gaan myn toe.
 330 I: O, Okay.
 331 C: Ek gaan leer vir 'n skofbaas. Hulle sê my eerste salaris gaan omtrent twaalfduisend
 332 rand wees
 333 S: En wat is daai ding waarvoor jy verder.
 334 C: CEO, general manager vd myn
 335 I: Okay. Platinum myn of wat?
 336 C: Anglo Platinum - - -
 337 C: Dan koop ek vir my 'n wildsplaas, ek het 50 persent aandeel en Susan die ander 50
 338 persent
 339 I: Umm, maak net seker dat jy weet waar die droogte siklusse is, sodat jy genoeg vee
 340 wegmaak voor die droogte kom soos nou.
 341 S: 'n Wildsplaas, waarvan praat jy? [lag]
 342 C: - - -
 343 I: Ja
 344 C: Dan bewaar mens mos wild.
 345 P: So jy gaan biltong eet.
 346 I: Umm
 347 C: - - -
 348 I: imm, Dit is nou meer die sensitiewe dele as dit regtig op hierdie grys vlakke raak.
 349 Soos julle vandag van die leerlingraad gepraat het en hoe jy daardie groot seun
 350 terug gechirp het. Imm... tel ek op dat dit so amper 'n bekommernis was dat ma-
 351 hulle nogsteeds weet, dit respekteer en nie aanmekaar moet hang as hulle by die
 352 skool kom en so nie, hoe maklik sê jy dit vir hulle?
 353 C: Ek het net my ma-hulle gesê en hulle weet nou daarvan, maar hulle hou by die reëls

- 354 I: Wat dink jy dit sal gebeur as hulle anders doen as hulle hierdie absolute out-mense
 355 raak en aan mekaar hang of net hande vashou by die skool, wat sal die kinders
 356 doen?
 357 C: Nee, hulle sal niks doen nie
 358 C: Hier by die huis kan hulle doen wat hulle wil. By die huis.
 359 P: Toemaar ons sal nie.
 360 I: Nee ek weet, dis daai fyn ding van persepsies van ander kinders; en jy ken die
 361 ouens saam met wie, wat in jou klas is en of hulle iets gaan sê of iets gaan dink en
 362 of agter jou rug gaan skinder? Maar dis ja
 363 C: Volgende jaar sien jy hulle in elkgeval nie weer nie
 364 I: Ja
 365 S: Dit gaan oor respek
 366 I: Imm
 367 I: Imm, As jy 'n meisie huis toe bring? Pelle net vir kom kuier?
 368 C: Nee, dan , meeste, nou nie meeste nie, maar al my vriende weet...my beste vriend,
 369 V het hier kom pool speel...
 370 I: En hoe't hy uitgevind?
 371 C: Estelle (draai na Jenny en Tina toe)
 372 Almal lag
 373 I: Laat ons hoor
 374 S: Vertel vir hulle, vir haar die storie
 375 C: Hulle sou weg gewees het, en ek was die naweek alleen. Hy het sy vermoedens
 376 gehad, maar hy het niks vir my gesê nie. Toe kom Estelle hier in en toe sê sy 'Hallo
 377 my naam is Estelle en ek is 'n lesbiën.'
 378 [lag]
 379 C: Hy't nie geworry nie en toe hulle weg is toe't ek het vir hom gesê vra nou jou vrae
 380 wat jy wil vra
 381 I: Okay, dis nice, en wat het hy gevra, mag ons weet, jy hoef nie te sê nie.
 382 C: Nee, dis fine, hy het net gesê hy het dit vermoed, maar hy was te bang om my te
 383 vra. En nou weet hy
 384 I: Ja, en was dit vir jou nicer gewees na die tyd, of bietjie weird, of dieselfde?
 385 C: Dieselfde, hy het sy vermoedens gehad en..
 386 S: Ek dink hulle het almal het maar hulle vermoedens gehad, maar
 387 P: En ek maak nou en dan 'n blaps en skree 'Engel'
 388 C: Ja hulle weet hier is een dubbelbed en
 389 S: Ja, hulle weet ons slaap in een kamer en ons deel 'n huis
 390 I: Is dit vir jou erg as hulle vir mekaar 'Engel' sê?
 391 C: Nie vir my nie..maar hulle
 392 I: Dit is nou maar deel van die grense. okay
 393 En as jy nou 'n meisiekind oorbring, want dit is nou mos baie spesiaal. Jy moet nou
 394 begin sê as ek moet begin wow, want dis nou...
 395 C: Dis hoekom ek haar hier insmokkel
 396 [lag]
 397 I: Asof sy jou gaan toelaat om 'n vrou hier deur te smokkel
 398 [lag]
 399 I: Sonder om haar eers uit te check
 400 C: Ge-test drive het
 401 I: Hey,
 402 Klomp gesels saam
 403 C: My, ja, my eks, sy het geweet daarvan.
 404 I: Het jy haar gesê?

- 405 C: Ja. Ons het so op die bed gelê en gesels toe sê ek ek wil haar my grootste secret
 406 vertel en toe vertel ek haar
- 407 I: Okay.
- 408 S: En wat was haar antwoord
- 409 C: Net o
- 410 S: En solank ons net nie inmeng nie, (C: o ja) dis wat jy vir my gesê het
 411 [onduidelik]
- 412 Nefie het haar afgevy – praat oor hoe upset 2 ma's was en namens hom
- 413 I: Jy laat my nou aan iets anders dink. Wat is great om twee ma's te hê? Wat maak dit
 414 beter?
- 415 C: Nie een van hulle twee kan hard slaan nie
 416 [Lag]
- 417 I: Okay
- 418 S: Jy lieg, jou ma het jou lekker pak gegee ...
- 419 C: Net toe ek kleiner was, maar toe't ek altyd vir Susan gekies. My ma slaan
 420 aanhoudend, en sy slaan oor my bene. Maar Susan, Susan slaan twee houes, dan
 421 praat sy, dan huil ek, dan loop sy.
- 422 Almal lag
- 423 I: Jy gee nou al jou secrets weg, jy is nog 'n jaar in hierdie huis.
- 424 P: Ek's nou te bang om hom te slaan, hy vat mens vas en dan hy's hy my op
- 425 Almal lag
- 426 I: En wat nog?
- 427 C: Hulle is.. hoe kan ek sê? Ons is close, daar is nie 'n pa wat, soos in, ons vang vis,
 428 sy is my male-figure, ons gaan vang saam vis. Ek moet self, nou nie self leer
 429 nie. Toe Penny se pa geleef het, my oupa... het hy my goeters gewys, nou nie karre
 430 nie
- 431 I: Sulke meganiese goed
- 432 C: Dan leer hy my
- 433 S: My pa was 'n gentleman, dan sê ek pa, ek wil net gou 'n gat in die muur boor wys
 434 my, dan sê hy my kind, jy hoef nie
- 435 I: Jy hoef dit nie te weet nie, jy brand meanwhile om te leer.
- 436 C: My oom leer my ook baie
- 437 I: Okay
- 438 S: Hy gaan werk vakansies daar, dan leer hy baie
- 439 I: Ummm
- 440 S: Ons is 'n baie gehegte familie, make-up. So ons is gereeld bymekaar.
- 441 C: Ek wil nou soos, nou nie uitstaan nie, maar ek wil wys ek kan enige iets doen. 'n
 442 Sukses van my lewe maak
 443 Praat iets van nefies...onduidelik
- 444 I: Wat doen die ander?
- 445 C: Hulle is almal jonger as ek, maar my ooms en so
- 446 I: So dit is nice, jy is amper 'n rolmodel vir die kleintjies ook.
- 447 C: My oupa het soos in 'n eie boot gehad, sy eie werkswinkel, maatskappy. En ek sou
 448 dit alles gekry het, omdat ek sy naamgenoot is en toe't my oom nou dit alles gaan
 449 uitdobbels en dit alles verloor.
- 450 I: Dis sad
- 451 C: En soos in, my ma, daai kant van die familie, dis nie om hulle af te maak nie, maar
 452 mens sal nou nie moeite maak met hulle nie
- 453 I: Jy mors nie energie op hulle nie
- 454 C: Mens sny hulle net uit
- 455 I: Maar dit kom nou baie maklik wat jy daar sê, maar dit is nie so maklik nie.

- 456 P: O nee, dis maklik
 457 I: Is daar nie ook 'n sadness en 'n seer nie?
 458 C: Nee
 459 I: Okay
 460 C: My nefies, sal my baie probleme gee, maar, dit pla my nie
 461 P: Ek het 'n baie funny familie, hulle bel met as dit is nodig is As daar moeilikheid is,
 462 dan kom die k*&!, dan is dit ek. Ek kan niks reg doen nie.
 463 I: Ag nee, [lag]. Jy is al gewoond daaraan.
 464 P: Ja, ek kom by niemand nie, ek bel niemand nie, ek is altyd die een wat in die
 465 moeilikheid is. Soos my ma.
 466 C: Sy ken nie my naam nie, dit is altyd Johan, Kerwin, ag Carl.
 467 I: Oo, okay, een van daai's.
 468 P: Sy noem eers al die ander se name voor syne.
 469 I: Ja, maar dit voel nie lekker as sy so
 470 P: As ons daar kom, sal sy nie brag oor hom nie, verstaan jy. Kyk ek brag oor my
 471 kind, hy is leerlingraad en hy het Noord Transvaal krieket gekry, dit is 'n groot eer.
 472 Sy sal eerder die ander kleinkinders goed maak hier voor ons. En dit het hom
 473 seergemaak in die begin.
 474 C: Maar nou weet ek dit is hoe ouma is
 475 P: Sy het al vir jou gesê. Ouma kom net hierna toe as sy 'n lift nodig het.
 476 I: O okay, as sy jou nodig het.
 477 P: Dan bly sy net drie dae, dan moet ons haar weg vat.
 478 I: Umm
 479 P: En hy tel dit op
 480 C: Sien dit was omdat ek my Oupa se blue eye boy was
 481 I: Okay, umm
 482 C: En sy het dit nou nie gelike nie
 483 I: Glad nie.
 484 C: En ek dink dis wat haar afgesit het
 485 P: Maar dit het hom in die begin baie gepla
 486 I: Pla dit jou nie nog soms nie?
 487 C: Nee wat, ek weet mos nou watse tipe mens is sy
 488
 489 I: Is daar kinders in die skool wat self begin agterkom het dat hulle gay is en dit, al
 490 geopper het? Want dis 'n ding wat mens al meer en meer sien. Dat die kinders self
 491 agterkom hulle is gay. Dat daar 'n meisie is wat click sy is verlief op 'n ander meisie,
 492 of 'n ou wat agterkom hy is verlief op 'n ou?
 493 C: Hulle kom praat nie soos in reguit met my nie. Ek weet van Michelle en ek weet van
 494 Ruan.
 495 I: En weet hulle van hulle self?
 496 C: Michelle weet ja maar Ruan weet nie. Maar ek dink hy weet, want hy praat met daai
 497 handjie (wys) – almal lag.
 498 Ek weet van matrieks wat nou uit die skool is. Daar was ook een keer in ons kerk
 499 wat in ons skool was, so rookop dogtertjie. Maar sy's nou weg.
 500 I: En hoe gaan dit met hulle op die skool? Is die kinders meer rustiger deesdae of is
 501 daar maar 'n geskindery en 'n gespottery?
 502 C: Nee, almal weet vanMichelle, maar met Ruan, want hy wil dit nie erken nie.
 503 I: Ummm, die oomblik wat hy die handjie en meer verfynd is..
 504 C: Ja, want op 'n stadium praat hy met iemand, en dan op die ou end sê hulle het jy
 505 gesien..
 506 P: Dis eintlik lelik, dit maak seer.

- 507 I: Nou sal jy iets sê of los jy dit maar of...
- 508 C: Ek ignoreer dit. Dis nie my saak nie. As hy is dan is hy, of nie. Maar ek dink hy is,
- 509 S: Ja dit kan wees ... baie mans is verfynd...
- 510 I: Umm
- 511 P: Daai meisie wat so is, spot hulle haar?
- 512 C: Almal weet sy is.
- 513 P: En hulle los haar uit?
- 514 C: Umm. Die meisies in ons skool het ook nie 'n probleem nie, hulle druk mekaar...
- 515 I: Dit is eintlik nogal nice.
- 516 P: Die kinders is meer oop, meer oop...
- 517 I: Absoluut. Vyf jaar, tien jaar terug sou dit nie gebeur het nie, nee.
- 518
- 519 I: Ummm. Okay, watsê advice het julle vir ander families? Vir kinders wat ook twee
- 520 ma's of twee pa's het?
- 521 P: Weet jy my ... my raad wat ek kan gee is, wees net oop.
- 522 S: Wees jousef.
- 523 P: Wees jousef. Wees lief vir jou kind. Moet dit nie eers vir hom probeer wegsteek nie.
- 524 Wees oop met hom en as daar probleme is sorteer dit uit op 'n mooi manier.
- 525 ...Partykeer weet ek fight ons ook
- 526 I: Hello, dis 'n given, alle gesinne fight.
- 527 P: Maar ek sou vir hulle sê, hulle moet dit face, en openlik met mekaar wees. Ons is
- 528 daar deur..So ek weet, en dit skeur nie die verhouding nie, dit skeur die kind, op die
- 529 ou end maak dit die kind seer, jy maak nie jousef seer nie, jy maak die kind seer
- 530 Mens moet mekaar vertrou en hy moet ons ook vertrou. En kan praat. Okay, hy
- 531 praat nie met my nie, hy praat met Susan
- 532 I: Ten miste met een
- 533 P: Ja, ek bly maar stil.
- 534
- 535 I: Carl, wat sal jy vir 'n seuntjie sê wat nou graad een toe gaan en hy het ook twee
- 536 mamma's of twee pappa's? En hy is verskriklik bang? Oor die maatjies wat dalk
- 537 gaan spot of die TV wat sê dis...
- 538 C: Op daai ouderdom... Hy gaan hulle in elk geval oor sewe jaar uit die skool, en hulle
- 539 nooit weer sien nie. Hy hoef niks te sê nie, dit net los, in elk geval, mense het niks te
- 540 sê nie. En op die ou end gaan dit so, hoe kan ek sê, afgesaag word hulle gaan dit
- 541 in elk geval los.
- 542 I: Dis dalk vir 'n dag of twee.
- 543 C: So 'n week
- 544 I: Dan is dit ook oor. Okay
- 545 S: Imm. Ek dink veral as jy dit ignoreer gaan hulle sien, ons kry nie konfrontasie uit
- 546 hierdie ou nie, kom ons los dit maar
- 547 C: Ek worry nie daaroor nie.
- 548 I: Umm
- 549 S: ...[- -]
- 550 I: Hy't net baie respek dink ek. Maak jou nie moeg met gemors nie.
- 551 P: Hy sal nie sy hande vir iemand lig nie
- 552 S: Hy sal sy man kan staan. Sy ma baklei vir sy part
- 553 I: Is hulle interfering (vra vir Carl?)
- 554 Almal lag
- 555 P: Ek dreig hulle sommer met prokureurstories (lag)
- 556 I: Moes jy al iemand so dreig?

- 557 P: Jaaa... vertel van motorfiets wat Carl reggemaak het en toe wil oorspronklike
 558 eienaar dit weer kamtig terughê; en gedeelte oor buurman/ man in dieselfde straat
 559 wat Carl geslaan het oor sy kop net na sy operasie, en hoe sy hom aangevat het,
 560 en hoe die man ook sy vrou slaan – en hy skel haar vir 'n "lesbiën" en sy wat sê "jy's
 561 'n vroueslaner, vir jou vat ek hof toe}
- 562 I: [lag] Okay ek dink dit is genoeg vir vannaand, ek weet nie of daar nog iets is
 563 waaraan julle kan dink nie?
- 564 S: Is dit al?
- 565 I: Julle het dit pretty much gecovert. Maar dit is so dit help nogal om bietjie te gaan
 566 dink, en deel te word. Dan sal ek weer terug kom
- 567 S: Net nie op 'n Woensdagaand nie.
- 568 I: Dit is 'n kerk aand.
- 569 [lag]
- 570 *[Details uitgeruil, koffie gedrink]*
- 571 *[Gedeelte oor skoolvakke en punte]*
- 572 S: Maar hy het goed gedoen.
- 573 Praat oor hoe hy swakker gedoen het aan einde van die jaar – by maats gehoor jy kan
 574 nie st. 9 druipe as jy prefek is nie, maar besef toe teen einde dat sy punte baie sleg
 575 is, en hy begin bekommer....
- 576 P: Hy't verlede jaar bietjie geskrik....
- 577 ...
- 578 P: Hy sal enige iets met haar oopmaak. Ek en hy kan nie, sy geheime, ek en hy kan dit
 579 nie doen nie. Hy deel glad nie sy goed met my nie. Alles met Susan. Maar ek
 580 waardeer dit, want hy...
- 581 I: Jy is te close
- 582 C: Sy's te
- 583 I: Objektief nie.
- 584 C: Hoe kan ek sê
- 585 I: Te emosioneel, te involved.
- 586 [lag]
- 587 S: Dit is asof sy dit anders opvat as wat dit is. Ek dink meer soos jy, en jy dink meer
 588 soos ek.
- 589 I: Wie sê julle twee is reg?
- 590 [almal lag]
- 591 P: Sê hulle
- 592 S: Ek dink oor ek meer rustig en kalm met hom praat. Sy raak nogal erg. Die
 593 stemmetjie raak hoër. Dan dink hy sy wil nie meer met hom praat nie. Ek is meer
 594 kalm en ...
- 595 I: Ummm
- 596 S: Dan begin hy, dan begin sy.
- 597 - - -
- 598 P: Ek los hom maar uit dat hy maar met Susan gaan praat.
- 599 Vertel van laasnag wat hy moeg en geïrriteerd was en skoor soek...
- 600 P: Mens kan hom nie meer slaan nie. Hy tel my somer op, dan dink hy dit is 'n grap,
 601 dan raak ek kwaad vir hom. Jy kan hom nie meer slaan nie.
- 602 S: Maar vir wat wil jy hom slaan.
- 603 [lag]
- 604 [kuier]
- 605 Praat oor ma wat aandag soek en hom drukkies wil gee...
- 606 C: Dan partymaal dan sit ek rustig hierso, en dan sê sy, Ag kom hou my net bietjie vas.
 607 Ek's haar seun, hier sit haar man. Hier lewensgroot op die bank.

- 608 S: Maar sy wil bietjie liefde van haar seun hê, wil bietjie hê haar seun moet haar
 609 vashou
- 610 P: Wat is fout daarmee? Om my bietjie vas te hou. Kyk daarso, sy hou jou vas. Dan sit
 611 hy daar en dan sê ek hou my bietjie vas, die mense kan dink wat hulle wil, dis ma
 612 en seun
- 613 C: Dis soos in die winkels, nou wil sy my hand vashou, netnou dink hulle dis my
 614 girlfriend, en dan, netnou loop daar 'n mooi meisie verby en dan
 615 Almal lag en praat gelyk
- 616 J: Ja dis waaroor dit gaan
- 617 I: Hulle interfeer né, jou liefdeslewe gaan nooit op dreef kom nie
- 618 P: Ek hou daarvan as hy langs my sit, maar hy't nie 'n saak nie...
- 619 Praat oor eerste liefdesteleurstelling
- 620 P: Jy kry seer saam met jou kind, jy weet nie wat om te verwag nie. Ek wil net met alle
 621 geweld haar storm, en haar aan haar keel ruk
- 622 C: Hulle het omtrent harder baklei as ek
- 623 P: Mens probeer nie inmeng nie, maar dis maar moeilik
- 624 Lisensie – Penny het nie, hy het learner's – Susan is nagblind...
 625 ...dagmoeder 17 kleuters...
- 626 P: In die begin was dit erg, ek het dit baie op hulle 2 uitgehaal, maar nou's dit beter"
 627 - - -
- 628 Bespreek rasse-indeling ; en haar sus in Kaap wat ook dagmoeder is, maar nie swart
 629 kinders soen nie...
- 630 S: Hy's mos deur dieselfde Here gemaak.
- 631 P: Jy kan mos nie 'n witkind soen en as hy nader kom, dan jou rug om hom draai nie.
 632 Dan't jy mos nie 'n hart nie. Ek flippen vry hulle almal voor die voet.
 633 Ek soen hulle net nie as hulle 'n snotneus het nie.
 634 - - -
- 635 P: As jy daai kind oopsny, dis dieselfde kleur bloed wat daar uitkom
 636 ... vertel hoe Carl ook help en met hulle speel....
- 637 Nog 'n stukkie van tug toe klein was – pakslae gee
- 638 Hoe Carl keer met Penny en dan slaan sy hande, boude, bene –
- 639 Maar Susan wat 2 houe gee, dan praat, dan huil hy – dan sê sy "jy moenie dit weer
 640 doen nie" – en dan loop die trane, sê Penny as sy uit die kamer kom...

- 1 **Carl Session 2**
- 2 I: Oraait, nou wat ek graag wil hê ons moet doen is, net so 'n lifeline, so 'n tydlyn
- 3 van jou lewe met die highest highs daarop, die hoogtepunte, imm, wat ja
- 4 C: Imm, ek glo nie ek gaan daar iets hê nie want (lag) ek het 'n geheue van so twee
- 5 weke
- 6 (lag saam)
- 7 I: Dis ook okay
- 8 So jy kan kies, ek het verskillende kleure papiere en die rooi is karton dis bietjie
- 9 harder, en ek het nou nie vir jou pienk gebring nie (dankie)want ek het nie gedink
- 10 jy sal daarvan hou nie
- 11 C: Lag, beslis nie van pienk nie
- 12 I: Oraait, of jy kan daardie groot wit papiere gebruik wat ons kan klein vou ook,
- 13 oraait, en dan moet jy besluit hoe wil jy dit voorstel, imm, party mense, kinders,
- 14 mense maak net so 'n reguit lyn so, ander maak sulke sirkels, anders kan jy 'n
- 15 paadjie teken, ek weet nie waarvan hou jy nie, sport, so jy kan dalk, dalk kan jy 'n
- 16 krieketbat teken, dalk 'n krieketbat, net om 'n outline te gee van hoe was dit
- 17 vandat jy gebore is tot waar dit nou is
- 18 Dan kan ons sommer net gesels en dan
- 19 C: Moet ek nou sê, ek's nie seker nie
- 20 Jy kan kies
- 21 Jou ouderdom en dit en dit
- 22 Yes, oraait, dit gaan oor hoofsaaklik jou highest highs, nê, soos dit nou, nou nie
- 23 soos as mens op " 'n high" is nie
- 24 C: Ihm
- 25 I: Ihm, ja, ag wat ek sommer baie keer doen as ek dit moet doen dan sal ek nou sê
- 26 hier's ek gebore, oe, ek wil dit nou nie skryf nie dan gee ek my ouderdom weg
- 27 (lag, skryf dit in elk geval), maar dan ja, dan kan jy besluit of jy dit volgens
- 28 laerskool of hoërskool of jy kan dit volgens sportprestasies doen, ihm, ja, enige
- 29 nice goed wat gebeur het
- 30 C: My oor?operasies en -
- 31 I: Ja, jy kan, even dit, want dit kan, wat ek baiekeer sê dis jou highest highs en jou
- 32 lowest lows, maar dis nou nie altyd lekker om daaroor te praat nie
- 33 C: Ek dink ek sal my highest highs bo sit en my lowest lows onder
- 34 I: Ja, so jy kan dit so doen, kan werk
- 35 Oraait, maar jy moet dit doen (gee papiere vir hom)
- 36 (praat oor kleur pen wat nie op blou gaan werk, hou van blou, kry boek wat hard
- 37 onder kan wees om op te skryf)
- 38 C: Hulle 2 doen Bybelstudie daar binne
- 39 I: Mmm, ernstig ernstig
- 40 C: ja
- 41 I: Dis nice
- 42 C: Jy moet net my handskrif verskoon, want ek skryf links
- 43 I: (ek het van 'n clue???????) – kan nie uitmaak, as ek reg onthou sê ek iets van
- 44 dat hy altyd van ander kant af moet skryf of oor sy hand moet skryf of iets oor die
- 45 manier van jou pengreep...
- 46 I: Oraait
- 47 C: - ?
- 48 I: ?
- 49 C: Jy het gesê kleuterskool ook? Ek was nie juis in 'n kleuterskool nie, ek was 6
- 50 maande daar gewees
- 51 I: Ag dis fine
- 52 C: Toe byt iemand my en toe haal my ma my uit
- 53 Lag
- 54 I: Ag nee, Toe's sy vies
- 55 C: Ja toe haal sy my uit die kleuterskool uit

- 56 I: Toe hou sy jou by die huis
 57 C: Ja, dit was 'n jaar en 'n half gewees
 58 I: Kan jy dit onthou, Dit was seker nogal seer
 59 C: Ek was in Kabouter, ag, imm, 'n Piekieland gewees
 60 I: Ag, oriaat, is dis hiernaby
 61 C: Imm, ja toe byt iemand my in my oor. Ek dink dit was nog G [REDACTED] gewees,
 62 ek was nogsteeds daar gewees
 63 I: O oraait, lag
 64 C: Toe haal my ma my uit
 65 I: lag, En wat het jy aan hom gedoen dat hy jou gebyt het?
 66 C: Ek was klein gewees, ek kan nie sover terug onthou nie, ek dink nie ek het hom
 67 teruggebyt nie (- - -)
 68 I: oraait, jy't baie interessante dinge wat met jou gebeur
 69 (stilte – teken tydlynne)
 70 C: ... meeste net die goeie goeters onthou ek, want die slegte goed skakel ek uit
 71 I: Mm, dink jy nie dis andersom nie dat mens die slegte goed eerder onthou nie,
 72 maar
 73 C: Die goeie goed hierdie. .. Ek onthou net, ek onthou die datum vandat ek eerste
 74 keer, vir die eerste span krieket gekies is. (I: okay) Al wat ek basies onthou is my
 75 mense wat ek verloor het, (I: oraait) C: wat nogal sleg is
 76 I: Dis sad, dis pertinente goed wat jy sal onthou; en die ander nitty gritty goed
 77 maak nie saak nie. Klink of jou sport nogal groot rol speel né
 78 C: Ja
 79 I: Obviously
 80 C: Ek het nie eintlik baie goeie goed wat al met my gebeur het nie
 81 I: Ag shame
 82 C: Die slegte goeters het ek vergeet. Het ek uit my brein gesluit het. Ek kan nie
 83 onthou dat ek al my ma se kar gestamp het nie want ek het nog nie, sekere dinge
 84 het nog nie met my gebeur nie
 85 I: Teen mense wat jy verloor in jou lewe is dit niks, wat is 'n kar nou
 86 C: Dis my ouma, en my oupa, my 2 beste oupas, my ouma wat ek verloor het, my
 87 oom wat ek verloor het, laasjaar se liefde wat ek verloor het, my ooroperasie.
 88 Verder kan ek onthou my laerskooldae toe ek leer motor bestuur het. Eerste
 89 span 2000.
 90 I: Okay, dis nice. Vertel my van jou oupas?
 91 C: Okay, my een oupa, dit isd nou my ma se pa, dit was my beste oupas gewees,
 92 hy's omtrent in 1996, lank terug... Dis basies, nou seker nie sy eie skuld nie maar
 93 hy het baie Grandpas gedrink
 94 I: O oraait
 95 C: En toe kry hy beroerte en so het hy aangegaan, maar hy het sonder, hy't nie
 96 geloop nie, en toe kry hy inwendige bloeding en toe's sy bloed te dun gewees en
 97 toe bloei hy homself dood. Maar ek het ek het baie dinge by hom geleer. Hy het
 98 altyd geld in my hand gesit, maar dis nie al rede nie
 99 I: Nee, maar dis lekker bederfies ne, (C:Ja) dis soos ouma se koekies en beskuit
 100 C: My oupa was, nou nie, baie lucky gewees basies, hy't gaan dobbel met R500
 101 basies en dan kom hy met 'n dertig duisend terug of iets
 102 I: Hoop jy't daai gene, lag,
 103 C: Ek hoop ook so
 104 I: Nou nie die dobbelgene maar die luck
 105 C: O
 106 C: In elk geval, hy't baie goed gehad, hy het 'n boot gehad wat ek moes geërf het,
 107 hy't 'n workshop wat ek sou geërf het
 108 I: Wat het hy gedoen, houtwerk? Metaal?
 109 C: Nee, hy't karre reggemaak
 110 I: O oraait

- 111 C: Hy't my altyd, elke liewe dag omtrent 'n bak 2l-bak rum en raisin roomys gebring
 112 om te eet, ek was sy blue eyed boy gewees. Ek, my oom en hy was die enigste
 113 wat Carl is, sy naamgenoot, en nou's ek die enigste een oor, ek was soos in sy
 114 alles gewees , dis hoekom my ouma kan my nie hanteer nie maar in elk geval
 115 I: O so sy het nie
 116 C: Ja sy's bietjie
 117 I: Ooghare, Sy leef nog
 118 C: Ja, sy lewe nog. Maar sy's soos agterbaks.. sy sal as sy met my praat sal sy nie
 119 my eers, naam eerste noem nie, sy sal altyd my nefies se name eers noem en
 120 dan myne. Sy's 'n twee gatjakkals maar ek is baie lief vir haar.
 121 My ander oupa het my nou weer nou hier gewys, dis Susan se pa, hy't my nou
 122 weer gehelp met alles, my geleer wat ek vandag weet basies.
 123 I: Oraait, gehelp met watse goed alles
 124 C: Soos in bv. ja, soos ek gedoen het, soos, wat ek moet doen, soos my fiets
 125 regmaak, en ek kry dit nie reg nie dan wys hy my, soos hy 't my al die basiese
 126 goeters gewys wat, maar, basies hoe goeters werk
 127 I: Imm
 128 C: My ander ouma het my weer baie gehelp as ek moes pakslae kry, dan kom haal
 129 sy my uit die kamer uit dan baklei sy met my ma
 130 I: (Lag) O ja, julle't laas gesê
 131 C: Sy was baie kwaai met my gewees ook ma', maar sy was die beste gewees, sy't
 132 my baie gehelp ook, geld gegee, ek's nou nie eintlik haar regte bloed kleinkind
 133 nie, maar ek het die meeste van die kleinkinders gekry
 134 I: Imm
 135 C: My oom is my beste oom basies gewees, hy was die ander naamgenoot gewees
 136 ,
 137 I: Oraait
 138 C: Hy't hier op Witbank gebly.
 139 I: Okay
 140 C: Hy't homself verbrand, nou nie self verbrand nie, hy't doodgebrand. Ah, hy werk
 141 by Highveld gewerk, het gewerk op Highveld daar by Witbank toe klim hy in die
 142 skagte af en toe laat ander mense al daai warm as daar afval en toe brand hy
 143 I: Aagh, nee, oe, dis sad
 144 C: Ja, hierdie, my 2de oupa , Susan se pa is dood is, ons dink, want hy't longkanker
 145 gehad en die aand toe begin hy net opgooi en hy kon nooit bloed vat nie,
 146 I: Agnee, En hy't seker bloed opgegooi
 147 C: Ja, hy't bloed opgegooi en ons dink dis wat hom swak gemaak het, daai bloed
 148 opgooi
 149 I: Het dit hier gebeur
 150 C: Ja, in die kamer waar my ma-hulle bly
 151 I: Dis sleg, wanneer was dit
 152 C: Dit was nou net die jaar daarna, 97
 153 I: Sjoe
 154 C: Was net 'n jaar
 155 I: waar was jy daai aand
 156 C: Ek was net in die kamer net hierlangsaan, maar hulle het my nie wakker gemaak
 157 nie, hulle wou my nie wakker maak nie, Susan sê sy't sulke goeters uit sy mond
 158 uitgehaal, so, hulle het my nie wakker gemaak nie seker eers so 3 ure daarna
 159 wakker gemaak toe was die meeste van die family al klaar hierso
 160 I: Toe was hy klaar oorlede
 161 C: Ja
 162 I: En toe jy wakker word, en hulle vir jou sê, kan jy nog onthou?
 163 C: Ek onthou ek het wakker geword toe skud sy my toe sê sy vir my oupa is
 164 oorlede, toe dog ek sy jok, toe ek uitkom toe sien ek net almal huil
 165 I: Dis bad stuff

- 166 C: Ja
 167 I: Imm, en vroeg in jou lewe né, as mens eers ja, iemand naby verloor het dan
 168 verander dit mens, dan kyk mens met ander oë
 169 C: My ouma het getreur, lank getreur, sy's nou verlede jaar die 18de Aug is sy ook
 170 oorlede
 171 Ook longkanker, sy't eintlik eers borskanker gehad maar toe versprei dit toe gaan sy
 172 in 'n semi-kom in, dit was baie erg
 173 I: Sy't ook hier gebly né
 174 C: Ja, seker tot so.. sy en my ma het 'n rusie gehad, en toe stop hulle nou en toe
 175 kalmeer hulle en toe besluit sy self sy moet trek; my ma wou eintlik gehad het sy
 176 moes bly, maar toe sê my ma dis seker maar vir die beste. Toe kry sy vir haar 'n
 177 plekkie in 'n woonstelletjie. Ons was elke aand daargewees, sy was, die 18de
 178 Aug net voor die einde nog by hierdie huis gewees. Toe't ons geweet dis naby,
 179 toe was die hele family daar, en toe neem ons afskeid
 180 I: Dis bad, hoe gaan mens aan na so iets
 181 C: Ons het nogal gecope hoor, dis moeilik, maar, veral met Susan, want daai
 182 afgelope sê, 6 maande was sy soos in kort humeurig.
 183 I: En dis nie sy nie
 184 C: Nee, sy't nou onlangs eers, seker so 2 maande terug, eers begin kalmeer.
 185 I: Haai solank..shame
 186 C: Sjoe, baie kort humeurig
 187 I: Hoe's sy gewoonlik?
 188 C: Sy's baie kalm, as sy nou miskien sleg uit die bed opgestaan het, mar jy kan
 189 sien, ..
 190 I: Dan weet jy
 191 C: Dan bly jy maar uit die pad uit
 192 C: Maar anderster sal sy altyd met 'n smile sit, en as jy met haar gaan praat en sy
 193 praat terug dan weet jy soos in ...As ek en sy alleen is ook , ons kon hoe 'n fight
 194 gehad het, as ek en sy alleen is, dan praat ons lekker, maar ek en my ma, kan
 195 nie lekker praat nie
 196 I: Jy't gesê ja, sy raak te gou kwaad
 197 C: Ja
 198 I: En dit lyk asof jy en Susan 'n baie goeie verhouding het, jy't laas ook gesê julle
 199 kan oor enige iets praat. Dit is stunning, né.
 200 C: Ek kan haar alles vertel, ek vertel haar amper alles
 201 I: Het jy nie geheime nie?
 202 C: Nee, sy weet alles...
 203 I: of loop jy eers en bietjie broei en wonder wat jy vir haar sal sê.
 204 C: As ek en sy alleen is dan praat ons oor alles en goeters.
 205 I: O okay
 206 C: Soos hierdie jaar ook, nee, dit was verlede jaar, ek het bietjie opgeslip met die
 207 skoolwerk, en almal het gesê as jy op die prefekteraad is dan sal hulle jou oorsit.
 208 En toe begin slaplê en slaplê en toe begin my rapport my te vreet.
 209 I: O-ho, wat het jy gedoen.. vertel my eers dit
 210 C: Ek het net begin, imm, huiswerk het ek nog gedoen maar leerwerk. Dan skryf ons
 211 die volgende dag miskien 'n groot vak, dan leer ek daai aand miskien net so
 212 bietjie, die volgende oggend dan gaan skryf ek
 213 I: En watse punte begin jy kry
 214 C: Daai laaste, okay my punte het bietjie gedaal, maar daar's wat opgeklim het ook.
 215 Maar ek het begin worry. En toe begin ek met my ma te praat en toe begin sy my
 216 so, en toe sê ek vir haar okay los dit. En toe spat ek kamer toe en toe bel ek vir
 217 Susan. En sê vir haar ek moet haar sien, toe gaan ek na haar werk toe en toe
 218 gaan praat ek met haar, somer daar in haar kantoor, somer daar voor almal
 219 maar dis okay
 220 I: Shame, waar werk sy

- 221 C: Sy werk by die [REDACTED] gebou, [REDACTED] straat. Toe ry ek met die bus soontoe,
 222 toe vertel ek haar alles
- 223 I: Spill the guts; toe's sy okay?
- 224 C: Toe sê sy nee dis reg, jy weet, ons moet net vir God bid en goeters, en toe bid
 225 ons
- 226 I: Dis nice, en
- 227 C: en ek's deur, ...ek's deur, baie spanning, ja
- 228 I: Hoe voel die akademie vanjaar?
- 229 C: Ek dink dit gaan makliker wees, ek gaan nou nie daarop uit om prestasie te kry
 230 nie
- 231
- 232 (Liz transcription):
- 233 I: Hoe voel die akademie vanjaar, want matriek is nogal 'n ander...
- 234 C: Ek dink dit gaan makliker wees, ek weet ek moet nou werk.
- 235 I: Ek verstaan ja.
- 236 C: Ek gaan nou nie uit om prestasies te wen nie. Waar ek gaan werk waar ek wil
 237 werk is nie op prestasies ingestel nie. Ek gaan net deurkom en mooi deurkom,
 238 nie slap le nie.
- 239 I: Ag shame. Jy het laas gesê.
- 240 C:
- 241 I: Ja ek kan dit dink ne [lag]
- 242 C: Want die wat dit nie doen. Die gaan almal dit pluk... Die juffrouens vertel ons
 243 whoo... hier gaan nou groot dinge kom. As ons daai gaan haal ook gaan ek
 244 hardloop.
- 245 I: Nie weer nie. As jy hulle nou goeie raad van standerd nege kan gee.
- 246 C: Goeie raad van standerd nege... moenie dink dit is so maklik nie. [lag] Dit was
 247 eintlik maklik, dis net moet net nie lui raak nie, moet net nie agter raak nie.
- 248 I: Ja, moet net nie agter raak nie.
- 249 C: Moet net nie agter raak nie.
- 250 I: En julle het moeilike vakke, vet.
- 251 C: Ja, nogal, want laas jaar het ek nogal alles basies op hoërgraad gehad ook. Ja,
 252 toe het ek net gesê ek daal maar laat ek alles op standard graad vat.
- 253 I: En vertel my van die myn.
- 254 C: Die myn wil ek graag in kom, maar my nefie moet eers vir my vorms kry.
- 255 I: O, hy werk daar.
- 256 C: Ja, hy werk by Amplats. Ek gaan leer vir 'n skofbaas. So as ek daar instap, my
 257 eerste paycheck is daar.. Nou sê hulle vir my ek sien net geld, maar geld gaan
 258 oor alles hierdie leeftyd.
- 259 I: Ja, as jy dit nie het nie dan is dit ook nie so lekker nie.
- 260 C: Ja, maar ek dink weer soos in... my eerste tien jaar gaan hard wees, maar ek het
 261 vir my ma-hulle gesê binne tien jaar gaan ek wees waar ek wil wees. Ek gaan in
 262 Jo'burg se hoofkantore wees CEO of general manager. Ek dink ek kan dit binne
 263 vyf jaar maak as ek hard werk.
- 264 I: Mmm, alright.
- 265 C: Dan gaan ...Ek het vir my ma hulle gesê, binne vyftien jaar, voordat Susan aftree
 266 koop ek my wildsplaas... Dan gaan ons fifty-fifty in die besigheid. ...of iets
- 267 I: Wat sê hulle daarvan, is hulle lus vir 'n wildsplaas?
- 268 C: Ja, hulle is nogal lus vir 'n wildsplaas en ek ook, dis my droom daai. So ek
 269 gaan... ek gaan werk. Ek moet net die matriek jaar klaar kry dan gaan ek daar
 270 aankom. Ek gaan swot en swot en swot todat ek is waar ek wil wees.
- 271 I: Umm... En swot jy by die myn self?
- 272 C: Ja, ek swot vir 'n skofbaas. Ek gaan nie werk twee jaar basies nie, twee jaar dan
 273 is my salaris R12 000.
- 274 I: Alright, dit is baie nice.

- 275 C: Ek gaan net leer en as ek skofbaas kry gaan ek leer vir manager en dit en dit...
 276 So gaan ek op.
 277 I: Jou nefie, wat doen hy daar?
 278 C: Hy is 'n myner, hy het nie...
 279 I: En hou hy daarvan?
 280 C: Ja, hy hou daarvan, hy was standerd... hy en my ander nefie was standerd sewe
 281 uit die skool uit.
 282 I: Umm. Wou hulle of moes hulle?
 283 C: Nee, hulle wou. Skool is maar... Ek wil eintlik 'n prestasie haal, want as ek
 284 matriek behaal is ek die eerste een in die S familie wees wat dit behaal.
 285 I: O, dit is great.
 286 C: Ja.
 287 I: Ek kan hoor jy het baie ambisie. Baie dinge bereik, 'n go getter.
 288 I: Go-getter
 289 C: Ek het baie drome, sê eerder dit. Ek wil baie ryk word
 290 I: Ja, alright, dit is nice. En behalwe om CEO te wees, wat is ander drome? As ek
 291 mag hoor? Wat droom jy nog van die wildsplaas se droom...
 292 C: Ja, ek wil as ek die wildsplaas koop en ek het baie geld, dan wil ek eiendomme
 293 koop. ...rekord
 294 I: Wie het jou sulke slim planne geleer om te weet jy moet eiendomme koop en..
 295 C: Familie
 296 I: Jou oupa-hulle.
 297 C: Ja, my oom, my een oom ook né, Susan se oudste broer, ek sien hom ook as 'n
 298 oupa-figuur. Ja, Sy seun my ou... is eintlik my nefie, ek sien hom as my ouboet.
 299 I: Dit is nice, dit klink asof julle 'n close family is.
 300 C: Ja, hulle besit X so 'n konstruksie besigheid. L het nou vir hom 'n woonstel
 301 gekoop by die see en hy is by homself daar en hy kry nog geld in... Hy gaan nou
 302 goed aan met eiendomme
 303 I: As die wildsplaas te duur is begin jy eers met die eiendomme. Dan andersom,
 304 dan betaal die huur eintlik die wildsplaas.
 305 C: Susan het ook gesê as.. as die dag kom wat sy sê ek wil 'n wildsplaas hê, dan
 306 sal sy die huis verkoop.
 307 I: Alright, dis nice, dit klink goed, nice drome.
 308 C: Ek gaan dit kry.
 309 I: Jy gaan beslis ja. As jy dit noem op die naam sal jy dit kry.
 310 C: Die krieket ook ja, ek wil ver kom met die krieket. Laasjaar het ek nou Noord
 311 Transvaal gekry, maar ek wil verder gaan, ek wil SA kry. Ons gaan nou uit speel.
 312 Daai myn ook. Daai myn bied ook sport aan, Amplats krieket.
 313 I: O, ja.
 314 C: As hulle... as ek daar speel en ek speel goed dan kan Noord, Noord Wes krieket
 315 my sien. As ek vir hulle speel en as ek goed speel dan is daar ... Noorde speel
 316 teen Northern Titans, dan kan ek van daar af ... as hulle my opstoot kan hulle my
 317 opstoot SA krieket toe.
 318 I: Gaan jy vanjaar weer probeer, inkom?
 319 C: Ja, dit is mos nou voorseisoen.
 320 I: Haai, dit is nie nou krieket seisoen nie.
 321 C: Ons sou vandag speel, maar dit het uitgereën, ons sal nou more weer speel.
 322 I: Dan speel julle ook teen ander Provinsies?
 323 C: Ons het teen Vaal driehoek, Suider, suider, Noord Noord area gespeel, ons was
 324 die beste Noord Transvaal, verlede jaar die beste span in Suid Afrika gewees.
 325 Ons het teen al die spanne behalwe een gewen.
 326 I: O, okay
 327 C: Ons het twee games op een dag gespeel...
 328 I: Toe is julle moeg.
 329 C: Moeg, moeg.

- 330 I: En wat moet jy doen om SA's te kry?
- 331 C: Hard werk [lag]
- 332 I: Hoeveel kies hulle vir die span, vir SA?
- 333 C: Vyftien.
- 334 I: Dan is dit eintlik makliker om vir die onder 21's, onder 18's te speel, hoe werk dit?
- 335 C: Ek gaan eers vir onder 21's speel.
- 336 I: Daar is nie iets laers as dit nie?
- 337 C: Daar is onder 19's, onder 21's en dan is dit SA.
- 338 I: O, okay
- 339 C: Maar as ek onder 19's kan speel, onder 19 onder 21's dan is dit fyn.
- 340 I: Maar as jy daar in kom dan is jou kans goed. En as jy jou meet teen die ander.
- 341 Ek weet jy moet nou nie eintlik nie, maar 'n mens moet weet of jy 'n kans het. Of
- 342 jy 'n kans het om SA's te kry.
- 343 C: Ek het 'n goeie kans want laasjaar het ek... okay ek het die eerste driehoek vier
- 344 match het ek nie so goed perform nie, maar die laaste match, was ek op my
- 345 beste, maar toe het hulle het my nie gesien nie. Anders sou ek SA gekry het.
- 346 Want daar was 'n ander speler gewees, want hulle sou my in die span gesit het.
- 347 My naam was op die lys. Maar
- 348 I: O, senuwees
- 349 C: Maar daar was 'n ander speler wat voor my...
- 350 I: So jy is 'n bowler?
- 351 C: En 'n batsman, ek het vir Noord Transvaal geopen.
- 352 I: Okay, ek gaan dit bietjie dophou en kyk wanneer speel julle.
- 353 C: Ja, as ons nou weer begin. Dit is harde werk.
- 354 I: Ja, so saam met die swottings.
- 355 C: Al wat bad is, hierdie jaar is dit saam met die rekord.
- 356 I: Maar as jy dit maak is jy fine. Ag, maar jy sê jy is nou op standaard graad en jy is
- 357 gewoon aan die hoërgraad. Sal maar duimvas hou.
- 358 C: Ek sal dit maak hierdie jaar, definitief. Ek is nie eintlik bang nie, ons begin die
- 359 Maart, begin ons met die eerste eksamen. Wat badste van alles is daai elfde
- 360 Maart skryf ons Afrikaans, dan as ons klaar is met die Afrikaans, dan klim ons op
- 361 ons fietstoer
- 362 I: Hou boude. hou
- 363 C: En daai Dinsdag skryf ons nog Nat en skeikunde.
- 364 I: Jy sien kans vir baie. Je dis erg.
- 365 C: Dis darem, daai Maandag kan ons by die huis bly dan gaan ek swot.
- 366 I: Okay so dit is lekker, dis nice. So dit is net 'n naweek ding?
- 367 C: Ja, dit is van die Donderdag af tot die...Sondag. Sondag ry ons van daar af reg
- 368 deur. Hopelik het my ma hulle baie Red Bulls sodat ek kan krag het vir die
- 369 volgende dag kan leer.
- 370 I: As hulle jou kom oplaai. Energade dink ek sal beter werk as al daardie kaffiene.
- 371 C: Ek moet swot vir Nat Skei. Gelukkig was Nat Skei was nog nooit vir my 'n
- 372 probleem gewees nie.
- 373 I: Ag, as jy nou bybly sal dit seker nie so erg wees nie?
- 374 C: My lekkerste vak was geskiedenis maar my hardste vak om te leer. Ek probeer
- 375 geskiedenis geleer en dan raak ek aan die slaap. Die volgende dag gaan ek
- 376 skool toe en skryf ek dit op my gemak, toe kry ek 93% op my rapport, ek weet nie
- 377 hoe het ek dit reggekry nie.
- 378 I: Oor jy daarvan gehou het.
- 379 C: Maar dit was so baie gewees. Toe stop ek dit in standerd sewe.
- 380 I: Dit is nou vir bevooregste by die tegniese skole nie, wiskunde, Skei Nat en TT,
- 381 dis die basics, né?
- 382 C: Daai drie moet jy hê Afrikaans en Engels moet jy hê. En meganiese vakkies. Ek
- 383 het tegnika siviel gehad, siviele ingenieurswese, maar ek het dit ook geskuif na
- 384 boukonstruksie toe.

- 385 I: Toe het jy nou?
- 386 C: Ja, ek het dit geskuif. Dit maak dit ligte...
- 387 I: As jy 'n plan in jou kop het druk jy deur daarmee, ne?
- 388 C: Ja, maar ek het dit by my ma geleer.
- 389 I: Nice, beginsel vas.
- 390 C: ... Hulle is baie bang vir my...
- 391 I: ,...vet, wat moet hulle doen.
- 392 C: As hulle stout is.
- 393 I: Sies, dis seker al wat werk. Haat hulle jou?
- 394 C: Maar hulle kom almal na my toe, as ek eet kom almal na my toe, kom hou hulle
- 395 my vas. Al die kinders. Jy kan my ma vra al my niggies se kinders, niggies en
- 396 goeters. Die enetjie wil sommer met my trou sy is nou 12 jaar oud. Sy sê vir my
- 397 ek is haar seksieste nefie en sy wil nog steed met my trou, sy moet my ma hulle
- 398 maar vra.
- 399 I: - - -
- 400 C: Ek het haar net van klein tyd af, haar daipers gechange. My ander niggies se
- 401 kinders ook daipers gechange en goeters.
- 402 I: Jinne, maar jy is hulpvaardig né.
- 403 C: Ja, kan kosmaak alles. Ek het juis vannaand kos gemaak.
- 404 I: Lekker. Wat het julle geeet?
- 405 C: Rys, vleis en aartappels. Dis al wat ek kan maak.
- 406 I: En waar is die groente?
- 407 C: Moet ek groente maak. Ek het nie groentes gemaak nie. Ek eet net twee
- 408 groentes maak, maar dit is as ek dit meng met rys. Pampoen, dan moet daar ook
- 409 sous by wees, baie sous, die sous moet so loop [fluit].
- 410 I: Lekker, o, vet ja. Alright. 'n Kern deel van my studie gaan oor kinders wie se
- 411 ouers gay is né, en wat ek nou gewonder het, soos ek jou nou laas gevra het, as
- 412 kinders self gay is soos daai meisie se naam genoem het.
- 413 C: S - -
- 414 I: Weird naam. En baie keer sal mense sê hulle moet soos uitkom, coming out.
- 415 Dink jy dit is vir jou ook nodig om uit te kom en
- 416 C: Op 'n ouer stadium ja.
- 417 I: Umm
- 418 C: Op 'n jonger stadium dan as kinders jou spot dan kraak dit jou baie vinniger af.
- 419 I: Okay.
- 420 C: Maar nou soos in nou, maar hulle noem my in elk geval nie name nie. Ek dink dit
- 421 is nou die beste tyd om uit te kom.
- 422 I: Umm, okay. En as jy praat van jonger, hoeveel jonger? Laerskool, of voorskool
- 423 of?
- 424 C: Om uit te kom?
- 425 I: Ja.
- 426 C: Ek sal sê so teen standerd sewe. Nie standerd ses nie, mens is nog jonk en
- 427 onervare. So standerd sewe of agt. Ek het nou eers laas jaar, nee ja, laas jaar,
- 428 laas jaar uitgekom, nou nie vir die hele skool nie, net vir my vriende. Maar
- 429 I: Okay, en het jy nou voor die tyd besluit jy gaan nou maar iets sê of?
- 430 C: Nee, dit het net uitgekom.
- 431 I: So daar toe die prefekte saam was. Dit was 'n ander outjie... Vertel my weer die
- 432 storie.
- 433 C: Ons het daar gestaan, ons het daar gestaan by die deur. Toe... eers toe ek uit
- 434 gaan toe gaan my ma en Susan uit. My ma is uitgeroep, maar Susan wou nie,
- 435 toe sê ek Susan kom, toe... en hulle het fotos geneem.
- 436 I: O dit is nice, is dit toe julle aangekondig is.
- 437 C: Ja, nie toe ons aangewys is nie, toe ons ingehuldig is. Toe gaan ons toe ons
- 438 klaar is en ons staan ons daar en my vriende roep my. En hulle vra vir my ... nie
- 439 vrees nie, maar daai verwagting... het jy twee ma's of is dit jy en jou ma en jou

- 440 stief ma of so iets, ek kan nou nie meer onthou nie en... ek sê ek vir hom nee,
 441 een is my ma en een is my pa. Toe sê hy dit is 'n vrou. Toe sê ek so.
- 442 I: Ek dink jy het dit great hanteer.
- 443 C: Hulle het my nie eers verder vra gevra daarvoor nie. En nou hulle worry nie
 444 daarvoor nie, hulle kom slaap by my nog steeds. Ek dink my ma hulle sal hulle
 445 self gedra.
- 446 I: Okay, en voorheen het pelle hier kom slaap.
- 447 C: Ja, hulle het vrae gehad, maar hulle het nooit gevra nie. Soos my een vriend, ek
 448 het gesê. Hy het my na die tyd 'n paar vra gevra. Maar ek dink hulle almal weet
 449 al, maar hulle wil my nie vra nie, hulle is te bang. Maar dit is so obvious, want my
 450 ma-hulle slaap bymekaar, so... Hulle moet vir my vra vrae sal ek hulle antwoord.
 451 Hoekom moet ek dan vir hulle lieg?
- 452 I: Nee.
- 453 C: As hulle my nie aanvaar oor my ma-hulle gay is nie, is dit okay, ek het hulle nie
 454 nodig nie. Ek het baie vriende, so
- 455 I: Ja, dit gaan tog oor jou, en dit is eintlik ietsie kleins op die ou einde, maybe of is
 456 dit nogal 'n ding?
- 457 C: In watter opsig tannie? 'n Slegte of 'n goeie ding?
- 458 I: Wel ek dink dit is 'n goeie ding. Maar ek dink...
- 459 C: Dit is mos nie hulle ma nie, dis myne. En ek is tog meer volwasse as 'n paar van
 460 hulle.
- 461 I: Verseker.
- 462 C: Die een ou is in 'n maand seker 12 dae uit die skool uit. Hy het nou gepluk laas
 463 jaar, hy gee die verskoning, nee sy ma en pa is geskei.
- 464 I: Dit gaan oor daai verhoudings binne die huis.
- 465 C: Maar ek is pligsgetrou, ek is partykeer lui om in die huis joppies te doen
- 466 I: Maar jy weet dit ook
- 467 C: Maar skool toe gaan ek, tensy ek rêrig siek is, dan sal my ma my by die huis laat
 468 bly. En hulle is streng op my skool.
- 469 I: Daar is 'n paar dae wat nie lekker is nie.
- 470 C: Ja, gaan maar skool toe, maak maar klaar. Dis amper amper dan is jy klaar. Baie
 471 mense se geniet jou skool, want as jy uit is mis jy dit.
- 472 I: Dit is so.
- 473 C: Ek
- 474 I: Dit is anders. Daar is goed wat jy mis, maar ek dink nie ek wil nou weer van agt
 475 tot een...
- 476 C: Dis die vakansies.
- 477 I: Ja, daar slaan jy die spyker op die kop.
- 478 C: Almal mis net vakansies. Maar hulle dink ... hulle dink... om daai vakansies te hê
 479 moet jy deur daardie skool loopbaan gaan. Dis wat nie so lekker is nie. Jis want
 480 daai ...hy het seker ses moods op 'n dag verskillende mense, in 'n periode.
- 481 I: O, vet.
- 482 C: Hulle is net mislik partykeer, dan is hulle weer vriendelik. Maar met my is nou
 483 weer 'n ander saak, as ek by hulle kom en hulle groet met sulke smiles. Hulle kan
 484 nie vir my kwaad bly nie, bitter min mense kan vir my kwaad bly.
- 485 I: 'n Smile maak alles reg. Jy het netnou gesê in die laerskool kan kinders miskien
 486 die name noem of... Het dit gebeur of ...of het jy gehoor.
- 487 C: Toe ek jonger was, ja. Soos my ma hulle vir my sê gesê het ek het ek baie huis
 488 toe gekom en gehuil en goed. Soos ek ouer geword ... ek dink hulle is bang...
 489 nie eintlik bang nie... oor ek basies eintlik die grootste in die laerskool was, ek is
 490 nou amper die grootste in die hoërskool ook.
- 491 I: O, okay.
- 492 C: Ek dink in daai opsigte... ja ek dink hulle is bang, bang ek reageer erg en ek
 493 slaan hulle miskien of iets. Maar, in die laerskool, toe ek jonger was ...dit was rof

- 494 I: Jy kan nie onthou nie. Ja, dit was rof In die begin dalk maybe. Wat dink die
 495 kinders daaroor. Wat is die kinders se persepsie? Dink hulle dit is 'n goeie of 'n
 496 slegte ding?
- 497 C: Ek weet nie, ek dink vir hulle is dit seker maar inbetween. Ek het voordele wat
 498 hulle nie het nie.
- 499 I: Soos wat? Daarin is ek nou baie geïnterreseerd.
- 500 C: Ek kry nie pak soos hulle nie. Hulle pa's slaan hulle nou nog met rottange en met
 501 die vuis en sulke goeters. Hulle pa-hulle suip baie... die kinders by die skool. My
 502 ma-hulle doen dit nie. In opsigte is dit nou weer anderse van, hulle pa doen dit vir
 503 hulle, maar doen dit ook vir my.
- 504 I: Soos wat?
- 505 C: Soos met die karre ding, soos as jy een ma het dan sal sy nie vir jou 'n kar leen
 506 nie. Sy sal te ...
- 507 I: Eh-he.
- 508 C: Maar Susan trust my en goeters. Ek vat haar kar dan gaan ek skool toe, funksies
 509 en goed. Hulle pa... party van hulle pa's doen dit nie eers nie. Ek het 'n vriend...
 510 maar hy is 'n kennis. Sy pa het die ander dag staan hy so, toe het hy per
 511 ongeluk iets laatval op die kar of iets, toe slaan sy pa hom met die vuis. Laat hom
 512 niks toe. Sy pa is baie baie streng.
- 513 I: Umm
- 514 C: Bad goed. So ma is darem baie rustiger met my.
- 515 I: Al die benifits om twee ma's te hê
- 516 C: En eintlik... hoe kan ek sê, ek dink dis hoekom my ooms ook lief is vir my. Ek is
 517 meer volwasse partykeer as my nefies en... ek is altyd vriendelik, ek is
 518 gemanierd...
- 519 I: Ummm
- 520 C: Baie mense laaik my, baie mense wil met my trou by die kerk. As ek net 'n paar
 521 jaar ouer was, as hulle net 'n paar jaar jonger was.
- 522 I: [lag] As hulle ook maar net meer geld gehad het, dan het jy dit oorweeg.
- 523 C: Sugermammas
- 524 I: Why not? Dan kry jy jou wildsplaas baie gou. [lag]
- 525 C: Dit is only jokes. Ek maak baie jokes, ek is 'n baie vriendelike persoon.
- 526 I: Ja, jy is, ja, baie nice kwaliteite.
- 527 C: Ek het my af dae. Dan is ek baie geïrriteerd is
- 528 I: Ja, natuurlik.
- 529 C: Dan sê my ma net iets verkeerd...
- 530 I: Dan voel jy jy kan ontplof?
- 531 C: Dan is ek weer reg deur die dak, dan gaan ek na my kamer toe.
- 532 I: O
- 533 C: Maar almal kry hulle af dae.
- 534 I: Is so, verseker. Ja.
- 535 C: Eintlik is ek baie vriendelik. Ek kan my ma hulle eintlik... nou nie irriteer nie, maar
 536 hulle wil partykeer gaan slaap, dan laat die aand, is ek op en af tot so twaalf uur
 537 se kant dan sê ek hulle. Dan bly in die kamer, dan hou ek hulle wakker. Veral my
 538 ma sy is baie lief vir slaap. Dan hang die ogies al hierso. Dan praat ek en praat
 539 ek en praat ek
- 540 I: [lag] Tot daai ogies toeval?
- 541 C: Daai ogies... Dan maak ek haar wakker, dan sê ek hey ek praat nog.
- 542 I: Uhhh
- 543 C: Dan loop ek
- 544 I: En toe jy jou meisie gehad het, was dit 'n, special event wat jy vir haar moes sê,
 545 luister die set-up by my huis is anders, of
- 546 C: Ons was by my een vriendin gewees en toe gaan haal ek haar en toe lê ons net
 547 daar en chat en, ons sou 'n movie gekyk het. En toe gaan my vriendin en haar
 548 boyfiend uit, na 'n ander kamer toe of iewers. Toe vra ek net vir haar wat is jou

- 549 grootste geheim, toe sê ek net vir haar, wag ek sal jou my grootste geheim
550 eerste vertel, my ma-hulle is so en sy't nie 'n probleem daarmee nie
- 551 I: Okay, en haar ma-hulle, en ander, jou pelle se ouers
- 552 C: Hulle het miskien vir hulle ouers vertel
- 553 I: Maar niemand het nog gesê hulle mag nie hier kom kuier nie
- 554 C: Uh-uh/ eh -he, 2 van my vriende se ma-hulle het hulle al uitgegooi...maar hulle
555 gaan nie... hulle is nie lief vir... hulle gaan na vriende wat hulle ken, hulle sal nie
556 sommer na wildvreemde mense toe gaan nie.
- 557 I: O, okay. Maar dis nice
- 558 C: Soos my een vriendin ook hier onder, my eks vriendin. Haar boyfriend het
559 ons..like nie as ek by haar gekuier het nie.
- 560 I: Okay, umm.
- 561 C: Ja, haar ma-hulle was ook gay gewees, okay. Ons het altyd, dan kom kuier sy
562 by my en die dag toe vra ek... toe vra ek haar ma, toe vra ek is jou ma-hulle gay
563 toe sê sy ja te sê sy jou ma-hulle ook, toe sê ek ja. Toe het ons eers gejel, toe
564 gaan sy saam met my kerk toe, haar ma-hulle het saam gegaan. Nou onlangs
565 toe breek hulle dan breek haar ma-hulle op..
- 566 I: Dis sad...
- 567 C: Ja, haar ma en ...
- 568 I: Die ander ma...
- 569 C: Maar blykbaar gaan hulle weer saam, gaan goed aan. Daai is ook net 'n lang
570 verhouding, hulle het haar ook groot gemaak soos ek groot gemaak is. Verjaar
571 presies 'n week na my. Selfde interests gehad. Toe kom haar boyfriend daar
572 aan. Ek en hy het nooit ooghare gehad vir mekaar nie.
- 573 I: O, jy moet jy nou bietjie jou afstand handhaaf.
- 574 C: Ja, ek het haar nou basies afgeskryf.
- 575 I: Het jy en sy ooit bietjie gechat oor hoe is dit met haar en met haar pelle en so...
- 576 C: Ons het nogal. Haar vriendinne aanvaar dit ook.
- 577 I: Ja..
- 578 C: - - -
- 579 I: Dit klink anderse
- 580 C: Ek dink daar is 'n paar wat sit en geluide gemaak het. Ek het nie al haar
581 vriendinne geken nie.
- 582 I: Ek dink almal aanvaar dit aan die einde. Ek dink dit is net daai begin dink... o,
583 jinne, ek weet nie wat gaan.. jy weet nie wat die ander ou se antwoord wees nie,
584 weet nie hoe die ander ou gaan reageer nie. En ek dink partymaal bly 'n mens
585 dan eerder stil en los dit amper.
- 586 C: Meeste van my vriende ook, hulle gaan nie op die subject in nie.
- 587 I: Umm
- 588 C: Maar ek ..vir my ma gevra.
- 589 I: Maar ek dink dit is oor jy so rustig is daaroor. Dit nie 'n issue maak nie.
- 590 C: Ek dink dit is oor dit vir hulle 'n issue is. As dit vir hulle 'n issue was, dan is dit
591 hulle probleem.
- 592 I: Ja, verseker. Alright. [lag] So jy sê jy het op die ou einde baie benifits.
- 593 C: Baie benifits.
- 594 I: En ek dink op die ou uiteinde is hulle twee nice mense en dit is vir my nice om te
595 sien hoe close is jy en Susan.
- 596 C: Ja ons is close.
- 597 I: Ek dink dis min tieners, veral seuns, wat iemand het in hulle lewens met wie hulle
598 alles kan share. Jy sê jy share alles. I mean hallo!
- 599 C: Ja, ek het, sy het nou eintlik... basies vir my 'n sonde gedoen. Sy het vir my borg
600 geteken, op my foon. Ek soek die foon, toe vra ek my nefie, my nefie moet vir my
601 teken, want jy moet oor 21 wees en 'n paycheck en dit kry. Toe sê hy nee, hy
602 kan nie, hy het klaar drie kontrakte op sy naam.
- 603 I: O, okay

- 604 C: En op haar verjaarsdag, Maandag, sê ek vir haar Susan asseblief. Ek het haar
605 gesmeek en gesmeek en.
- 606 I: Shame.
- 607 C: Maar sy was vriendelik gewees.
- 608 I: [lag]
- 609 C: Toe draai ek haar om my pinkie, toe gaan sy en koop vir my 'n foon.
- 610 I: Pleks dat jy vir haar 'n birthday persent kry.
- 611 C: Ek het, ek het vir haar kar nuwe wieloppe opgesit en nuwe brake pads.
- 612 I: O, cool.
- 613 C: Hierdie jaar besluit ek gaan ek vir my ma en vir Susan groot persente koop. Die
614 afgelope paar jaar, twee jaar skeep ek my ma heavy af. Die afgelope twee keer
615 was ek nie by my ma se verjaarsdag gewees nie. Want verlede jaar, of die jaar
616 voor dit het ek by my nefie gewerk
- 617 I: Alright, so dis in die vakansie
- 618 C: En... verlede jaar was ek ook by my nefie se huis om dit op te pas. Sy verjaar die
619 5de Desember so dit is in die vakansie tyd.
- 620 I: Ja, dit is 'n moeilike tyd, my pa verjaar die 17de
- 621 C: - - -
- 622 I: En waar kry jy die geld? Spaar jy hard?
- 623 C: Ja, spaar en kry en sakgeld.
- 624 I: Werk goed
- 625 C: Ja, ek werk ook partykeer vir my geld, ek werk vakansies, pas my nefie se huis
626 op
- 627 I: Dit is goed. Jy doen jou eie dinge.
- 628 C: Ons maak die 23 ste Oktober klaar.
- 629 I: Dit is vroeg né. Amazing. Hoe dink jy gaan dit daai dag voel as jy jou pen neersit
630 en daai punt?
- 631 C: Ek gaan skree... Ek gaan skree. Ek gaan uithardloop en skree.
- 632 I: Ja.
- 633 C: Klaar. Twaalf jaar se gesuffer.
- 634 I: Ag, dit was nie so erg nie.
- 635 C: Dit was erg. Al daai... nie baie stres nie, ek stres nie baie nie, want ek stres nie
636 maklik nie, maar ons hande begin afdop as ons stres.
- 637 I: O, ek het al gehoor van mense met wie dit gebeur, ander mense se hande sweet
638 so.
- 639 C: Ja myne sweet ook. My hele lyf sweet basies dan.
- 640 I: Ag, shame. Dit is eintlik 'n dead give away, he, jy is besig om te stres.
- 641 C: Ja, ja met die hande my familie
- 642 I: [lag] Gee my jou hand sodat ek sien of voel of iets.
- 643 C: Sy sien dit in my oe, my oe begin glinster of iets maar...Dis stupid
- 644 I: Dit is omdat jy nie 'n evil-spirited mens is nie. Dat jy jou soul wys.
- 645 C: Ek het een keer geld gevat in my lewe, toe ek nog klein was. Ek kan nog onthou
646 ons was by oom S gewees. My ma hulle was buite gewees, en die handsak was
647 binne gewees ek het net R5 gevat.
- 648 I: Ag, shame, maar dit was seker baie gewees vir jou.
- 649 C: Ja, maar toe sit ek alles terug, maar nie soos dit was nie. Haar beursie oopgelos
650 en...
- 651 I: O, okay. Jy was ook nie slim nie, amateur.
- 652 C: Ja, toe kom sy in, toe staan ek by haar handsak. Toe maak sy oop, toe sien sy
653 haar beursie is oop, toe sien sy daar is geld weg.
- 654 I: En toe?
- 655 C: Toe slaan sy my.
- 656 I: Dis reg.
- 657 C: Nie weer nie. Hoekom moet mens jok. Dis nie so erg nie.
- 658 I: Verkieslik nie, maar dit is nie so erg nie.

- 659 C: Hoekom moet jy vir hulle lieg, jy moet vir hulle die waarheid vertel? In hierdie
 660 huis kom alles altyd in elk geval uit.
- 661 I: Ja, dit kom in elk geval altyd uit.
- 662 C: Vertel liewers die waarheid. Al hierdie waardes waar hulle sê, nee vat die punch.
- 663 I: Klink asof julle dinge nice uitpraat.
- 664
- 665 Slaagsyfer in skool
- 666 Aantal meisies – net 35...
- 667 Prefek-skedule
- 668 Valentynsbal
- 669 Groentjekonsert
- 670 Huiswerk
- 671 Tydsbestuur, beplanning
- 672 "ek manage"...
- 673 handskrif
- 674 foon – musiek (Susan het vir my sonde gedoen, sy het vir my borg geteken)
- 675 Susan se karretjies – broer kanker oorlede is
- 676 Sien onregverdigheid raak van hoe mense in straat hulle pa onregverdig behandel
- 677 Platinummyne
- 678 Praat oor hoe hy ma-hulle terg:
- 679 C: Partymaal sê ek iets net om Susan kwaad te maak
- 680 I: Jy sê dan sy word nie kwaad nie
- 681 C: Sy word partykeer, maar dan word my ma vir ons kwaad, en dan's ons lankal
- 682 weer pelle
- 683 "My ma raak nou deesdae doof, dan moet ek alles skree"
- 684 O, dis van al daai kleintjies
- 685 Vertel van hoe is om huis te deel met kleintjies
- 686 Vertel van begin hoe groot aanpassing was, mag nie lawaai
- 687 Susan se niggie ook werkloos en ingeneem, bly in sy kamer
- 688 (Vertel hoe Susan enige iemand sal inneem en vir hulle sal sorg, al moet hulle in
- 689 gang slaap)
- 690 Eers nefie se huis opgepas, en toe terugkom, trek buitekamer toe
- 691
- 692 Gaan roep ma-hulle:
- 693 Vertel van toe hulle amper uit was, amper om en by 7 jaar terug. Ek lei af Penny
- 694 wou uit, dalk iemand anders gewees....
- 695 Noem eers en toe praat hulle eers later verder
- 696 Kwessie van vertrouwe – as sy net 5 min laat is
- 697 Praat oor of ek besig is, hoe studie werk – bv. transkripsies, memory, temas
- 698 uithaal...
- 699 Susan: Straights kan weet dis soos enige ander verhouding – net soos hulle,
- 700 moeilike tye - ons nader aanmekaar gebring. God was heelyd daar...
- 701 Susan wat nie man wou gehad het nie, maar wel kinders, maar wil hulle nie self hê
- 702 nie (ons spot almal lekker oor die kraamscene – sy't te veel TV gekyk sê ek,
- 703 Penny maak sulke "push-push" geluide; in bad gesit en vir God gevra, vir haar
- 704 man stuur of vrou met kind
- 705 Ek het 15 jaar terug gebid daarvoor en ek het dit gekry
- 706 Was 6 jaar alleen voor hulle; lief vir kinders...
- 707 ("Stuur dan nou vir my 'n man, of 'n vrou met 'n kind")
- 708 En volgende dag of week later - stap Penny in
- 709 Klink of vir Penny vreemd was, uit moeilike abusive verhouding, met kind...gebroke,
- 710 seer, deurmekaar
- 711 Sy't my mooi laat verstaan dis haar kind (Susan se woorde van Penny)
- 712 Ek wil hom nie vat nie ek wil hom net graag saam met haar grootmaak. (S)
- 713 En ek wil haar iets aandoen, los die kind, dis my kind....(Penny)

- 714 Penny: kan oor enigiets met hom praat, oop verhoudiing, vir hulle so nice...
 715 Ek vra – so besluit of spontaan gebeur
 716 Gebeur maar
 717 Penny:vra oor kondoom en waarvoor gebruik mens dit
 718 P: Gaan vra vir Susan
 719 S: sy't hom als mooi vertel, van bye en blomme
 720 Vertel weer van punte-insident; ma wat gou kwaad raak en baklei, Susan wat
 721 rustiger luister
 722 (herhaal – dus NB – waarom so NB?)
 723 "sy wil op daai oomblik die probleem oplos, ek wil net hê iemand moet luister"
 724 **Kant 2**
 725 I: Is dit nogal 'n konserwatiewe gemeenskap of nie, wat hier bly? Wat nogal ...
 726 C: Ons het baie minder kleurlinge en swartes as wittes. Hierdie deel is nog rustig.
 727 I: Verder op
 728 S: As jy hoe kan ek sê hulle is baie
 729 P: Wit mense. Is dit nie die hoër klas swart mense wat hier bly nie. Die laer klasse
 730 bly in die plakkers huise.
 731 C: Ja, maar hulle hou hulle parties.
 732 I: O, ja ek kan dink.
 733 S: Maar veral die mense hier agter. Hulle gaan aan tot so een uur, dan stop hulle.
 734 I: O, okay, nie te bad nie. Nou waar is jou blyplek?
 735 C: Basies hier in die agterkamer. Ja, ek slaap in die agter kant. Daar was een
 736 keer... Elke oggend dan ry hy, dan kom hy terug dan was hy sy kar. Soos sy
 737 boot maak hy silwer skoon.
 738 I: Vet.
 739 P: Maar hy het getrek. Die mense hier oorkant. Hier het ook skurwe mense hier
 740 oorkant gebly, maar hulle het verniet gebly.
 741 I: Nou wat is skurwe mense?
 742 C: Eish, low class mense, soos in drink... rook dagga, sulke mense.
 743 I: Okay
 744 C: Maar hulle het verniet gebly, hulle het hier ingetrek. Nie huur betaal nie, toe trek
 745 hulle weer uit. Maar hulle het soos in, voor dit het die kinders hulle is nie stout
 746 nie, maar lelik stout, hulle het al hulle vensters gebreek, ligte uitgesteel, hulle het
 747 tot die plafonds uitgesteel.
 748 I: Joh
 749 C: Geyster gesteel.
 750 I: Dit is bad. Hoeveel kinders... Hoe ver is die skool van hier af?
 751 C: So binne vyf tot tien kilos
 752 Praat oor aanwysings
 753 I: So daar is baie mense wat na die skool toe gaan.
 754 C: Nie eintlik nie, dit is min.
 755 Praat oor skole
 756 I: Ja en ek dag dit is meer seuns wat sal gaan en dan moet jy nogal slim wees om
 757 daai vakke te kan maak.
 758 C: Ja, ons standarde is die hoogste in Pretoria, Pretoria Wes.
 759 P: Ek wil nie in 'n tegniiese skool wees nie. Skei Nat was nou nie my beste vak
 760 gewees nie.
 761 C: Die hoogste nou is John Voster, maar hulle is basies dieselfde as ons.
 762 I: Want dit is gewoonlik net julle twee.
 763 C: Ons is die tegniiese skole wat die hoogste standarde het. Ons slaag ...druip
 764 syfer is 80%. Hoog.
 765 I: Is dit vir almal of net vir julle, sjoe. Dit is omtrent die helfte.
 766 C: Dit is nie hoeveel druip nie, dit is die rapport punt.
 767 Praat oor punte
 768 Praat oor meisies in die skool

- 769 Praat oor prefek wees
- 770 C: Ons het baie voordele. Ons kan inkom in 'n klas wanneer ons wil. Ons het altyd
- 771 'n verskoning. Ons reel goeters, ons het nou 'n Valentynsbal, more aand het ons
- 772 'n vergadering oor die krieket.
- 773 I: Moreaand. Sjoe.
- 774 C: Ja, Saterdag is die Valentyns bal, ons moet daar wees. Baie van die
- 775 byeenkomste, sport en atletiek, moet ons daar wees. Ons het nou basies verlede
- 776 week, of die week voor dit. Of een van daai twee weke. As ek by die huis gekom
- 777 het, en werk het en ek sit by die huis twee ure dan is dit baie goed. Want die
- 778 Maandag het ek krieket geofen en toe kom jy hier aan, Dinsdag het ek krieket
- 779 gespeel, ek het gespeel en eers laat die aand by die huis aangekom. Woensdag
- 780 het ons iets aan gehad... Ons was tot nege uur by die skool gewees. Donderdag
- 781 het ons die groentjie konsert gehad, eers kwart oor elf uur by die huis aangekom.
- 782 I: Hoe was dit?
- 783 C: Ek het gedink my groep is die beste van almal gewees. En Vrydag was ons by
- 784 Rustenburg by 'n atletiek byeenkoms gewees, maar ek was nie. Ek was na my
- 785 niggie toe gewees. My niggie... ek is moeg toe ek by die huis gekom het, dan
- 786 slaap ek.
- 787 I: Nou wanneer doen jy huiswerk?
- 788 C: Huiswerk doen ek so..
- 789 I: Pouses, 5 minute voor die tyd?
- 790 C: Ja, af periodes, ons het baie af periodes. Voor krieket die middag. Huiswerk kry
- 791 ek, bring ek nie baie huis toe nie. Want ek weet as dit huiswerk huis toe bring
- 792 gaan ek lui raak, gaan ek dit ... nie aframmel nie, afskeep werk doen, maar...
- 793 I: O, okay, jy gebruik jou tyd goed
- 794 C: Ek probeer om die meeste by die skool te doen, as ek 'n probleem het, dat ek die
- 795 onderwysers kan vra.
- 796 I: O, okay.
- 797 C: Ek probeer maar om goed in te pas waar ek kan.
- 798 I: Dit klink asof jy dit regtig regkry.
- 799 C: Daar is baie goed wat ek nie so lekker reg kry nie, dis te veel. Ag, maar ek
- 800 manage.
- 801 I: Klink so dis goed. Nou ja ek moet nou amper huis toe se kant toe staan. Is daar
- 802 iets wat jy my wil vra, onthou dit is 'n two-way street hierdie. Whoe hier kom dit...
- 803 Praat oor sy handskrif.
- 804 Praat oor briewe skryf.
- 805 Praat oor karretjies.
- 806 Praat oor iemand wat gesterf het in 'n botsing.
- 807 Praat oor waar hy gaan bly op die myn.
- 808 Praat oor baie kinders in die huis.
- 809 Praat oor hoe hy sy eie kamer gekry het.
- 810 Praat oor selfoon wat hy self betaal.
- 811 Praat oor rave.
- 812 Praat oor eksamen en sy verjaarsdag.
- 813 (16 Feb 2004)

1 **Carl Session 3,**
2 *8 Maart 2004*
3 Interesting set-up, when I came there, there were 2 friends, a couple (Bebé and
4 Tanya), and they said I can just continue.. which for me was a bit strange.... I
5 wanted to ask about the people who said it won't work – who said he would be a
6 wash out – and I didn't felt like starting with that in front of other people, so I
7 started of with the question of what is it like as a gay family in a straight world,
8 and they do not have to agree with me on that it is a straight world, that they must
9 please differ from me.... But then Susan started saying she agrees, because they
10 can't walk in the streets holding hands, out of fear for confrontation, you don't
11 want to encourage a reaction or confrontation;
12 And the other lady said, or when they did it and a group of men made remarks and
13 their house was burgled one or two days after that, and although she can't prove
14 it, she just know it and the neighbour, an old man across them, also supports
15 that.
16 Continue chatting about prejudice and discrimination that they all have encountered,
17 with men at dance – calling them lesbians, etc,
18
19 They can tell me that, but not in front of my kids
20 (Wil nie konfrontasie uitlok nie, veral nie waar hy by is nie)
21
22 It's not only what they think will happen, it has happened
23
24 Bebé sê: as mans die idee kry dat jy nie afhanklik is van hulle nie, dan stoot hulle
25 jou eenkant toe"
26
27 Bebé: Mediese insident – partner by werk op haar kaart opsit:
28 Sy werk dan nie by Raad nie
29 Werk jou vrou hier, nee sê hy, maar is jou vrou op jou medies, ja sê hy. Nou maar,
30 as sy nou my houvrou is, wat dan
31 Sal hulle nie openlik konfronteer nie, maar op 'n punt gekom dat as jy my aanvat
32 dan sal ek jou aanvat.
33 Ek moet maar eendag aan Here antwoord, want voor die Here nou uitdruklik voor
34 my kom staan en sê jy moet dit nou stop
35 Want die Here het 'n manier op reguit met my te praat; en tensy ek 'n
36 straightforward boodskap kry, het dit niks met iemand te make
37
38 Penny beaam en sê dis hoe Susan ook is – tensy die Here hier voor my verskyn, ek
39 wil nie mense se opinies hoor nie
40
41 Ja, Bebé – ek lees nog dieselfde Bybel en 20 jaar terug het hulle gesê ek mag nie
42 met hierdie mense praat nie (wys na bediende wat swart is se kant toe), want
43 hulle's diere, twintig jaar later lees ek nog presies die Bybel en nou's dit anders
44
45 Tanya praat oor as mense jou ken, dan is dit anders of tree hulle anders op , dan is
46 dit vir hulle baie meer aanvaarbaar.
47 Makiker as mense jou eers ken
48 Werk tussen jongmense, hulle nie issue
49
50 Lag vir my vir vraag oor konstitusie
51 Sukkel steeds om op medies te kom – Susan met Bonitas – sukkel al 3 maande
52

53 Daar word meer van julle verwag as van straight couple, straight mense trou en kry
54 alles; jy moet baie meer bewys
55 Bebé sê sy kan dit verstaan – want elke 2, 3 maande moet ander naam op .
56
57 Praat oor bloedskenk, Bebé en Tanya al geweier oor hulle gay is. En wie is veiligste
58 groep! Penny nog nooit geweier.
59
60 Gesprek rondom AIDS – Bebé wat voel hulle/ regering weet nog te min van siekte,
61 sy sal dat pelle vir haar bloed skenk
62
63 Ek vra in oor meer verwag as gay ouer... Penny stem saam, ek vra bv. oor laasjaar
64 toe punte swak was, gaan dit oor ma's of oor ander goed – Carl sê dis meer oor
65 dat hy die eerste kind in familie sal wees wat matriek maak, en oor daardie beeld
66 in familie.
67
68 Praat oor families en hoe dit aanvaar word al dan nie – niemand blatante
69 diskriminasie of verwerping – Susan oor haar ouma, wat sê as sy gelukkig is dan
70 is dit goed so: Vir ouma gesê sy en Penny bly saam soos 'n man en vrou doen;
71 "ouma, ek en Penny leef saam soos 'n man en vrou doen")
72
73 Haar skoonpa het haar aan al sy pelle voorgestel as sy skoonseun, en dat sy dan by
74 mans moet sit en bier drink, terwyl die vrouens in die kombuis is
75 Sy lyk nogal skaam daaroor – maar
76
77 O, en nuwe disclosure insident: Tiaan, maat wat naby bly; was in dieselfde kerk
78 voorheen:
79 I: Vertel vir ons van wat gebeur het
80 C: Toe't ons hier gestaan, toe vra hy vir my of ons nog in daai kerk is, want hulle is
81 nou in 'n ander kerk. Toe vra hy of my ma-hulle nog in daai kerk is, toe sê ek
82 hulle gaan nou na 'n gay kerk toe
83 En hy vra: Na 'n gay kerk toe, en hy kyk my so, stil
84 Ek sê: Weet jy nie my ma-hulle is gay nie?
85 M: Moenie met my strooi praat nie
86 C: Hy deny dit heeltyd, toe't ek fotos gaan haal
87 [Lag, stemme gelyk]
88 I: En hoe't jy gevoel toe hy sê man moenie met my strooi praat nie
89 C: Ek was verbaas gewees
90 S: Jy't gedink hy't gaan meer breins as dit en dit al agtergekom het
91 C: Ihim
92
93 I: En toe wat sê jy vir hom om hom te oortuig
94 C: Serious, en ek wys hom die foto's
95 I: En wat was sy reaksie toe
96 C: Nee hy't toe niks gesê nie, net gesê okay, en aangegaan
97
98 I: Ek het gewonder of julle meer insidente verwag het deur die jare? Geantisipeer
99 het amper, dat van sy pelle dalk iet sou sê of so, want daar was eintlik min
100 insidente?
101 S: Ja, en hy het altyd vir ons gesê, soos in graad 1. Ek weet nie of hulle jou gespot
102 het by die skool nie?
103 C: Nee
104 S: Hulle was te skuit bang vir jou
105 P: Hy was altyd die langste
106 S: Ons het eintlik baie min insidente gehad
107 P: Hy't uit sy eie uit – daai aand by die skool

- 108 S: Vir die prefekte gesê, en vir Tiaan gesê en Neil weet al, weet Charl, weet hy al –
 109 C: Hy weet maar hy't nog niks gesê nie.
 110 S: Maar ek dink hy weet
 111 P: Hulle skryf hom nie af nie, hulle kom nogsteeds kuier, en dis vir my nice
 112 C: Hulle kom eintlik juis kuier, want...(mompel)... iets van hulle word nie gepla nie
 113
 114 I: Dink jy dis 'n ding wat mens moet sê
 115 C: Ek vertel net mense wat ek kan trust. Ek gaan nie van die verhoog af skree
 116 P: My ma-hulle is gay
 117 C: Maar my vriende sal ek sê
 118 I: Is dit 'n moet? Dat jy moet sê, of is dit soos jou een pel wat weet maar niks word
 119 gesê nie? Dit gaan net aan
 120 C: Nee, dit pla my nie meer nie, nie baie nie, dit pla my glad nie meer nie
 121 I: Dit klink asof dit jou wel gepla het op 'n stadium.
 122 P: Ja, ek wou nou net ...
 123 I: En dis nie verkeerd nie, want dis wat so great is nou dat jy ouer is en kan
 124 terugdink
 125 C: Ek was toe ek jonger was bang vir konfrontasies
 126 I: Okay
 127 C: mm
 128 I: Hoe oud was jy toe
 129 C: Laerskool, st 1
 130 Van graad 4,5 het ek bo die ander kinders begin uitreik en toe't hulle bang vir my
 131 geraak en toe back hulle af
 132 I: O okay
 133 S: Maar jy's nog nooit gespot oor ons nie
 134 W lh ih (soos in nee), Behalwe in graad een, maar ek kan dit nie onthou nie
 135 P: Maar ek dink nie basies dit was 'n gespottery oor ons nie, hulle het gesê hy't nie
 136 'n pa nie. Ek dink nie graad eentjies weet van gay nie...
 137 I: Stem jy saam Carl
 138 C: Ja ek dink ook so, ek weet nie, ek was te klein gewees daai tyd
 139 P: Ek dink nie kleintjies.... As jy vir 'n graad eentjie sê jou ma en jou pa is lekker
 140 lesbiëns, jou ma's is lesbiëne dit gaan nie regtig by hom insink nie
 141 S: Kyk nou net vir (niggie). Sy's nou graad een. En moes ek nou please explain dat
 142 ek 'n vrou is..
 143 Ander: haai, wat?
 144 S: Ja ernstig, praat jy, sy't met jou gepraat
 145 P: Ek het vir haar gesê...
 146 [praat oor hoe sy nou sê van Susan het ook tieties en 'n gauva – maar sy glo dit nie;
 147 ander kleinkind of neef sê nou nog vir haar Oom Susan]
 148 Sy stry lewe en dood
 149 Wys borste dat jy kan sien
 150 Tot nou toe glo sy dit nie
 151
 152 P: En Nicky ook, 12 – groet haar, middag oom. Dis te goed
 153 Mense lag
 154 P: Hulle oom nog al die pad vir Susan
 155 Hulle sien tog die boobs, maar ek dink hulle sien die boots, ek dink dis die manlik
 156 figuur in haar
 157 I: Die masculinity
 158 P: Ja
 159 I: Pla dit jou Susan? Want dis iets wat by julle ook uitkom, dat hy jou stiefpa noem
 160 C: My pa
 161 S: Dis pa nou
 162

- 163 [Praat oor inhuldiging]
 164
 165 I: Hoekom is dit so, ek sit en dink as 'n straight persoon dit moet encounter, vir die
 166 eerste keer moet hoor, dan is dit vir hulle vreemd. Waarom is dit so, wat is die
 167 funksie, hoekom is dit vir jou nice om haar pa te noem
 168 C: Want sy's my vaderfigur
 169 S: Imm
 170 I: En vir jou Susan?
 171 S: Wel, ek meen ek's die butch in die verhouding so ek neem aan ek's die
 172 vaderfiguur, ek moet die pa wees... Ek probeer altans
 173 [Almal praat]
 174 S: Gelukkig het hy my geaardheid aangeleer
 175 - - -
 176 I: Carl wat is vir jou vaderfiguur, as jy daardie woord bietjie kan ontleed
 177 C: Vaderfiguur is iemand jy deel als met hom, ek en omdat ek die seun is, deel ek
 178 alles
 179
 180 I: Okay , nou wat was eerste die hoender of die eier..
 181 - - -
 182 I: Is dit oordadig jy baie nice met haar share dat jy dink, ja, ek's 'n seun, ek moet dit
 183 met 'n pa doen; dink jy nie daar is seuns wat met hulle ma's nice goed share nie
 184 C: Ek praat met my ma ook oor baie goed en, maar meestal met Susan
 185 I: En daarom is sy vir jou soos 'n pa
 186 C: Ihim
 187 S: Kom ons sê so, dinge wat seuns graag wil weet, praat ek met hom. As ek nie
 188 weet nie dan sal ek gaan uitvind of vir hom sê gaan vra vir Oupa Henry of vir een
 189 van sy ooms of nefies. Maar die meeste van die tyd help ek hom self met
 190 dingetjies wat hy wil weet
 191 Comment oor die oupas en nefies –die teenwoordigheid van baie mansfigure...
 192 P: En hulle is baie lief vir hom, hy sal net vir hulle sê spring en hulle sal sê, hoe
 193 hoog. Nie dat hy dit misbruik nie, maar as hy hulle nodig het is hulle daar vir hom
 194 - - -
 195 P: Hulle betaal al vir 2 jaar sy skoolgeld en gaan nou sy eksamen geld ook betaal
 196 S: En dis wat so nice is. Dis nie vir hulle nodig enigsens om dit te doen nie. En dit
 197 wys net vir jou hoe aanvaar ons familie, my familie, vir hom en hulle 2.
 198
 199 I: Was dit van die begin af so
 200 P: Nie haar familie nie, maar haar ma
 201 S: Eerste aand toe ek hulle voorstel toe sê sy jy bring 'n alkohol hier binne
 202
 203 Chat oor hoe't dit verbeter, wel nog hulle fights gehad, ...
 204 - - -
 205 Pres Bush – gay marriages
 206
 207 B: ek kan nie worry nie
 208 T: as ons nie kan nie, hoekom moet ons worry dat die Amerikaners kan
 209 B: praat oor hoe T wou, en hulle het daarvoor gechat
 210 Daardie papier maak dit nie beter of makliker nie, en gaan jou nie keer om jou goed
 211 te vat en te loop nie;
 212 Volgens my, alles wat gay aan is kon ek sover regkry, maar volgens die Bybel is die
 213 huwelik 'n man en 'n vrou....
 214 Ek kry al die voordele wat ek kan in elk geval, ek sien nie die nut daarin nie
 215 Ek glo nie in 'n gay huwelik nie
 216
 217 P Wil nie begin jare oortel nie

- 218 (vandag 15 jaar saam)
219
220 Butch-femme tendense in verhouding
221 T & B comment nie so in hulle verh nie, nie soos met P en S nie
222
223 Vertel oor die rolle, hoe sien julle julle verhouding?
224 Daar is nie
225 Butch is die meer manlike in die verhouding...
226 Meer 50/50 verh
227 Plugs regmaak, kosmaak, skottelgoed was
228
229 Maar Susan maak ook kos, want Penny hou nie van kosmaak of kan nie lekker –
230 Carl se hy kan ook nie, maar hy moet...ek sê hy's man van 21e eeu
231
232 Praat oor gesinne waar kinders nie goed behandel word nie
233 Vergoudings wat onstabiel is – spesifiek nou gay verhoudings; ook oor straight
234 couples waar kinders verwaarloos word
235
236 Ek vra:
237 I: Hoe is dit om te kuier in huise waar daar kinders is, is dit anders of dieselfde?
238 B: Daar is party plekke waar dit vir my anders is, maar nie hier nie, omdat dit 'n
239 stabiele omgewing is. Ek was al in huise waar dit nie so 'n stabiele omgewing is
240 nie
241 *Bebé skets scenario:*
242 Gillery en bakleiery, vriende
243 Mode om kinders aan te neem
244 Soms wou hulle nie regtig kinders gehad het nie
245
246 B: Dis, vir my, behoort dit moeilik vir 'n kind te wees om onder sulke omstandighede
247 te bly en dan nog te verduidelik hoekom is my ma 'n vrou en my pa is 'n vrou; en
248 ek is altyd deurmekaar en kan nie my pels huis toe bring nie. En kinders moet
249 kan pels huis toe bring maar nie as daar nie stabiele omstandighede is nie.
250
251 P: Aan die einde van die dag is dit nie die 2 ouers wat seerkry nie, dis die kind wat
252 seerkry
253
254 S: Hy bring sy pels huis toe, hulle doen wat hulle wil doen
255
256 (20:20) Ek dink in die samelewing vandag waar gay couples kinders aanneem en
257 die kindes baie skade aandoen;
258
259 P: As jy 'n kind aanneem, moet jou verhouding
260 S: As jy 'n ander man se bloed wil inbring
261 P: Daar kan nie 'n gedrinkery wees nie, die kind moet sy eie kamer hê, jou
262 vriende....
263
264 Vertel weer van vriendin wat ingestap het en gesê het hi, ek is ... en ons is gay ,
265 nee, ons is lesbiëns;
266 Maar hy was okay daarmee, gaan saam met hulle kerk toe ens
267
268 S: Maar dis nie hoe mens dit wil doen nie, of hy moet dit self doen, ja ons kry
269 partymaal glipsies hy
270 S: Ons probeer altyd dink aan hom
271 P: Ons wil nie hom in 'n gespottery inbring nie
272

- 273 P praat oor hoe't haar man Carl met stompies gebrand as sy kar bestuur want hy's
274 te dronk.
275 Hoe het hy amper hom in swembad laat verdrink.
276 Hoe sy rond verhuis het as kind en st 8 8/9 skole was – gedruip – nie kaas, polonie
277 of weense worsies geken nie – vertel weer storie van hoe alles eerste keer
278 opgeëet toe Susan groceries gekoop het.
279 Carl net marog en mielierys geëet vir sy eerste 3 maande, toe het haar ouers hom
280 kom haal. Na haar egskeiding het sy en haar pa weer 'n pad begin saamloop.
281
282 Praat oor hoe Susan hom gaan mis volgende jaar; en hoe hulle uitsien na
283 kleinkinders (20:26)
284
285 Hoekom nie kinders wil hê nie:
286 Duur
287 As kind iets moet oorkom – vrese
288 Dwelms
289 Dissipline styl
290
291 Grootword-tye...

1 **Carl Session 4**

2 Carl: ouers, sessie 4, 29 Maart 2004

3 Carl is in die Kaap, by Penny se suster besig om daar vakansiewerk te doen:
4 loodgieterswerk en so meer.

5 Daar vir 3 weke

6 Hulle mis hom klaar, stilte is erg – mis sy musiek en sy stem en sy lag, al was hy die
7 laaste tyd moeilik – wil net rondry en by 3 meisies gaan kuier.

8 Fietstoer

9 Bly eksamen is verby

10 Susan praat weer oor laasjaar se eksamen insidente. Sy sê hy was baie humeurig
11 voor die tyd en hulle kon sien iets broei. Toe kry sy een dag SMS van Penny wat
12 sê "praat met jou kindjie"; en kort daarna 'n SMS van "pa, kan ek met pa kom
13 praat, ek kan nie met ma praat nie". Toe laat sy hom werk toe kom en toe praat
14 hulle dit uit. Hy't lekker gehuil, was baie bekommerd oor hy slap gelê het. En
15 oupa (haar broer wat hy oupa noem) stel hoë verwagtinge in hom en hy gaan
16 hulle teleurstel. En toe op die ou einde nie so sleg gedoen nie.

17 Penny sê vir hom as dinge begin druk moet hy met Susan praat.

18 Hy skimp iets or selfmoord die vorige naweek, en Susan sê niks in die lewe kan so
19 erg wees om dit te doen nie, jy soek hulp en jy praat.

20 Verwys na een van pelle wat geen ondersteuning kry nie, hulle is 9 kinders, speel
21 krieket – Noord Transvaal en ouers nooit by die baan nie.

22 Hy is baie uitputtend die week sê Penny, Susan beaam (oor meisies en rondry)

23 As vir kar vra: "Pa", "nee vergeet dit", "Ag pa, ek moet vir R■■■■ help met sy
24 rekenaar" (Outjie or wie hy hom ontferm, wat gedruip het en nie meer skool toe
25 gaan nie)

26 I: Mense wat gesê het daar gaan niks van hom word nie... daai mense, is dit
27 mense naby aan julle of sommer net so op die rand, verlangse familie? Of was
28 daar spesieseke mense?

29 S: Ek sou sê mense het so gedink, mense het nie iets gesê nie, het hulle iets gesê
30 (draai na Penny)

31 I: Want Carl het so pertinent gevra "wie" en toe wou ek nie die issue push nie

32 S: EK weet ook nie wie dit was nie

33 P: (Knik) Dit was my broer, hy't vir my gesê, dit het so gekom. Ek en hy het een dag
34 gery,

35 S: O,

36 P: Onthou jy

37 S: Ek kon onthou wat hy jou gevra het, maar nie wat hy van Carl vertel het nie

38 P: Dit hoef ek nie te vertel nie

39 I: Nee dit hoef glad nie

40 P: Hy't gesê, omdat ek nou 'n lesbiën uitgedraai het, dink ek nie my kind gaan nou
41 'n moffie uitdraai nie, ek gaan dit vir jou nou net so sê soos hy gepraat het,

42 I: Ja, doen seblief

43 P: Nee, hy sal nie so uitdraai nie. Toe sê hy vir my, dink jy nie hy gaan 'n "f..op"
44 wees op skool nie. Toe sê ek net nee ek dink nie so nie. Toe sê ek net my kind
45 sal nie, as ek en Susan hom reg groot maak, toe sê ek nee ek dink nie so nie.
46 Toe sê ek vir hom maar as jy 'n probleem daarmee het moenie jou probleme
47 myne maak nie. Ek bly nou by haar en ek en sy gaan Carl saam grootmaak.

48 I: Ja

49 P: Nou, nou die dag toe sê ek vir my ma sy moet bietjie vir T (broer) sê hoe goed
50 het hy gedoen

51 I: Imm

52 P: So was dit my boetie

53 S: Ek wonder of hy ooit sal onthou wat hy gesê het

54 P: Nee ek weet nie

- 55 I: Maar dit klink asof dit so in die beginfase was, toe hy nog geskok was
 56 P: Imm
 57 - - -
 58 P: Ek dink nie dit was noodwendig skok nie, as jy my probleme geken sal jy
 59 verstaan waaroor dit gegaan het.
 60 I: Okay,
 61 - - -
 62 En dan hoekom is dit so belangrik dat hy straight moet wees?
 63 P: Dan sou ons hom so aanvaar het, weet jy, ek sê né, en ek het dit nou die dag vir
 64 hom gesê, as hy besluit hy wil rook, kom na my toe, kom wys vir ma en pa ek
 65 rook, as hy na my en Susan toe kom en sê hy's gay, dan gaan ek nie my kind by
 66 die deur uitjaag nie; as hy met 'n swart meisie wil uitgaan, ek gaan hom nie jaag
 67 nie, wat hy ook al wil uitdraai dit is mos nou sy keuse. Ons elkeen het 'n keuse in
 68 die lewe, so dit pla my regtig nie. Regtig.
 69 I: Dit was amper by hom so van, kom ons sê "ek is straight", en mens wonder
 70 nogal wat beteken dit, is dit regtig 'n ding want ek dink dis baie keer so van gay
 71 ouers dat, want dis die algemene ding, soos julle gesê het, die samelewing wat
 72 sê ja nee, hulle gaan ook gay wees
 73 P: Ja, jou kind gaan ook gay wees
 74 I: Maar ons almal kom uit straight huwelike en ons is gay
 75 P: O ja
 76 I: Maar ja
 77 S: Daar is baie kinders wat in gay verhoudings is wat tog gay uitdraai, ek het al
 78 gehoor van kinders... ek weet nie of dit dalk...onderlangs in die onderbewuste
 79 dat jy hom toe maar wel bietjie pressure om straight te wees, ek weet nie
 80 I: Dis nogal iets waaroor ek wonder
 81 S: Want ek het baie vir hom gesê 'check daai cherrie', kyk daai mooi meisie, kyk ek
 82 het altyd aanmerkings gemaak oor meisies om hom attent te maak op meisies,
 83 hoekom weet ek nie, seker maar...kan ook wees, seker maar oor ek die pa-rol
 84 speel, seker as ek nou mooi dink, want as 'n straight pa en seun in die straat
 85 afloop, gaan die pa tog vir hom sê kyk daai cherrie, is dit nou nie 'n oulike meisie
 86 daai nie, sulke goed..dit was seker nou deel van my rol gewees.
 87 I: Imm
 88 P: Moenie vir my kyk as julle so
 89 I: Ons probeer die goed uitfigure, want die goed is nogal kompleks
 90 S: Ja
 91 P: Solank hy net goed wees
 92 S: Ek wil nie hê hy moet 'n dronkgat word, 'n vroueslaner
 93 ...
 94 S: Hy weet ook die dag as hy aan 'n meisie of sy vrou slaan of stamp, is die hel los
 95 P: Ja, hierdie ma klim ook in
 96 ...
 97 I: O, hierdie is eintlik wat ek vir hom wou vra, imm, die voordele dat die maats nou
 98 weet, of daar enige verandering is nou dat die close maats weet,...
 99 S: Nee, ek dink nie hy praat oor ons nie
 100 ...
 101 ek dink nie kinders praat oor hulle ouers nie
 102 P: Maar ek dink nie dit het verander nie, hulle is nog dieselfde, presies dieselfde,
 103 maak grappies en so
 104 S: Danie het my nog altyd met die hand gegroet en nou dat hy weet groet hy my
 105 nogsteeds met die hand
 106 Vra uit oor voor die tyd ongemak, - niks nie
 107 Penny sê as hulle snaaks is met haar sal sy hulle in elk geval uitjaag.
 108 ...

- 109 Susan vertel van dat sy vir hom gevra het, maar seun, wat nou as jy 'n meisie het,
110 want as jy regtig net by haar wil wees, dan sal jy jou ma-hulle afskryf vir haar; en
111 Carl sê nee glad nie
112 Vertel van meisie (M) en hoe hy vir haar vertel het van sy grootste geheim/ secret,
113 "my ma-hulle is gay" en hoe hy haar gevra het het sy 'n probleem, en sy het
114 gesê, nee, solank dit net nie tussen hulle 2 inkom nie
115 I: Ek wonder wat het sy daarmee bedoel?
116 S: Ja, seker maar nie inmeng nie, ek weet nie
117 Vertel hoe opgebreek het, girl het met Carl en sy neef gekuier – hoe hulle 2 amper
118 meer gehuil het as Carl self
119 En van eerste meisie 2 jaar terug, nie geëet, net rondgedwaal, tot Susan een aand
120 met hom gepraat het
121 Nou het hy 3 meisies
122 Penny het meisie wat ook gay is ontmoet waarvan hy nou die aand gepraat het
123 Los geselsies: Skottelgoed, kamer onnet, vriende, ...dwelms...

1 **Danielle session 2**

2 Talk about trouble sleeping (had burglary previous week in her room)

3 Talk about moving the one bed out of her room - have more space, but don't want
4 to because when she has sleepovers then the bed is there.

5 When I have visitors over then she just sleeps there.

6 And do you have lots of sleep overs?

7 Ja, it's actually very comfortable

8 Talk about what they discussed last time (any questions wondering about, she will
9 stick a copy in her secret book)

10 Talk about her secret book.

11 Wants to know if I'm coming again; I tell her yes, somewhere next week, inquire
12 about holidays.

13 Talk about coming holiday.

14 Talk about sensitive friend, (says it in a nasty voice, but then she says in a nice
15 calmer voice that she's really nice once you get to know her), shy and not
16 assertive (people push her around).17 D: I make sure that they don't push around my friends. Because people can push
18 me, but not them.

19 C: Not them. Don't you think some people see you as a fighter?

20 D: Ja, some. Some, but I think that I am actually... but I think ... they use to mess
21 around with me and I got angry and see I would like to hit them, I would get
22 really angry.23 C: O, okay. But don't you think some kids would just try and get you to be like,
24 angry.

25 D: No... only 2 or 3 children like that , M■■■■, K■■■■ and D

26 C: It sounds like boys. You mustn't pay any attention to them.

27 D: I say like: "Are you looking for attention!"

28 C: Umm, ja, that is a good one.

29 D: So with M■■■■, are you looking for attention and with the other two boys "I am
30 going to tell teacher", "Okay, sorry"

31 C: Okay, all right. So how many friends do you have?

32 D: I made a friend the day before yesterday. She is actually very nice. We always
33 walk past each other in the days. So I actually think who's that? The whole time
34 and now we finally meet each other and now we like each other as friends and
35 ja, we're talking and saying "Are we friends now?" Cause we now each other.
36 She is Afrikaans. She is one year younger than me and her brother is one year
37 younger than Ryland

38 C: O that's interesting

39 D: So she's in the same grade as me

40 Talk about friend

41 Talk about birthdays and going to school. (everyone a year later to school, Ryland
42 had problems with eye and don't like reading, Tom's got birthday late in year)

43 Talk about reading and movies.

44 Talk about Maths, grades and group work

45 Talk about visual learning (take pictures in our minds of everything we see).

46 Talks about her first boyfriend in grade 0

47 Talks about her secret boyfriend, who still has another girlfriend.

48 Talk about gossip and computer messages in class, screen savers

49 Talk about what a player is (boys just "playing" girls, goes out with 2 girls and they
50 don't know about each other)51 Talk about fake/ false nails – allowed in school, must just be cut – she bites her
52 nails, one friend did it and she thought it would be nice and it became a habit53 Talk about fight at school with other girl, it got physical – "we're really hit each other"
54 – elbow hit ear – and N becomes upset and friend kicked her, etc....

- 55 Talk about alternatives to fighting.
56 Talk about making up with girl again. "I said: I can't survive without you"
57 C: Ja, Okay, tell me some more what it is like to live with two moms?
58 D: It is nice. I imagine if she's not here this house would be like spider webs and all
59 those weird things.
60 [laugh]
61 D: It is actually nice that when she says "clean up your room" then I know I must go
62 and clean up my room cause I don't clean up my room much. I am a girl but I
63 don't like wearing girl dresses. But I do things to make my Mom happy, and I
64 make her happy like wearing a girl T-shirt and my boy pants. So I make them
65 happy, because I feel comfortable in boy clothes. ...And my mother, and my
66 father last week we went to a wedding last weekend and my father bought me
67 so short skirt and I thought I can't wear it I can't wear it, oh no, they're torturing
68 me. And he bought me a girl T-shirt and these high shoes. I don't want to wear
69 these.
70 C: Not comfortable
71 D: Ja, too much of a girl.
72 C: So you like, like boyish clothes you say.
73 D: Ja, I like boys things you do.
74 C: Like what is that.
75 D: And sometimes I like doing girl things like do your nails.
76 C: Okay, Like you your hair maybe...
77 D: And like when you are a boy you don't do much. So I do boy and girl things. Like
78 I have my boy moments, and I have my girl moments.
79 C: What's a boy moment?
80 D: I build things and I play with my brothers rugby...and all those stuff
81 C: And girl things are like hair
82 D: And nails and make-up, I don't like make-up.
83 C: And your clothes, what do you wear? If you could pick your clothes, what would
84 you wear?
85 D: If I have to pick my clothes, I lend from my brother, my big brother, cause my
86 mother won't buy me their clothes. Okay, I lend from my brother sometimes, and
87 for civvies; I wear these long baggy things and a cool T-shirt. Then I wear
88 tekkies or something.
89 C: And then why does mom have a problem with that?
90 D: She wants me to come out like a girl. Be like a little girl.
91 C: And how do you know that?
92 D: She says like... She tells me...I know you're having those boy moments, but I'm
93 trying to stop you, because when you grow up you going to have difficult.
94 C: Did she explain that?
95 D: She did, she doesn't like it that much. But now she is fine with it.
96 C: Okay. But what does she mean by it is going to be difficult when you grow up?
97 D: Then I am going to do those things like normal teenagers do, those mad things
98 like drink and take drugs and all those things, and I'm very scared doing that, I
99 don't wanna do that
100 C: Umm
101 D: I just wanna do that, and they say if you too much of a girl, and my brother cares
102 about that he doesn't want me to come out like that. And as well if you're a girl
103 then you won't, if you're too much of a girl then you won't come out like that.
104 Then if you dress up like when you're a teenager and all those sweet things. I
105 want to try to come out like that, but I thought, I want to come out like that to
106 make my mom happy so I change, I am going to try and not come out like that
107 ... I won't go like to rock and roll parties and that, I'd rather go to movies.
108 C: And what kind of clothes do your friends wear?

- 109 D: Okay, Cherese wears pants like that, cause she doesn't have so much boy
 110 moments. She only like, one time, but just like, I didn't have that. And Shirley -
 111 girl, like that, we can talk about that, okay, she a lot of girl. And Karen, I don't
 112 like her, at all and Zoey is a little bit girl. I don't like Karen because she shows
 113 off.
- 114 C: O, Okay.
- 115 D: When I am alone with her she is this girl this little girl and we shop. When my
 116 brother is there, she doesn't want to play with me, she plays with my brothers,
 117 and she plays Linkin Park.
- 118 C: Umm..
- 119 D: Just to make my brother happy. So he can like her.
- 120 C: So she is like very after your brother? Now where does this boy moment, girl
 121 moment, she is like a girl, she is like a boy?
- 122 D: Like my friends?
- 123 C: Ja, do you all talk to each other like that...
- 124 D: Ja...
- 125 C: Like look what you're wearing...
- 126 D: Ja, so what you're going to wear this Saturday, then she goes I guess I'm going
 127 to wear this pink long pants. Okay, you've got it, Okay.
- 128 C: And you are thinking.
- 129 D: Girl! Girl!
- 130 C: Girl moment, girl moment.
- 131 D: And then... and then I talk to Zoey and she's like, this dress and these like high
 132 heels
- 133 C: And you don't like that?
- 134 D: No, and then I am the only one who is wearing boy clothes between all my
 135 friends. And walking so nice so cool and they walk so lady-like
- 136 C: So walking is also part of it. The way you walk. So there are things you do and
 137 things you wear and the way you walk.
- 138 D: And my friends are like, so Oh, I'm a lady (mock voice – high pitch), ohh – and
 139 I'm like aagh, I don't think I can wear that like for two minutes
- 140 C: So being lady-like is you will turn out okay and being boyish you will get into
 141 trouble?
- 142 D: Ja...kind of
- 143 C: Okay
- 144 D: And Alicia and Anel, Alicia was my best friend, Ashney and Alicia are my best
 145 friend -
- 146 Talks about friend (and blood bond between them)
- 147 C: Now I am wondering. Does you friends know about the fact that you have two
 148 moms?
- 149 D: No, I am not going to tell them. But Anel was in the school for one year and we
 150 had civvies and I wore boy clothes. And she never knew of these boy things
- 151 C: Imm, because you looked very girlie.
- 152 D: And she looked at me and said "you look like a boy" and I said "I am sorry I have
 153 these boyish moments, thank you very much" and then she teased me and then
 154 I began to cry because...
- 155 C: How did she tell you? How did she tease you?
- 156 D: It's like, "Danielle, you, I didn't knew you were like that, and I'm to much of a girl
 157 so you can't play with us anymore."
- 158 C: What is "To be like that"? What did she imply by that.
- 159 D: She's like...Okay she is in the bathroom, she turns around looking at me like
 160 that and she says "I am not going to play with you anymore". I am like "Why?"
 161 She is like "Because you like have boy clothes, and I can't hang out with a boy."
 162 And then I say, and I begin to cry and I say "A, why do you say that? Do you
 163 have boy moments. Do you have a problem with that?" and she said "I thought

- 164 a..a..I thought you... I thought that you knew that I thought you look nice." I
 165 can't exactly explain that
 166 [laugh]
 167 D: It actually learnt me, imm, (tells me a riddle – Bitty bought butter...)
 168 C: O dear I am not even go there.
 169 Says some tongue twisters
 170 C: Okay, and they didn't knew it, those two that were only in the school for a year,
 171 they didn't know about mom?
 172 D: No, only Alicia knew, she was ...
 173 C: She is a friend
 174 Talk about origin of friend's name.
 175 C: Okay so she knew.
 176 D: Yes, she knew, cause I had to tell, she was one of my best friends, only my best
 177 friends know
 178 C: Okay, you had to tell her. What made you tell her?
 179 D: Ja, I thought, if she's my best friend, as well, then I share my secrets with her
 180 C: So how did you tell her? Can you still remember.
 181 D: I said to her my mommy and Auntie Sandy are together is that fine with you, and
 182 she said ja, and she is still my best friend and all those nice things she said to
 183 me and I began to cry.
 184 C: Ag, shame. Ja, because I think you were very, how did you feel before you told
 185 her?
 186 D: I feel like I had to tell her because she was my best friend and I told her and I
 187 begin to get heart sore
 188 C: Ah, that is nice, okay... ummm, do you sometimes feel you have to tell?
 189 D: Ja
 190 C: Okay. In what circumstances, when do you feel you have to tell?
 191 D: When I was feeling, I had this feeling that like pushes those words out of me,
 192 and I don't understand that and I don't know what I say I just told me and I go
 193 like, okay, so it just came out that I had to say something.
 194 C: Okay
 195 D: So it just came out and I have to say something. Like with my teacher, I just put
 196 up my hand and say something, and then, where did this answer come from?
 197 C: So how do you keep from telling that, ja, you have two moms?
 198 D: Excuse me.
 199 C: How do you keep... If you like answer so easily and sometimes answer and then
 200 you realise ooh, I have just answered. Doesn't it sometimes happen that you just
 201 say ooh?
 202 D: Ja.
 203 C: So, hasn't that happened, that when you just informal, spontaneous talked
 204 about...
 205 D: Imm, ahh,
 206 C: Would you like say this is secret and you don't share secrets.
 207 D: I don't actually share my secret, I just like hold them and if it, if she became my
 208 best friend, like only Shirley and Alicia that I tell, but Shirley knew before me.
 209 That my mother and her mother was together.
 210 C: Oh, that is interesting. So what happened there, did she tell you?
 211 D: No she didn't tell me, she said "I know a secret that you have to ask your mom"
 212 and then I said what must I ask my mom "Just ask your mom whatever comes
 213 into your mind" and it just came into my mind and I asked my mom and she said
 214 yeah.
 215 C: What did you ask your mom?
 216 D: Are they together? And she said "ja". I asked this question and she said "Yes,
 217 how did you get it right"

- 218 C: Okay, alright. And imm, how did Mom explain that to you? Because last time you
 219 mentioned that you talked a bit about...
- 220 D: How did she tell me, I asked her and she told me who with she was all before
 221 with...before she was with, before she was with [REDACTED]
 222 [REDACTED]
- 223 C: Okay
- 224 D: It's hard to remember, I think it is last year or the year before, or the year before
 225 that.
- 226 C: Okay, and how did you feel when she told you?
- 227 D: I thought aghh no, and then I thought oh, is it Auntie T, and she said ja and then
 228 okay, I'm fine with that. She had these twins.
- 229 C: Oh ja, you spoked about the kids. Isn't it like a different kind of thing that
 230 happened?
- 231 D: Yes, and now I've got three mothers.
- 232 C: Okay, and who are your three mothers, because you mentioned that before?
- 233 D: My mom, Aunt Sandy and Aunty Thea.
- 234 C: So you also think of Thea as your mom.
- 235 D: Ja, I actually have her as my Aunty. Okay it sounded very weird. My cousins, né,
 236 is very young. Because they are many children. My one Aunty is sixteen and my
 237 one Aunty is one year older than me so that is 13 she is turning 14 and my one
 238 Aunty is one year younger than me and my one Aunty is much younger than me,
- 239 C: That's nice.
- 240 D: She is still a baby. She is one year old, that's my Auntie, and my other Aunty is
 241 in grade one.
- 242 C: Okay, now what do you mean by Aunty because usually...
- 243 D: It is Aunty Sandy's cousins.
- 244 C: Okay.
- 245 D: And my mom and them are 7 children.
- 246 C: Oh okay, now I am thinking the word mom, what does it mean to you? What's a
 247 mother? Like you explained about having boy moments and girl moments, what
 248 is a mother for you?
- 249 D: I actually, I actually, my mom and don't actually have a meaning for that, but I
 250 know what for me mom means actually my mom is somebody that I loves so
 251 much and I trust my mom I love her, it is difficult. I just love her a lot.
- 252 C: Okay, now your real mom, your birth mother and Aunty Sandy, is their a
 253 difference between Aunty Sandy being a mom, Aunty Thea being a mom and
 254 Mom.
- 255 D: There's no big difference
- 256 C: Okay, It is almost, basically the same
- 257 D: It feels like almost, my real mom feels more, my real mom is more real to me
- 258 C: In what sense
- 259 D: Like I love my mom more than them, she feels like more mom to me than the
 260 others
- 261 C: Why can't people at school not find out? Why are you afraid of that?
- 262 D: They will end up teasing me. It is just difficult, and not much people are like that,
 263 and it's just they'll do stuff to me. Cause, they, they make me, make like killing
 264 me or something like that.
- 265 C: Okay, ja, so that...
- 266 D: At least my parents are better than yours (voice of other kids teasing her)
- 267 C: Okay
- 268 Speak about Aunty being teased at school (the one 1 year older) – she teased
 269 her with friends.
- 270 C: So then why are you afraid that other kids tease you if you tease them?

- 271 D: I don't tease them, they tease me and then I get upset and I push them around.
 272 I don't really push them around, I just say "don't you tease me", I'm going to get
 273 you"
- 274 C: Okay, you said just before that there are not a lot of people like that, like your
 275 mom. What did you mean by that?
- 276 D: She is, my mom is a much better person, I trust my mommy
- 277 C: In the context that kids will tease you and tell you that their parents are better
 278 and ja, that there are not a lot of people like that?
- 279 D: I don't know, I don't actually know. I don't actually know if they're *going to* do
 280 that, it's a *feeling* that they're going to do something
- 281 C: And that's fine... I think, you know, the fear of, and to be afraid of maybe they
 282 are going to tease, that's scary enough.
- 283 D: But when, Alicia, one of my best friends, when she come I feel like I have to tell
 284 her, but I am scared that she'll tell her mom and then I scared her mom don't
 285 talk to my mom again which is scary, I can't tell the future, if I could then
- 286 C: (laugh) Then none of us would have a problem, then you would be the richest
 287 girl on earth and the wisest.
 288 [laugh]
- 289 D: Okay, you are gonna have three children [laugh], thank you. Three hundred
 290 rand.
- 291 C: Definitely. Do you have sometimes sleepovers and things like that?
- 292 D: Not on school nights, only when
- 293 C: Ja, only on weekends. And then what do you tell your friends when they come
 294 over, who's Sandy?
- 295 D: I say she is a friend. I say she actually lives with my mom cause they are best
 296 friends.
- 297 C: Okay, and what is your friend's reaction. Do they ask more questions?
- 298 D: Ja, Alicia asked me, are they together, do they sleep together? And I am like
 299 aggh, ja, where else would she sleep, and she catch me there.
- 300 C: Ja, it is like a bit of a personal question.
- 301 D: And I'll have to explain to her that my mom
- 302 C: You don't have to explain that, you can just answer yes.
- 303 D: I'll just, if I'm going to have to tell her, if I'll tell her they're together and just
 304 explain all the times that and all those things that they sleep together and just,
 305 and I'm going to tell her I'm sorry that I'm a liar. It's just very personal to me and I
 306 can't share all my personal things and I would, if she can understand I would be
 307 very happy.
- 308 C: Sounds like a good thing.
- 309 D: Only my best friends. They are allowed to know everything about me, but they
 310 don't know anything about my dad.
- 311 C: Ja
- 312 D: I have a secret book....
 313 Talk about making her own diary with a lock
 314 Talk about writing in a diary – the loves writing stories
 315 Talk to her about writing a story about her family
- 316 C: Write me a story about your family. And maybe we can put that in the book as
 317 well. Then the other kids can read about how it is to live in a family that is not
 318 like other families, or is it the same, more or less?
- 319 D: I don't know, when my father used to live with my mother, it was like a strict
 320 house, and when I wanted to ask my mom something and it was a big thing
 321 between me. Like a private thing and then we couldn't talk to her
- 322 C: Umm..Okay
- 323 D: I was very scared to be with my dad and when he moved out I was actually very
 324 happy

- 325 C: Mmm, But do you think would have happened if Mom chose a male partner, she
326 had a boyfriend?
- 327 D: And she was cheating on my dad?
- 328 C: No, after they were divorced
- 329 D: Oh, then I hoped he weren't as strict as my dad. but my pa can be a very
330 different person with Aunty Thea. It is like amazing difference.
- 331 C: So Aunty Thea is mom's, ag is dad's girlfriend,
- 332 D: Yes, but now they are engaged.
- 333 C: So she is his fiancé.
- 334 D: They are getting married as soon as they saved. They say they are going to
335 have a perfect one.
- 336 C: I don't think anything can be perfect, but a beautiful one.
- 337 D: She says she is going to make me... they're going to make, make me wear a
338 dress.
- 339 C: What do you have against dresses?
- 340 D: You can't do boy things.
- 341 C: Like ... okay so you can't jump and climb trees.
- 342 D: When I was a girl and I we ate at Spur, and I tore my whole dress like that when
343 I just tried to climb over a chair.
- 344 C: And then you decided dresses were out.
- 345 D: Dresses are 'eww!'
- 346 C: Okay will you write me a story? [Laugh] Tell the kids out there who you are for a
347 start and then ... I would really appreciate it.
- 348
- 349 Talk about next visit.
- 350 17/03 Session 2

- 1 **Danielle session 3**
- 2 25/3/04
- 3 D: My friend phoned and said she's going to come and visit, I hardly ever see her.
- 4 C: In the holidays? That sounds good. Mmm, does she live in Pretoria or
- 5 somewhere else...
- 6 D: She lives in, in, near my father, C [REDACTED]
- 7 C: Okay. So you're excited
- 8 D: Mmm, she's also excited to see me.
- 9 C: I'm sure, that's wonderful.
- 10 D: Ja, she's my best friend.
- 11 C: Ja. I like the way you're started. It's so cool. You have a beautiful handwriting.
- 12 D: (laughs) I try to write neatly. I'm still not done.
- 13 C: Okay.
- 14 D: I forgot all about it, totally.
- 15 C: Ag shame. But there's enough time. Don't worry about it. But I'm glad you're
- 16 started, it's very nice.
- 17 D: I can finish it tonight.
- 18 C: Mmm. It's interesting what you say here about the divorce, because your mom
- 19 didn't tell you. It was a bit of a shock. I can understand that you were upset as
- 20 you say, and a bit happy. But you don't want it to happen really.
- 21 D: Jip.
- 22 C: Okay
- 23 D: 'cause now we keep on going to other places, it's weekends, and weekends
- 24 C: Oh, so it's a bit disruptive.
- 25 D: It irritates me.
- 26 C: (laughs) It's irritating. What makes it irritating?
- 27 D: I get car sick.
- 28 C: Oh, car sick, that's bad. And it's far to drive to Centurion.
- 29 D: Ja, how did you know so fast. My eyes are still suffocating to see where we're
- 30 going; and I go lie down in the corner and I can't see her, cause my father
- 31 always has plans
- 32 C: Oh so he drives around a lot. You must him to take you straight away
- 33 D: I don't have time to tell her that I'll visit next time
- 34 C: Okay, so they're getting married...Ah, an after this we will get to the interesting
- 35 stuff.[laughing] No, that's wonderful. Thank you for putting in the effort. I know
- 36 it doesn't come easily. It takes some effort, ja. This is wonderful so keep it and
- 37 then you continue writing. This is so cool.
- 38 Laughing.
- 39 C: Okay, we have to think of a name for you. Okay, bit like a special name.
- 40 All right, the first time you like the name you said Danielle, is that all right, then we
- 41 can stick with that.
- 42 D: Imm.
- 43 C: Okay, you must just remember this so your brothers don't see it. Do you think
- 44 they will write something?
- 45 D: My brothers, I said didn't she say you must write something. They said, "no, she
- 46 didn't tell us to write anything". He asked if you've got something in your brain.
- 47 Laughter
- 48 C: What about if you write the story and we give it to them. But you can say no if
- 49 you want to and then they can just comment on that.
- 50 D: Comment?
- 51 C: They can write extra notes and say no, no, no I knew about the divorce, or mom
- 52 told me.
- 53 D: They can use it, but then they will tease me.
- 54 C: We'll leave it then.

- 55 D: Or I'll sit next to them and tell them what to write
- 56 C: No, no, no you can't be their memory. It must be their work.
- 57 D: Ja.
- 58 C: Okay, So what are you going to do for the holidays?
- 59 D: I don't know what mom's going to do, but Alicia, she's going to visit Saturday,
- 60 and Friday night and Saturday and Sunday.
- 61 C: That's tomorrow already. Wow! Okay what's her name?
- 62 D: Alicia.
- 63 C: Okay, you've spoken about her last time
- 64 D: I've spoken about her lots. All of them at school. Because she's left the school.
- 65 C: Ja, you said she was only a few months in school and then she left.
- 66 D: When I come to school I had my friend Karen. She was very selfish with me and
- 67 then, and then, I didn't feel welcome at the school because she made me not
- 68 feel welcome at the school Alicia made me.
- 69 C: All right. And Alicia was the one that teased you about the boy's clothes the one
- 70 day?
- 71 D: No that's her friend. It's not her friend, but the one day she came to the school
- 72 and she starts to take Alicia away from me.
- 73 C: Oh, okay.
- 74 D: She like, she pushes me behind. I always end up walking at the back.
- 75 C: Oh dear, ja. Mmm, but now its all changed and Alicia is back with you. And
- 76 Alicia also knows about mom and Auntie Sandy. She's the one who you said
- 77 caught you out because she asked if they were together. Something like that?
- 78 D: Yes she caught me out, ja.
- 79 C: Or did she just asked you? Tell me the story again?
- 80 D: No, she like, I was, I was thinking and all that stuff and then she said that, and
- 81 she heard ... and my mother and them were talking about them two together
- 82 and then she heard everything.
- 83 C: Oh, tell me?
- 84 D: Okay, its like, I was with my brother playing with something -
- 85 C: Oh, so you weren't near her.
- 86 D: ... and I was playing with my brothers. So then I just tried to sort out a problem
- 87 and then she, and they were talking and I said Alicia, just wait here and she
- 88 heard them talking.
- 89 C: Who was talking?
- 90 D: My mom and auntie Sandy .
- 91 C: Oh, okay. And she overheard them?
- 92 D: Yes, and she asked me, "is it true?" And I said "yes, its actually about time that
- 93 you must hear it."
- 94 C: Ja, how did you feel in that situation?
- 95 D: Like Ah (sigh - benoud). "So you don't have a dad you have like three mothers."
- 96 And I say its like cool hey, but that's all I'm saying.
- 97 C: Brilliant answer. And then, was she happy with that?
- 98 D: Ja, she said, "I don't know if my mother knows". Ja, I can't forget that time. Oh,
- 99 she gave me a sickness and I was sleeping with her in bed and we were eating
- 100 oranges. She gave me an orange with a worm in it.
- 101 C: Mmm
- 102 D:I spat out when I saw a broken worm. Ja, I was angry with her. I said, "I'm
- 103 going to tell your mom".
- 104 C: Ag shame. Do you think her mom will mind that she knows and that mom and
- 105 auntie Sandy are together?
- 106 D: I don't think so. But she knows that we are best friends and we always stay at
- 107 each other's place.
- 108 C: Wonderful.
- 109 D: She's really nice!

- 110 C: Ya. Did Alicia, hey?
111 D: Yes.
112 C: Did Alicia tell you what she overheard? What exactly mom and auntie Sandy ...
113 D: Yes, she said, I can hardly remember because it was when I was in Grade
114 Three.
115 C: Okay so it was a long time ago.
116 D: Ja, she said to me, imm, she said that she heard that that imm, they were going
117 to go to this place with other women like them and all that
118 C: Okay.
119 D: And then she heard that they were also like that.
120 C: Okay, what does "like that" mean...
121 D: But she's also very clever. So she, Like, if she's hanging out with a couple, with
122 two women together and you know that my mother will be one of them. And
123 she's sleeping with the other woman.
124 C: Okay.
125 D: She first found out, my mommy , she first found out about auntie Theresa and
126 my mom and then she found out about auntie Sandy. Because I told her about
127 auntie Sandy and she found out about it.
128 C: Okay so she found out about auntie Thea and then she just assumed.
129 D: Ja, and she know that my mom and auntie Sandy are together.
130 C: Alright. Do the kids at school talk about women like that, women
131 D: They don't even think about it. Because it's very dumb.
132 C: (Laughs) well,
133 D: You, D (boy's name) hit me on my back, I went to my teacher, he hit me on the
134 back and I was very upset.
135 C: He's actually not allowed to do that. Why does he do that?
136 D: No he hit me over some other girl name [REDACTED] and I fell and she looked to D
137 and I said sorry and she said you stupid new girl
138 C: Oh dear, girl trouble at school.
139 D: Ja, I don't like the boys at all.
140 C: Ah, Danielle, imm, when did you first realise um, about mom and auntie Tersia.
141 Like you say that the kids at school don't even think or know about umm, about
142 people being gay. When did you realise?
143 D: What do you mean (giggles)
144 C: Um, how can I put it. With mom and dad being together, okay and then they got
145 divorced. And then..
146 D: I wasn't there then. I wasn't in that school.
147 C: Okay.
148 D: I was in [REDACTED]. They didn't even know, they think, ja, because my mother
149 and my father were together so it didn't worry them. And then my mother
150 divorced him.
151 C: Mmm, mmm.
152 D: Ja, Okay, but when did you realise that mom liked other women?
153 C: Oh, when she was with auntie Tersia and she, we were at auntie Theresa's
154 house, her old house there. And I asked them if they were together and then we
155 went to auntie Theresa. And auntie Tersia came with us and I said to my mom,
156 "I don't believe you" and she said, "go ask auntie Tersia", and then I asked her. I
157 said, "Aren't you going to tell Karen" and she said "she's not old enough".
158 C: Okay, so is Karen her daughter?
159 D: Yes,
160 C: Did they ask you not to tell her or?
161 D: Yes, They said that I mustn't tell her.
162 C: She's too young, Okay. Why do you smile?
163 D: Because I told her. (laughs) I couldn't hold it in, I had to tell her.

- 164 C: Ah, how old was she then? She's my best friend, but not always, she always
165 hang out with my brothers, but I've beginning to like her a lot.
- 166 C: Okay, because you're all getting older now. What did you tell her?
- 167 D: What age?
- 168 C: No, well, how old was she in any case when you told her. How old was she
169 then?
- 170 D: Ah, okay. I was eleven and she was ten.
- 171 C: Okay and what did you say to her?
- 172 D: I said (whispers) Karen did you know that our mothers and them are together
173 and she said, "UHH!" (ahh like shock and surprise) and I said, but I'm not
174 supposed to tell you and you don't know that anymore
- 175 C: And then did she ask her mom?
- 176 D: No, but I think her mom told her.
- 177 C: And how do you think, what was her reaction, when her mom told her?
- 178 D: She didn't tell me.
- 179 C: Oh, okay.
- 180 D: I wasn't with her. She told them when mom and her broke up.
- 181 C: Okay, did you and your brothers ever discuss what's happening with auntie
182 Theresa or auntie Sandy
- 183 D: We say that auntie Sandy is much better than auntie Theresa. And her children
184 are irritating.
- 185 C: Oh ja
- 186 D: You can't even go into your room. I heard that, the other weekend I was with my
187 dad and they took my rat and put it on the pool table and they hit it with the pool
188 things.
- 189 C: So that didn't work out at all.
- 190 D: And she kept on saying "put away the rat". And then Karen even bother to tell
191 her brothers put away the rat, she was not allowed, because she will get
192 grounded.
- 193 C: Naught naughty
- 194 D: And she said, "put it back" and they walk into my room and walk out with the rat
195 again.
- 196 C: Mm, So Alicia, was she the first friend to know, about mom.
- 197 D: No, ugh, Shirley was.
- 198 C: What happened there?
- 199 D: Shirley knew before me.
- 200 C: Oh ja, she's the girl who's mom told her and then she told you and then you had
201 to ask mom.
- 202 D: Ja
- 203 C: Quite interesting all these circles.
- 204 D: You want to know how Shirley found out?
- 205 C: Ja
- 206 D: She found this other book in her mom's room and then she locks the door, her
207 and her brother go sit there and read the book and her mother knocks on the
208 door "wake up", 'cause she always locks the door when she sleeps and she said
209 "yes, mommy".
- 210 C: Okay, so she was a bit naughty. What was in the book?
- 211 D: I can't remember.
- 212 (interruption)
- 213 D: There's nothing such things in my life, because there's a photo in the book with
214 my mom in it with glasses, cause she used to wear glasses.
- 215 C: Okay so it was like a photo album?
- 216 D: Not like a photo album. It only had one picture in it and a PS chocolate. But not
217 the chocolates only the wrapper.
- 218 C: Okay, okay.

- 219 D: And little poems about my mom.
220 C: Where did you, where did you saw that? In that book?
221 D: Yes.
222 C: (laughs) Okay, I think I've lost you there.
223 D: Okay, she locks the door and once.....
224 C: That's your friend? Her mom?...
225 D: Shirley, the girl with the long hair.
226 C: Oh, and her mom is?
227 D: Auntie Theresa. The one who lives in the flat. She was with my mom. Now
228 she's not anymore.
229 C: So it was first Theresa, then Tersia. Oh, okay, thank you
230 D: You're welcome
231 C: Okay, now I've got the order right.
232 D: Uh, and something else, today
233 C: Oh, and so she saw the love letters and things on the page.
234 D: Ja.
235 C: Okay, and then did she ask her mom what's this?
236 D: (whispers) No, she didn't talk to her. She only told me about that, so that's why,
237 imm, when her mom told her she acted like she didn't know.
238 D: And today was the worse day of my life.
239 C: What happened today?
240 D: Um, the other boy was my boyfriend and ... talks about boyfriend. Talks about
241 the holiday. And what Danielle is going to do. Talks about break up day. Talks
242 about Danielle's birthday on the 19th.

- 1 **Erid Session 1**
- 2 Kashni (K) & Erid (E), Interviewer Carien (C) 18/11/03, session 1
- 3 C: Oraait, Dit is sommer net lekker 'informal' chat, ek weet ek's nou nie die
- 4 ouderdom van julle pelle nie, maar (lag) probeer maar so dink
- 5 Almal: lag lekker
- 6 C: En dan imm, ja, chat julle sommer net oor wie's julle en wie's julle family
- 7 E: Ek is [REDACTED] (no, Erid)
- 8 C: Ek weet nie eers hoe spel mens dit nie
- 9 E: "[REDACTED]", so jy moet dit vir my spel
- 10 Almal spel my naam verkeerd, "[REDACTED]" of "[REDACTED]"
- 11 C: En [REDACTED] (nee, Kashni), hoe hoe spel mens jou naam
- 12 K: [REDACTED]
- 13 C: [REDACTED];
- 14 Okay, So just tell me what it's like being in this family, just generally, I'll ask specific
- 15 questions later on
- 16 E: Nice
- 17 C: Okay, wat is nice
- 18 E: As mens persente kry
- 19 C: Ja, en kersfees kom
- 20 [R chat oor geskenk wat gekry het by nefie, Matrix unloaded DVD, 7 maande later
- 21 eers, en hy't ook toevallig dieselfde vir nefie gekoop]
- 22 C: En vir jou?
- 23 (19:11:55)
- 24 K: Dis ook lekker
- 25 C & K: Ja (lag al 2)
- 26 C: Wat is lekker?
- 27 K: Ja dis net, ja, ons is 'n liefdevolle familie, soos in, 'n huis vol liefde, ja
- 28 maar ons het ons argumente, lag
- 29 C: Lag, dis okay, so wat is 'n tipiese argument, waarom gaan dit
- 30 K: Ek wat grumpy is, en
- 31 C: O okay
- 32 K: Uhm, as ek en my boetie baklei
- 33 C: Ihim
- 34 E en K: praat gelyk
- 35 K: No man, that's the arguments
- 36 E: I love getting money
- 37 C: Ye right
- 38 E: I love it
- 39 C: Ja...okay
- 40 - - -
- 41 E: 'n Maatjie van my wou vir my R250 gegee het. R250 sommer net so
- 42 E: R250 wou hy my gegee het, sommer net so,
- 43 - - -
- 44 E: Could you have taken it Kashni, R250?
- 45 K: No
- 46 E: Why not?
- 47 K: You just don't
- 48 E: He offers it to you for free, no strings attached
- 49 C: Nothing comes for free without strings attached
- 50 E: Hoekom
- 51 K: Niks verniet
- 52 [Continue chatting with Kashni, saved under seperate file – Erid of to bath] [mense
- 53 interrupt – praat oor hond se besering – Erid kom weer terug/ by]
- 54 C: Vertel van die outjie wat jy geslaan het

- 55 K: Gaan tannie nou met hom praat
 56 C: Ja, ek sal later weer met jou praat
 57 E: Hy't goeters gesê, van my ma gesê, en toe word ek kwaad
 58 C: Ihim, ek kan nogal dink ja
 59 C: En kan jy onthou wat hy gesê het, jy hoef nie te sê as jy
 60 E: Ek wil nie,
 61 C: Wil jy eerder nie, dis fine
 62 [*honde hardloop weer tussen in*]
 63 En wat het ma hulle gesê, was hulle trots op jou?
 64 E: Ja
 65 C: Klink vir my goed, ek dink dis partymaal al wat werk
 66 Jy't laas gesê dis partymaal vir jou erg om tussen vroumense te wees, en ek is
 67 nou 'n vrou en ek weet nie of jy net lekker gejoke het nie
 68 E: Maar dit is nie lekker nie
 69 C: Wat is nie lekker nie
 70 E: Ek wens ek het ten minste 'n boetie gehad
 71 C: Oraait
 72 E: Kyk hierdie penne vir my eksamen
 73 [continue chatting about pens]
 74 Mom Z kom maak omverskoning
 75 C: You don't have to answer if you don't want to, okay
 76 E: I know
 77 C: Say for instance like when you move to schools, and you move to a new school
 78 E: Jip
 79 C: and now you know, at one stage, we are going to do lesson about "my family",
 80 what goes through your mind if the teachers say "Today we are going to talk
 81 about our families?"
 82 E: uhm, just, I don't think much, I just say that we've moved, I don't say much
 83 C: Okay, so you rather say less than too much, and they must then ask
 84 E: Yes
 85 C: And your friends, if they come for a sleepover are they like oh this is like funny or
 86 E: They're my friends they don't mind. They love playing here because it's so big.
 87 They're always surprised that this is my house because they didn't expect it to be
 88 so big
 89 C: And the teachers, do uhm, do mom go before school starts and tell them like
 90 listen,
 91 E: No, they just told the headmaster when I was grade three and he was fine with
 92 that
 93 C: Do you sometimes feel like you can't tell?
 94 E: Tell?
 95 C: That you have two moms that you must keep it as secret
 96 E: If they want to know then I will tell them
 97 C: And, how much do you know about [REDACTED]?
 98 E: A lot
 99 [Continue chatting about [REDACTED], horseriding, Matrix and gift for nephew, History
 100 exams]

- 1 **Erid Session 2**
2 3/12/2003
3 *Schools have just closed; last time I am visiting the family – they are leaving on the*
4 *10th for East Cape*
5 *Has three friends there, swims, plays football, plays with his toys, eating ice cream –*
6 *two people visiting the moms, lot's of action and noise and movement*
7 C: So who packed all your stuff?
8 E: Ek het
9 C: Jyself
10 C: O jy en jou maatjies. En hoe gaan jy weet waar's
11 E: Ons het dit saam gepak
12 C: Erid, as this is our, basically our first and last time before you go away, I want to
13 give you this file so that you can think of me. Hierdie file is joune maar dis vir my
14 – okay, so jy moet allerhande 'goodies' hier binne in sit vir my, en ek't vir jou 'n
15 boekie ook gegee so as jy goedjies het om vir my te sê dan kan jy dit skryf of
16 teken
17 E: Okay
18 C: Okay, en daar's net 'n briefie vir jou om te sê dankie, okay
19 C: Basically why, what I would like to do is, maybe over the weekend or over the
20 holidays when you have some quiet time for yourself, maybe 5 min before you go
21 to sleep or just in the morning when you wake up, or whenever, I think you would
22 have lost of time once you're in [REDACTED] ... When the school start is
23 basically to share with me some stories of your family, tell me something about
24 Kashni or your friends or your teachers or your parents,
25 E: Anything
26 C: Anything
27 Sometimes you can just start writing, uhm, it does not have to be in this booklet, it
28 can be on any piece of paper. And if you decide no, it's not for Carien's eyes you
29 can just keep it or throw it away. So just send me the stuff
30 *I told you – friends interrupt*
31 C: Send me the stuff that I can look at, okay. Afterwards, the stuff that you've send
32 me and I've worked with that, I will show you what I have written and you can
33 decide, okay, this, everyone can see this, like other kids, other parents, and the
34 people where I work is going to read your stuff, some of your direct words. And if
35 you don't want anyone to know this, okay they can't know this, then we can take
36 that out – so there's another process where you can decide, it's like the sensor
37 board which says, this movie is for 16 year olds and this is for 14 year olds and
38 this is for 12 year olds, okay
39 C: So tell me anything and from that I will ask you questions back
40 E: Uhm, okay
41 C: Have you lost me?
42 E: No
43 C: Is it fine?
44 C: So of you maybe write me something about Kashni, I'll maybe ask you more, tell
45 me more, or tell me why did you think she did that, ask you questions around
46 that. But in the end, in essence, in the end, my task that I have to do for my
47 teachers, is about your experience, as a gay family and what do you think and
48 feel about it. Okay, so what's happening to you and then how do you sometimes
49 feel about it and what thoughts go through your mind things like that. But you
50 don't have to restrict it to only that, okay, you can tell me anything about your
51 rugby or cricket. Because sometimes stuff will flow from that but not always,
52 okay. What I also want to show the world that you're actually just like any other
53 family and just like any other 9-year-old
54 E: People

- 55 C: Ja, people in South Africa. Maybe there's a difference, maybe you're better off,
56 immm maybe not, okay. So I also want to show that you play rugby - all right. I
57 know some of the stuff can be personal and we don't have a lot of time to share,
58 because it does help if you get to know me better and I know you better, that we
59 can get into the stuff that hurt you bad. Maybe there will again happen things in
60 ██████ that will also be uhm onlekker
- 61 E: Ja
- 62 C: So you don't have to share that if you feel you're not ready, maybe later on – you
63 can say once this happened or that happened and this is how mom handled it
64 and this is what I think and felt
- 65 E: Okay
- 66 C: And that's basically all. Keep the file as you're moving. Jy kan al die papiere daar
67 indruk of enigiets wat jou aan my laat dink
- 68 E: Okay
- 69 C: Hoe klink dit vir jou? Is daar ietsie wat jy vir my wil vra oor dit, anything you want
70 to know?
- 71 E: Uhm, nothing
- 72 C: You don't have to share it with your parents or with Kashni or you may. Jy kan
73 obviously vir hulle sê waaroor dit gaan, van jou leër en hulle vra om jou te help of
74 dit vir jou te hou,
75
- 76 E: Hulle hoef my nie te help nie
77
- 78 C: Smile-laughs, En dan kan jy dit vir my op pos of hopelik kom kuier ek vir julle.
79 Kashni het ook gesê julle gaan dalk opkom Pretoria toe in April of anders kan jy
80 dit vir ma A gee, want sy's elke week hier
- 81 E: Okay
- 82 C: Ek sal dalk meer kontak met haar hê. Okay, enige vragies
- 83 E: Nee niks
- 84 C: Niks
- 85 C: Ons het laas bietjie gepraat en toe't jy gesê daar't ietsie 'bad' by die skool gebeur,
86 toe die kinders jou gespot het, okay, wat ek ...
- 87 E: Nie my gespot nie maar my ma
- 88 C: Jou ma gespot het, so dis verskillend of of, amper anders
- 89 E: Dis dieselfde en anders
- 90 C: Oraait, maak nogal sin. Dis nie jy nie, maar dis iets van jou. Hoeveel keer het dit
91 al gebeur?
- 92 E: Dit het 'n paar gebeur in hierdie skool maar baie keer in die ander skool
- 93 C: Hoekom dink jy verskil die skole so?
- 94 E: Weet nie
- 95 C: Is die kinders anders of dink jy die ouers is anders?
- 96 E: Ja
- 97 C: Want wat ek al gehoor het by my pelle is dis baie keer die ouers wat 'n issue het,
98 en nie die kinders nie
- 99 E: Ja
- 100 C: Want die kinders sien jou en dis vir hulle bietjie weird maar hulle kom hier en
101 speel en sien dis niks anders, hulle kom nie eers agter dat jy 2 ma's het nie, maar
102 nie die ouers
- 103 E: Ja
- 104 C: So dit verskil hang af watter maats jy het
- 105 E: Ja
- 106 C: Dink jy jou nuwe skool
- 107 E: Ja
- 108 C: Is daar verskillende kinders, but it's interesting that it differs

- 109 C: What do you think would have happened at the previous school if you would
 110 have stayed at the previous school
- 111 E: Hulle sou opgehou het
- 112 C: Okay
- 113 E: Ek sou hulle aanhou slaan het
- 114 C: lag, dis ook reg, ja, dan sou hulle geweet het jy's die bokser, die fighter.
 115 Jy't 'n baie nice bril
- 116 E: Thanks
- 117 C: Het jy dit nog altyd aangehad?
- 118 E: Ja
- 119 C: In die vorige skool toe dit baie gebeur het, was dit ook comments gemik teenoor
 120 ma-hulle en nie teenoor jou nie
- 121 E: Ja
- 122 (*Mense/ kuiergaste kom verby en groet*)
- 123 C: Imm, is dit partymaal so, want dis nogal iets waaroor ek wonder, soos nou
 124 wanneer julle [REDACTED] toe gaan, would you be like not scared, but apprehensive, like
 125 keep it to yourself
- 126 E: No, half-half
- 127 C: Can you explain that more?
- 128 E: I don't, I don't talk much,
- 129 C: Okay
- 130 E: But if I get to know somebody then ja
- 131 C: Okay
- 132 C: So you won't go like...Do the teachers still in the first week or so when school
 133 start ask you what you did for the holiday and tell us about your family?
- 134 E: No, they ask what you're going to do
- 135 C: Okay, but now, you think when you get to the new school would you then stand
 136 up in class and say we've moved and "dara lalla da" and say you've got two
 137 moms
- 138 E: I won't say that, I would just say, we've moved
- 139 C: I think it's just like other kids won't say, oh I've got a mom or dad, share their
 140 family structure
- 141 E: Ja, they have to find out
- 142 C: Imm,
- 143 C: What do you think would happen if you have a close friend and you don't tell him
 144 – and you just say come and visit me, do you think it would be an issue? Or do
 145 you feel like you have to tell them?
- 146 E: no
- 147 C: What advice can you give other kids, your age who have two moms or two dads?
- 148 E: Advice? Just to be like a normal kid
- 149 C: Okay, if someone ask about your family, how many brothers and sisters do you
 150 have, or
- 151 E: I just tell them
- 152 C: I think people usually ask what does your mom do what does your dad do? What
 153 do you answer then?
- 154 E: I just say "I don't know"
- 155 C: Okay, and you start off by saying I don't have a dad
- 156 E: That's what I used to say. And then they say but how's that possible that you
 157 don't have a dad? And I say I'm adopted by two mommies
- 158 C: Okay, do children sometimes ask more questions about the adoption? How does
 159 that feel or where were you before this?
- 160 E: Ja
- 161 C: Is that sometimes hurtful or bad memories?
- 162 E: Sometimes, okay, but I don't tell them
- 163 C: That's okay because you can't tell them all the bad stuff,

- 164 E: Ja
- 165 C: It's too personal, okay
- 166 C: Imm, and how do kids usually react when you they hear the news, what or if you
- 167 can maybe put them in little boxes, some kids are like this and others like that,
- 168 what's the feedback you get, or reactions you get?
- 169 E: You get, most people are normal, you get the nice ones being so nice to you; and
- 170 then the bad ones
- 171 C: And what do they do?
- 172 E: They tease you like the other one and so I hit him
- 173 C: Do some children ask more questions like how does it work or it's impossible?
- 174 E: Ye, I don't always answer that
- 175 C: ja, just almost let it slip away
- 176 E: Sometimes they ask me and I just say, I don't feel like telling you now
- 177 C: Okay, that's a good answer, and for whom would you tell more or share more info
- 178 E: But I don't have that
- 179 C: Okay, ja, really close friends?
- 180 E: Not, I wouldn't say anything
- 181 C: And they, sometimes asks you questions, maybe in the beginning?
- 182 E: That's why they're my friends, they don't ask questions
- 183 C: (laughs) Don't ask you any stupid personal questions! Okay
- 184 C: Do you think it will get worse, the teasing, if some kids find out like say the bad
- 185 ones that tease you, as one gets older?
- 186 E: It gets better
- 187 C: Okay, Why do you think that?
- 188 E: I don't know cause they then get more sense and they're not so stupid any more
- 189 C: Imm, If you see a programme on television, that portray gay people, do you as a
- 190 family talk about stuff like that or?
- 191 E: Imm, we do sometimes, but very little
- 192 C: If maybe one of your friends realise that they're gay, how would you feel about
- 193 that?
- 194 E: It's fine
- 195 C: Imm, and say they've got an issue with themselves they don't want to be gay or
- 196 they struggle with that, what advice could you give them or how would you think
- 197 you would be able to support them
- 198 E: Just let them know that you are there, cause it's okay
- 199 C: All right, okay that's all the questions I can think of, for now
- 200 C: Something you want to ask or want to know, want to find out about me, cause
- 201 this is a two way street....
- 202 E: no
- 203 C: If you have questions you can also write it down
- 204 E: Okay
- 205 C: I know it's a bit much to ask but maybe you can write me more about yourself –
- 206 this is me, Erid, I am nine years old, this is who I am, this is me, this is what I like,
- 207 things like that
- 208 E: Okay
- 209 C: Okay, thanks for your time
- 210 E: Is that all?
- 211 C: Ja, except if there's something you want to tell me
- 212 E: Imm, imm, no
- 213 *General: Continue chatting about his friends, one ("the small one" since he*
- 214 *was 3 years old, friends bow for 8 years, birthdays 13 days apart*
- 215 *Erid's birthday on 20th April*
- 216 *School in [REDACTED] and different sport activities (rugby and cricket)*
- 217 C: Show me how to play Pokemon's

218 *We continue by unpacking and sorting through packs of Pokemon's – end of formal*
219 *interview/ conversation..*

- 1 **Kashni Session 1**
2 Kashni (K) & Erid (E), Interviewer: Carien (C) Session 1 18/11/03
3 *In sitting room, while parents still had guests in kitchen . I felt very uneasy whilst*
4 *interviewing her, with Erid being present – although he left the room at one stage. It*
5 *felt very formal and so not what I wanted to do. She did however, answered the*
6 *questions straightforward, but this is too direct...*
7 C: Oraait, Dit is sommer net lekker 'informal' chat, ek weet ek's nou nie die
8 ouderdom van julle pelle nie, maar (lag) probeer maar so dink
9 Almal: lag lekker
10 C: En dan imm, ja, chat julle sommer net oor wie's julle en wie's julle family
11 E: Ek is Erid
12 C: Ek weet nie eers hoe spel mens dit nie
13 E: "E-r-i-d", so jy moet dit vir my spel
14 Almal spel my naam verkeerd, "██████" of "██████"
15 C: En Kashni, hoe hoe spel mens jou naam
16 K: K-a-s-h-n-i
17 C: s-h-n-i;
18 Okay, So just tell me what it's like being in this family, just generally, I'll ask specific
19 questions later on
20 E: Nice
21 C: Okay, wat is nice
22 E: As mens persente kry
23 C: Ja, en kersfees kom
24 [Erid chat oor geskenk wat gekry het by nefie, Matrix unloaded DVD, 7 maande later
25 eers, en hy't ook toevallig dieselfde vir nefie gekoop]
26 C: En vir jou?
27 (19:11:55)
28 K: Dis ook lekker
29 C & K: ja (lag al 2)
30 C: Wat is lekker?
31 K: ja dis net, ja, ons is 'n liefdevolle familie, soos in, 'n huis vol liefde, ja
32 maar ons het ons argumente, lag
33 C: Lag, dis okay, so wat is 'n tipiese argument, waarom gaan dit
34 K: Ek wat grumpy is, en
35 C: O okay
36 K: Uhm, as ek en my boetie baklei
37 C: Ihim
38 E En K: praat gelyk
39 K: No man, that's the arguments
40 E: I love getting money
41 C: Ye right
42 E: I love it
43 C: Ja...okay
44 - - -
45 E: 'n Maatjie van my wou vir my R250 gegee het. R250 sommer net so
46 E: R250 wou hy my gegee het, sommer net so,
47 - - -
48 E: Could you have taken it Kashni, R250?
49 K: No
50 E: Why not?
51 K: You just don't
52 E: He offers it to you for free, no strings attached
53 C: Nothing comes for free without strings attached
54 E: Hoekom
55 K: Niks verniet

- 56 C: Okay, let's go a bit more specific, as ons in bietjie meer detail gaan kyk,
 57 imm, vertel my van, as mens bv. as jy skool toe gaan, aan die begin van die jaar,
 58 of as jy uitgaan met pelle, is daar partymaal dat jy voel dis anders of dis glad nie,
 59 dat jy dink: o, gaan iemand dalk iets dink want ek het 2 ma's, dat dit dalk deur jou
 60 kop gaan, of..
- 61 K: Jja
 62 - - -
- 63 C: Vertel bietjie
- 64 K: Ek bedoel, party mense is nou maar net ongemaklik daarmee en dit kan
 65 partykeer 'n moeilike situasie wees veral, jy weet, en ek het vriende né, okay né,
 66 en ek het vriende gehad wat so was, en toe besluit ek dit help nie veel ek is
 67 vriende met hulle as hulle nie met my wil soort van, jy weet, ja maar meeste van
 68 hulle is okay daarmee; en as hulle daarvan weet dan is dit nie 'n probleem nie,
 69 dan ja
- 70 C: Dan gaan dit aan soos normaalweg – dis amper asof dit aan die begin so 'n ding
 71 is
- 72 K: Ja
- 73 C: Hoe sense jy hulle ongemak?
- 74 K: Mens kan dit voel as hulle soos in oor jou ouers praat, en jy voel so, as, sê nou jy
 75 nooi hulle om na jou huis toe te kom, mens voel die ongemak dat hulle nie wil nie
 76 of so, ja
- 77 C: En wie maak gewoonlik die eerste move om dit te hanteer
- 78 K: Ekke, ek sê net vir hulle, luister hier, imm, twee 2 ma's okay, en dan's dit soos in,
 79 o, okay,
- 80 *[Onderbreking: Honde blaf, storm deur vertrek]*
- 81 C: Kan jy dink aan 'n aan 'n keer wat dit nice was, om iemand te vertel
- 82 K: Meeste van die kere is dit so, imm, dit was baie okay in Rodcrest College, want
 83 ek bedoel baie mense daar is openminded en dit was lekker. Maar nou by
 84 Festive School is dit bietjie, moeiliker, moeiliker want baie mense is meer
 85 konserwatief
- 86 C: Imm ja
- 87 C: Wat was vir jou die badste experience- wat jy heavy ongemaklik gevoel het
- 88 K: Wat ek..?
- 89 C: Wat jy heavy ongemaklik gevoel het
- 90 K: Ek het van hierdie outjie gehou, uhm, ons het goed oor die weg gekom, en nie
 91 geweet hoe hy oor my voel nie. Imm, En toe jy weet moes ek vir hom sê, want dit
 92 kan net nie nie werk as hy nie weet nie. Maar ek bedoel as jy straight met hom is
 93 en soos in die waarheid vertel dan's dit okay en hy was fine daarmee
- 94 C: Oraait, so dalk daar aan die begin het jy dit bietjie stilgehou
- 95 K: Ja, soos in, ek weet nooit, partykeer, weet, is daar is 'n sekere tyd wat jy dit kan
 96 sê, en ja, soos in, ja, en partykeer kan jy dit net dadelik sê
- 97 C: En wat bepaal dit, ek weet dis nou moeilik om te sê wanneer is dit makliker om te
 98 sê en dis oop, of ander kere moet jy half die situasie lees
- 99 K: Imm, as 'n vriend van jou soos in baie oop is en sy's so, dan, dan kan 'n mens dit
 100 imm, doen, imm, as mens die persoon dadelik kan leer ken jy weet,. Maar sekere
 101 mense, soos in veral met 'n seun, want ek weet nou nie hoe hy is nie, so ek moet
 102 hom eers leer ken jy weet, verstaan, hoe is hy, en, soos in wat se soort persoon,
 103 ek bedoel as hy soos in 'n heavy konserwatiewe persoon is dan kan ek mos nie
 104 eintlik, is, dan gaan dit mos nie werk nie, maar imm, en dan ja. Dit het al gebeur,
 105 en dan los ek dit, dan kan dit nie. Maar andersins imm, ja, dan dan lees jy dit en
 106 jy sê dit vir hom of haar.
- 107 C: Wat is oop?
- 108 K: Hoe bedoel jy nou?
- 109 C: Jy sê die mense is oop

- 110 K: Hulle is net soos in openminded – imm, hulle gee nie eintlik om nie –hulle is maar
 111 gemaklik met enige situasie of, ja
- 112 C: Wat is, wat is nice hiervan, wat dink jy maak dit beter as 'n gewone, van 'n pa en
 113 ma
- 114 K: Imm, lag lekker
 115 En imm, ek dink 'n mens kry soos in soos in meer aandag, want 'n ma, ma's dink
 116 ek, is meer mense wat meer aandag gee imm, in 'n familie, en dan kry jou nou
 117 meer aandag, maar partykeer kan dit te veel aandag wees wanneer hulle
 118 overprotective is, want dis meer die ma's wat meer overprotective is
- 119 C & K: Lag
- 120 K: So dis 'n win-lose situasie
- 121 C: Wat sê jou maats, as hulle hier kom oorslaap
- 122 K: Niks nie, hulle is fine daarmee, hulle hulle noem hulle Tannie Anriëtte of Tannie
 123 Zané of, jy weet, hulle is fine daarmee
- 124 C: Het iemand al ooit iets, jy weet half 'n spesiale comment daarvoor gehad, soos, of
 125 dis cool, of dis weird
- 126 K: Ja party mense sê dis cool, dit moet cool wees dat jy 2 ma's het- maar ja daar
 127 was al soos in probleme by die skool, imm ja, en ag, okay, ek het 'n paar
 128 probleme gehad en toe een dag, né, toe hak hierdie seuns nou net uit, né en sê
 129 hulle ja jis jy's 'n lesbiën en jou ma's is nie lekker nie en sulke dinge né en toe sê
 130 ek nou vir my ma, en wraggies, toe gaan sy nou skool toe en toe gaan praat sy
 131 nou met die hoof en juf [redacted] en toe praat sy so voor die hele klas, né, en sy roep
 132 hierdie seuns, en dis nou ma Anriëtte, okay, en sy roep hierdie seuns, né en sy
 133 sê, as ek weer hoor dat julle noem my dogter 'n lesbiën noem né, dan, jy weet
 134 dan gaan ek julle ouers bel en dan jy weet, dan gaan ek julle aankla van, jy weet,
 135 wat as mens iets, as mens name noem, dan
- 136 C: Naamskending
- 137 K: Ja, imm, ja, dan gaan julle ouers hierdie hofgeld en wat moet betaal, uhm, ja en
 138 jy weet, en net vir hulle gesê dis nie Kashni wat jy weet, 'n lesbiën is nie, dis ons,
 139 toe, ja,
 140 En as julle probleme daarmee het dan moet julle vir ons kom sê en toe was dit
 141 nooit weer 'n probleem nie (lag)
- 142 C: Okay
- 143 K: Ja
- 144 C: En hoe't jy gevoel toe ma daar instap (o, ek wens ek kon nou daai gesig afneem)
- 145 K: Heavy embarrassing, my arms was oor my kop gedurende die hele ding
- 146 C: En ja, oho ja
 147 En daarna, het mense nog iets weer gesê
- 148 K: Hulle het nie gewaag om iets te sê nie
- 149 C: En body language wise, kinders wys dit mos verskillend, hulle het mos nie nodig
 150 om iets te sê nie
- 151 K: Imm, nee, nee...
- 152 C: En toe dit gebeur het nog voor jy by die huis gekom het, voor jy vir ma-hulle gesê
 153 het dit het gebeur? Wat het deur jou kop gegaan? Hoe't jy gevoel?
- 154 K: Soos in toe
- 155 C: Daar soos in die situasie
- 156 K: Uhm, ek het ongemaklik gevoel en so imm dis nie 'n lekker gevoel nie, uhm, soos
 157 in, ek weet nie juis hoe om te verduidelik nie, baie huilerig en jy weet, soos in
 158 stil. Okay ek is nie 'n stil persoon nie, [lag], ek is 'n persoon wat soos in heavy
 159 loud is en ek praat verskriklik baie in die klas, en ja, ek kan nogal 'n klas
 160 onderbreek met grappies en ander goed aanvang en ja, toe's ek net stil; en vir
 161 niemand iets gesê nie
- 162 *[onderbreek ma Z – Erid gaan bad]*
- 163 C: Ja, soos amper, as iemand vir jou iets sê soos in jy het 'n "skewe neus", dan sou
 164 jy iets teruggesê het

- 165 K: Uhm
- 166 C: Soos as hulle sê jou naels is lelik
- 167 K: Ek kan partykeer maar as dit 'n heavy iets is, dan, dan as dit erg is dan sal ek net
- 168 stilbly, dan sal ek vir ma sê as dit nou regtig erg is
- 169 C: Was daar pelle in die omgewing naby jou, van jou vriendinne, of was dit in die
- 170 klas
- 171 K: In die klas
- 172 C: In die klas, so niemand anders het iets gechirp nie, net silence
- 173 C: Ogh, ja
- 174 K: Ja
- 175 C: Dit was seker die eerste keer wat so iets erg gebeur het
- 176 K: Ja, eerste, maar die laaste
- 177 C: En dit was in die laerskool
- 178 K: Ja
- 179 C: Watse ouderdom
- 180 K: Ja dit was graad 5 in die begin van die jaar
- 181 C: Hoe's dit in die begin van die jaar as jy nou in 'n nuwe klas instap, veral nou soos
- 182 na Festive school toe
- 183 K: Uhm, okay jy weet almal is maar so-so, want dis standerd ses, ek weet nou nie,
- 184 soos jy jou vriende leer ken en vriende maak, [- -] sekere vriende wat nou nie
- 185 so goeie vriende is nie, ek bedoel, ek's vriende met hulle, maar ek praat nou nie
- 186 die hele dag met hulle nie, en dan, en hulle kom nou nie juis na my huis toe nie,
- 187 dan pla dit my nie. En as hulle hoor dan 's ek fine daarmee, en dan's hulle ook
- 188 gewoonlik fine daarmee. Maar soos in my goeie vriende, vriende wat ek elke dag
- 189 mee praat, sal ek vir hulle sê
- 190 C: Is dit amper dat jy voel jy moet dit share, jy kan dit nie net los nie,
- 191 K: Ja want anders sit ek met die ongemaklikheid, sê nou hulle kom na my huis toe,
- 192 dan verstaan hulle nou nie die situasie nie dan kan hulle ongemaklik wees met
- 193 die hele, weet, soos in 'n sleep-over
- 194 C: Wanneer was jou eerste sleep-over
- 195 K: Laerskool, ek weet nie, seker graad 3, graad 4
- 196 C: Okay, as jy can recollect, hoe't gevoel om vir jou maatjies..
- 197 K: Graad 3 of graad 4, dan maak dit mos nou nie so woes saak nie, Dan sê jy en
- 198 dan weet jou hele klas en ja, imm, hulle het nie 'n probleem nie. Maar soos hulle
- 199 ouer word en jy verstaan
- 200 C: Ja, dis interessant wat jy nou daar noem, want jy't gesê in graad 5 was daar die
- 201 insident,
- 202 K: ja,
- 203 C: Okay, so toe jy in graad 1,2 en 3 was daar niks
- 204 K: Okay, niks nie, fine. Ek het baie partytjies gehad en almal was by my huis en al 2
- 205 ma's was by die huis, so, uhm, ja
- 206
- 207 C: En is daar vir jou 'n verskil van die laerskool na hoërskool
- 208 K: Ek dink verskillende skole maak dit anderster, okay want, [REDACTED]
- 209 (laerskool) was, jy weet, die local skool hierso, was fine tot daai insident en toe
- 210 was dit weer fine. En toe gaan ek Rodcrest College toe, en daar was nie juis
- 211 probleme nie, want weet almal is soos in oop en openminded want daar's
- 212 verskillende uhm, religions, soos in Muslims, en soos in, uhm
- 213 C: Internasionaal amper
- 214 K: Ja, verskillende kinders, soos in as hulle ouers soos in van oorsee kom en in
- 215 Suid-Afrika bly daan gaan hulle gewoonlik Rodcrest College toe en daai mense
- 216 het gewoonlik baie geld, uhm, en omdat dit ook 'n privaatskool is, soos, ja, so dit
- 217 was lekker daar. Maar Festive school, dis bietjie moeiliker daar, uhm, baie, soos
- 218 in, jy weet, ek glo ook in die Here en alles maar ek's meer spiritual as wat ek,
- 219 maar Festive school is soos in Christen, jy moet 'n Christen wees en bid drie

220 keer 'n dag en soos in, jy weet, in oggende open en Bybel en alles, en ek gee nie
221 om daarvoor nie maar hulle is soos in heavy daaroor en nie baie openminded
222 met ander godsdienste nie, hulle glo net in Christelike...
223 C: Waardes
224 K: Ja, soos dit maak dit ook daar moeiliker omdat dit daar in die Bybel staan dat dit
225 verkeerd is en alles, uhm, ja, ek bedoel, ek dink, met die kinders is dit eintlik okay
226 , maar dis met die ouers, soos in, my een vriendin, uhm, eers sy was fyn
227 daarmee, maar sy't toe ook vir haar ouers gesê van my ouers en toe kon sy nou
228 nie eintlik by my huis kom slaap het nie, jy weet, ek kon by hulle huis gaan slaap
229 het maar sy kon nie by my kom slaap het nie en jy weet soos, uhm
230 C: En wat het sy vir jou gesê
231 K: Mens kon dit eintlik agterkom jy weet sy't uhm sy't soos in excuses, hele tyd 'n
232 ding dat sy nie kan kom nie, en dan weet ek, jy kom dit agter
233 C: Het jy vir haar gesê, luister ek dink dis dit, of het jy dit gelos?
234 K: Uhm, toe gaan ek uit die skool uit, toe... nooit weer iets van haar gehoor nie
235 C: Wanneer was jy in Rodcrest College
236 K: Standerd 3,4 en 5
237 C: O, okay, dis 'n interessante skool
238 K: Maar dis 'n baie lekker skool
239 C: Uuhm, het jy ander pelle wie se ouers gay is
240 K: Een van my ma-hulle se vriendinne nie, né, haar partner was, ken jy vir C [REDACTED],
241 okay, met hulle ...imm, maar nie my skoolvriende nie
242
243 [mense interrump – praat oor hond se besering – Erid kom weer terug/ by]
244

- 1 **Kashni session 2; 27 Nov 2003**
2 *Lifelines: content specifically related to topic*
3 C: Jy het laas keer gesê daar is 'n groot verskil in die vibe tussen Festive School en
4 Rodcrest College, veral nou die issue dat jou ouers gay is?
5 K: Ja, Festive school is freaking konserwatief, regtig, dis erg, sug, ek het vir tannie
6 vertel van die biddery en so en dat alles van die Here afkom. Ek gee nie om
7 daarvoor maar hulle moet nie hele tyd half en hulle is rassisties. En dit irriteer my
8 C: Dis sleg
9 K: Jis, dit irriteer my en meeste van die kinders is so, wat het dit nou.. dis mos nou
10 nie reg nie toe eendag toe kon ek dit nie meer hou nie toe se ek luister hier as
11 julle so wil praat, dan praat julle nou nie voor my so nie, ja, eintlik ja, en dis nou
12 eintlik, ja, dis oor en verby. Maar dis eintlik die ouers...En hulle is baie...En
13 Rodcrest College is glad nie rassisties nie, daar's Muslims.. jews, swartes
14 C: En dis die ergste vir jou – jy kom uit so kosmopolitaanse, so mixed, hulle sien nie
15 eers meer ras nie
16 K: Ja
17 C: Dit was seker nogal 'n Kultuurskok by Festive school, wat het jy daardie die
18 eerste week gedink?
19 K: Erg. Ja, en ek bedoel soos in ons het soos daar by die busstop gestaan, en toe
20 loop 'n swarte , uhm ja, die man was swart en die vrou wit, maar hulle is saam en
21 getroud. En almal oe en jis en jy. En Rodcrest College, ons laerskoolkinders, ons
22 gaan met 'n swart ou uit of
23 C: Dit gaan oor die mens
24 K: Hulle is net woes erg
25 C: Dis bad
26 K: En nou, as as hulle so erg is oor jou ras, wat moet ek nou vir hulle sê dat my
27 ouers gay is
28 C: Exactly
29 K: En dan kyk ek hulle so en jissie, en uhm, wil ek met een van hierdie kinders
30 vriende wees as hulle so is
31 C: Uhuh – is hier ooit plek vir my.. Is dit soos hulle moet net nie uitvind nie
32 K: Uhm, ek sê net nie iets nie
33 C: Dis seker bad, dat mense nasty kan wees daaroor
34 K: Ek praat nie, ek hang nou nie juis met daardie mense uit nie, ek pick my vriende
35 C: Mens moet seker nogal fyn kyk
36 K: lhm
37 C: Ek dink jy't 'n incredible intuïsie en is 'n fyn waarnemer van body language. Was
38 jy al verkeerd? Dat jy gedink het iemand sal baie cool wees daaroor, en dan was
39 dit nie of andersom?
40 K: Daar was seker een meisie, maar die res, ja, is okay, hulle weet nou
41 Honde: 1 van SPCA, bang vir skoene, ens
42 Huis nog nie klaar nie – dak nog nie opgesit nie
43 Musiek – 150 musiekterme; harmonie – graad 3
44 Nie aangaan met Musiek in Plett, eerder Rek, nie Kuns – moet privaatklasse neem
45 Journal – en lêer wat ek haar gegee het;
46 [e-mail, scanner en copier – om vir my info te stuur volgende jaar]
47 Life-line
48 Geboorte
49 Sy's 'n morning person – party mense sê dan's jy in oggend gebore
50 K: Het tannie van hoërskool gehou?
51 K: Ek weet nie baie van my 'vorige lewe' nie
52 C: Dis okay, wat seker ook 'n storie is
53 C: Is dit vir jou okay om daaroor te praat?
54 K: Oor wat?
55 C: Oordat jy aangeneem is?

- 56 K: Nee
 57 C: Anders kan jy maak of jou pad 'n gat in geval het
 58 Vertel van maatjie wat aangenaam uitgespreek het as aangeneem en verwarring
 59 daarrondom (13:57) – toe hulle nog klein was
 60 [maat kom in wat mekaar al van laerskool af ken]
 61 sussie se boetie en Erid ook al solank maats
 62 maak omverskoning dat hulle vroeg gekom het]
 63 K: Meer soet in die laerskool
 64 C: Wat is stout?
 65 K: Ek praat verskriklik baie, ek gee net my opinie vir die juffrouens en party hou niks
 66 daarvan nie
 67 Ek's altyd die eerste een wat hulle ken
 68 Vra oor my ouers, waar hulle bly..
 69 Vir 7 weke deur Afrika getoer – Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenia, Tanzanie, Uganda – nie
 70 Namibie
 71 2,3 jr terug Namibie toe, gaan deur Botswana
 72 Haar en Erid se bakleiery gaan oor wie voor sit in die kar
 73 Hoe besluit op Festive school
 74 Kies tussen ██████████ (skool) en Festive school
 75 ██████████ (skool) vir haar meer attitude gehad, meer van opedag van Festive school
 76 gehad
 77 Ma Z ook in Festive school
 78 Die uniform het niks verander nie, lyk presies dieselfde
 79 Praat oor ██████████ (skool) en kinders se behepthed met geld en designer-klere
 80 Hoeveel geld jy het, watter kar jy ry, watter klere jy dra
 81 Omdat dit nie my pla nie dan pla dit ook nie my vriende nie
 82 As ek dit graag wil hê dan spaar ek daarvoor, dan's dit my geld
 83 Anders as kind net vir ma sê ek wil net dit hê en hulle kry dit
 84 Ek hou baie van perde
 85 Wat doen julle vir Kersfees?
 86 Lekker ontbyt – maak geskenke oop
 87 Familie by nuwe huis
 88 Ma A is 5 kinders
 89 Ma Z het darem net 1 sussie
 90 Dis woens
 91 Ek het 'n niggie, 10 – sy's baie mature so ons kuier lekker
 92 Haar boetie is 14, ek kom oor die weg met almal
 93 Jonger enetjie,5, kan nogal erg wees, ook enigste kind, sy's baie bederf, mal oor my
 94 ma en my ma oor haar – ek haat dit as sy vakansies daar is, want sy hoef niks te
 95 doen nie
 96 Maar sy't darem nou so bietjie beter geword
 97 4 katte en 5 honde, mens moet wakker sit in hd huis
 98 Thanks for sharing
 99 Ek sal tannie seker weer sien
 100 Ek dink so....

- 1 **Kashni Session 3**
- 2 3 December 2003 (Kashni)
- 3 Nie getape
- 4 Ek vra haar oor of sy dink dat ek met ander kinders eers net gewoon moet gesels
- 5 voor ek met meer presiese indringende vrae vorendag kom; en of sy dink dat die
- 6 kinders weet waaroor is ek daar en daardie vrae uit die weg wil ruim.
- 7 Sy antwoord dat dit vir haar om't ewe is, iets van
- 8 "kyk hier, ek het 'n ma wat 'n [REDACTED] (beroep) is, so ek is gewoond aan reguit vrae..
- 9 sy vra my alles reguit.."
- 10 Sy sê wel dat sy dink eers gewone vrae is tog dalk beter, want sy voel dat sy my
- 11 nou eers begin ken. Ek skryf in my process notes, " Kashni sê sy dink eers leer
- 12 ken is dalk beter, dis nicer sê sy".
- 13 Ons praat oor eksamen, huis in P [REDACTED] wat nog nie klaar is nie. Ek vra haar of sy
- 14 enige iets wil byvoeg of vra oor ons gesprekke maar sy sê nee, dis fine.
- 15 Haar maat is daar en ek wil op Erid fokus, so ek het nie verder ingevra nie. Nou in
- 16 hindsight besef ek, ek was nog te subjektief betrokke en te onseker oor die
- 17 proses. Ek het ook nog nie weer na die transkripsies teruggegaan en fyn gaan
- 18 kyk watter clues het ek gemis nie. Ek was ook tevrede met van die quotes wat sy
- 19 aan my meegedeel het, en ek dink op daardie stadium het ek gehoop en vertrou
- 20 dt ons e-pos korrespondensie sal hê...
- 21 Ons eet lekker roomys en Erid het 4 maats daar wat kuier. Hy "boss" hulle nogal
- 22 rond, sê watse roomys hulle kan kry; sê met watter speelgoed hulle nie mag
- 23 speel nie (sekere gewere, maar ander in een boks nie).
- 24 Ek skryf in my process notes dat hy daarvan hou om geinterview te word, maar hy
- 25 praat min , en hy sê dit self – en ek mis dit om hom op sy gerus te stel en te sê
- 26 dis okay, maar tog 'n bietjie verder te probe...(of te probeer en te kyk of hy met
- 27 nuwe goed uitkom). Ek dink wel dat as ek nog met hom kan praat sal dit
- 28 waardevol wees, want daardie tyd het ek ook gedink ek gaan net Kashni se
- 29 onderhoude gebruik.
- 30 Dit was baie besig by hulle gewees daardie dag. Beide ma's was daar, en hulle was
- 31 baie geoccupy met die trekkery. Dinge het dol gegaan daardie dag, en ek het 'n
- 32 rustige tranquil vibe gemis. Hulle huis is defnitief te energeties vir dit, maar ja, dit
- 33 het hectic gegaan en ek kon agterkom of dis hoe dit gevoel het, dat die
- 34 trekproses hulle pla – die feit dat die huis nog nie klaar is nie en dat so min goed
- 35 gepak is.

- 1 **Kim Session 1**
- 2 Kim, Elina's daughter (14:30 - 24 Maart 2004)
- 3 Gesels lekker vooraf
- 4 Ouboet nie opgedaag vir ma se koffie-afspraak nie
- 5 Baie van die gesprek inhoud wentel rondom ouer broer, verskil jaar of wat ek dink...
- 6 Praat oor ma wat vir haar bloese kop, smaak redelik, sy leer
- 7 Praat oor Desemberavakansie – lekker weggebreek vir 3 dae – loop rond en shop
- 8 saam – eerlike verhouding ma en dogter
- 9 Praat mooi met ma oor pa, sal sy kant probeer stel, Elina luister
- 10 Trots op dogter – Kim swat Kommunikasiebestuur
- 11 Nog nie lisensie – werk by Dros, ma rondry
- 12 London – verpleeg - skoolstelsel
- 13 Sal nie in straat afloop met sigaret nie... oor opmerkings oor broer se meisie
- 14 Broer groot frustrasie vir hulle albei
- 15
- 16 Vertel van ma se vriende wat by Dros gekuier het, en een van hulle is baie
- 17 "opsigtelik" butch – en toe van die ander waiters opmerkings maak, het sy hulle
- 18 teruggekap..
- 19
- 20 Ek gee agtergrond oor my studie:
- 21 C: Ek kyk na kinders se ervarings, imm children's experiences, imm, as hulle gay
- 22 ouers het... experiences is nogal 'n moeilike woord want dit omvat alles, hoe jy
- 23 voel, hoe jy dink, daai inner voice, daai binne-gesprek, en wat vir my nice is, is
- 24 dat jy ouer is en kan terugdink ... dat jy nie meer jonk is nie waar dinge dalk nou
- 25 met jou gebeur, wat vir my nice is dat jy kan terugkyk en sê op daai ouderdom
- 26 het dit gebeur of was daar iets
- 27
- 28 K: En dis nogal interessant omdat ons twee kinders is want my broer is nogsteeds
- 29 die donner in oor die storie is en hy kan nogsteeds nie my ma aanvaar nie en
- 30 weet ma hy bly ma, dis my ma se skuld dat hy uitgedraai het soos wat hy is
- 31 C: Okay
- 32 K: En ag, ek sal my ma nie op enige ander manier verkies nie, en dis nou my point
- 33 of view, imm, en my broer, verstaan, ag, dis heeltemal anders
- 34 C: Dit sou nice gewees het as mens sy dele ook kan inbring, dit sou ideaal gewees
- 35 het as ek met hom ook kon praat
- 36 K: Ja
- 37 E: Hy sal ook nie eers teenoor jou afpak nie
- 38 K: Nee hy's nog altyd dan, soos hy nou met my praat, hy't mos so vir ma ook
- 39 eenkeer gesê né, hy't vir my ma gesê nee sy's sy vriendin, toe ons op die plaas
- 40 was, sê hy vir my gaan kry vir daai ma van jou 'n stoel; ek sal hom met 'n plank
- 41 slaan, en hy't altyd
- 42 E: Wanneer was dit, was dit nou, Desember?
- 43 K: Nou toe ons op die plaas was, en toe, imm, toe gaan, toe my ma hier kom bly
- 44 het, toe bly sy nou by my pa vir die eerste keer en dan bel ek my ma so nou en
- 45 dan, jy weet sy't altyd uitgefit omdat ons haar nooit baie gebel het nie, maar ons
- 46 het nooit my pa ook baie gebel nie verstaan? Ons was baie gewoon daaraan
- 47 om haar rondom ons te hê. En hy't haar nooit gebel nie en dan as my ma by my
- 48 kom dan is sy so sad omdat hy haar nie gebel het nie en dan kom ek by die huis
- 49 en dan vreet ek hom uit van 'n kant af en dan 'ek wil haar nie bel nie' en 'tirrr' dan
- 50 gaan hy aan en anyway, hy maak altyd sy probleme erger as ander s'n. en,
- 51 E: Ag ek weet nie
- 52 K: Hy sal, hy's een van daai mense wat 'n ongelooflike f-op sal uitdraai en hy sal
- 53 alles maar alles, elke liewe dingetjie blame op iemand anders
- 54 C: Anders

- 55 K: Dis omdat sy dit gedoen het, dit is omdat ek dit nou doen
 56 C: Imm
 57 K: En dat sy gay is, honestly, enige persoon wat so dink moet 'n klap kry. Sug, Kyk
 58 dit was moeilik gewees op 'n stadium. En ek het gehoor mammie sê nou-nou net,
 59 iets oor my relationships, julle sê mos ouers weet alles, né, imm, toe ek begin
 60 rook het, ag ..pa was by toe ek my eerste trek gevat het maar hy het eers twee
 61 jaar na die tyd vir my gesê jy kan nou eers begin rook, verstaan, ouers weet alles
 62 wat hulle kinders aanvang en alles en alles, ma't mos gesê ons het nie voor die
 63 tyd geweet nie, maar kinders weet net so meer alles van hulle ouers af (lag). Ja,
 64 baie kwaad vir ma. En toe daai koerantberig uitkom toe, toe's dit...toe's dit nou,
 65 wat nou, by die skool het ek ongelooflike baie strooi gehad en my broer het niks
 66 gehad nie want hy's mos 'n seun, en toe issue hulle hom nog nie, maar dit was
 67 hoekom ek Festive School toe is in hierdie situasie
 68 E (Ma interrupt): ek dink nie hy hy het nie strooi gehad nie, hy hy't nog nooit daaroor
 69 gepraat nie.
 70 K: Hy het nie, ek was mos saam met hom standerd vyf, standerd ses, toe was
 71 ons...nie saam nie, ek bedoel, ons was toe nog goeie vriende gewees, want tot
 72 en met standerd 9, toe my broer standerd nege was was ek en hy baie baie
 73 goeie vriende gewees en toe begin hy te veel dagga rook en "hirr-hirr" en wat ...
 74 en toe besluit ek nee wat, ek skuif alle lelike goed uit my lewe uit, as far as
 75 possible. Ja en imm ja toe was ons baie jy weet, so gewees. En toe's hy al in
 76 Festive School gewees so toe die k*!@ die fan gestrike het, nou bejammer ek
 77 myself, né dis alles (wys so asof sy iets opblaas en sê "bhoë") in die koerant
 78 gewees, dit was in die koerant gewees en almal is soos, jy weet en Alene, die
 79 arme kind, sy was, ek weet nie wat nie... sy's die eerlikste mens wat ek ken. Sy't
 80 nie eers geweet van die ding nie, twee maande na die tyd toe kom Lilly na haar
 81 toe, hoor hierso, is jy nie bang om na Kim se huis toe te gaan nie, en Alene soos
 82 in hoekom, want Kim se ma is so en so, is nie man, jy lieg. En toe vra Alene my
 83 daaroor en toe sê ek ek gaan nie vir jou lieg nie, maar dit is so. En weet jy sy't nie
 84 gechange nie, sy't nie, sy's een van die dierbaarste mense en sy ken als van my,
 85 van hier, hmm tot daar
 86 E: Jy kan nie als met haar bespreek nie
 87 K: Ja, maar met wie anders moet ek dit bspreek?
 88 E: Jy kan dit met my kom bespreek as jy wil
 89 K: Imm
 90 C: Van hier tot daar, jy't my nou baie nuuskierig
 91 K: En ja sy weet van alles en die res van die mense, ek weet nie, ek sal ek sal, nog
 92 steeds nie vir almal.. gaan .. sê nou maar Mary kom kuier hier en Ann kom tel my
 93 op en sy vra vir my wie's dit, ek gaan nie vir haar sê dis my ma se girlfiend nie, ek
 94 sê dis my ma se vriendin, verstaan, want ek weet nie hoe my ma voel daaroor of
 95 sy wil hê dat almal moet weet nie, en frankly ek wil nie hê dat almal moet weet
 96 nie, verstaan dis nie van oe, dit gebeur met my nie. Dis 'n persoonlike ding, (E:
 97 dis persoonlik), jy weet nie almal hoef te weet nie en as hulle nou weet dan's dit
 98 maar nou net so what. Want Jo, een van my vriende by die Technikon, dis vir
 99 hom verskriklik moeilik om te sê hy's gay, maar weet jy, jy kan hom so sien van
 100 die kant af, so, (wys flap-handbewegings), maar hy's adorable en net om hom so
 101 bietjie te laat disclose toe sê ek vir hom luister my ma is ook gay so jy weet,
 102 moenie dink ek gaan jou stenig of iets of jou by die kerk aangee nie, so, jy weet,
 103 vir hom het ek gesê en vir P [redacted] het ek gesê (wie's P [redacted]) en nog so ander ene,
 104 maar dit was ook so deel van 'n conversation gewees
 105 E: Was hy ook daar
 106 K: Hy?
 107 E: Waar's hy?
 108 K: Ook by die technikon, baie baie goeie outjie. Hy is net een van die's wat
 109 ongelukkig femme is, hy is nie gay nie, hy's net baie femme

- 110 Al 3 praat gelyk
- 111 C: En die gesprek, hoe't dit gebeur?
- 112 E: Weet jy, ons het in Barchello's gesit, toe, ek kan nie regtig onthou nie, dit was,
- 113 ons het gepraat oor sy families iewerster langs, toe praat ons oor een van [REDACTED] se,
- 114 dis nou 'n ander outjie, nou hy's ook gay en sy suster is gay ook en toe praat ons
- 115 van sy familie en hulle families wat bietjie bymekaar gekuier het en alles en toe
- 116 praat ons so en toe sê ek vir hom, ja, wow, alles kom daarop neer is, imm, yes,
- 117 ek is ook net 'n klein bietjie gewoond aan dit (fluister), ja, so dit is omtrent die
- 118 enigstes wat ek vertel het. Jane weet nie en sy't ook nie nodig om te weet nie,
- 119 verstaan, as mense my kom straightforward vra luister hier, ek het dit en dit en dit
- 120 gesien, is jou ma gay (heftige stem)? .. (stilte) ja (saggies), jy weet so as jy so my
- 121 gaan aanval dan gaan ek jou eerstens 'n klap gee, en tweedens, dis al . (skud
- 122 kop soos ja). En in elk geval het ek nie 'n issue as mense dit weet, wat nie vir my
- 123 saak maak nie. Verstaan as hier nou 'n Boesman langs die straat kom afstap "is
- 124 jou ma gay, ja, gaan verby", maar verstaan mense wat in die omtrek is en aan
- 125 ons raak en wat, verlangse vriende, verlangse familie, kennisse,
- 126 warrawarrawarra, hulle hoef nie almal te weet nie, want dit is 'n persoonlike ding
- 127 om hierdie, in ons ou wêreldjie, hulle kan aangaan, ja, ja. En my broer is, wil net
- 128 glad daarvan hoor nie, glad nie weet daarvan nie, hy lewe in sy eie wêreld waar
- 129 hy die slimste een op aarde is, ..
- 130 (Ma en sy praat gelyk)
- 131 C: Okay, vat my bietjie terug na die koerantstorie toe, ek weet nie of jy lus is om dit
- 132 weer te revisit nie (rig na Elina), maar vertel dalk vanuit jou perspektief (rig op
- 133 Kim), het niemand by die skool geweet nie?
- 134 K: Niemand, niemand niemand ek en my broer was so vir onself gehou. Nee ek
- 135 was in standerd 5, en my broer was toe uit die skool uit, ek bedoel nie uit die
- 136 skool uit nie, uit die laerskool uit. Toe kom die rapport uit, sjoe, toe vra my ma my
- 137 moet ek jou nie uit die skool uithaal nie. Toe sê ek, dit was iewers rondom die
- 138 middel van die jaar gewees en toe dog ek by myself, weet jy nie, dit is nou so en,
- 139 weet jy, ek gaan nou regtig nie uit die skool uitgaan in die middel van die jaar nie
- 140 net omdat hierdie storie en frankly ek het nie gedink dit gaan so aandag trek nie.
- 141 En jy weet hoe's die kleintjies, iets vir almal om oor te praat, want ek was mos toe
- 142 nog in die laerskool gewees. En ja, toe's almal soos in jy gaan soos jou ma word
- 143 en dit is hierdie on..., hierdie, sondige Satanskind, verstaan en ja, en almal, maar
- 144 dis okay, ek's daardeur
- 145 C: Was dit oor jou naam in die koerant was of het hulle jou ma geken?
- 146 K: Naam, adres, foto
- 147 C: Kan jy nog onthou toe jy by die skool uitkom
- 148 K: Weet jy, al wat ek kan onthou is Peter wat vir my in die Geskiedenis klas vir my
- 149 gesê het jou ma' s mos gay, en sy is so en so en so en wat, jy gaan soos sy word
- 150 weet en jy moet net nie met ander mense praat nie, want net nou maak jy
- 151 vriende of wat, en ek kan nie onthou wat ek vir hom gesê het nie, toe tel ek 'n
- 152 stoel op en toe slaan ek hom amper met die stoel, maar ek het nie, ek het hom
- 153 so getap op die enkel, ek het met fors die stoel opgetel en toe stop ek so in die
- 154 helfte toe slat ek hom net so hier onder sy been, los my uit los my uit. Daarvoor
- 155 was ek vir ma baie baie kwaad gewees, want toe weet almal en dit was net so
- 156 hoe, kan jy dit aan my doen, weet ma hoe kan jy, jy het nog altyd boyfriends
- 157 gehad, jy't met pa getrou, as jy gay is moes jy nie kinders gehad het nie(verhef
- 158 stem), dit was my siening, ek was baie baie kwaad vir haar vir baie lank gewees.
- 159 En toe in standerd agt, maar ek het dit nooit vir haar gewys nie, nooit nie, ek is
- 160 nog altyd soos even met close family, ek sal nie na my broer toe gaan tensy hy
- 161 rerig rerig strooi aanjaag nie en vir hom kan sê hoor hier, ek... Wat ek nou vir jou
- 162 gesê het sal ek nie vir my broer sê nie, want ek is rerig te bang vir hom, omdat dit
- 163 sulke close family is.
- 164 C: Imm

- 165 Die goeters wat ek vir my ma sê van my pa sal ek nie vir my pa kan sê nie, maar
 166 weet mense, obviously byt dit aan mense, en as ek vir jou kwaad is sal ek vir jou
 167 sê ek's kwaad vir jou, maar nie vir my pelle nie. En toe in standerd agt toe gaan
 168 ek op 'n seminaar, toe gaan ek eers hoekom ek, hoekom hoekom hoekom. Weet,
 169 dis my ma en alles. Toe kom dit nou, toe clear ek dit nou op
- 170 C: Is dit ma wat so gesê het of het jy dit gewonder (ek dog sy wonder hoekom is sy
 171 gekies vir die seminaar – sy bedoel sy't deur haar issues gewerk)
- 172 K: Ek het dit gewonder, hoekom ek, hoekom nie almal nie, hoekom ek
- 173 C: Watse tipe seminaar
- 174 K: Dis 'n christelike seminaar vir kinders wat probleme het, daar's verskillende
 175 ouderdomme, maar dis baie nice, daar is mense wat jou help, deur jou probleme.
 176 Die volgende ding was om vir my ma en daai ... uitskeisel van 'n vroumens te
 177 vergewe, ja dit was ook moeilik gewees maar dit het ook gebeur en weet jy van
 178 daar af is dit soos 'n ding van my skouers af is. Ek kan met my ma praat wanneer
 179 ek wil, en niks wegsteek nou nie, so dit was nogal nice. Maar, wat ek op daai
 180 kamp geleer het is om te vergewe en te vergeet, en te maak asof niks gebeur
 181 het. Sjoue (fluit-sug), daai Linda vroumens....
- 182 E: Ja dis sy wat die oorsaak was dat die koerante
- 183 C: O ja-ja
- 184 E: 'n Baie slegte ondervinding gewees, dit was, jy weet net voor dit, toe eendag lop
 185 ek net so drie huise bokant ons in die straat bly daar 'n familie, en toe staan hy,
 186 C [redacted] met sy fiets daar verby, en toe bly staan en kyk hy vir die seuntjie, wat
 187 was sy naam, kan nou nie dink nie, maar toe staan hy buite in die straat, en die
 188 pa is binne in, en gesuip, en hy wil hulle skiet. Maar die niceste ou as hy nugter
 189 is, hy was 'n rekkie gewees, sy vrou ook. Maar sodra die alkohol in is dan spring
 190 hulle aanmekaar. En 'n, toe kom C [redacted] daar en sê mamma, Tannie P en
 191 Oom M is besig om the fight en hy wil hulle skiet. En toe sê ek C [redacted], sien jy,
 192 omdat die gemeenskap wil hê 'n ma en 'n, 'n man en 'n vrou moet saam bly, né,
 193 met kinders, as so iets gebeur dan sê die gemeenskap niks nie, maar dat ons,
 194 ons vier het saamgebly, ek en H [redacted] en die twee kinders, hulle was mal oor
 195 H [redacted], saam het ons gaan vakansie hou en rerig. C [redacted] was al ouer, en het
 196 bietjie 'n probleem gehad. Hy't in standerd ses toe hy in Festive School was vir
 197 my 'n briefie geskryf en gesê ons kan nogsteeds met H [redacted] vriende wees maar
 198 sy moenie saam met ons bly nie. Maar hy't nooit iets gepraat nie. Toe sê ek vir
 199 hom daai aand, sien jy, oor die gemeenskap van ons verwag dat 'n man en 'n
 200 vrou bymekaar moet bly en dan wanneer ons vier bymekaar bly en ons kom niks
 201 kort nie, niks, niks, ons bly lekker saam en ons eet lekker saam en ons het 'n dak
 202 oor ons koppe, so wat wil ons meer wees. Want hy't saam met ons kerk to
 203 gegaan en alles, wat vir C [redacted] traumaties was die eerste keer toe hy besef
 204 ons is in 'n gay kerk, by Deo Gloria, hy't opgespring en uitgeloop en ek het
 205 agterna geloop en toe later weer kom sit en toe later is hy net so gemaklik met
 206 die kerk en elke aand na kerk het ons koffie gedrink en het hulle volley ball
 207 gespeel en so aan. Toe's hy voorbok met die spelery en hy't vriende geword met
 208 Linda se seun, wat was sy naam?
- 209 K: B [redacted], sy naam was B [redacted],
- 210 E: So't B [redacted] saam met ons gery en saam gaan visvang en so, want C [redacted] en
 211 H [redacted] en B [redacted] het so lekker saam visgevang
- 212 C: Lekker
- 213 E: Jy weet, so toe was hy heeltemal gemaklik gewees en want, ja, ons het, hy was
 214 in Festive School en toe't hy vir my gesê hoe is ek net 'n vriendin vir hom en dit
 215 maak my kwaad want hierdie vriendin is net goed as hy geld kort en dit my
 216 kwaad, want hy het vir my R8 000 gekos net om hom in Engeland te kry en 'n
 217 Engeland self het hy my 'n verder 500 pond gekos, bo en behalwe dat ek kos
 218 gekoop het, hy't nooit 'n ete betaal nie... (praat verder oor Engeland se ervaringe
 219 – beste van R18 000 rand gekos....

- 220 K: as jy kyk hoe hy en my ma praat jy kan dit duidelik op sy gesig sien, hy't hierdie
221 hierdie kyk op sy gesig wat ek nie vir jou kan beskryf nie
222 E: praat hoe hy haar nie soengroet en hoe hy nou weer by haar wil kom bly....
223
224 Praat verder oor broer/ seun. Elina en Kim praat oor sy meisie, hoe hy net dagga
225 rook, pa ook niks met hom kan uitrig nie, rigtingloos...hy wil nie admit dat hy 'n
226 probleem het nie
227
228 Einde

- 1 **Kim session 2**
- 2 Intro oor toestemming tot opname:
- 3 C: Dit gaan oor jou "voice" nie myne nie.
- 4 K: Okay
- 5 C: So ons los hom sommer "so try to forget about it"
- 6 K: Ek dink nie enige mens sal van jou verwag om 'n uur se gesprek te onthou nie
- 7 C: Weet jy mens onthou nog al
- 8 K: Ja maar
- 9 C: Fyn detail
- 10 K: Ja wat belangrik is wat mens kan onthou
- 11 C: Wat jy dalk bedoel en regtig wil benadruk
- 12 K: Ja
- 13 C: Omdat dit die eerste keer is wat ek dit hoor tel jy dit nie sommer op nie waar as jy
- 14 dit na die tyd luister ...
- 15 K: Ja, ha-ha-ha. Dan het jy 'n hele "misperception" oor hierdie storie gehad.
- 16 C: Ja, dit is "kind of crucial"
- 17 K: Ja
- 18 C: Dit kan 'n verskil maak in die hele interpretasie
- 19 C: Ek wil uh, hoor of jy enige "comments" het oor laas week.
- 20 K: Laas week
- 21 C: Ja of jy aan iets begin dink het of wonder oor wat nou gaan gebeur en wat is jou
- 22 rol okay,
- 23 K: Nee [Giggel]
- 24 C: Oraait het jy, mmm, wanneer het ma hulle geskei? Ma en Pa.
- 25 K: Weet jy.
- 26 C: Want ek probeer nou dink, jy't gepraat van
- 27 K: Mmm, ek gaan vir jou lieg as ek vir jou sê ek gaan vir jou verseker, ek weet nie
- 28 mooi wanneer. Ek dink dit was toe ek vier of vyf, ses daar rond, ons was baie
- 29 klein gewees. Dit was die effek van "baai Pa, sien jou eers oor twee weke vir die
- 30 res van my lewe". Dit was nie regtig 'n "issue" van huil of trane, of ek dink nie so
- 31 nie. Weet ek kan nie regtig onthou nie.
- 32 C: Ja
- 33 K: So
- 34 C: So jy was elke tweede naweek by hom
- 35 K: Ja, nee hy het altyd elke tweede week van Botswana hierdie kant toe gery.
- 36 C: Nee, okay
- 37 K: Ja, en dit was wat so "damn confusing" was, want toe het my ma twee of drie
- 38 "boyfriends" gehad. Die een het haar half bankrot gesteel, ek dink. Die ander een
- 39 het ons beloftes...as jy 'n belofte aan 'n klein kind maak dan moet jy dit mos hou.
- 40 Hy het ons belowe hy gaan ons see toe vat en allerhande sulke goed en daar het
- 41 nooit niks daarvan gekom nie. En dit het ons gebreek.
- 42 C: Ja
- 43 K: Verstaan. Die ander een het net so heelyd gelê
- 44 C: Okay
- 45 K: Sjoë, baai, waarna toe nou? Weet. En toe ewe skielik toe sit ek daar in die huis
- 46 en ek hoor sy sê ons het nie geweet nie, ja ons het nooit geweet voor die
- 47 koerante nie. In my lewe! Ek en my broer sit daar altwee voor my ma se
- 48 kamerdeur en loer deur die sleutelgat.
- 49 C: Ah, okay, as wie daar agter die deur is?

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- 50 K: Ek weet nie, want dan as Linda of iemand daar oorslaap, dan vat hulle 'n
51 middagslapie of iets en dan letterlik dan sit ek en hy voor die deur, dan sit ons nou
52 daar, en wat nou, jy weet dit was "completely new" gewees maar weet ek dink nie
53 een van ons het volle begrip gehad van wat aangaan het nie maar ons het geweet
54 dat iets nie lek, iets is nie dieselfde as wat dit altyd was nie.
- 55 C: Mmm
- 56 K: Maar nou ja sy het daai een ongelooflike "bitch fight" met daai Linda vroumens,
57 maar die res was "stunning" gewees. H [REDACTED], ek was vrek mal oor haar . Sy is
58 nou Kaap toe. L [REDACTED], ek is mal oor haar, M [REDACTED], hoe kan ek sê, sy is bietjie
59 skurf.
- 60 C: Ha-ha
- 61 K: Sy het so "pony" ding hier aan die agterkant
- 62 C: Ja, so 80s,mmm
- 63 K: Nee, maar sy was ook "nice" gewees. L [REDACTED] het ek met die eerste rondte 'n gly
64 in gevang; en M [REDACTED], ek sal, ek's mal oor daai vroumens
- 65 C: Oraait, dit is lekker baie vrouens.
- 66 K: Ja, ha-ha-ha. Baie mense om na my te kyk.
- 67 C: Okay wanneer het die bom gebars, met Hestie?
- 68 K: Linda
- 69 C: Met Linda
- 70 K: Ja
- 71 C: Was dit die eerste "lover" of "partner"?
- 72 K: Ek dink so...ja,ja, ja
- 73 C: Okay so dit is die eerste
- 74 K: Ja, die eerste waarvan ons geweet het.
- 75 C: So dit is die eerste "affair" waar julle agter die deur gesit het en gehoor het
76 "something is cooking". Julle het nooit "heavy gechat" daaroor nie?
- 77 K: Glad nie.
- 78 C: Jy en jou boetie
- 79 K: Ons het geweet dit gaan aan, maar ons het dit nooit gesê nie. Nooit nie
- 80 C: So as jy self sê, jy het dit self agter gekom.
- 81 K: Ja, nee, dit was nie, ek kon nie vir hom gesê het, jy weet wat, dit gaan nou aan
82 nie.
- 83 C: Aaa
- 84 K: Ons altwee het net soos...ons het eenkeer, my ma, weet jy ek dink my ma het 'n
85 oorval gekry, ons het eenkeer, toe pyn my maag, né, nou baie sulke klein
86 dingetjies het, dink ek het my ma verkeerd gedoen. Soos dan pyn my maag, soos
87 rêrig en dan klop ek aan haar deur en dan sê ek vir haar ma my maag pyn, né,
88 dan wil geen mens, as jou ma in die kamer lê, klop aan die deur, honderd en
89 sewentig keer, "ma my maag pyn", ek is amper in trane. Slaap ma. Verstaan, dit
90 werk nie. En soos byvoorbeeld in die aande dan maak ons 'n moerse "Christmas
91 bed", né, dan wil ek en my broer langs my ma slaap, "obviously". Ons mag nie.
92 Nie een van ons mag nie. En toe een aand, besluit ek en my broer, ons sal, en
93 hoorie ek belowe jou ons het daai bed gemaak en toe daai vrou by my ma gaan
94 sit, toe storm ons op haar af. Ons sal. En ek gaan nie vir jou lieg nie, in die
95 middel van die aand toe het hulle twee opgestaan en kamer toe gegaan.
- 96 C: "No way".
- 97 K: So, dit is sulke tipe goed wat, jy weet jy tel
- 98 C: Bevestig, né
- 99 K: Nie net dit nie, dit kon bietjie gebly het.
- 100 C: O, ek verstaan, anders hanteer het

- 101 K: Ja en ek dink dit is oor sulke klein goedjies dat my broer my ma, nie lekker is nie.
 102 My ma het ons nie afgeskee, glad nie afgeskeep nie. Afgeskeep is heeltemal, 'n
 103 kras woord. Maar dit sulke goedjies soos die deur klop en die maag pyn en sulke
 104 goed, jy weet, baie sulke verskriklike klein goedjies. En dan gaan eet hulle uit,
 105 dan vat hulle ons nooit saam nie. En net as ons by vriende is gaan hulle uit.
 106 C: Okay
 107 K: Of jy weet, sulke klein goed, ek dink dit het baie aan my broer geraak.
 108 C: Kyk ek dink vir 'n jonger kind is dit erger
 109 K: Ja ek dink
 110 C: Dit is al wanneer julle haar alleen gehad het vir 'n redelike lang tyd
 111 K: Ja, mmm
 112 C: Wanneer het dit begin gebeur, na die kêrels.
 113 K: Ja, mmm
 114 C: Net julle drie
 115 K: Ja nee dit was en dit was, want vandat Linda daaraan gekom het, het ons haar
 116 nooit weer vir ons self gehad nie. Nooit nie. Sy was altyd die een wat aandag
 117 gekry het, en R■■■■ haar kind.
 118 C: O vet, is daar nog 'n ander kind ook. Hoe oud is hy?
 119 K: Hy, nee hy is jonk. Hy is jonger as ons. Ek dink hy was in die kleuterskool
 120 gewees. Iets in daai lyn. Die stoutste klein bliksem wat jy al in jou lewe ontmoet
 121 het. Jy wil nie, jy kan nie huis hou met daai kind nie. Ons het altyd raas gekry vir
 122 sy probleme, altyd-altyd-altyd. Dan sal hy byvoorbeeld sommer die TV begin
 123 slaan omdat hy nie wil harder nie, dan druk hy nie die regte knoppie nie dan word
 124 ons uitgevreet al is ons in die kombuis omdat ons hom nie help om die TV harder
 125 te sit nie. Weet, sulke goedjies wat nie lekker was nie. En dan het hulle altyd
 126 baklei, ek dink dit is hoekom hulle baklei het. so bietjie wat ek kan onthou is, dan
 127 kom my ma by die huis dan roep hulle vir my, vir Henk en my broer.
 128 C: En dan wat van ...
 129 K: Ja, en dan begin hulle baklei. Verstaan. En weet jy wat my ook afge*!* het toe ek
 130 daai koerantberig gelees het, Linda het vir die koerant gesê dat hulle het nooit
 131 baklei nie en die verhouding het so "smoothly" verloop. Toe gooi hulle haar uit, en
 132 toe gaan my ma uit in die straat soos 'n hond. Strooi. Daai vrou het half boss
 133 gegaan soos ek gehoor het, want ek was nie daar nie. Sy het blykbaar ons deur
 134 want ons het so hek gehad, maar die onderkant was glas. Sy het blykbaar daai
 135 stuk glas uitgeslaan met 'n stuk hout of iets.
 136 C: Okay
 137 K: En my ma het net vir haar gesê, ek weet nie, ek was nie daar nie, ek was by
 138 vriende of iewers gewees, toe sê my ma blykbaar vir haar nee, jy kan maar, dit
 139 werk nie, jy kan maar hier bly tot jy 'n ander plek het maar jy moet nou gaan
 140 C: Is dit nadat hulle uitgemaak het, amper wat dit toe, die bom bars
 141 K: Ja-ja, nee, verseker, toe my ma vir haar gesê het julle moet dit los toe gaan sy
 142 koerante toe.
 143
 144 C: So, dit is nie jou foon wat lui nie
 145 (foon lui, houtkapper op karspieëltjie)
 146
 147 C: Ek het jou ma lank terug eenkeer ontmoet en toe het sy die storie eenkeer vertel,
 148 maar dit is omtrent "five years, six years ago". So ek kan vaag weg recollect,
 149 maar nie
 150 K: Ja, nee, alles het "geburst" toe my ma vir haar gesê het, luister die "stuff" gaan nie
 151 werk nie.

- 152 C: (praat oormekaar) Hoe sal 'n koerant nou belangstel?
 153 K: Nee dit was mos daai tyd mos was dit
 154 C: Dit was a "major" ding.
 155 K: Bestaan daar sulke mense, weet stenig hulle. Weet dit was nie soos vandag nie.
 156 Dit was vreeslik gewees. En imm, toe ja, en toe
 157 C: Okay toe die koerante nou uitvind toe dink jou ma nou dit is die eerste keer wat
 158 julle iets "click"?
 159 K: Ja, en ek het haar maar so laat dink. Verstaan. Die eerste keer wat ek uitgevind
 160 het
 161 C: Nou hoe het sy dit "explain" dat die vrou in die huis bly nou, of was julle nie 'n
 162 "family" nie. Het julle nie onder een dak gebly nie?
 163 K: Nee, weet jy ek kan nie rêrig onthou hoe my ma dit, sy het net altyd gesê my
 164 vriendin bly hierso of "what ever".
 165 C: O, okay
 166 K: En
 167 C: Dit is niks van hierdie is nou...
 168 K: Nee
 169 C: Soos hierdie is nou julle tweede ma of..
 170 K: Nee-nee-nee
 171 C: "Of what ever"
 172 K: Nee-nee, aaa, nee, toe H■■-hulle nou kom na die koerantberig. toe nou kom na
 173 die koerantberig, toe is dit 'n ander storie.
 174 C: Okay, nou verstaan ek beter, oraaait.
 175 K: Ja, ons was "completely" oningelig
 176 C: Ek kan verstaan van daai tyd.
 177 K: Ons het nie geweet wanneer sy kom en wanneer sy gaan nie en wanneer sy gaan
 178 bly want partykeer bly sy vir 'n maand, en toe ewe skielik toe bly sy net by ons,
 179 okay, weet dit is my ma se huis ons kan nou rêrig niks sê nie. En soos, ja ek weet
 180 nie. En ek dink dit is nog 'n ding wat aan my broer gevat het want hy "like" dit om
 181 "on top van things" te wees.
 182 C: Okay
 183 K: En...my ma het altyd alles, sjoe, onder deur
 184 C: Mmm,
 185 K: Onder deur, nooit "up front" todat dit die koerant bereik het nie. Eerste keer wat
 186 ek dit uitgevind het, het ek nie rêrig geweet hoe om dit te hanteer nie, mmm, ons
 187 was in standerd vier gewees, né, toe gaan ons mmm, Franshoek toe
 188 C: Mmm, daar in die Kaap.
 189 K: Ja, ja een van haar doktersvriende se huise, en ek en my broer kom van die
 190 strand af en my ma-hulle het by die huis gebly en ek gaan hulle nou "surprise", jy
 191 weet hulle skrik maak
 192 C: Mmm-mmm, en toe
 193 K: En alles...en ek stap so saggies in die huis in en alles en daar lê hulle op die
 194 bank. Ek sweer vir jou ek het seker vir 'n minuut so gestaan om te "recollect" wat
 195 te moer gaan hiervoor my aan want ek het dit nog nooit in my lewe gesien nie, dit
 196 is my ma daai. En (giggel), ek weet nie, jy weet, en toe draai ek net om en toe
 197 gaan staan ek by die voordeur en toe skreeu ek "ek is hierso".[giggle]
 198 C: Shame, ag Kim.
 199 K: Jissie, so dit was bietjie erg gewees
 200 C: Ja
 201 K: En dit is hoe ek uitgevind het. En toe weet ek nou "obviously". En ek het nie eers
 202 vir my broer gesê ek het so uitgevind nie, toe ek so standerd nege was, nee

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- 203 standerd agt. Ek het dit baie stil gehou en ek wil dit nie rêrig vir my ma sê nie
 204 want ek dink dit sal bietjie aan haar kou.
- 205 C: Ja
- 206 K: Ja, nee dit is so. Sy voel nog steeds skuldig daarvoor. Ons weet dit en sy moet
 207 ophou maar. Sy kan nie die res van haar lewe skuldig voel nie. Oor alles. Sy
 208 kan haarself nie vergewe nie. Dit is verskriklik, mmm, dit is vir haar baie hard.
- 209 C: Mmm
- 210 K: Ag, dis okay, ons sal lewe
- 211 C: Okay dan toe vertel vir my die stuk tot by die standerd agt kamp waar jy haar toe
 212 vergewe het en begin uitreik het
- 213 K: O,
- 214 C: Voorheen het jy in “silencing and secracy” gegaan
- 215 K: Ja, kyk ek was nog altyd “nice” met my ma, ek het laas keer mos vir jou gesê ek
 216 kan nie vir my “close-close relatives” mos sê, “jy dit en dit”. Ek kom altyd baie-
 217 baie “nice” voor. So my ma het nooit geweet ek is kwaad vir haar nie, nooit-nooit-
 218 nooit nie. Ek het vir daai vier jaar, vandat ek uitgevind het, van standerd vier tot
 219 standerd agt toe nie eenkeer gebid nie, nie bybel gelees nie, want jy het my skade
 220 aangedoen, hoekom doen jy dit aan my, jy weet, hoekom ek. Goed.
- 221 C: Toe is jy nie net kwaad vir jou ma nie, maar ook vir Liewe Jesus.
- 222 K: O ja, verskriklik.
- 223 C: Okay
- 224 K: Baie kwaad. Toe besluit ek, ek gaan op hierdie kamp gaan. Dit was in standerd
 225 agt gewees. Ja, ek het eenkeer in standerd agt gegaan en eenkeer in standerd
 226 nege gegaan. Of ek was twee keer in standerd agt daar.
 227 So daar rond. En die eerste keer het ek gegaan om hierdie mense net te
 228 vergewe. Asseblief tog. Ek moet die Here begin vergewe, ek moet hierdie Linda
 229 vrou begin vergewe, my ma begin vergewe, want dit raak ‘n bietjie te veel vir my.
 230 En ek het gegaan en ek het dit uitgepraat met iemand
- 231 C: Hoe het jy....skies, ek gaan jou nou in die rede val, hoe het jy agter gekom dit
 232 raak nou te veel vir jou? wat het binne jou aangegaan?
- 233 K: Dit was soos, ek kon nie my ma reguit in die oë kyk nie, jy weet, want elke keer
 234 wat ek my ma sien dan breek ek. Dit is soos, dit is my ma hierdie, weet né, en ek
 235 haat haar. Dit werk nie vir my nie. En die feit, ek is ongelooflik Christen Christain
 236 groot gemaak. Ek het nog steeds altyd sondag skool toe gegaan, dan sit ek in
 237 daai sondegskool klas dan dink ek heelyd, dominee wat jy sê jy lieg. Ek bedoel,
 238 hoe kan so wonderlike persoon dit aan my doen. Jy lieg. So alles waaraan ek
 239 geraak het, het ek afgekraak. Ek was ‘n verskriklike... ek was so...so vir die
 240 wêreld...(wys vuus)
- 241 C: Ha-ha-ha
- 242 K: Ek het ‘n regte gat in die deur ingeskop. Verstaan dit was ‘n ...ek was ‘n baie
 243 haatvolle mens gewees. En toe dog ek so by myself, toe sit ek net eendag en
 244 besluit ek net, luister hier, nou moet jy bietjie ophou want, jou ma gaan verewig
 245 hier saam met jou bly, die Linda vrou kan jy nie vir die res van jou lewe haat nie,
 246 sy is nou uit jou lewe uit maar hier moet jy iewerste rond nou ‘n “change” begin
 247 maak. Vergeet, vergee, vergewe die vrou, “let it go”, dit is nou in die “past”, en
 248 dan moet jy jou verhouding met die Here begin regkry. Goed, so gaan op die
 249 kamp. Toe's dit die eerste dag en ons les is ons moet vergewe en weet jy né, toe
 250 begin ek “random” mense gryp, en vir hulle vertel hoe my ma is. En weet jy hoe
 251 baie het dit gehelp.
- 252 C: Okay

- 253 K: (Acring stem) "Kom hierso, weet jy wat, my ma is (giggle) so en so" ...kom hierso,
 254 my naam is Kim, weet jy wat. Weet jy, maar dit is net om dit van jou skouers af te
 255 kry, want jy weet jy gaan hulle nooit weer sien nie.
- 256 C: Okay
- 257 K: So
- 258 C: Dit was "safe"
- 259 K: Mmm, hulle gaan nie, hulle kan maar oorvertel maar die mense wat hulle gaan
 260 vertel ken my nie, maar ek kan nie na my skoolvriende toe gaan en vir hulle my
 261 hart gaan uitstort nie want ek weet nie vir wie hulle gaan vertel nie. Verstaan. So
 262 dit was "nice" gewees, regtig en ek het met dominies en goeters gepraat en toe
 263 "eventually" toe kom alles reg en ons vergewe, en jy weet... daai woorde van om
 264 te vergewe beteken nie om te vergeet nie en te maak of niks gebeur het nie. Dit
 265 is nou goed op my gepas
- 266 C: Okay, ek wil bietjie vir jou vra, hoe het jy dit geframe, want jy't gesê jou ma is so
 267 en so, ja, het jy gesê sy is gay of sy is lief vir 'n ander vrou?
- 268 K: My ma hou nie van mansmense nie (giggel), my ma hou van vroumense, nou wat
 269 nou
- 270 C: O okay
- 271 K: Ja, dit was so effective gewees
- 272 C: Wat was die reaksie gewees?
- 273 K: Weet jy né, die reaksie van daai mense is nie so erg as toe ek vir een van hierdie
 274 mense vertel het nie, want weet jy teen die probleme van daai mense is myne
 275 minimaal. Daar was 'n meisie, ons het so kampvuur "stand-up", okay dit is wat ek
 276 ook nie kon gedoen het nie. Dan bely jy, nie bely nie, jy weet wat jou probleem is,
 277 hoe die kamp jou gehelp het en wat nou alles aangaan. Dit is 'n moerse
 278 kampvuur en almal huil verskriklik
- 279 C: Ek kan nou net dink
- 280 K: Verskriklik. Daar is mense wat daarop gaan, 'n meisie wat kan, die laaste keer
 281 wat haar Ma of haar Pa vir haar 'n soen, 'n druk, of vir haar gesê het hulle is lief
 282 vir haar, was toe sy agt jaar oud was, sy is nou sestien, maar dit breek jou. Dit is
 283 verskriklik, jy weet, "screw" my probleme. Kyk hierdie vrou. Daar is 'n meisie wat
 284 ses keer "gerape" is
- 285 C: O
- 286 K: Drie keer in twee dae. Driekeer na mekaar in twee dae. Verstaan, en dit is die
 287 heletyd twee, drie swartes. Ek kon dit nie "kop" nie, dit is soos vrou, lewe jy nog.
- 288 C: Mmm
- 289 K: Jy weet, en toe is haar ma ook nog dood. Verstaan, alles het net so op daai vrou
 290 geval en sy is net sestien. Verstaan en dit is mense met sulke probleme en dan
 291 gaan jy daarop en dan vertel jy nou, maar weet jy dat ek kan nie opgegaan het en
 292 voor almal gesê het, luister, my ma is ... so bietjie anderste nie
- 293 C: Aaa,
- 294 K: Weet ek kan dit nie gedoen het nie, ek het net gesê ek het 'n probleem en dit is
 295 vergewe en alles en alles, so
- 296 C: As jy nou daarvoor terug dink, hoekom dink jy kon jy nie en hoekom is dit okay of
 297 nie okay nie of hou sou jy dit anders wou gehad het?
- 298 K: O, weet jy ek dink daai tyd was dit nog, omdat dit nog so 'n anderster "subject"
 299 was, weet en ek was ongelooflik bang want, aaa, mense dink jy gaan soos jou ma
 300 wees en almal het my "different" begin "treat" behalwe Alene, verstaan so, almal
 301 het "different" teenoor my begin optree, niemand wou by my kom oorslaap het nie.
 302 Niemand wou gehad het ek moet by hulle kom slaap nie. En ek was so baie-baie
 303 bang dat dit was soos met daai mense en ek het flippen "nice" "buddys" gemaak

- 304 op die kamp, rêrig nog steeds. Weet ek is nog steeds vriende met hulle en mmm,
 305 ek was bang hulle tree “funny” teenoor my op. So mense wat ek rêrig-rêrig goed
 306 geken het, het ek dit nie voor vertel nie, nie geken het nie maar met wie ek goeie
 307 vriende mee gemaak het, het ek nie vertel nie maar die mense wat so in die
 308 verbyloop “more hoe gaan dit”. Hulle het ek so aan die kraag gegryp “kom hierso,
 309 jy gaan nou luister, jy het nie ‘n saak nie”
- 310 C: Amazing
- 311 K: Ja, nee, en die ander keer was ook, hoekom ek?
- 312 C: Mmm
- 313 K: Toe gaan ek, weet jy né hulle het sulke kaartjies wat hulle, dit is “amazing”, ek kan
 314 nie vir jou verduidelik nie..Weet jy, dit is sulke kaartjies maar dit is mmm, dit is
 315 meer reguit en dit is so vormig, het hulle op almal se stoele uitgedeel. Né, jy het
 316 ‘n plek waar jy sit in die saal.
- 317 C: Mmm
- 318 K: Al my kaartjies het gegaan oor, want ek wou geweet het, 'hoekom ek'
- 319 C: Ja
- 320 K: Toe staan daar “mense wat nie vrae vra nie en mense wat net aanvaar sal die
 321 koningryk bekom” of wat, ek weet, maar al my kaartjies het tot op dit
 322 neergekom dat, aanvaar dit net, dit gaan nie geantwoord word nie, dit is so, lewe
 323 daarmee, alles sal “okay” wees. En dit is so sjoe, jy weet. En dit is rêrig met die
 324 vorige kamp het dit ook gebeur. Daai bekende versie van wie, verge, vergewe
 325 mense sewekeer.
- 326 C: Sewe maal sewe, mmm
- 327 K: Daai, daai vergewe storie, al my kaartjies was oor vergewe, so die wat vergewe
 328 sal in die rykdom beland– al daai
- 329 K: En hulle ken jou nie maar, ja, die eerste dag. Die heel eerste dag wat jy op jou
 330 stoel gaan sit is daar ‘n kaartjie.
- 331 C: Mmm
- 332 K: En daai kaartjie
- 333 C: Weet hulle mos niks van jou
- 334 K: Shit, dit is baie goed. Dit is verskriklik “nice”. Dit het my ongelooflik baie gehelp.
 335 Jis, ek kon onthou toe ek terug kom van die seminaar en ek bel my ma. Ek begin
 336 “huil”, ek sê vir haar “ma, ek het vir Linda vergewe”, sy sê vir my “wat”? “Ma, ek
 337 het vir Linda vergewe, dit is “amazing”. Sy sê “nee, maar dit is goed en alles en
 338 alles”, jy weet en almal het toe vir my gesê van daai seminaar is ek, is ek is
 339 vriendeliker
- 340 C: Waar het julle toe gebly toe jy jou ma gebel het?
- 341 K: Nee-nee, ons het by my ma gebly. Ek het net by die huis gekom en toe
- 342 C: O, okay
- 343 K: Ja, toe bel ek my ma, my ma het baie gewerk ook.
- 344 C: Mmm
- 345 K: Ja, maar wat kan sy maak?
- 346 C: Ja
- 347 K: Verstaan. Daai, my broer “blame” haar daarvoor. Sy het altyd alleen by die huis
 348 gelos, wat moet sy maak. Verstaan dit werk nie.
- 349 C: Ja
- 350 K: Ek weet nie, maar dit, ek is bly my ma-hulle is geskei.
- 351 C: Okay
- 352 K: Want ek hoor elke liewe dag van mense wat almal weet is gay maar hulle is
 353 getroud...verstaan, jy is besig om jou eie lewe te verniel
- 354 C: Mmm

- 355 K: Daai mense s'n né
 356 C: "True"
 357 K: Skei net bietjie want, weet dit is, "come on"
 358 C: Mmm
 359 K: Jy kan dit nie doen nie weet jy. Dit is so onregverdig teenoor daai ander persoon.
 360 Ongelooflik onregverdig. Dit is so onregverdig vir jou kinders, 'n prentjie voor te
 361 gee.
 362 C: En kinders weet
 363 K: Kinders weet alles
 364 C: Dit is so waar
 365 K: Soos ouers alles weet van hulle kinders, kinders weet alles van hulle ouers
 366 C: Mmm
 367 K: 'n Babatjie wat so groot is wat 'n jaar oud is kan aanvoel, luister hier is nie iets reg
 368 nie. Dit is so want kyk nou die "shit". Jy kan nie probeer voorgee, daar is nie so
 369 iets nie
 370 C: Mmm
 371 K: Dit is verskriklik
 372 C: Die "close" familie soos oumas en oupas
 373 K: Mmm, hulle was dood toe ons nog klein was
 374 C: Niggies, nefies. O, so daar was nie van
 375 K: Nee, my ma se ma is dood, sy is die laaste een wat dood gegaan het, toe my ma
 376 nog getroud was
 377 C: Okay, so daar was nie iemand wat
 378 K: Nee, soos die ander familie, haar suster, praat nie met haar nie. Haar broer, weet
 379 ek nie of hy weet nie, ek weet nie.
 380 C: Nou, hou julle ooit familie etes of waar almal daar is?
 381 K: Nee, hulle is in die Kaap
 382 C: Okay, so daar is nie....
 383 K: Ja-Nee. Daar is nie 'n "pretend" soos, ha-ha-ha
 384 C: Almal wat nou eers besluit wat en hoe tree ons nou op
 385 K: Ja, maar weet jy ek dink my pa se broer hulle, tannie Martie, ek dink hulle weet
 386 C: Wat sê jou Pa?
 387 K: Ek is nie seker nie. Weet jy ek dink my pa is baie seergemaak en alles maar nou
 388 die dag het my ma vir my gesê, ek weet nie of ek "suppose" is om dit te sê nie
 389 maar my ma het vir my gesê dat my pa het geweet dat sy gay is toe hy met haar
 390 getroud het
 391 C: Okay,
 392 K: "Stupid"
 393 C: So, sy het geweet voordat sy getroud is
 394 K: Ja, soos wat ek kan aflei het sy 'n "experience" gehad en mmm toe belowe sy
 395 haarself nooit weer sal sy in hierdie ewelse, duiwelse goeters deelneem nie.
 396 C: Okay
 397 K: Jy weet en toe trou sy met my Pa. Dit is verskriklik.
 398 C: Hoekom is dit verskriklik?
 399 K: Hey
 400 C: Sy het net hierdie een experience gehad
 401 K: maar sy het geweet sy is nie "attracted" tot mans nie. Sy het vir my gesê my pa
 402 het geweet sy is gay toe hy met haar getroud is.
 403 C: Nou dink jy dit is so eenvoudig?
 404 K: Ja
 405 C: of dit of dat

- 406 K: Ja. Daai tyd moes jy
 407 C: - - -
 408 K: Mmm, dit, dit kom reg, dit is 'n "curable" siekte hierdie, dit kom reg
 409 C: - - -
 410 K: Ja, dit is ook waar – dit is ook waar
 411 C: Mmm
 412 K: Ja, ag "shame", dit is seker
 413 C: - - -
 414 K: Mmm, ag wel, dit was nogal 'n skok gewees.
 415 C: Mmm. Hoe het jy dit reg gekry om hulle te vergewe, veral nou vir haar?
 416 K: Weet jy, ek het besluit dit is nie 'n "disease" nie. Dit is nie "aids" wat my ma gaan
 417 laat verkrok en vergaan nie. My ma is nogsteeds dieselfde wonderlike persoon
 418 wat ek, weet jy ek weet nie, wie se begrafnis, oupa se begrafnis, uit haar eie uit,
 419 ek weet nie hoeveel bakke Lasagne gemaak het vir almal nie. My ma is nog
 420 steeds dieselfde liefdevolle ma, wat sy nog altyd was ... "she is just bisexual", so
 421 bietjie anders. En weet jy, "go for it" hoekom moet jy dit "fake" as jy dit anderste
 422 "prefer". So wat ek "actually quite" van gay mense "admire" is hulle sê "f-you" vir
 423 die "unwritten laws to society". Jy weet dat jy moet, jy moet man en vrou
 424 verhouding en alles, en hulle dink bietjie vir hulleself en hulle draai na die kant toe
 425 wat hulle "actually" wil gaan. So baie mense het hierdie "tunnel vision" van hoe 'n
 426 mens moet lewe, van hoe 'n mens moet aantrek en die in skoene is dit
 427 C: Die "labels"
 428 K: En verstaan. Mense wat afwyk van daai paadjie af, ek het jare se respek vir jou
 429 maar soos wat, so dit is nou maar net soos dit is en hulle moet dit bietjie toe hou,
 430 verstaan. Twee vroumense wat in die pad hand-aan-hand af stap, staan my nie
 431 aan nie, moenie dit doen nie, want dit is nog nie, dit kom daar. Kyk dit kom daar,
 432 twee vrouens met twee meisie kinders wat in die straat gaan afkom, al vier hand
 433 aan hand. Dit kom daar maar dit is nog nie daar nie, so hou dit bietjie "discreet".
 434 Want verstaan, hulle gaan aan soos hulle wil, verstaan hulle is nie, so gebind
 435 soos die res van ons nie, verstaan hulle het 'n bietjie kop van hulle eie
 436 C: Ja
 437 K: So toe besluit ek net weet jy né, "shit" soos ek gesê het, my ma is my ma, sy gaan
 438 altyd daar wees, sy gaan die een wees wat my deur alles gaan trek, is die een wat
 439 my nog altyd bygestaan het, verstaan, en hoekom, hoe, wat maak haar nou
 440 anders? Ek kan onthou ek het een aand so gesit en toe begin ek en my ma nou
 441 praat en alles en alles en alles na die seminaar nou toe dink ek by myself, weet jy
 442 wat, my ma praat nog presies dieselfde met my as toe my ma en pa nog getroud
 443 was.
 444 C: Ag shame
 445 K: My ma lyk presies dieselfde, sy trek presies dieselfde aan, sy is presies, nou
 446 hoekom kan ek nie presies dieselfde lief wees vir haar as toe sy en my pa saam
 447 was nie. Verstaan soos
 448 C: Mmm
 449 K: Ek het net besluit weet jy, my ma is my ma. Sy is my ma en dit is dit. En dit is
 450 wat my broer moet oorkom
 451 C: Maar hy kort ook 'n seminaar
 452 K: Dit breek my ma, jy-jy dit, dit is... ek kan nie vir jou verduidelik nie. Dit, hy het
 453 letterlik, dit is net so goed hy vat haar en skeur haar so middeldeur.
 454 C: Ja
 455 K: Sy buig haarself, driehonderd en sestig grade agteroor om sy lewe vir hom beter
 456 te maak en hy spoeg dit letterlik terug in haar gesig.

- 457 C: Ja, want hy weet nog nie hoe nie
 458 K: Oo, en hoe meer ek vir my ma sê, want ek kan dit nie meer eintlik vir haar sê nie,
 459 skryf my broer nie af nie, maar “avoid” hom bietjie.
 460 C: Dit is “tuff-love” ja
 461 K: Maar ek kan dit nie rêrig van haar verwag nie want dit is soos haar kind. Ek is my
 462 pa se kind want ek lyk baie soos my pa en my broer is my ma se kind en ek dink
 463 dit is so as jy bietjie na jou kind lyk, die ouer wat na die spesifieke kind lyk daar is
 464 bietjie daai ietsie, bietjie. En dit was nog altyd my broer en my ma verstaan hulle
 465 het nog altyd ‘n baie goeie verhouding gehad en nou is dit soos “doef”, ek kan nie
 466 van my ma verwag om net haar enigste seun af te skryf “for time-being, weet dit is
 467 makliker gesê as gedaan.
 468 C: Maar dink jy nie hy is waar jy was toe jy in standerd ses of agt was nie?
 469 K: Weet jy
 470 C: Jou issues en hoe jy dit sien
 471 K: Ja
 472 C: Jou ma kon koekies gebak het en sy kon jou by die deur uitgeskop het, jy sou
 473 gesê het “what-ever”
 474 K: Ja, weet jy hy het dieselfde probleme maar hoe hy dit, dit voorgee is vir my,
 475 C: Dit is om te “pretend”
 476 K: Ja, want weet jy wat ek dink, dit is “unnecessary” wat hy my ma aandoen.
 477 Verstaan as ek nou aangaan het “gerat-en-gerave” het vir vier jaar, ek “ek haat
 478 jou” so baie, ek het geen idee wat dit aan my ma sou gedoen het nie. Alles is fine,
 479 kyk waar's ons vandag. Party goeters is rêrig, dit is nie nodig om gesê te word nie.
 480 En my broer is besig om onnodig seer aan my ma te doen
 481 C: Ag shame
 482 K: En aaa, ja, maar hy moet regkom want weet jy, goeters begin vir, gebeur in jou
 483 lewe en jy kom oor dit. Kyk hy moet begin om oor dit te kom, hy moet sy
 484 probleme bietjie begin verwerk en ek en my pa
 485 (praat oor ete-afspraak met pa, hule het boetie bespreek en pas wonder of ek nie dalk
 486 sal kan help nie)
 487 Praat oor broer [edited]
 488 K: Ek weet nie, ek dink net, ek dink net dat deur wat hulle ons gesit het soos met my
 489 ma met die skeiery en alles en alles en baie trekkery dink ek ook nie dat hulle voel
 490 half, hulle het ons deur genoeg gesit. Hulle wil nie so baie
 491
 492 K: Mmm, maar dit is so, niks in jou lewe is iemand anders se skuld nie. Niks-niks-
 493 niks. Nie eers as jy jou toon stamp en iemand het ‘n trollie voor jou ingestoot nie.
 494 C: “Exactly”
 495 K: Want jy het jou voet daar neer gesit. Die persoon het nie jou voet daar...dit is wat
 496 hy nie kan kop nie.
 497 C: Mmm
 498 [edited]
 499 C: Het hy gesien hoe jy verander vandat jy van die seminaar afgekome het? Dink jy
 500 hy “envy” dit?
 501 K: Nee. Nee kyk. My broer, ek kan hom vir jou mooi beskryf. Toe my broer terug
 502 gekome het van Engeland af. Toe moet ons plaas toe gaan, drie weke nadat hy
 503 terug gekome het. Weet jy, toe sit ek op my bed en huil want ek weet nie wat om
 504 aan te trek nie, want ek wil net maerder lyk dat my broer my nie hoef af te kraak
 505 nie. Van so groot af al verkleineer hy my voor mense. My ma, almal het hom
 506 altyd so uit getrap en gesê hou op om jou suster so te verkleineer. Altyd voor
 507 almal, man sy vriende, ouers by die skool voor mense, ek was altyd net “shit”

Kim Session 2

- 11 -

- 508 gewees. En toe praat ek met, met wie het ek gepraat...ook een of ander iemand
 509 wat weet iets doen, ek kan nie heeltemal onthou nie. Toe sê hulle weet jy, jou
 510 broer sien jou potensiaal en hy wil jou afbreek...
 511 C: Sodat hy beter kan voel
 512 K: Hy beter kan voel oor homself. Toe dog ek "wow", dit maak nog steeds "damn"
 513 seer. Verstaan want elke liewe keer. My broer het nog nooit in sy hele lewe vir
 514 my gesê jy lyk mooi nie. Hy het nog nooit vir my gesê man nou het jy mooi klere.
 515 Dit is net altyd van jy het alweer gewig opgetel, jy weet. "Eet jy alweer". Weet
 516 sulke goeters
 517 [edited]
 518 K: Ek weet nog steeds nie presies wat jy doen met hierdie goed nie.
 519 Praat/ vrae oor tesis & analise
 520 C: O hierdie goed, hiedie deel van jou broer sal ek nie insit nie, mmm. "Maybe" 'n
 521 deel daarvan, mmm, waarna ek basies kyk is hoe "negotiate" jy jou lewe - - -
 522 en die samelewing wat verwag dat jy moet met 'n man trou en
 523 kinders hê
 524 K: Mmm
 525 C: Die ideale prentjie en jou prentjie stem nie saam nie. So wat doen jy?
 526 - - -
 527 K: O, okay
 528 C: Ons wil dit gebruik
 529 K: Aa,
 530 C: So ek sit baie van wat reeds geskryf is..... op papier, sit ek in en dan "link" ek
 531 wat julle sê met wat die ander mense
- 532 K: Oraait
 533 C: En so wat ek op hierdie stadium doen is om al die stories te vat en die "voices"
 534 met mekaar te laat praat. Weet soos jy byvoorbeeld sê mmm,
 535 - - - maar as dit regtig vir jou belangrik is mmm, dan sal jy
 536 fyner kyk daarna en dan miskien wat 'n ander kind gesê het, wat amper dieselfde
 537 is soos die kamp - - - "nice" was, daai "positive experiences", "experiences van
 538 reassurance", soos standerd vyf wat almal jou-as "outcast" behandel het. Daai
 539 "rejection", so dit is maar die temas waaroor dit gaan..
- 540 [edited]
 541
 542 K: Dit is een ding waaroor ek baie bly is. Hulle het nie baklei toe hulle geskei het nie.
 543 Verstaan, my ma sorg vir ons kos, klere, warra-warra en my pa betaal ons skole
 544 en dokters. En dit is hoe dit is, my pa het vir ons kom kuier en hulle het nie baklei
 545 oor wie kry die kinders of niks van daai strooi nie, verstaan. So ek dink daar het
 546 ons bietjie van 'n plus gehad.
 547 C: Verseker. Ma het laas week gepraat van hoe boetie uit die kerk gehaal het, hoe
 548 het jy die kerk ervaar?
 549 K: Baie lekker gewees. Mense het net "passed out" voor haar, onthou ek net.
 550 C: Sê gou weer, mense het...
 551 K: "Uitgepass" voor. Hulle sê kom hier ek bid vir jou, dan staan mense op
 552 C: Okay
 553 K: Dan bid hulle vir jou en dan val jy om
 554 C: Hu (giggle)
 555 K: Ag nee mens. Staan regop jy is in 'n kerk. Weet so ek het dit nie maar die res
 556 was
 557 C: Okay

- 558 K: Oraait. Ek het nie rêrig, ek was nog altyd van klein tyd af moerse "open minded" .
 559 Verstaan ek is "open" vir "new ideas" en "new adventures" en alles...ek het nie 'n
 560 saak nie.
 561 C: Mmm
 562 K: Nuwe mense, nuwe plekke, so
 563 C: Dink jy dit het jou gehelp of om nog twee vrouens te sien wat hande vashou, of
 564 twee mans, of ek weet nie wat is die "set-up" daar nie?
 565 K: Nie rêrig nie, dit was net vir my, dit was net vir my soos "kind of a soothing thing"
 566 gewees om te weet my ma is nou in 'n plek waar sy "actually" haarself kan voel.
 567 C: Mmm,
 568 K: So ek het "gerespect" dat my ma soontoe gaan. Ek het dit vir haar gegun om
 569 soontoe te gaan. Gaan, geniet jou gate uit want daar kan jy jousef wees.
 570 C: Mmm
 571 K: So ek dink dit is wa, waarom ek die meeste van die kerk gehou het, is omdat my
 572 ma is my ma ,
 573 C: Shame
 574 K: Dit is "nice"
 575 C: Mmm. Hoe was die oorgang van laerskool na hoërskool? Almal in die laerskool
 576 het nou gewee en nou moet jy hoërskool toe?
 577 K: Dit is hoekom ek Festive School toe gegaan het, want Festive School, niemand in
 578 my Laerskool het soontoe gegaan nie.
 579 C: Oraait
 580 K: En ek was in die koshuis gewees. So ek het my, my vriende wat ek "gechoose
 581 "het om te sien, net naweke gesien.
 582 C: Okay,
 583 K: So ek het nie per ongeluk in hierdie een in die dorp vas geloop nie en warra-
 584 warra. Koshuis het my baie verander. So, want ek was vetterig in stander vyf.
 585 Nie vetterig nie, ek was vet. Ek het ongelooflik baie gewig verloor in stander ses
 586 en sewe. Toe begin ek modelwerk doen en alles. So ek het verander. Soos
 587 Peter, die outjie wat vir my in die Geskiedenis klas gesê jy gaan soos jou ma word
 588 en alles. Toe hy my die eerste keer stander sewe weer raak loop, ek dog daai
 589 mannetjie donder van sy voete af. Ek sê, ag, mm. So wat nou
 590 C: Mmm
 591 K: Toe is hy tjoepstil.
 592 C: Okay
 593 K: En toe ek in stander nege in die skool kom. Toe is ek en my vriendekring my,
 594 soos, toe ken almal my al, dit is my ou..(ouderdom) soos Alene-hulle
 595 C: Ja
 596 K: Alene en S██████████.Hulle het na ABC School toe gegaan en deur hulle het ek
 597 ander mense leer ken. Toe ek in ABC School in kom toe is dit soos wow
 598 C: O, so toe is jy terug ABC School toe
 599 K: Ja-ja. Ek was ses, sewe en agt in Festive School, nege ABC School en toe
 600 C: Oraait. Hoekom is jy weer terug?
 601 K: En toe matriek in Witbank. Want ek wou by my vriende wees
 602 C: O, okay
 603 K: Ja, toe is die "fever" nou al verby. Almal weet dit is...weet en toe ons daar instap
 604 toe is ek en my vriendekring die "most respected" mense in daai skool gewees.
 605 C: Mmm
 606 K: Dit is soos, en die mense wat altyd vir my "shit" gegee het op laerskool"wat-
 607 wat". Dit was so lekker gewees.
 608 C: Mmm, so niemand het meer gestir of gevra nie

- 609 K: Glad nie
- 610 C: "Never ever "mentioned"
- 611 K: Mmm, nooit nie want dit was nie 'n ongemaklike "subject" gewees nie. Almal het
612 gewheet. Ek het, en Alene praat openlik daaroor. Dit is niks "weird" en alles nie.
- 613 C: Ja
- 614 K: So dit was okay. Maar een ding waaaroor ek vir jou kan sê my broer. Ons was
615 eenkeer by 'n "house party" gewees. En ek het altyd by hom gaan huil oor hierdie
616 mense wil nie ophou oor ma se stro*&! nie.
- 617 C: Mmm
- 618 K: En dit is toe eenkeer, toe een van sy beste-beste vriende, toe sê hy iets van "kyk,
619 sy is 'n lesbiën". En dit is toe ek daar verbystap. Okay toe dog ek hy praat van
620 my, want ek was so "touchy" daaroor gewees.
- 621 C: Aha
- 622 K: Ek begin huil en alles. My broer kom daar aan en vra wat nou. En ek sê toe die
623 mense kan nie ophou met ma se "stront" nie. Hy sê "wat" en ek sê toe "Marco".
624 Dit is een van sy beste vriende maar hy loop na hom toe en hy gryp hom so aan
625 sy kraag, maar hy gooi hom so op die gras ... "wat doen jy aan my suster" (loud
626 voice). Toe was hy nog al, in daai stadium todat hy begin "swing" het na die
627 probleemkant toe en todat ek begin aanvaar het. Toe ons altwee so half in 'n
628 dwaal "maze" effek was, was hy "m*!&! protective" oor my gewees.
- 629 C: Okay
- 630 K: Jy sê nie iets verkeerd van my suster nie want ek sal jou hard bliksem. My broer
631 is klein maar, maar hy het eenkeer my kaak afgeslaan. Dit is hoe kwaad ek hom
632 gemaak het.
- 633 C: Mmm
- 634 K: So daarvoor, kan ek, weet, dit tel vir iets.
- 635 C: Ja, dit tel baie
- 636 K: En mmm by die skool. Toe gaan ek Witbank toe en nou is almal vriende nog
637 steeds "hi-hi-hi". Daar nuwe vriende gemaak.
- 638 Matriek is ek Witbank toe
- 639 C: In matriek skole geskuif
- 640 K: Ja (ha-ha-ha)
- 641 C: Was dit nie moeilik nie?
- 642 K: Dit was, in my matriek jaar. Dit was verskriklik, want dit was soos graad een, want
643 ek ken nie een persoon nie. Nie een nie. Ek is in matriek. Ek het ongemaklik
644 gevoel.
- 645 C: Dit is "terrible"
- 646 K: Dit was verskriklik gewees
- 647 C: Hoekom het julle getrek?
- 648 K: My pa se brein het in sy "croch" gesit. Toe trek hy agter 'n "girlfriend" aan.
- 649 C: O vet, en hoekom het jy nie toe by jou ma gebly nie?
- 650 K: Hey? My ma was in Londen
- 651 C: Sy was oorsee
- 652 K: Ag, maar dit was "okay". Dit was "nice" gewees. Ek het 'n 'exchange student'
653 ontmoet en dit was die liefde in my lewe, nou nog.
- 654 C: "Okay, cool"
- 655 K: Ja. Nee, wat gebeur is, ek voel niks vir ouens nie, so. Ek wil nie nou al 'n
656 verhouding hê nie. Nou kyk toe het ek al 'n fris nommer ouens in my lewe gehad.
657 Nou die een wat ek vir vier maande ken, wat in Argentinië bly, sal nou die een
658 wees wat ja so. So, so werk dit nou maar.
- 659 C: Ja

Kim Session 2

- 14 -

- 660 K: Maar in elke geval
 661 C: So in Witbank het jy toe vir die mense gesê of het jy net gesê
 662 K: Man, nee weet jy, wie weet daar? Niemand weet daar nie. Ja
 663 C: Was daar ooit vrae van wat doen jou ma, wat doen jou pa? En dan antwoord jy
 664 net vir hulle, jy sal nie uitbrei nie?
 665 K: Nee, my pa se "girlfriend" is hierso en my ma is in Londen en da-da-da. Ja dit
 666 was
 667 C: En in Festive School?
 668 K: Festive School. Niemand weet dit nie, ook nie in Festive School nie. (Adamant
 669 voice) Ek wou nie dat dit uitkom nie. Verstaan want dit was die direkte
 670 oorskakeling van standerd vyf na standerd ses en ek was bang dat as dit uitvind
 671 in daai skool, omdat dit 'n meisieskool is, verstaan dan is dit nj-nj-nj (skinder
 672 geluide), jy weet, wat nou?
 673 Ja so niemand tot vandag toe nog weet nie.
 674 C: Was daar kere wat jy byvoorbeeld op die speelgrond gestap het of in 'n klas gesit
 675 het en kinders het net begin praat oor "moffies" of oor gays? Wat is die tipiese
 676 goed wat kinders sê deesdae oor dit?
 677 K: Deesdae,
 678 C: ja
 679 K: Weet jy ek het al baie, immm, anderste perspektiewe gesien soos, immm P [redacted]
 680 het gisteraand saam met seuns na Maximus toe gegaan. Nou P [redacted] is straight
 681 soos die hel en [redacted] is 'n vrou meer as wat ek is, nou Maximus is 'n gay club. Ag
 682 heeslaaik, dan wil ek vir P [redacted] sien in daai gay club.
 683 C: Mmm, die mense
 684 K: Hy wou nie alleen badkamer toe gegaan het nie. Dan sê hy vir [redacted], "kom saam
 685 met my badkamer toe".
 686 C: Shame
 687 K: Alles is weet en Jane die vriendinnetjie wat my kom oplaai, sy is "jis", "ji", weet dit
 688 is, mense het baie "different perspectives" daaroor. So
 689 C: Dit is "obviously" makliker om by [redacted] hulle uit te kom en te sê "yes" dit is ons "set
 690 up" maar soos Jane, wat doen jy daar?
 691 K: Ja, dit is nog al.
 692 C: Hou jy dit maar stil?
 693 K: Ja, nee vir Jane, sy weet glad nie. Verstaan en, maar J [redacted] weet, en P [redacted]
 694 weet. So
 695 C: Okay en op hoërskool, want ek is nou nog al geïntereeseerd in hoe die skole
 696 verskil. Dat Festive School 'n ander tipe "set-up" het.
 697 K: Festive School het niemand geweet nie.
 698 C: Al weet niemand nie, wat sê die kinders, praat hulle?
 699 K: O, nee, weet jy Festive School was dit nog, ses, sewe en agt, man dit was nog
 700 "stenig, stenig die mense".
 701 C: Okay
 702 K: Moenie. Jy weet. So niemand het ooit daaroor gepraat. So daar was 'n klomp
 703 van hulle, van daai soort, en elke keer as hulle hallo sê (wys dan wil hulle drukkie
 704 gee), dan's dit jis, J. So dit was maar so-so, maar niks jy weet, sy moet wegbly
 705 van my, maar niks viesliks nie. In ABC School, al my vriende is baie "open-
 706 minded" oor dit, verstaan so niemand doen of dink enige iets daarvan en alles nie.
 707 En Witbank, wie was gay gewees wat in ons groep was? (Bly stil en dink) M [redacted],
 708 ja hy was gay, hy het nooit uitgekom daarmee nie, maar ek dink hy is gay
 709 C: Het die kinders daaroor gepraat
 710 K: En toe, nee

- 711 C: Okay
- 712 K: Nee, ons het net altyd vir hom gesê "almal dink jy is gay, wanneer kry jy vir jou 'n
- 713 meisie?"
- 714 C: Ag shame
- 715 K: Jy weet. (ha-ha-ha). Maar jy weet almal was maar nog steeds so. Hierso van
- 716 standerd nege, matriek en nou, weet, van nou af, begin dit nou al hoe meer 'n
- 717 "relaxed subject" word. Verstaan as jy nou, my ma se "article" in die koerant gaan
- 718 sit.....wel
- 719 C: Dit is nie wat sy
- 720 K: So dit is
- 721 C: Dit maak dit "easier"
- 722 K: Dit begin baie meer oop, dit is hoekom ek sê, die tyd gaan daar kom wat
- 723 C: Dat jy sal moet die twee tannies in die straat "face"
- 724 K: Ja (ha-ha-ha)
- 725 C: (ha-ha-ha)
- 726 K: Hi, ja stap maar met julle kinders, hoe julle gekry het, sal ek nie weet nie maar, jy
- 727 weet dit gaan kom so
- 728 C: Okay, wat sal jy nou doen as ma 'n "lover" het en sy stap in die Kollonade saam
- 729 met jou en hou die vrou se hand vas
- 730 K: Ek sal vir haar sê jy sal nie. Nie nou nie. Dit is nie hoe dit is nie. Jy het respek vir
- 731 ander mense se, dit is die hele ding gaan oor jy het respek vir ander mense se
- 732 ...dit is in die publiek, verstaan, wat ander mense sien, jy weet, daar is 'n limitation
- 733 aan wat jy, dit is net so goed hulle sit 'n kaal vrou in die pharmacy wat suntan
- 734 lotion. Verstaan jy respekteer wat ander mense sien en wat hulle nie wil sien nie.
- 735 C: Mmm
- 736 K: En dit is waaroor dit gaan. Verstaan dit is soos as jy rondom ander mense is, dan
- 737 doen jy iets wat in alle ways kan flexible gaan. Verstaan. Hulle wil dit nie sien
- 738 nie. Want jy moet aanvaar in 'n shopping center gaan daar mense wees wat nie
- 739 twee vrouens wil sien nie. So moet dit nie doen nie. Dit gaan alles oor respect
- 740 teenoor hulle. So, ja, nee, nee los. Totdat op die stage kom waar dit gaan kom.
- 741 Dan kan hou hand vas en gaan aan kom.
- 742 C: Hoe dink jy gebeur dit dat mense by daai stage uit kom? Want wat ek nou sit en
- 743 dink, wie is society en wie sê jy sê 'n man, 'n vrou en kinders, is die ideaal?
- 744 K: Weet jy, ek weet nie. Ek dink, ek dink né dat een mens het bietjie daarmee
- 745 uitgekom en toe 'n volgende en toe die volgende en nou dat hulle "actually"
- 746 mekaar gevind het, weet mekaar gevind het, hulle weet nou dat "shit, ek is nie die
- 747 enigste een in die wêreld nie". En dan, mense soos ons raak dan baie meer
- 748 "relaxed" daaroor weet want daar is boeke daaroor, mense skryf boeke daaroor.
- 749 Elton John is hoeveel mense se rolmodel en hy is gay, ek dink deur daai milieu
- 750 begin mense dit aanvaar ook. En weet, deur sulke klein goedjies, begin mense dit
- 751 so stadig aan, stadig aan, stadig aan aanvaar en dit is al op die TV, dit is oralste.
- 752 Verstaan jy.
- 753 C: Jy wil nie hê jou ma moet een van hulle wees nie. (lag)
- 754 K: (lag). Dit is net so goed dat immm. Ja maar dit is "discreet" verstaan. Dis, dit is
- 755 op sy plek vir sy tyd. Dis net so goed jy drop 'n rekenaar in die 1910e. Verstaan
- 756 die mense gaan dink dit is alien, verstaan, dit gaan nie werk nie. En alles kom op
- 757 sy plek. En ek dink, dit is soos wat enige iemand, enige iets "gerevolve" het, soos
- 758 byvoorbeeld dit is net soos jy vra hoe het ouers so baie "lenient" geword op hulle
- 759 kinders se opbrengs.
- 760 C: Mmm

- 761 K: Verstaan. Wie het dit bepaal. Niemand het dit bepaal nie, dit is maar net hoe dit
 762 net gebeur het. Dit gebeur maar net. Ek dink "society" raak net 'n bietjie slap.
 763 Verstaan so. Te lui om te dink of dit reg of verkeerd is. Ons aanvaar jy is reg.
 764 C: Aha
 765 K: Goed, ons gaan aan.
 766 C: Okay
 767 K: Meer belangrike goed om aan te dink.
 768 C: Mmm
 769 K: Maar, alles-alles sal uitkom. Daar is 'n paadjie. Donder my broer is net op die
 770 verkeerde pad
 771 C: Ag shame
 772 K: Maar weet jy né, daar is 'n reguit pad, 'n om pad en dan is daar nog 'n pad wat so
 773 loop, maar al drie daai paaie, kom op een eindpunt uit. Net op een eindpunt, nie
 774 op sewentig nie, een. En weet jy op daai eindpunt is waar jy rêrig moet wees.
 775 C: Ja
 776 K: So of hy hierdie pad stap wat honderd en vyftig, en hy is besig, hy gaan daar uit
 777 kom. As jy die regte pad stap, "good for you".
 778 C: Ja, daar is min wat daai pad stap.
 779 K: Baie min. Ja, ongelooflik. Jy val in "ditches" en jy donder neer en jy breek jou
 780 been maar jy kom daar uit
 781 C: Ja
 782 K: So alles, my broer gaan regkom soek weet net nie wanneer nie
 783 C: Ja, "tuff love" en bid
 784 K: Ja. Ek dink so (stilte). En al hoekom ek wil hê my broer moet regkom is vir my ma
 785 se "sake". Rêrig, as ek
 786 C: Is jy regtig seker daaroor?
 787 K: Mmm
 788 C: Okay, jy is lief vir hom
 789 K: Die meeste, okay die meeste rede is
 790 C: (praat saam – onduidelik – iets van jou ma en sessies)
 791 K: Mmm, dit is nogals waar
 792 C: Want jy het gesê dat sy haarself nie kan vergewe nie
 793 K: Ja
 794 C: "And she's got no reason to"
 795 K: Hy dink net dit is so ongelooflik verkeerd wat sy doen.
 796 C: Sou dit erger gewees het as sy by jou pa gebly het
 797 K: O, ja, verseker
 798 C: Kan jy dink waar was jy en jou boetjie dan dalk nou?
 799 K: Dan het sy 'n groter sonde aangevang
 800 C: Ja
 801
 802 Continue chatting about brother – not for purposes of research ; end of with discussions
 803 about my writings – book – pseudonym...

1 **Luanne Reflection notes Jan-March 2004**

2 11 March 2004

3 Let me write my notes regarding Luanne and then you can try to analyse it a bit
4 further, my gut-sense now is that I am making a fuss of it.. that she's quite okay...
5 she doesn't see it as a problem – and then I say to myself – she can't see it as a
6 problem – she cannot allow herself to see to it as a problem:

7 Hannah vertel (eerste ontmoeting, 15 Nov 2003):

8 nie pertinent genoem toe klein was dat hulle gay of lesbies is nie (en sy haat die l-
9 woord). Net gesê ons is saam, of ons is 'n gesin, en gesinshuggies begin gee –
10 wat hulle nou nog doen, soms – voor werk of skool.

11 Sy vertel hoe hulle as couple/ gesin een keer in Mosselbaai van die preekstoel as
12 berispe is; en dat dit die ouers se skuld is.

13 Nou by NG dominee wat baie nice is

14 In laerskool vir hoof gaan vra of hulle oriëntasie vir die skool 'n probleem gaan
15 wees, of vir Luanne en skool het hulle op hulle hande gedra. Luanne was tot
16 hoofmeisie verkies – baie maatjies en 'n hele groep wat van kleintyd afkom. Kom
17 gereeld by hulle huis, doen take en so. M ry die kids rond en een keer het hulle
18 vir haar gesê sy's 'n cool ma (altd lekker koeldranke in cooler box...).

19 Nog net een van die maats se ouers het haar belet om daar oor te slaap, maar sy
20 mag nou wel al soontoe kom as hulle die take doen.

21 Krisismoment in graad 6, [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED] en dit het Luanne ontstel, en toe sê sy vir haar ma sy wil nie
23 meer hê hulle moet saamwees nie, want sy't gedroom [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED] Ma kon haar nie antwoord en Hannah moes toe die aand na werk met
25 haar chat – en toe mooi verduidelik; en ook vertel van seuns wat by haar sal kom
26 kuier en wil hê dat sy met hulle slaap ens ens oor dis verkeerd en dis statutêre
27 verkragting en so.

28 Kom wel kêrels nou by haar kuier en Hannah sê sy "check" hulle uit en sê vir
29 Luanne dat sy oop kaarte moet speel...

30 (kan nie onthou – met kêrels of hulle, seker met hulle..)

31

32 Eerste sessie: Luanne, 27 Nov

33 'Het maar besluit om oor koeitjies en kalfies te praat... sodat ek nie die issue push
34 nie..

35 Sy praat incredibly maklik, 'n heerlike ekstrovert.. maar oor vraag hoe was dit
36 sonder pa voorheen is dit "ek kan nie onthou nie". En ja, dalk is dit soos boeklees
37 vir haar, want sy sê sy hou nie van lees nie, want sy vergeet wat sy reeds gelees
38 het en dan kom sy nie in die storie in nie – of dalk is dit defensiveness...

39 Het net gevra wat noem sy haar 2 ma's - antwoord "Ma en Hannah"; en gesê
40 partymaal vra my maats ook wat hier oorslaap – "waar is jou 2 ma's" en hulle
41 chat nie daaroor nie ... pla nie, sê sy.

42 So nou wonder ek, is dit "net ek" wat dink dat dit hulle gaan pla... hoe negotiate
43 hulle hulle eie personal narrative met society's dominant narrative – en die
44 antwoord is – by just being themselves, just going on with their daily lives as if
45 nothing is wrong, It's not a problem for them.

46

47 2 Des, 2de sessie

48 2de sessie met Luanne gehad, sy's oulik, chat maklik oor allerhande goed. Share
49 geredelik – maar dit bly oppervlakkige goed- ek het die urge gehad om te begin
50 invra, maar sal Januarie.

51 Luanne share gemaklik oor albei haar ouers, sy steek dit nie weg nie, maak nie
52 issue daarvan nie – dit opsigself sê al baie né

53

54

55 7 Jan 2004, sessie 3
56 Is notes op rekenaar, maar ook hierdie:
57 Nou ja, nie te sleg nie (ek skryf vooraf – ek hoop dat ek dieper vrae sal vra vandag
58 en meer detail sal kry uit Luanne... wie weet)
59 - alhoewel ek amper 'n bluntness of defensiveness - "ons praat nie oor ons ouers
60 nie" – so asof sy nie lus is nie (?); of ek kom nog nie by die regte vrae uit nie..
61 maar interessant die deel van die godsdiens al weer.. al sê sy die onderwyser
62 kyk nie eens 7de Laan nie - en ek wonder wat dink sy van haar ma – of die nou
63 hel toe gaan (want dis 'n groot sonde) – en dat sy niks sê nie – so wat dink sy,
64 hoe voel sy daarvoor....
65 "ek gaan maar net aan" – sy dink nie; of is dit dalk juis coping....
66
67 Wat tel jy hier op Carien –
68 Eerstens, my onsekerheid oor die interviews veral aan die begin;
69 Dan ook dat ek eers wou verhouding stig – en daarom nie dieper geprobe het nie;
70 Ek wat terapeuties werk en sense sy's ongemaklik of geïrriteerd – en dit dan ook
71 daar los;
72 Dan is jy altyd baie positief direk na 'n onderhoud, en later begin jy eers devils'
73 advocate speel;
74 En ek wonder, wanneer sal jy besef as 'n kind, en dalk is dit hierdie kind, heel okay
75 is met gay-wees, en dat haar ouers 2 ma's is, meer as wat jy is my liewe Carien;
76 En hoe gaan jy dit weet as 'n kind okay is, hoe gaan jy dit agterkom – want ja,
77 hoekom wil jy bly probe en "dieper vrae" vra, jy vra nie anders as met die ander
78 kinders nie en hulle kom op met amazing stories – en as sy dit wegsteek of net
79 nie kan onthou nie, dan gaan jy dit nie uit haar kry nie, but give her the benefit of
80 the doubt – dis nie vir haar bad experiences nie – so vra jou vraag oor critical
81 incidents

- 1 **Luanne Session 1**
- 2 (25 Nov 2003)
- 3 Min- behalwe hoe noem ma's en hoe verskil hulle en oor pa...
- 4 C: So wat maak jy met jou vakansie?
- 5 L: Ag niks nie, ek moet vandag kerskaartjies maak
- 6 Ek moet hierdie soort letters vir die kerskaartjies maak
- 7 My ma se sussie het my gewys
- 8 C: Waar werk ma M?
- 9 L: My ma? ██████ (financial company)
- 10 Ek moet maar bietjie oefen
- 11 St 6 ontgroening
- 12 Verskil hs en ls
- 13 Honde
- 14 Watse honde het julle?
- 15 Kamp
- 16 Foto-albums
- 17 Lees
- 18 Vriende
- 19 Close-nit pelle van kleuterskool af – was 6, E█████ nou in Centurion
- 20 1 uit hulle groep uit, kom wel kuier, maar ander groep
- 21 Ons almal sien wat haar vriendin doen, wat sy aan haar doen, sy wil almal slaan, sy
- 22 will heeltyd fight, en by die seuns wees heeltyd, die st 9 seuns, jy moet jou
- 23 skoolloopbaan geniet – nie heeltyd net fight nie
- 24 As mens in die straat loop dan's daar 3 meisies dan sê sy, kom ons gaan slaan
- 25 hulle
- 26 Sy's baie kort, haar naam is C█████ en nogal fris
- 27 Wat is daai?
- 28 'n Lig
- 29 Skoolvakke
- 30 Het julle van die Bobbies gesien –
- 31 Engelandse toer....
- 32
- 33

- 33 Lee-Ann 25/11 (Liz transkripsie)
34
35 Praat van vakke wat sy geniet
36 Praat oor toepassing van vakke (toer etc)
37 Praat oor Bobbies
38 Praat oor trip na Engeland na pa
39 Praat oor klere wat pa vir haar gekoop het in Engeland
40 Praat oor 2 half-sussies en kyk na foto's
41 Praat oor Kersdiens en weer
42 Praat oor gesmelte bottle kuns
43
44 C: Jy het laas gese jy het jou pa eers ontmoet toe jy elf was.
45 L: Ja
46 C: Dit was seker nogal weird?
47 L: Dit was.
48 C: Het jy gevra na hom toe jy klein was, of hoe het dit gebeur?
49 L: Ek kan nie onthou nie.
50 C: Oo, okay
51 L: Ek was baie op my senuwees gewees.
52 C: O, ek kan dink.
53 L: Om die eerste keer jou pa te sien
54 C: Umm. Was hy nice?
55 L: Ja.
56 C: Dit maak seker sin, nou verstaan jy van die sweet en die hare... (wat sy van pa
57 geërf het)
58 L: Ja.
59 C: En hoe het ma dit hanteer?
60 L: Ek weet nie eintlik nie, ek kan nie onthou nie. Maar my sussie, ons imm, hulle het
61 mos daai vinnige aksent
62 C: Ja
63 L: [lag]En die eerste keer wat ek haar hoor praat het is ek soos excuse me, excuse
64 me,
65 C: Eh-he, praat stadiger
66 L: Hulle praat so vinnig.
67 C: En so binnesmonds
68 L: En hulle sê nie elke woord heeltemal nie. Soos...
69 - - -
70 L: Dan sê my pa die heelyd vir haar T slower, L can't understand you, slower.
71 C: Ag, shame. Dit doen seker jou Engels goed.
72 L: En hulle sê mos nie Father nie, hulle sê you wha.
73 Dis mos you what
74 [lag]
75 C: Sien jy jou pa gereeld as hulle oorkom?
76 L: Nee, net my ouma wat nou oorkom.
77 Praat oor Oupa se diabetes.
78 L: Ek was die naweek by my ma se sussie gewees, want my ma-hulle vas Vrydag
79 aand by so 'n Hawaiian party by die werk gehad. [lag] Toe gaan ek na haar toe...
80 toe ons het agtuur gery toe gaan haal ons kos, toe... hulle eet laat, toe... ons eet
81 al half sewe, partykeer ses-uur al.
82 C: Dit is seker lekker.
83 L: Ja, toe eet ons hier by nege uur. Toe kyk ons Titanic.
84 C: O-ja.
85 L: Toe kyk ons hom klaar.
86 C: Hy was seker eers 12 uur klaar.

- 87 L: En toe kyk ons die Magic ... want sy het 'n DVD. Twee uur toe gaan slaap hulle,
88 half 3 het ek eers gaan slaap. Agt uur was ek wakker... so ek het net vyf uur en
89 'n half slaap ingekry. [lag]
- 90 C: O, sjoë. Jy was seker nogal moeg.
91 Praat our Avon en hempies.
92 Praat oor klere inkopies doen.
93 Praat oor kleure wat by haar gelaat pas.
- 94 C: So wat noem jy jou twee ma's. Ma en Hannah of wat?
95 L: Ja, Mamma en Hannah.
96 C: Alright ag dis nice.
97 L: Die kinders wat ook hier bly, sê ook, waar is jou twee ma's?
98 C: [lag] Okay. Dit klink asof hulle heel alright is daaroor.
99 L: Ja
- 100 C: Praat hulle partykeer daaroor? Of vra hulle uit of?
101 L: Niks
102 C: O, okay, net sulke toevallige comments.
103 L: Mm-uhh. Nee, net waar is jou twee ma's? Nee hulle praat nie eintlik daaroor nie.
104 Hierdie kleurlingkie op die hoek, het presies die van ook, kan dit nie verstaan nie,
105 baie mense het mos dieselfde vanne wat nie familie is nie, maar dit kom tog van
106 een mens af?
- 107 Praat oor vanne
108 Praat oor Skei-Nat onderwyser wat baie gelowig is wat oorboord gaan.
109 Praat oor gelowige vrae wat aan die onderwyser gestel is.
110 Praat oor die skepping.
111 Praat oor hoe daar verskillende gelowige sieninge oor die skepping is.
112 L wonder oor hoe mense aan gode kan glo.
113 Praat oor Ateïsme
114 Praat oor die koms wat naby is.
115 Praat oor mense wat oor die dier se merk gepraat het.
116 Praat oor sendeling in die familie.
117 Praat oor fear factor
118 Praat oor vegetariër word
- 119 C: Ons het die naweek saam met pelle gekuier en die een... toe eet ons skaap, en
120 die een pel se om te dink hierdie skaap het so 'n rukkies terug in die Karoo
121 rondgehardloop.
122 L: H se dit ook altyd [lag]
123 C: Toe dag ek, o, sy tender om 'n vegetarian te word. Klink asof jy 'n nice
124 verhouding het met altwee.
125 L: Ja.
126 C: Verskil hulle baie?
127 L: Um-umm. Nee, hulle verskil nie baie nie, ... maar nou-ja. Ek het lekker geslaap
128 tot half-nege.
129 Praat oor ouderdom.
130 Praat oor of jy mense tannie of juffrou noem
131 Praat oor 'n hond wat sy wou hê moes kleintjies kry.
132 Praat oor hond wat mors in die huis.
133 H hou nie van die hond in die huis nie.
134 Sê totsiens en praat oor werk wat sy nog moet doen.
135 L: Ek weet nie wat om vir my ma-hulle te gee vir Kersfees nie, want hulle het al
136 alles. En hulle sê altyd, nee, liefde sal genoeg wees vir Kersfees.
137 C: Ag maar dit is vir hulle bederf.
138 L: En hulle bederf my altyd so baie, partykeer kom hulle nie agter ek waardeer dit
139 nie.
140 C: Ag, ek dink hulle doen, hmm? [lag] Hoe bederf hulle jou? Laat ek hoor.

- 141 L: My ma koop vir my sweeties en chocolates, ... sweeties en chocolates, sy het vir
142 my nou die dag twee nuwe borsels gekoop.
143 C: O, lekker. Ag gee hulle net drukkies en sê dankie. Waarvan hou hulle?
144 L: My ma is mal oor kerse.
145 C: Ja.
146 L: En my ma soek nou 'n nuwe paar oorbelle. Oorbelle is so duur.
147 C: Dit is.
148 L: Dit is net 'n paar dae voor Kersfees. Sy verjaar die 16de Desember.
149 C: O, alright
150 L: Kyk hierdie ding wat H gekry het. My nefie is mos nou in China.
151 Bekyk persent
152 Lag
153 Praat oor ma se sussie wat kinders wil hê
154 Praat oor wat haar man doen
155 Praat oor volgende besoek

- 1 **Luanne Session 2**
- 2 Chat net lekker – besluit om net verhouding te stig – nie iets te vra – net te kyk wat
- 3 gebeur
- 4
- 5 Seated outside
- 6 Draw time line
- 7 Chat about many friends she has
- 8 Chat about before school - 4 years: broke arm – she wanted to fly
- 9 Primary school – being head girl
- 10 Now grade 8 & 9
- 11
- 12 Goes into detail about hair of friends, names
- 13 Close knit friends
- 14 Visits her house a lot
- 15
- 16 Had to move – not that nice, but okay
- 17 Teken spotprentjies
- 18 Eet lekker ysies en super C's
- 19
- 20 Gesels oor wat Kersfees gaan gebeur
- 21 Gaan op kamp
- 22
- 23 Kyk deur Huisgenoot
- 24 Vra niks oor my prente nie
- 25 Einde
- 26 *(2 December 2003)*

1 **Luanne Session 3**

2 07/01

3 L: Een wat in S [redacted] bly en een wat in V [redacted] bly.

4 C: Ummm. Hoe was Kersfees en Nuwe jaar gewees?

5 L: Dit was lekker, ons het nie eintlik veel gedoen nie, die familie het maar hierna
6 toe gekom.

7 Praat oor family en geskenke.

8 L: Ek het 'n rompie gekry, so 'n mooi rooi broek met 'n belt, 'n wasmasjien, sulke
9 mooi skoene gekry. Maar ek het gister my kamer reggepak.

10 C: O, so jy is reg vir die nuwe jaar?

11 L: Ja, en ek het 'n nuwe tas gekry...

12 C: Skooltas?

13 L: Ja, dit was R200 gewees

14 C: Wow, dit ... ek moet dit sien

15 L: Dit is 'n Reebok tas so 'n mens betaal vir die naam.

16 C: Ehhuh.

17 L: En my ma het vir my nuwe kouse gegee want ek het nie meer kouse nie. [lag]
18 Anders moet ek kaalvoet met die goed loop... en nuwe shaving cream. Black
19 Berry, wat het ek nog gekry? Ag,... en ek het geld gekry.

20 C: Okay, en wat het jy vir jou ma-hulle gekry?

21 L: Ek en my ma se sussie het gekonkel want my ma het gesê sy het nuwe oorbelle
22 nodig.

23 C: O, okay.

24 L: Toe sê ek vir my ma se sussie sy soek oorbelle, want sy is die een met die baie
25 geld. Toe kry sy vir my ma die oorbelle. Ek het vir my ma so 'n mooi dagboekie,
26 'n dagboekie ...

27 C: Dis nice.

28 L: Ek het vir my pa 'n nuwe paar kouse gekoop. R45 per paar want dit was so 'n
29 dik paar kouse.

30 L: O, dis nice.

31 C: Verder het ons almal geweet wat ons gaan kry. Sy het so 'n rugsak gekry want
32 sy gaan mos die Argus ry, dan is die koeldrank binne in.

33 Praat oor sak en Argus.

34 Gaan kry foto oor ritte by pretpark

35 Praat oor karre wat in die straat jaag en honde wat blaf.

36 C: Het Hannah dit laaskeer, dit genoem daar was moeilikheid met haar werk en dis
37 hoekom julle moes trek?

38 L: Ja, sy het haar werk verloor.

39 C: Die company het bankrot gegaan of iets, ja.

40 L: Ja, die tannie het vir haar 'n Mercedes gekoop en toe kon sy dit nie meer betaal
41 nie.

42 C: Dis erg.

43 L: Ons bly nou in 'n helfte kleiner as wat ons gebly het.

44 C: Ja, dit was seker nogal bad. Want sy het laas gesê sy dink dat sy vir jou en M
45 deur 'n baie slegte tyd gesit.

46 L: Ja

47 C: Ek het vanoggend gesit en dink of dit nou al beter is, of julle aanpas?

48 L: Ja, ons het die tannie die ander dag weer gesien...

49 Telefoon lui.

50 C: So wat is jou planne vir die nuwe jaar?

51 L: Ek stres eintlik oor standerd sewe. Van my vriende sê dit is moeilik, maar van
52 my vriende sê dit is nie so moeilik nie.

53 C: Umm

- 54 L: Maar nou ja, sal maar kyk. Ek stres nie so baie daaroor nie.
 55 C: Maar dit is maar so in die begin van die jaar dit is hierdie afwagting en die
 56 apprehension en wie is onderwysers.
 57 L: Ja, ek ken helfte van die onderwysers nie.
 58 C: Ja, dit is sulke nuwe goed, en dit is sekerlik meer werk as graad agt.
 59 L: Ja, natuurlik
 60 C: Ja, en julle is mos op die nuwe sillabus ook né. Ag, as 'n mens net elke dag
 61 bybly met jou, daai ou goedjies van jou eie huiswerkies doen en bybly elke dag,
 62 dan gaan dit nie te moeilik wees nie, umm?
 63 L: Ja,
 64 C: Ag, en jou rapport was mos goed?
 65 L: Ja, hier lê hy.
 66 C: Laat ek bietjie sien?
 67 C: Aitsa laat ons sien
 68 Kyk na rapport en bespreek dit
 69 L: Dit is van sport en sulke goed, ek het nie baie in sport deelgeneem nie, want my
 70 ma wil my vir kickboxing insit want ek is mal oor kickboxing.
 71 C: Is dit by die skool?
 72 L: Nee, nie by die skool nie,
 73 C: Oo!
 74 L: En my ma wil my insit vir belly dancing.
 75 C: [lag] En waarvoor wil jy gaan?
 76 L: Maar ek doen nogsteeds hip-hop, so, ja, maar ek doen nog tussen yoga maar
 77 die video.
 78 C: O, jy het die video.
 79 Praat oor yoga en wys van die posisies.
 80 Praat weer oor punte
 81 L: Ek kon beter gedoen het, ek weet ek kon beter gedoen het.
 82 Praat oor punte uiteensetting op rapport
 83 C: Dis nice, umm geluk.
 84 L: En ek was nie een keer afwesig gewees nie, en ek het niks straf punte nie.
 85 C: Jy is baie gelukkig, jy hou jouself uit die moeilikheid uit.
 86 L: Ja
 87 C: Dit is baie nice.
 88 Praat weer oor rapport uiteensetting
 89 L: Dit is seker nou nie in almal nie, ek is hoër as die graadgemiddeld, behalwe
 90 tegnologie, tegnologie ek hou net nie van dit nie.
 91 C: Wat moet julle daar doen?
 92 L: Dit is van modelle bou en alles van vervaardig ek hou nie van sulke goed nie.
 93 C: Ja
 94 L: Op laerskool was ook nie, dit nie my favourite vak nie... want een van die
 95 meisies was een van daai en haar ma ook ...so haar ma het nie baie van my en
 96 my drie vriendinne gehou nie.
 97 C: Was die ma die juffrou?
 98 L: Nee, baie ingemeng by die skool, so
 99 C: Oopsie, so sy het die woord laat trek dat julle nie so wonderlik is nie. Okay,
 100 umm. Seuns goed, die modelle bou en ...
 101 L: Van dit was lekker gewees. Ons sou 'n karretjie gebou het wat regtig gewerk
 102 het, maaa toe kry ons nie tyd daarvoor nie.
 103 C: Dis jammer, want dit sou nou interresant gewees het.
 104 L: Wat rêrig soos met petrol werk of gas of wat ook al.
 105 C: Umm
 106 L: Ek sou nou weg gewees het.
 107 C: O

- 108 L: Ek sou Sondag terug gekom het. Ek sou saam my ouma Groot Marico toe
 109 gegaan het.
- 110 C: Okay. Skaapwêreld.
- 111 L: Ja, en toe gaan ek nie.
- 112 C: Hoekom nie?
- 113 L: Sommer nie.
- 114 C: Was jy stout?
- 115 L: Nee, [lag] ... my ouma-hulle wou nie hê ek moet alleen gaan nie so.
 116 Praat nog oor nie weggaan.
- 117 Praat oor stilte.
- 118 Speel 'n CD
- 119 Praat oor die musiek se woorde en vloek
- 120 C: So wat doen jou ma-hulle as jy 'n liedjie speel met vloekwoorde in?
 121 ...
- 122 L: Ek het nog nooit 'n liedjie voor haar gespeel wat vloekwoorde in het nie, so...
 123 C: O, okay. Ag lekker jong. Nou ja. Wat sou jy nou vir kinders se wat nou op skool
 124 is wat is lekker van twee ma's
- 125 L: Wat is die lekker dele, ek weet nie...
 126 C: Moet ons begin by die bad dele [lag]
- 127 L: Ek soek net ... [redacted]
 128 [redacted]
 129 [redacted]
 130 [redacted]
- 131 C: Jy sien pa ook so min, dis eintlik ...
 132 L: [redacted]
 133 [redacted]
 134 [redacted]
 135 [redacted]
 136 [redacted]
 137 [redacted]
 138 [redacted]
 139 [redacted]
 140 [redacted]
 141 [redacted]
 142 [redacted]
 143 [redacted]
 144 [redacted]
 145 [redacted]
- 146 C: Okay
- 147 L: ..maar daar is ook jy moet ook altyd verby jou pa kom, [lag] so dit is nie eintlik
 148 moeilik om verby my ma te kom nie.
- 149 C: So dis jou voordeel.
- 150 L: Ja, [lag] en as ek vir H vra, sal sy eers vir my vra, hoekom wil ek dit doen.
 151 C: Okay.
- 152 L: Dan sal sy vir my sê okay.
- 153 C: Alright ummm. Wat nie altyd by jou pelle so is nie. [redacted]
 154 [redacted]
 155 [redacted]
 156 [redacted]
 157 [redacted]
 158 [redacted]
 159 [redacted]
 160 [redacted]
 161 [redacted]
 162 [redacted]

- 163 [REDACTED]
- 164 C: Die vet weet... Vertel my van kleuterskool of laerskool, het kinders ooit vir jou
165 iets lelik gesê of nasty gesê of... gewonder of vrae gevra?
- 166 L: Glad nie,
167 C: Die kinders gaan net aan.
168 L: Pla my nie.
169 C: Maar dink jy dit pla hulle?
170 L: Vir wie?
171 C: Vir jou maats, of ...dat hulle net wonder
172 L: Nee wat, ook een van my vriendinne se ma hulle is ook gay, maar haar
173 lewensmaat is nou oorlede, maar hulle is lankal al uitmekaar uit, nou bly sy en
174 haar ma nou maar alleen.
175 C: O, Okay. Interessant.
176 L: So ek is nie die enigste een nie.
177 C: Ek dink dit raak al meer en meer, dit raak baie algemeen.
178 L: Maar dit is eintlik verkeerd om gay te wees, want dit staan in die Bybel. Ek dink
179 dis in Romeine 1, want ons onderwyser het ons eenkeer vertel dat as jy dit
180 eenkeer doen.
181 C: O, Okay
182 L: want as jy dit eenkeer gedoen het gaan die Here jou nooit kan vergewe
183 daarvoor nie, want hy het nie 'n vrou en 'n vrou of 'n man en 'n man saamgesit
184 nie, hy't 'n man en 'n vrou gemaak. Dis hoekom, dit is eintlik baie groot sonde,
185 maar nou ja
186 C: En toe jy dit die dag by die skool hoor, toe was jy seker baie upset?
187 L: Ag, nee, dit was maar 'n skok gewees.
188 C: Ja, en ek dink meer vir jou omdat jou gesin dan verkeerd is, want ek dink die
189 ander kinders sal luister en dink ja, okay sure, maar ek dink vir jou is dit soos in,
190 'n personal issue.
191 L: Ja
192 C: Want jy moet terugkom vandag en dan kyk jy vir jou ma en dan kyk jy vir jou ma
193 en dan dink, weet sy dit, wat dink sy daarvan? Praat jy met haar daaroor.
194 L: Nee, nie eintlik nie.
195 C: Dit sou vir my upsetting wees. Ek probeer my nou in jou skoene indink.
196 L: Ja, nee. Ek gaan maar net aan met die lewe
197 C: [lag] Dit is maar die beste... imm, en het julle toe al by die skool daaroor gechat
198 of...
199 L: Nee, ons praat nie eintlik daaroor nie...ons praat nie daaroor nie
200 C: Okay
201 L: Niemand praat oor hulle ma's of pa's by die skool nie. Ons praat van Sewende
202 laan en van musiek en seuns. (lag)
203 C: Okay
204 ...
205 L: En nuwe fliëks
206 C: Ja, nee, dit is interresant.
207 Praat oor musiek
208 Praat oor staatsteater
209 Praat oor dans en punte
210 Praat oor dagboek – dat sy sprokie kan skryf – storie oor gesin.... 3 nice goed wat
211 gebeur
212 C: Maybe as 'n onderwyser weer op 'n dag met julle praat oor al die bybelversies,
213 dan kan jy dit skryf, dis dan 'n nice manier om te sê sjoe, dit was bietjie weird, of
214 L: Daai onderwyser van ons wat so is, hy sit nie eers sy TV op Sewende laan nie,
215 ek dink hy's te erg.
216 C: Ek dink ook hy's bietjie erg.

- 217 L: Hy is rerig te erg. Maar hierdie crossing over met John Edwards, dit is nie reg
218 nie. Ek weet nie of hy so maak en of hy rerig praat met die dooie mense, as die
219 TV daarop is, dan sit ek dit sommer af.
- 220 C: Ek wil nog met 'n dominee oor dit gaan praat.
- 221 L: Ek meen hoe kry hy dit reg. Ek is bly ek kan nie, met, die dooie mense sien nie.
- 222 C: Die bybel se daar is 'n kloof tussen die wêreld en daai wêreld. Maar ja, dan is
223 daar mense wat sê, maar toe ek vyf was of toe ek tien was, toe gebeur dit, oo,
224 dis bietjie anders.
- 225 L: Ja.
- 226 C: Dit is weer anders. Ek is weer so 'n gentle soul, ek sal weer almal glo.
- 227 L: Ja, ek sal ook nie sommer vir iemand as hulle nie mooi lyk nie sê jy lyk sleg nie.
- 228 Praat oor klere koop en aanpas
- 229 L: Dit is moeilik om vir iemand te sê hulle lyk nie mooi nie.
- 230 C: Ja.
- 231 L: Veral as hulle nie baie klere het nie, en dit is hulle beste klere is .
- 232 C: Party mense lyk net altyd mooi, al dra hulle 'n swartsak.
- 233 Praat oor 'n sprokie skryf.
- 234 Praat oor Harry Potter, of dit goed of sleg is
- 235 Tazzos
- 236 Praat oor enigiets wat 'n mens sleg kan maak.
- 237 Die feetjie, wonderwerk vraag.
- 238 Praat oor Chinese skrif.
- 239 C: Dit is so precious.
- 240 L: Dit is my naam.
- 241 C: Vertel my weer die storie.
- 242 L: Dit is H se nefie... hy is ook 'n gay, dit is sy lewensmaat, hy is 'n Chinese man.
- 243 C: Okay
- 244 L: Hy is baie oulik, hy het mos niks hare op sy arms nie, hy is so bruin.
- 245 C: Is die Chinese so?
- 246 L: Nee, nie almal nie.
- 247 C: O, Okay. Ja dit is ongelooflik interresant.
- 248 Reël oor volgende besoek.

1 **Luanne Session 4**

2 **2004-02-09**

3 At last – a meeting with Luanne and it was relaxed, and nice – for a lack of a better
4 word.

5 And I decided not to tape it, and I really don't know – I think to make it better for
6 myself, although I was very conscious of my own voice – I can hear my simple/
7 stupid laugh, and that a lot of the time I say "uhm, okay" – things like that

8
9 We talked a little bit about school and the new school year. She has a lot of things to
10 do each day, they already handed in 7 portfolios, but she's very proud that she
11 got 83 % for her Afrikaans portfolio which was about if Afrikaans would survive in
12 the next 10 years, Afrikaans and the media or in the media....

13 And she likes Maths

14 And she used to like English but the teacher isn't nice so now she doesn't like that
15 You can't like a subject if the teacher isn't nice

16
17 She and her moms went away this weekend – her mom is cycling and she wanted
18 to do the 105km, but after only 3 km's her chain or something around the cog
19 broke. And even a good friend of them – and now I can't remember if it's a man, I
20 think the name sounded like man's – couldn't even get it back on

21 And she tanned red-hot and were extremely sore (sunburn and while she was
22 swimming it started to rain and her tent that she borrowed from a friend leaked so
23 everything was so wet. She and her mom went to the heated swimming pool on
24 Sunday morning early – at 6. She said it was nice for her.

25
26 She told me at one stage that all her friends and some other kids come to her with
27 their problems, she doesn't know why, and I asked her to whom does she goes
28 when she has a problem and she basically immediately answered she tells "ma-
29 hulle"

30 That was when she was describing the new church she is going to, the Echo-group
31 or something. They have that on Wednesdays I think the group from the church.
32 Don't know exactly if the church is also called the Echo – and she says that she
33 like the nice English songs they sing, it's not like the old Afrikaans boring stuff.
34 And that they talk about different stuff each time and that last time they talked
35 about abuse, and a lot of people, came forward and talked about their
36 experiences. But she said she couldn't talk about one of her friend in primary
37 school who's father had beat her up

38
39 Oh, and she welcomed my offer to help or assist her in any way with her tasks at
40 hand and asked me for some references regarding stress that they have to get
41 for Life orientation

42
43 She's really an extravert and also mentioned how she needs a lot of friends

44
45 While we were doing the collage on our life motto – or just any picture that you like
46 that resembles something you want to do or value.. she talked about her love or
47 liking for make-overs, nails, tone nails, foot massages that she used to give her
48 moms; liking to do people 's hair and make-up; one friend of her mom is a
49 hairdresser and she says they've got lots of money – and mentioned all the nice
50 fancy cars that they drive.

51 And they want to go in business together

52 And in the beginning she mentioned that she didn't know what to do after matric, but
53 she came up with all these ideas

54 And interior decorating for instance a guesthouse – and she says it's her mom's
55 dream to own one and her mom can do the cooking and she'll do the furnishing
56 and all that stuff.
57
58 Really sounds as if she adores her mom
59 Did mentioned Hannah's name – can't remember when
60
61 She's also starting with guitar lessons and needs to save up some money to buy
62 one – at school.
63 Doesn't get time for yoga anymore
64 We have shavers in common (skeermesse) – and that we want to travel overseas
65
66 In beginning it felt as if she gets bored with my stories, that she doesn't want to
67 listen to me – maybe I'm boring, or she thinks she needs to speak and it's not
68 about me – I know it's not about me, but I want her to get to know me – but how it
69 really feels is that she is a typical extreme extrovert who like shop talk about lots
70 of stuff, but are not really interested in what other people has to say....
71 But later on it got better...
72 Said that she enjoyed the collage-making
73
74 When walking to car said that she usually finds it easier to talk to older people,
75 mentioned aunt of 28 and a girl she met on bus whom turned out to be 23
76
77 Got a wedding this Saturday – something else next weekend as well, I'll see her in 2
78 weeks time – and I asked her to start writing stories – I know she's busy and I
79 told her that, but yes, for now I need some writings from her.. but I think the letter
80 worked well, do that more often Carien – although for an extrovert – you won't get
81 reflections that easily!
82
83 Okay, my process, my experience of the experience¹

¹ Luanne, I decided not to tape our words today, maybe because I wanted to set myself free from the exact spoken words, what's more important is what's going on between us, the space we shared. Today I enjoyed myself, I felt comfortable, sharing little thoughts as they come up, not contemplating them and wondering what you would make of them, and if I can ask something or fishing and hunting for any bits about gayness, or prejudice from your mouth. What I wanted to ask or mention when you've said about your church wanting to put up some signs that welcomes any race, religion, sex worker, poor people into the church, I wondered if gays are also in that list of yours, or your church – you love your mom, I can hear that. And I sense that she and you will become closer during these teenager years, [REDACTED]. But this is my observation, and I get no such clues from you .. so where does my subjectivity blur into your experience, or my retelling of your story. So what is Luanne's story of negotiating her world with the outside dominant narrative. Luanne keeps quiet. And she doesn't care, and luckily she's got this personality that reinforce this, and she's got lot s of friends that grew up with her and they accept her, and come for visits, so they're fine. But Luanne doesn't make a point of discussing her gay moms – who would? But at crucial times when heterosexist statements are made, she doesn't discuss that with anybody I think.

About my process: I'm starting to wonder how am I going to write these narrative, and especially Luanne's, am I going to take the themes that come up from my analysis and weave that in, and just represent them in storied form, or am I going to show the intricacies and details of this girls' life – to enhance our understanding of how she constructs her family. Then I am going to talk about ordinary everyday stuff... shaving, hairdo's, Afrikaans assignments... and is that what I want to share...
I'm uncertain... And I don't know where the answers lie... and all I know is I must find it for myself, and there's is probably no right or wrong way, but surely a better way....

- 1 **Luanne Session 5**
2 **25 March 04**
3 Liewe Luanne
4 Sy was so hartseer gewees – sy voel so skuldig en so seer oor wat sy aan hulle
5 gedoen het – haar ma's – en veral oordat sy vir haar ma gesê het sy gaan
6 sommer pak en by haar pa gaan bly haar ma het gevra of dit is hoekom sy dit
7 gedoen het, omdat sy hulle wou straf – ag, shame – en dat die kerel met wie sy
8 so die huisreëls verbreek het nou nie eens meer kontak met haar het nie – hy's
9 groot en sy kan nie saamgaan na al sy jolplekke toe nie, sy's nog te jonk – en
10 hy's 'n skateboarder so hy ken baie mense, en meisies sê sy.
11 Ag haar hart was so seer – en sy's regtig okay met die 2 ma's in haar lewe. H is baie
12 streng, maar dis wie sy is en dis wie Luanne het en she's fine with it.
13 Maar o dat sy sê dat niemand weet nie, en hulle sê baiekeer H is haar tannie – die
14 feit dat ons gesinnne steeds in die closet is sê baie van die samelewing en van
15 hoe oop die wêreld nou eintlik is – ons mammas en "pappas" is baie keer 'still in
16 the closet ...'
17 Praat oor video
18 C: Want imm, by my het die vraag opgekom oor jou is, hoe kry jy dit reg om so okay
19 te wees oor jou ma-hulle, imm, want baie kids het insidente wat gebeur het, soos
20 iemand wat iets vra of..
21 L: Niemand weet eintlik nie
22 C: Ja, so dit is dalk ook 'n rede
23 L: Ons sê ook altyd Hannah is my tannie, so
24 C: Dit klink of dit so 'n gesamentlike besluit is, so 'n unwritten rule, ek wil nou nie die
25 woord reël gebruik nie
26 L: Ja
27 (– iets van hond wat appel eet)
28 C: Hannah het ook genoem toe ek die eerste keer hier was dat jy het 'n klomp
29 maats, wat al van die laerskool af saamkom, en ek en jy het ook al oor jou maats
30 gepraat, so is dit dalk ook 'n rede?
31 L: Ja, hulle is gewoon daaraan
32 C: As jy kan terugdink, wat is jou eerste herinnering, jou eerste awareness van o,
33 hier is 2 ma's
34 L: Ek kan regtig nie onthou nie
35 Nee jis, ek kan rerig nie onthou nie
36 C: En as jy terugdink en hoe dit nou is, wat is jou awarenenss, die Engelse het 'n
37 mooi woord, otherness, want dit is so klein bietjie anders
38 L: Ja
39 C: Dink jy die ideaal is nog daar van dat mens met grootword en trou en kinders hê?
40 L: Ek weet nie, ek het nog nooit so daaraan gedink nie
41 C: Okay, dan's dit vir jou 'n vraag om hierdie week oor te dink
42 C: Egoli – met Braam, wat is jou mening?
43 L: Ek weet nie, dalk is hy nie gay nie, dalk hou hy van haar, ek weet nie
44 Hy sal wel agterkom of hy gay is as hy saam met haar is
45 C: Hoe dink jy gaan hy dit agterkom
46 L: Ek weet nie
47 C: Okay, en terug my vraag van die otherness, hoe's dit met 2 ma's
48 L: Lag verleë, dis okay, dis lekker
49 C: Wat is lekker, wat is okay, wat is dalk bietjie minder okay
50 L: Imm, 'n ma is mos altyd so beskermend, so dit is nie altyd maklik vir hulle om ja
51 te sê nie (lag)
52 C: Imm
53 L: Maar dis lekker as ons uitgaan en piekniek hou en so
54 C: Hoekom dink jy is ma's so beskermend?

- 55 L: Ek weet nie, want mens is nader aan mekaar, mm,
 56 C: Hoe is ma vir jou 'n anderster of ek wil amper meer 'n ma as H?
 57 L: Dis baie dieselfde
 58 C: En hoekom dink jy is dit so want dis nie orals so nie, party kinders fokus op regtig
 59 meer op die "birth-mom"
 60 L: Ek en my ma click ook partykeer meer as ek en H
 61 Sy kry trane in oë .. ek vra en die trane, jy kan maar huil, was dit 'n upsetting week
 62 vir jou, vol emosies en dinge... wat gaan aan, jy lyk vir my lekker upset?
 63 Begin huil –...
 64 C: Jy's altyd so braaf en sterk
 65 L: Ja
 66 C: En by die skool gaan dit goed en jou kitaar en dinge
 67 Waar kom die trane vandaan?
 68 ..huil
 69 C: Wat gaan aan in jou hart?
 70 L: Ek voel so sleg oor hierdie ding wat ek gedoen het, en my ma-hulle trust my nie
 71 meer nie...
 72 ...
 73 C: Het daar al ooit so iets slegs gebeur?
 74 L: Nee
 75 C: Of net 'n klein bietjie erg
 76 L: Daar was hierdie ding met die ou oorkant die pad
 77 C: Wat het gebeur
 78 L: Ag ek en hy was saam gewees en toe't hy ook kom kuier
 79 C: Toe's dit weer 'n issue?
 80 L: Mmm
 81 C: Hoe klink dit my die kêrels in die huis werk nie so lekker nie?
 82 L: Mmm
 83 (lang stilte)
 84 Sy mag met meisievriende kuier, nie met seuns – nie by hulle gaan kuier, nie saam
 85 met hulle gaan flik
 86 Chat oor grootword.... (gaan nie als transkribeer want dis personal – beskerming
 87 van Luanne; ek praat te veel...)
 88 Ek wonder oor hoe baie emosioneel goed praat ma met haar – want sy sukkel om
 89 eie standpunte te vorm (nog jonk...) – enigsens emosie te gee
 90 Want sy's goed met die "wêreldse" goed – kan lekker baie praat – en energiek en so
 91 – events/ gebeure – maar wat sy dink en hoe sy voel as ek nou Egan gebruik,
 92 dan sukkel sy!
 93 Geen kontak meer met haar en F, mag nie kom kuier as hulle nie hier is nie, hy's nie
 94 meer in skool, nie meer selfoon – sy dink nie hy sal kom kuier as hulle hier is nie,
 95 sy dink maybe sal hy, weet ook nie
 96 Hoe voel jy oor hom? Erg lief of
 97 Ek het hom geken maar nie baie goed nie
 98 Jy sê mos nie altyd vir die eerste keer jy's lief vir hom nie, die dag toe hy kom kuier
 99 het toe sê ek vir hom;
 100 Dis goed sy't nou uitgevind, want as dit dalk 'n latere stadium was, dan was dit nog
 101 erger, die waarheid kom altyd uit
 102 Het hulle vir jou gesê ek het al probeer rook,
 103 Nee
 104 Ek het probeer rook, en ek was so bang dat as H dit uitvind by iemand anders is ek
 105 dood
 106 Toe vertel ek die aand, kon dit nie meer hou nie
 107 Toe lag sy, toe lag sy
 108 Toe sê sy almal probeer dit een of ander tyd

- 109 My ma het vir my gevra of ek hulle probeer terugkry vir nou die aand se goeters,
 110 want ek het gesê ek vat sommer my goed en gaan bly by pa
 111 ...
 112 (ma kry so maklik seer sê ek)
 113 L: My ma sê dit het vir haar gevoel of ek al die jare se goed in haar gesig
 114 teruggegooi het
 115 C: Enige huis sit kinders vas met hule ouers, wat maak dit so, partymaal ondraaglik,
 116 in aanhalingstekens dat jy sal sê ek gaan bly sommer by my pa, of wat gebeur?
 117 L: Dit voel net partykeer of hulle dit unfair hanteer
 118 C: Okay, soos in hoe
 119 L: Ai, (sug) ek weet nie
 120 C: Sê, ...ek kan sien jou kop is vol dinge
 121 L: Hoe moet ek dit sê
 122 C: Ek gee voorbeelde van party kids sê hulle luister nie, ander is ongelooflike streng
 123 L: Hulle is streng, hulle is net protected oor my, ja
 124 - - -
 125 L: Dis ook as H baie stres het by die werk, sy's net nie lekker as sy by die huis kom
 126 nie
 127 - - -
 128 L: My ma het mos nou my selfoon, en toe bel my ma vanmiddag my en sê sy't 'n
 129 interessante SMS gekry – chat oor pel wat van Kaap af kom kuier,
 130 Ma is mal oor hom, sy sê hy's nie so mooi nie, nie dat dit net oor looks gaan nie,
 131 maar hy's okay, maar nou nie so mooi nie
 132 Hy kom kuier op haar verjaarsdag, dan sê ma kan hulle gaan fliiek, hulle sal
 133 saamgaan, net ander fliiek kyk
 134 Explore die feit dat F net nie weer kom nie, en hoe dit eintlik vir haar baie seer is
 135 Hy's 'n skateboarder, so hy ken baie mense..so baie meisies ook... en ek kan nie
 136 saam met hom na al sy parties en goed toe gaan nie – "as hy wil gaan party wil
 137 hy sy girl saamvat, en ek kan nie gaan nie, of klubs..."
 138 (Vir haar NB om ou te hê, reël vir hom gebreek, en hy los haar net daarna...nie
 139 bereid om onder "streng" omstandighede vir haar te fight nie...)
 140 Sê wel aan einde sy voel beter
 141 Sê kan nie met pelle hier oor praat nie...

- 1 **Luanne Session 6**
2 **2004-04-01**
3 Praat oor: kuier by sussie en haar 4 weke oue baba
4 M██████: waar jongste sus van ma gaan trou
5 Hoe moet jou troue lyk?
6 Ek weet nie
7 Groot troue, klein troue?
8 Nie te groot nie en nie te klein nie
9 Vakansie: gaan dalk Sondag see toe saam met jongste sus, D██████, weet nie van
10 vliegkaartjie geld nie
11 Nefie uit Kaap gaan nou hier by sy sus kom bly, gaan John Voster toe, koshuise in
12 Kaap is te duur
13 Burrman sing vreeslik hart – dit pla haar
14 Skoolvakke
15 C: "Ons kom nou redelik aan die einde van die proses en ek het bietjie deur die
16 goed gegaan waaroor ons al gepraat het"
17
18 Vriende van kleins af en hulle is gewoon, praat nie oor ouers, daar's belangriker
19 goed, nie nuwe maats (ons is 'n hele groep wat saamkom van laerskool af)
20 Ek vra: As ander vra oor wie's dit, sê jy tannie of vriendin
21 Sy sê: Tannie
22 Ek vra or ander pelle wat dalk sommer net sien, of hulle iets vra - Glad nie, sê sy
23 Hannah gaan partykeer na funksies toe
24 L: Ek gaan nie saam nie – geen reaksie of vrae na die tyd nie
25 C: As hulle sou vra
26 L: Die onderwysers weet
27 C: Hoe weet hulle?
28 L: Ek weet nie, maar die hoof weet, want my Netbal juffrou van die laerskool weet
29 en dis haar man
30 C: O dit maak sin
31 C: Ek wonder of dit iets is wat gesê moet word
32 L: Ek weet nie
33 C: In laerskool toe jy hoofmeisie was het iemand iets gesê
34 L: Nee
35 C: En pa in Engeland het hy al iets gepraat oor haar of uitgevra
36 L: Ek weet nie, ne, hy vra net hoe gaan dit met hulle
37 C: Ek vra uit oor godsdien, en spesifiek die onderwyser wat so teen 7de laan was
38 L: Hy's mos nou oorsee, hy kyk ook nie Egoli nie, hy kyk net kinderprogramme soos
39 Liewe Heksie met sy kinders, maar volgens my is dit eintlik erger want dis mos
40 hekse, nie dat dit vir my so is nie, want dis cute
41 C: Ek weet nie of jy baie daaroor dink nie, maar as iemand self besef hulle is gay,
42 en hulle is 'n Christen, dan is dit nogal 'n ding waarmee hulle worstel oor wat die
43 Bybel sê, of hoe die dominees daaroor praat. Hoe erg dink jy daaroor?
44 L: Ek dink nie baie daaroor nie
45 C: Ek wonder nogal daaroor of kinders van gay ouers, amper dieselfde is soos
46 kinders wat self gay is, wat wonder oor gaan die samelewing my aanvaar, oor die
47 Bybel se goed en so
48 L: Sy frons, ek weet nie, imm, uhh,
49 C: Het jy ooit gewonder of bly jy wonder oor
50 L: Ek dink nie baie daaroor nie, dis, dit was eenkeer ook daai meneer wat gesê het
51 imm, 7de laan is uit en sulke goed, hy't ook daaroor gepraat, en toe't ek baie
52 daaroor begin wonder, want ek weet nie, hy't ook die stukkie gesê ek dink dis
53 Romeine 1, waar daar staan God het 'n man en vrou gemaak vir mekaar en nie 'n

54 vrou en 'n vrou of 'n man en 'n man nie, en toe't ek maar net daarvoor gewonder
55 en toe't ek weer daarvan vergeet
56 C: Tot ek weer met my vrae kom
57 L: Nee, (lag) dis reg
58 Ma en H wat se dissiplinestyle wat verskil, in elke huis dalk so, sy smile en sê ja,
59 gaan beter sedert laas week
60 Ek vra hoekom so belangrik dat ma hulle weet sy waardeer hulle?
61 Sy sê: Ek weet nie, seker maar oordat ek lief is vir hulle
62 Wil nie meer skoonheid swat nie, sy gril vir haar eie sweet so wat as ander sweet as
63 sy hulle masseer; en sy gril vir puisies, haar een pel se rug is vol en sy gril erg
64 Kinders spot nie meer oor geskeide kinders nie, omtrent almal se kinders is geskei;
65 sy sal nie sê haar ma het nou 'n girlfriend nie, bly net stil
66 Ek vra of F geweet het van haar ma, of sy gesê het
67 Nee, hy't seker toe hy hier was die aand agtergekome.
68 C: "Wat het vir hom gesê van ma-hulle?"
69 L: Ek dink nie hy weet nie, maar ek dink die aand toe hy hier was toe kom hy dit
70 seker agter"
71 Praat oor hoe H vir hom gesê het hy moes meer verantwoordelikheid geneem het,
72 hy's die ouer een en al die wette;
73 Ek sê ai dis erg, al die detail
74 En sy sê ja, en hy weet dit, hy's al amper 18.
75 Het baie gay vriende, sy sit nie by hulle as hulle praat nie, sy doen haar eie ding, of
76 in die kamer of by TV
77 Beaam dat sy nie 'n issue maak van ouers nie, dis wie hulle is...
78 Toe ons uitstap en ek sê dan sien ek haar more toe sê sy "ek hoop nou nie more is
79 die laaste kuier nie"
80 Ek sê, wel die met al die formele vrae...
81 Praat oor oupa wat dood is toe ma 7 was, ouma leef nog en sy shop saam met
82 haar; praat oor blomme, ring..

1 **Luanne Session 7**

2 **7 April 2004**

3 Ons kyk video – 2 moms

4 L: Ons het laas keer gepraat oor ek wat gesê het Hannah is my tannie né, maar H
5 sê dit eintlik self meer, want die meisietjie wat hier bly, sy sê vir haar ma,
6 "mommy, I want two moms". En toe vra sy vir H nou die aand "are you Luanne's
7 second mom or her other mom ", en toe sê H "nee , ek's haar tannie", so H sê
8 ook eintlik meer sy's my tannie

9 C: O

10 L: Toe stry die kleintjie met haar, "no, but you're her other mommy" toe hou sy
11 heeltyd so aan toe sê H, "okay, okay I'm her other mom"

12 C: Dis eintlik mooi gestel

13 L: Ja die kind het gesê dis cool.

14 Chat oor "wat is 'n ma"...en hoe H en M verskil en dieselfde is.. sy beaam net of sê
15 sy weet nie

16 C: en die kind sê sy's jou ma, en sy sê nee, en nou kan mens vra hoekom sê sy dit,
17 is dit oor die samelewing wat ..., wil sy dit wegsteek, is dit maar net makliker om
18 so 'n term te gebruik

19 L: "Ek dink sy wil dit wegsteek"

20 stilte

21 C: Okay

22 Praat verder oor bekendstellingsdeel in boek...

23

24

25 Refleksie: mondelings op tape

26 Ek wonder oor die konstruksie van ma-wees en hoekom H haarself voorstel as haar
27 tannie – of sy ooit na LA verwys as "haar kind", of net praat van LA, soos LA net
28 van haar praat as H. En LA jy't dit so mooi gestel van "sy maak my mos groot"...
29 of "sy maak my tog groot"; en ek verstaan dis iets waaroor mense nie
30 normaalweg reflekteer nie, maar die manier hoe jou ouers met jou praat en met
31 die wêreld praat gee vir jou 'n bepaalde boodskap;

32 En ja maybe is jou defence mechanism so dat jy dink nie so daaroor nie, LA dink nie
33 in terme van: o, haar ma noem haar so of ek wens ek kon haar ma noem nie -
34 sy's H punt. En sy vra nie vrae nie maar dit sal interessant wees om vir H te vra,
35 En dit voel amper asof ek stir, asof ek goed in haar los maak, want sy dadelik begin
36 om te sê o tannie het laasweek gevra ... oor hoekom H of tannie noem en H
37 noem haarself tannie, sy doen dit...

38 En die dogterjie het gesê sy wil ook twee ma's hê en sy't H gevra "are you her other
39 mom and then you said no, I'm her aunt" ...dat 'n kind moet insist dat jy is haar
40 ma

41 En wat doen dit aan LA, en ek bly vra wat is sy vir jou, want dink aand die verskil
42 tussen tannie en ma en, of, of H dit nou noodwendig doen om van die
43 samelewing af weg te kom en of sy dit net doen, want dis hoe sy genoem word...
44 ek weet nie

45 En dis regtig waar so, hierdie kind dink nie aan sulke goed nie; en niemand vra haar
46 reguit daaroor by die skool nie, maar dalk kan kinders haar maar daaroor kan
47 praat, en sy sal nonchalant vir hulle sê – want haar vriende weet...

48 Maar wat gaan gebeur as sy nuwe maats maak – wat gaan sy dan doen, gaan sy
49 haar dan voorstel as haar ma se vriendin, of 'n tannie wat by ons bly, of my ma
50 se tannie?

- 1 **Ryland Session 2**
- 2 Talks about:
- 3 Don't like reading, but good with sums
- 4 Danielle better with reading, but dislikes sums
- 5 Picture – Liewe Heksie and motor car – for me projection of dad – rock and roll
- 6 music, like fancy cars (Ferrari), good dancer
- 7 Very aggressive, scene of fight and bloody knife
- 8 Talks about grade 0 concert
- 9 Talks about name for research – Ryledon – (became Ryland)
- 10 Asked if mom must have different name as well
- 11 Unfair to dad cause he only sees them every second weekend
- 12 Danielle knows a lot
- 13 C: Does anyone know that you have two moms
- 14 R: (shakes head no)
- 15 C: Okay
- 16 R: Only my teacher
- 17 C: And your teacher, oh, so she knows, and how did she found out?
- 18 R: Imm, we had to tell her, but I didn't tell her about Auntie Sandy.
- 19 C: Okay
- 20 R: I only told her about my other mother
- 21 C: Imm, what's her name again
- 22 R: Auntie Thea (I confused dad's fiancé with previous partner)
- 23 C: What do you think about auntie Thea
- 24 R: She's nice
- 25 C: And your teacher, does she act differently
- 26 R: She's very strict
- 27 C: Ooeh
- 28 R: Talks about when noisy in class - how she shouts stop it...
- 29 Other boys scribble on worksheet, when bell rings they shout...
- 30 C: What do you think your friends will do if they find out you have two moms
- 31 R: I'll run away
- 32 C: You'll run away
- 33 R: From school
- 34 C: What would happen
- 35 R: They're going to tease me and stuff
- 36 C: That's bad hey
- 37 R: They're going to laugh and say and push me around like I'm a little snake
- 38 C: What stuff would they say
- 39 R: Like
- 40 C: Ugly stuff, (whisper – what)
- 41 R: It's very bad in my school
- 42 C: Okay
- 43 R: The blacks are nasty to me
- 44 C: Okay, why do you think the blacks would be nasty to you?
- 45 R: Imm
- 46 C: Has it happened before,
- 47 R: Imm
- 48 C: With you or with other kids?
- 49 R: Other kids
- 50 C: Okay, and what did they do
- 51 R: They were talking about stuff and that and other people heard and everyone and
- 52 the one person told everyone and lot's of stuff
- 53 C: That's bad, and is there something about your school that also makes it bad

- 54 R: The girlies, they hurt us and every morning they tell us to carry their suitcases;
55 and the older boys, if you bring like a tennis ball to school or something you have
56 to give it to them forever
- 57 C: Oh dear, that's bad, it's sounds a bit like bullying
58 (his voice is very soft, almost crying)
- 59 C: Okay, when you go to school are you worrying about it a lot that someone will
60 found out, that you have 2 moms?
- 61 R: Imm
- 62 C: Okay, what does a lot mean for you
- 63 R: Every day
- 64 C: Okay, and how does that make it feel
- 65 R: Like I don't wanna think about it and then I just go like running and like, then we
66 normally play rugby in the square
- 67 C: That helps you to forget
- 68 R: Ja, and then I go on with other stuff, think about my work
- 69 C: Imm, ja, that's a good idea; and when there's activities at school, like in the
70 beginning of the year there's a parent's evening, and Auntie Sandy goes with
71 mom
- 72 R: Uhuh (no) – only one goes to school, I don't want her to go
- 73 C: What would you say
- 74 R: Then and then I'll run away from that school
- 75 C: What do you do to keep it a secret
- 76 R: I don't talk about it
- 77 C: Family lessons in school
- 78 R: I will just talk about my mom and dad, cause it's none of their business ...like
79 when they ask questions then I just keep quiet and I just say I don't wanna talk
80 about it
- 81 C: Okay
- 82 R: Cause a lot of bad things happened
- 83 C: Bad things
- 84 R: Imm, with my family
- 85 C: You want to share maybe one
- 86 R: A lot of things happened, shares incident of uncle that had a heart attack
- 87 C: And did bad things happened to you
- 88 R: One time when I played rugby and then I was running and then I had an asthma
89 attack....
- 90 (talks about taking to hospital -)
- 91 This week a friend also had a asthma attack – he went with him to doctor/ hospital
- 92 R: I just say, sometimes when they ask I tell them she's my auntie (talks about
93 Auntie Sandy)
- 94 C: And who ask questions like that?
- 95 R: Just once my friend asked who got the asthma attack
- 96 C: And then they're satisfied with that answer
- 97 R: They think it's true
- 98 C: Ja, and that's why you say you're untruthful
- 99 R: Smiles shyly
- 100 C: But sometimes I think, you need to, especially if you're afraid of teasing you need
101 to keep a secret
- 102 C: What will make it better at school
- 103 R: Starts talking about blacks and coloureds calling them Boertjies and whities; only
104 3 people in class that's white, he, another guy and teacher
- 105 "hulle wil net hulleself wit hou"
- 106 We devise plans what to tell them back... end
- 107 C: Like a, let' ask it this way, let me ask it this way. Why do you think they tease
108 you about having two moms?

- 109 R: They want to.
110 C: Mmm (what)
111 R: They want to.
112 C: Mmm, do you think that maybe they don't have that in their culture?
113 R: What does culture mean?
114 C: You've got the black culture and the white culture, um, different habits, different
115 customs, ways of being....
116 R: ...sometimes I go to school and they come and then they say, "You coloured,
117 boere kid"
118 C: Oh.
119 R: There's only 3 white children, people in our class. And it's me, this other guy
120 and my teacher.
121 C: Oh, okay.
122 R: And they ... mock me sometimes.
123 C: And they're calling. you names? Mmm
124 R: We were at the police last time and then we played this game and then it
125 was will you let us Boertjies? Last time.
126 C: You must just tell them you're not a Boertjie you're a Rooi Neck.
127 R:I just don't know.
128 C: Is there something wrong with being a boertjie?
129 R: Mm mm (no), its just a...
130 C: But maybe if you were proud about it, and say I know that, do you think it would
131 stop?
132 R: Mm mm (no)
133 C: Mmm, I wonder.
134 R: That's what I said last time. Do you have a problem with my, that I'm a
135 boerekind. And they said, "yes, because you're white". The other guy, he's the
136 racist in our class né, his name is S [REDACTED], he's a racist, because most of us don't
137 want to pick up papers because our backs are like sore and this other guy broke
138 both of his arms and then how can he. He can only pick up bit by bit. He has one
139 arm. And then S [REDACTED] like, "Hulle wil net hulle wit hou." But this guy only has
140 one arm. And the plaster is around his fingers. Because he broke all his fingers.
141 C: That's bad! I think you must put on a big smile when they call you a boertjie and
142 say, "Yes, I am". And see what they do. Can you do that this week and then we
143 can discuss it next week. Okay great stuff.
144 **2004-03-17, Session 2**

- 1 **Ryland Session 3**
- 2 C: Hi, How are you, almost holiday!
- 3 T: When the school closes
- 4 C: Tomorrow
- 5 T: We are going to come out at 10 o'clock, we are going to go to the school hall, we
- 6 are going to say goodbye to everyone and then we are going to get our rappers
- 7 and hand in our books and then
- 8 C: And then
- 9 T: Then all our friends are coming
- 10 T: And after the long holidays then it's going to turn April, then it's a few days and
- 11 then it's my birthday, the 19th
- 12 C: I must write it down, I don't have you guys birthdays, but I'll remember, the 19th
- 13 C: Um, Last week I remember the blacks teasing you guys for being whities. Do you
- 14 remember that?
- 15 R: I was finished. I was finished.
- 16 C: Mmm, you were finished? Were you like tired as in finished? Or your school work
- 17 finished?
- 18 R: That whole talking is
- 19 C: Is it like closed, it's like nothing that has been said there is
- 20 R: I stayed at home today.
- 21 C: Wow!
- 22 Talks about school. And day at home. He doesn't want to talk about last week.
- 23 Talks about race conflict at school..
- 24 C: Ok, I just thought that maybe if you told them that you don't care that you're a
- 25 whitie it would work.
- 26 R: It doesn't.
- 27 C: Oh, so you've tried that. What happened?
- 28 R: Then they said "ah, you caramel boy".
- 29 C: Have you tried to laugh at them? And then did that work?
- 30 R: Yes, and then everyone start laughing at them and their faces went red.
- 31 R: Then they walked away.
- 32 C: So what do you want to tell me today. 'Cause last week I asked all the questions.
- 33 And now it's your turn. Do you want to ask me any questions?
- 34 R: No
- 35 Talks about friends and sleeping over. Talks about playing and how it was
- 36 interrupted. Then about rugby that they're playing on his birthday. Talks about
- 37 weekend with father and auntie Susan, father getting wet with the sprinkler. And
- 38 Susan's brother when they were eating out, he was waiter there.
- 39 C: What do you do to keep it a secret that auntie Sandy and your mom being
- 40 together?
- 41 R: I told you that other time.
- 42 C: Tell me again. 'Cause I can't remember everything. There's just something more
- 43 I want to know.
- 44 R: I've got nothing to say today.
- 45 C: You're such a secretive person...
- 46 He talks about wanting to play...
- 47 C: Okay after this one question. How do you keep it a secret?
- 48 R: I told you.
- 49 C: Tell me again, how do you keep it a secret
- 50 R: I don't tell anyone.
- 51 C: Okay. And if a friend sees you in a shopping mall with both of them
- 52 R: I say it's my auntie
- 53 C: Okay. Say, will aunt and mom ever hold hands in the shopping mall.

- 54 R: No, they doesn't. She goes on her own shopping, like she runs around and looks
55 at the stuff.
- 56 C: Okay.
- 57 R: My mother just looks at prices.
- 58 C: Okay that's how you're sitting at a Wimpy or coffee shop.
- 59 R: Mmm. Auntie Sandy will just talk, talk, talk.
- 60 C: Okay, do you feel that you have to keep it a secret? How do you keep it a
61 secret?
- 62 R: Agh no. So that people don't tease me.
- 63 C: Why do you think people will tease you about that?
- 64 Silence
- 65 C: How do you feel?
- 66 Silence
- 67 C: Okay I'll keep that question at the back of my mind.
- 68 The end of the session, 25 March 2004

- 1 **Tom session 2**
2 Talks about rugby and trials; talks about illness of previous week; cell phone...
3 C: Okay, the first thing is that we must think of a name that we can put in the book.
4 Okay, so maybe take the holidays and think of a name.
5 T: Agh, I'll just take mine, Tom
6 C: Put your name in? Don't you mind?
7 T: No, because there's three Tom's so it doesn't matter.
8 C: Okay, so are you named after your Grandfather, or someone.
9 T: My father and his father.
10 C: Okay, so it's like this whole league. All right. So you don't mind
11 C: You've told me last time that basically all your friends know about mom and
12 auntie Sandy, that you... ja, like general knowledge. How did that happen?
13 T: Ag ja, I don't know I think that I told half of them and the others, they just know.
14 C: They don't
15 T: No they just like come over and they just ask me. It's fine, it's normal, it's nothing
16 C: Okay, but then they do ask? It's not like they come here and it's like mmm
17 okay?
18 T: Ja,
19 C: So, they at some stage
20 T: To make sure
21 C: Confirm, make sure, confirm.
22 T: No, half of them think it's you know, it's like suppose to be like that.
23 C: Really?
24 T: 'cause most of my friends knew me with my dad and he never let them come
25 over.
26 C: Okay, so.
27 T: They are totally in love with the new thing.
28 C: This new thing (laughter), what is this thing? Having two moms?
29 T: nods
30 C: What do you tell your friends? Do you say that, okay I have two moms or do you
31 say that my mom's gay, or how do you say it? What do you say?
32 T: I just say that my moms with another woman and if they have a problem they
33 must just say so. And they won't do anything. And they won't do anything
34 funny, they're just like normal people. And they say, 'Ja I know'.
35 C: Mmmm
36 T: And then it just carries on. And then we don't talk about it anymore . It's just like
37 something long ago.
38 C: Ja, its just this once off, confirm, making sure and then its....
39 T: ...moving on
40 C: Okay so you know what your friends are like..and they don't ask what's going
41 on? And how does it work? Or any clever questions after that. Okay, which is
42 actually a bit of a relief hey?
43 T: Ag, I don't mind. It's normal
44 C: Mm ja, aaah, if you think it's that normal why do you think you have to tell them?
45 T: Just so that they feel more comfortable. So it doesn't help I keep secrets from
46 them and then they feel there's something happening and they don't what to be
47 here again. Me and my friends are very straight forward with each other, we
48 have this big thing
49 C: Mmm, so its almost like you'll be hiding something from them if you don't, ja, put
50 it out in the open. Okay. When do you decide to tell them? Just before they
51 come or when you arrange, like for a...
52 T: No, when they, the moment I see they feel uncomfortable. Because sometimes
53 they like, they just look at my mom, and just get that, you know, funny feeling.
54 I'm not suppose to be here. It's not the right place to be. (short nervous laugh)
55 C: So they'll get that feeling on their faces.

- 56 T: Ja, and I just help them out. After that they just carry on and get more
57 comfortable like they use to and do exactly what they use to. Like, they, we
58 always do it, we go into each others cupboards and stuff.
- 59 C: (laughter)
- 60 T: And the moment I see that they're not acting normal, then I tell them that, and
61 then they just go back and act normal.
- 62 C: Okay, so you can see the difference.
- 63 T: Ja,
- 64 C: Afterwards, so that's like a nice, it's a yes, a confirmation that you've picked up
65 the something's not right here.
- 66 T: Ja
- 67 C: Okay, that's interesting.
- 68 T: Cause, my friend's parents once were also, with the mom and dad, then the
69 mom left the dad, she thought she was gay, then they went back together. So
70 they all understand the whole concept.
- 71 C: Okay, all right, with one of the other friends or with mom?
- 72 T: No, with friend. He lives about two blocks away.
- 73 C: Okay, so that also happened to him?
- 74 T: So he knows, it's nothing.
- 75 C: Mmm and your other friend's parents? How do they react or feel or ... what in
76 this situation?
- 77 T: Ag they, they I don't know. They don't even, I don't know, I don't think they even
78 talk about it or know about it.
- 79 C: But no-one's got trouble with it? Like they can't visit?
- 80 T: My friends don't even tell them, 'cause it's nothing
- 81 C: Mmm, but don't you think your parents, or their parents like, drops them here
82 and just see if everything's fine.
- 83 T: Ja, they know it, they know everything's all right.
- 84 C: Okay, all right, okay,
- 85 T: We know everything of them and they, it's like a whole big bash thing.
- 86 C: It's actually nice to have everything in the open and no secrets. To be very
87 straightforward like you say. Um, you said you've told half a bunch last year or
88 somewhere before, like, was it like in a group? A big group of them together or
89 did you speak to each of them individually, single?
- 90 T: Ja, single,
- 91 C: Okay, single
- 92 T: After I told my one friend, his mom had big problems and she come and spoke
93 to my mom about what she had experienced
- 94 C: Tell me about that. This sounds interesting.
- 95 T: Okay, my parents were divorced and his parents were getting divorced and his
96 mom had this big break down.
- 97 C: About the divorce?
- 98 T: Ja, and then she thought she was becoming gay, and she never knew, she feels
99 that she is, but she knows that she isn't. So she's spoke to my mom and they
100 talked
- 101 C: Alright, interesting, and she went back to her husband?
- 102 T: Ja, she didn't really talked to my mom about the gay thing. She was just trying
103 to find where she is in the world and she got lost and now they're together again
104 and happy. We still see each other every single day.
- 105 C: That's nice! It sounds like a nice support system. How was it before, just fill me
106 in, about when mom got divorced. Um, met this new person in her life, with her
107 partner, and you telling your friends. How was it before that? Because now
108 you're in a very happy space. I can see that. It's okay, it's fine, it's normal, but
109 somehow I sense it wasn't always like that?
- 110 T: In the beginning.

- 111 C: Ja, so tell me about that stage.
112 T: From when?
113 C: You can decide.
114 T: Okay, when my mom and my dad were together I never had any friends.
115 C: Mmm, okay.
116 T: Because no-one came over, no-one did anything. I was friends with the next
117 door neighbour's daughter. She was like dead. And she was like uh...
118 C: And at school? How were things there? Were they fine?
119 T: No, if you had friends at school you like wanted to visit teach other more often,
120 just like now we're so use to it.
121 C: Did you invite friends and when they came over it was like a terrible atmosphere
122 here, with dad? Or did you just decide that you're not going to, you weren't
123 going to invite anyone over?
124 T: I didn't, I didn't want them to know about anything.
125 C: So you were like the...
126 T: I never brought them around, I was like a real nerd
127 Laughter
128 C: Okay, all right.
129 T: And then later on my mom divorced my dad. Another big thing. And then I
130 started getting more friends because I was more upset so I talked to more
131 people.
132 C: Okay, so you started making friends.
133 T: Ja, I wanted to be somewhere else.
134 C: Other than at home.
135 T: Ja, because I was dead lonely at that moment. More lost than anyone else here.
136 And then I started making big friends and stuff. And then in between that split I
137 thought they might get back together, and then my mom ended up with
138 somebody else. So then my friends came over a lot. And my mom didn't even
139 tell me, nothing. And I always had this very big suspicion, the whole year and I
140 was trying to figure out everything.
141 C: I can only imagine, if you can look at your friends and say uh, uh something's
142 cooking. I can just imagine how you can look at your mom and think
143 something's up.
144 T: Laughs
145 C: Okay, so you were for a whole year trying...
146 T: Busy investigating
147 C: Laughs
148 T: I was on cell phones, and I would try and look at mom's cell phone for messages
149 and peep around the corner. I don't know, I was just busy being very mischief.
150 C: Looking for answers. And what did you found out Mr Inspector?
151 T: No, I found out that my mother was seeing this other woman.
152 C: How did you find out?
153 T: I'd read most of my mom's sms's and I figured out that when she normally said
154 that she was going out for a pizza or something that she was.... (laughs)
155 C: Okay, something different. So how did you feel
156 T: She 's like nervous and I know, she's not going to eat anything because when
157 she eats out she must bring a doggy bag. Doesn't matter where she goes she
158 always brings one back. So there was no doggy bag. She was somewhere
159 else.
160 C: Okay.
161 T: And she always visits that one place, auntie T.
162 C: How do you know that?
163 T: Because we always use to go there, every single day. And this was not our
164 house.
165 C: Okay, so she took you with sometimes?

- 166 T: Ja.
- 167 C: How did you feel when you read the sms's and picked up that something was
168 going on?
- 169 T: I use to get nervous and feel all like aargg.
- 170 C: Angry.
- 171 T: Ja, like I need to know what's going on.
- 172 C: Like curious. Did you ask her? Confront her? Or..
- 173 T: No, I just wanted to know for myself, the moment I knew what was going on then
174 my mom told me. And then it was like, old news.
- 175 C: And how did she react to that, about you knowing
- 176 T: Ah, you know, okay
- 177 C: You'll make a good inspector. And how did you feel about mom liking another
178 lady?
- 179 T: No, I just wanted her to tell me before she did it. Then I wouldn't have felt
180 more...more...I felt more lost, my mom didn't give us no attention, she was only
181 out there. We were like hello, hello, how are you, there's food there and then she
182 would say yes dear, okay bye and then she would go to her room and cry
- 183 C: Ja, left out.
- 184 T: We were all three lost. Then we started doing our own thing. Playing donker
185 kamertjie and all those stupid things.
- 186 C: Ay, that's so nice, but ja, why do you call them stupid things?
- 187 T: Now its stupid.
- 188 C: Ja. Okay it's childish, alright, so now your angry and all lost,
- 189 T: And weird.
- 190 C: And you have this confirmation that your inspector skills are quite good. So
191 what happened next?
- 192 T: Okay she caught me with her cell phone and everything.
- 193 C: Ja, tell me about that?
- 194 T: I was reading through her messages and I accidentally deleted half of them all.
195 And she asked me what I was doing and I told her that was why I was not
196 surprised when she told me.
- 197 C: And how did she react to that?
- 198 T: She was just very angry.
- 199 C: Okay and then.
- 200 T: Ugh then auntie T comes to start living here. And then we all moved in. I've
201 never liked auntie T ever ever, since she first came.
- 202 C: What's it about her you don't like? Can you put your finger on it? Come on
203 Inspector
- 204 T: No, I don't know, it's just
- 205 C: If you think back because it's all over now.
- 206 T: She was always not nice to me. She always, I never, I don't expect anything
207 from her, I never have, but she always wants me to do stupid things that I hate.
- 208 C: Like what?
- 209 T: Like looking after her children and all that stuff. And the twins! You can see how
210 they broke these chairs...
- 211 C: Okay, and that's their doing, so they have no respect for stuff.
- 212 T: No.
- 213 C: And care for stuff.
- 214 T: And just the things she do. I don't know.
- 215 C: I can see that. I'm just trying to get a picture. Is she scolding you or irritated
216 with you
- 217 T: laughs. She tries to challenge me with something.
- 218 C: Okay, so everything you say she says something back?
- 219 T: Ja. She's there to you...
- 220 C: In your space. Ja. And never, ever a good word or a thank you?

- 221 T: No
- 222 C: Okay now I get the picture.
- 223 T: Or she'll do something nice one time just to get my mom on her side.
- 224 C: Isn't that interesting that you say that. That she moved in between you and your
- 225 mom.
- 226 T: She'll push in then she will pull back again.
- 227 C: Okay and this awareness of mom not being with dad anymore and mom being
- 228 now with T. How do you feel about that? And how did you think about mom.
- 229 T: No, I just, I didn't really think of anything because I was hanging out with these
- 230 new friends and I wasn't use to anything like that. I thought this friend was like
- 231 Kung Pow! Amazing!
- 232 C: Great, Okay. Because like some other kids they go through a phase where they
- 233 feel, hey, this is not right. It's the wrong thing to do. All the moral things or
- 234 school tells them something different. Did that happen to you?
- 235 T: No, I always had my friends with me. Okay, one or two's dads were like gay as
- 236 well, they told me a whole other story about everything.
- 237 C: Right, tell me the story as well .
- 238 T: Ag no, they just said that they prefer that to what it use to be and they love it
- 239 more then .. agh, I don't know. And then you understand everything, and you
- 240 think, it's like aliens communicating. It's like baby talk...
- 241 C: Laughing. Tell me that again in that weird language.
- 242 T: You know what they're talking about but they don't make any sense.
- 243 C: Okay, I've lost you somewhere. Tell me that again.
- 244 T: No, its like, their parents were gay and they were trying to tell me how easier life
- 245 is for them and I thought it's just going to be harder. I mean really, really. And
- 246 they were actually more happy than before. They said they're actually in a better
- 247 position, but it's not, it's not making sense to you, your trying to put your head
- 248 right and you don't know what's going on. You're trying to build your puzzle,
- 249 you're trying to flip over the pieces and trying to build your puzzle .
- 250 C: Okay, for your family and your new life. Ja, its like you can sense that they're
- 251 happy now and its better for them, but for you at that stage it weren't.
- 252 T: Ja, ja.
- 253 C: Okay that's the part with the weirdness. I lost you with the weirdness.
- 254 T: No, because my dad and mom fought, it was like hell. My mom would stand
- 255 here and my dad would punch the door out. My dad would never hit my mom.
- 256 He never touched her. So he hit everything around her. There were holes in the
- 257 door and everything.
- 258 C: Ja, but just to hear that and the whole atmosphere in the house, you are almost
- 259 now where your friends were at that time and it's better now. But at that time
- 260 your puzzle was not working out. Okay, where did your confusion lie? What
- 261 was, can you try to explain that?
- 262 T: My confusion was like, exactly how are they to do everything. Like daddy does
- 263 tools and home and everything and mommy does die and "sit" and "vrek" and
- 264 she's not use to working, like heavy homework. She wasn't use to anything. My
- 265 dad did everything in the house.
- 266 C: So you were concerned.
- 267 T: Ja, I thought what's going to happen now, because now we were terrifying
- 268 people, if we break a toy he would fix it.
- 269 C: And you were like hold on here she can't do that.
- 270 T: No, but she started and I started fixing little motors together.
- 271 C: Okay, alright, that's nice. Something else about the confusion or was it just that
- 272 kind of thing.
- 273 T: Ja my mom and dad at a later stage. They use to tell me like, how they get
- 274 married. It must be a boy and girl. And it made me wonder how are they going
- 275 to get married.

- 276 C: Mmmm so you were worried about that.
 277 T: Ja
 278 C: I'm so glad you thought of that because that's a very important thing that I think
 279 every child thinks about. Okay and who answered those questions for you, or
 280 do you still have them.
 281 T: Ja, but I've figured them out very slowly. Things like she told me that gay people
 282 don't get married they just get like things like almost engaged, they like promise
 283 each other....
 284 C: Ja, people call it a different things.
 285 T: Ja, I don't know what they call it, but it's there
 286
 287 C: Ja, ja it's like life partners. What does mom call it?
 288 T: I don't know (laughs)
 289 C: Okay, all right.
 290 T: You see Auntie Sandy is more about understanding. It's like my moms got a
 291 different kind of personality and I don't know where she gets it from. Ja (laughs)
 292 but its nice
 293 C: I think it's your influence.
 294 T: Ja, no when she comes here she always puts on this nice doef doef music and I
 295 think wow what good music.
 296 C: Wow!
 297 T: And I wasn't use to it. Before it was stuff like Rooirokbokkie and all these
 298 boeremusiek and now when we come it's doef doef.
 299 C: You can listen to it as well.
 300 T: It's like something I like and when she came it's like 'Wow, what is this music'.
 301 Wow!
 302 C: All right.
 303 T: You expect all these people to listen to this, it's like La La La-music, Classics.
 304 But she puts all this party music and she does what we do, jump up and down
 305 and get mad. She just joins in and carries on.
 306 C: And then, like just before you told all your friends how was it then? Because
 307 now you've made all these friends and it's all very nice but they still haven't
 308 figured out what's happening.
 309 T: Ja, I was still trying to find out more about this thing.
 310 C: Okay, so how did you handle your friends coming over and there's this lady or
 311 ladies in the house.
 312 T: No my mom told me she would act normal.
 313 C: And what does that mean? Act normal?
 314 T: Like, they're like friends. And then later on they like got this small suspicion and
 315 I just cut in
 316 C: Okay, but by that stage you knew?
 317 T: Ja.
 318 C: So how did you help then?
 319 T: No I just asked them what's wrong and then when they pull back a little I just tell
 320 them. Then I ask them if they have a problem and if they feel comfortable and if
 321 I can do something for them, if it's okay. And if they're not sure how to speak to
 322 their parents my mom could contact them
 323 C: Ag shame. How do you think they suspected? When you say they get a little
 324 suspicious, why do you think that's..
 325 T: No, they like when they play here and my mom is here, whatever and they'll go
 326 around the corner and they'll just think weird, say like they're holding hands...
 327 C: Oh, okay and you never asked your mom not to hold hands?
 328 T: No! (verbaas)
 329 C: Okay. Interesting. So how do you think you can help your younger brother and
 330 sister also coming to a place where you are comfortable?

- 331 T: To be honest I don't want to lead them because it's better to find out for yourself
332 than if other people help you. Because I've figured out the best and easiest way
333 for me . I've always got thatur you know what, what, what.
- 334 C: What do you think Ryland thinks? Do you think he understands what's going
335 on?
- 336 T: I think, on the sexual part no. But on the other way, Ja. More or less.
- 337 C: Alright, and Danielle?
- 338 T: No, I think she's got everything right. She was like my big buddy then, she told
339 me everything. I was like wow! How the heck do you know all this stuff.
- 340 C: And what did she tell you?
- 341 T: Agh no, that a boyfriend and girlfriend can hold hands. A girlfriend and girlfriend
342 can hold hands. They hug, you know, just stupid little things like that.
- 343 C: Okay, All right. All the woman stuff, a
- 344 C: Any questions for me?
- 345 T: No.
- 346 C: Nothing. (Laughter). Anything I can help you with?
- 347 T: Agh not really hey.
- 348 C: Okay all right. Thanks for sharing. I appreciate it! I think you still have ten or
349 fifteen minutes sunshine left to go and play rugby
- 350 T: No, it's all right...Talks of sore foot and his soccer and karate.
- 351 **The end of the session - 25/3/2004**

1 **Erid Kashni Parents Session 1**

2 11 November 2003 First meeting, diary notes

3 Mom Anriëtte, Mom Zané, Kashni and Erid

4 No transcriptions, only memory work and process notes

5

6 What a wonderful couple, easygoing, inviting – “just enter our home and we're fine
7 with it.” Easy spoken and outgoing, keeping conversation all the time – honest,
8 open, sharing – Anriëtte even went into the darker side of relationship-building and
9 raising kids and their differences in parenting styles at the end.

10

11 One bad thing/ obstacle is that they are moving in 4 weeks time. But after that I can
12 maybe enter into e-mail or letter writing. And it went quite fast yesterday – I even
13 talked to the kids – well, they were present at dinner table when I was introduced,
14 and the study mentioned, no quibble or fuss, no hidden agendas, everything is open
15 and up front, no secrets. This is who this 'tannie' is and this is what's she's doing.
16 Looking at gay families, gay parents with children – and asking me if she was
17 correct, and I said yes, but also looking at the children's experiences.

18

19 Well, if I only see them next Tuesday, then I'll use it as a pilot.

20

21 Entering this old house with the white "picture-plafonne" and wooden floors –
22 beautiful paint techniques against/ on the walls – door open – did not even hear my
23 knocking – Zané seemed surprised ... but you could see the 'oh I forgot' on
24 Anriëtte's face – but inviting me in, inviting me to share some dinner with them; and
25 carrying on with their dinner as if I'm an old friend. Kashni even moving the family
26 (drawn picture)

27

28 Anriëtte was very keen – saying that if it can contribute and help other families, or
29 psychologists

30

31

32

33

34

35

36 And they're very passionate – for them its really an urgency to adopt and offer a
37 child so much more – and this becomes evident throughout the conversation, that
38 yes, although it is difficult to deal with having 2 moms at times, the emotional issues
39 lies with their birth mother and her rejection of them and the fights/ struggles
40 between the 2 kids because of what happened to them...

41

42 Kashni were 6 when they came to live with A & Z, [redacted]; and she had her
43 birthday the previous day, [redacted]; and she's now 15, in grade 8. She repeated a
44 grade or they sent her late to school because of her backlogs and her birthday being
45 in Nov. Erid is now in grade 4, 12 years old, and he repeated grade 3 when they
46 moved to C-college; struggled with the switch from Afrikaans school grade 1 and 2
47 to English medium.

48

49 Also the story of his rugby tour this year to Phalaborwa, being taken from his team
50 mates and placed with a black family (Erid is coloured - / not fully white)...The
51 youngest in the black family saying his a 'whity', and the next day with his team
52 mates asking him – so how was it sleeping in the squatter camp. And someone else
53 telling him his a 'kaffir'.

53

54 And that a few weeks ago a boy in school told him – your mother wants to be a man
55 – and he gave the boy a beating – and confessed the moment he climbed into the
56 car – as Z. doesn't like that, while A tells them that at times its necessary – and he
57 told them that he couldn't let it stay like that, he had to defend his mom's honour.
58

59 Interestingly how Kashni when, A mentioned that they have two lesbian mothers,
60 she immediately stated with a sense of urgency that "I'm not a lesbian".
61

62 And Erid said he doesn't like living with 3 women, he's the only boy/ man living
63 there. Later when I talked to them alone he stated that again, that it's not nice –
64 when I told him that he can tell his story to other boys how it's like living with 3
65 women, and he answered not nice.

66 Z said that Kashni is a very strong child, able to lead and survive the ordeal of their
67 earlier years. Erid is very loveable, free, no-fuss, just flows from one situation to
68 another. He loves cuddles and kisses and wants to attract my attention, e.g.
69 showing off his muscles in a very subtle way, etc. so that I should make a comment.
70

71 But both of them looked keen – although Kashni said that she doesn't like writing
72 that much – or that she's not good at it. But she likes painting... so with them talking
73 will work – and it fits their personalities and the talkative atmosphere in their home.
74

75 A agrees that there is still a stigma – and that its evident through the example of the
76 incident – that that 10 year old boy must have heard it somewhere – his parents –
77 but that it depends on the context – you get healthy and unhealthy families... and
78 that people that's the leaders of their community won't say anything stereotypical or
79 hateful or discriminatory as they know it's not acceptable/ tolerated in terms of policy
80 and so forth, but that the 'ordinary' man does not have to "screen" what they say.
81

82 For Z it's much better, but A pointed out that she's a very positive person and she
83 moves in different circles/ crowd, as she is an artist, where 'differentness' and
84 otherness are embraced...

1 **Erid Kashni Parents Session 2**

2 18 Nov 2003, Sessie 2: Informele gesprek met ouers:

3 [*Dinner in kitchen, afterwards conversation with moms in kitchen, just transcribed*
4 *content where it entails the children and relates to my study*]5 20:35-20:58 – chat oor ouers se belewinge, coming out, hoe ander mense gay
6 verhoudinge hanteer7 20:55 - As gay mens baie dink oor seksualiteit en waar vandaan kom en hoe werk,
8 straight mense nie noodwendig (en link met wat slk by OUT gesê het)

9 Mens 'n energie het wat uitbalanseer met partner

10 Daar's meer aan gaywees as seks, ...

11 Sosiaal makliker

12 21:10

13 Z: 'n Jong gay outjie in een van die konserwatiewe dele van Amerika
14 doodgemaak – The Laminer Project (Matthew Shephard story). En ons kyk dit
15 toe, en kyk Kashni is baie keen op movies kyk en sy sal gou vir jou kan sê of
16 dit 'n goeie of slegte een is, en baiekeer is haar oordeel van die ding nogal reg

17 A: Sy was nogal keen dat ons dit moet kyk

18 Z:: Ja, want baie keer is sy nie keen op die gay movies nie. En toe, okay, dink
19 ons dis 'n goeie manier om met die kiddies te praat20 A: En ek hou gewoonlik nie daarvan nie, want dis 'n moordsaak en ek hou niks
21 daarvan nie, maar toe sy nou sê toe dog ek, agh oraait. En dit was nogal 'n
22 nice movie23 Z: Ja, very American, maar dit was toe obviously baie emosioneel – and they do
24 manage to push the buttons – en ek en Erid is toe in trane25 A: Anyway, toe dit nou klaar is. Die fliiek het my tot die besef laat kom, na
26 aanleiding van Kashni se reaksie nou die dag. Selfs ons wat so openlik is en
27 wat so gewoon lewe asof dit niks is nie stuur sulke klein boodskappies na die
28 kinders toe, dat dit tog beter is om straight te wees

29 Z: That it's not okay

30 A: Verstaan jy en ek het toe besluit dat ek net daai ding regstel

31 C: Dis 'n fyn ding

32 A: En toe sê ek hulle tweetjies moet by my kom sit, dat ons daarvoor praat, ek
33 was nou bietjie emosioneel en het bietjie gehuil ook, maar ek het vir hulle
34 gesê hulle moenie vir een oomblik dink ek is nie trots op wat ek is nie, wat dit
35 ook al is nie, want ek dink nie dis verkeerd nie en hulle moet nie, ek wil nie hê
36 hulle moet êrens in hulle harte dink ons is verkeerd nie, en dis hulle eie morele
37 oordeel later en ek sal dit ook later vir hulle sê, en hulle kan besluit is dit reg of
38 verkeerd, maar ek wil nie hê hulle moet oordeel nie. Maar die gemeenskap
39 oordeel ons, Sanger sê: gays gaan hel toe, né,... 'oe ek is nie 'n lesbiën nie'.
40 Weet jy, dit maak my seer as jy dit doen, want dis is so oe, ek is nie soos my
41 ma nie, nie so nie, verstaan jy. En ek dink nie Kashni het dit besef toe sy dit
42 doen nie, en ek was saggies met haar en ek het net vir haar mooi gesê. Want
43 ek het skielik net besef dat mens moet daai persepsie, dat daar dalk, wat dit
44 sal, en ek verstaan dat jy by die skool of voor ander mense moet wegs kram,
45 maar in jou hart moet jy nie so voel nie, dat dit oor jou eie ma is nie, want dan
46 gaan dit nie lekker wees vir jou eie ma nie en jou ma gee jou al daai baie
47 liefde en goedjies and if you want to accept that you have to accept the reality
48 of the situation en dit is, en en ons glo nie dat wat ons doen is nie verkeerd
49 nie. En ek kon dit nie help om te sê nie en ek dink buitendien dis belangrik om
50 dit vir kinders op hierdie ouderdom te sê want hulle begin met 'n mite, hulle wil
51 mos vir jou kwaad wees. En ek wil nie hê Kashni moet kwaad wees omdat ons
52 gay is nie, sy kan eerder iets reg pick

53 C: en haar tiener tantrums daarop uithaal

54 A: Want dit sal verwerping van ons wees, onregverdig ook so, en toe sê ek vir
55 haar en een belangrike faktor, reg of verkeerd, as ek en Zané nie gay was nie
56 het ons ons eie kinders gehad met 'n man, maar ons het gepick om mekaar te
57 hê, ons het gepick om hulle te hê en dis hoekom hulle ouers het. Maar dit
58 gaan nie eintlik daaroor nie, maar om genuïne trots te wees op wat jy is, want
59 ek skaam my nie dat ek gay is nie, en ek wil nie hê hulle moet dink ek skaam
60 my nie, of dat dit reg is om te sê 'ag, ek is nie so nie', ek kan verstaan in alle
61 gevalle nie waar ek nie by is nie, maar waar ek by is... En dit was baie nice
62 gewees. Erid was baie understanding gewees en ook bietjie gehuil, Kashni sal
63 nie sommer huil nie

64 Z: Sy wou jou druk

65 A: Ja, ek weet, maar ek het toe aan haar gevat en weet jy wat het ek in haar oë
66 gesien, dat sy presies weet waaroor ek gepraat het en dat sy okay is daarmee
67

68 What have you learned from these informal conversations:

69 Loving atmosphere – proud of kids – mentions all the different dishes they are able
70 to cook/ prepare

71 Inviting – sharing – makes one feels at home, makes you part of family

72 Children know their place, thus discipline and respect – but child friendly
73 environment

1 **TDR Parents Session 1**

2 1st meeting, parents: Vaula and Sandy, 9 March 2003

3

4 Vaula is the biological mother

5 The 3 kids call her Auntie Sandy

6

7 Sandy is Afrikaans speaking, but they speak English to the kids, except she says
8 when she needs to discipline them, then she turns to Afr

9

10 I did reflect in my diary, so I am only going to type the parts that I find **most** relevant
11 to the theme of disclosure/ negotiation now in English....

12

13 Vaula explained to the 3 kids why I am coming, telling them that I am writing a book
14 about people that live together. She said they looked at her like, okay, so what
15 will she write about...

16 Then she continued saying, hallo, we're gay...

17 And Tom the oldest said but that's nothing, it's normal...so what will she write
18 about...

19 Danielle said nothing I think..

20 But the youngest she said, and that surprised her, said no, moms and Auntie
21 Sandy's lives are private, what they do has nothing to do with anyone else – and
22 when she explained a bit further and he was okay with that, he said, but why
23 must she come to us, to our house, will other people see their names...

24 Powerful from a 9 year old, already concerned about "confidentiality" – and then
25 there's definitely an awareness of what other people are thinking...

26

27 The incident of Danielle with her friend walking into their sleeping room one night
28 while they were kissing, and her immediate turning around into the face of her
29 fiend and being upset about that, telling her mom that it's okay what they do, but
30 not when her friend's around...

31

32 Vaula's mom not accepting them as a couple and not speaking to Sandy, or visiting
33 them

34

35 Tom stood up in his grade 7 class, when they had sexual guidance – and telling the
36 whole class that his mom is gay and in a gay relationship or that he has two
37 moms – and that he said nothing happened, no one asked him questions
38 afterwards; and after his birthday party when Vaula probed a bit about how the
39 other kids felt, he said, they're fine, they all know.

40

41 He had however, she said in the beginning, a lot of religious queries and a great
42 problem with it as a Christian, until her previous partner sat down with him and
43 discussed the matter with him, and she had done a lot of research on the verses
44 and on the internet and could counter-argument all his arguments. Vaula said
45 that a lot of anger also came out and things he would never told his mom
46 directly...

47 Sandy mentioned that some people are still very conservative, and with later probing
48 she referred to "skoonma" – but then Vaula mentioned that only 2 people at her
49 work now – and she ascribes to a very conservative (politically) and male
50 dominated work environment...

51 And about the neighbour also stating that he "won't talk about what's happening in
52 the yard next to him"...

53 And then the relief that I am gay myself, because she thought she doesn't want
54 anyone come and tell her what she's supposed to do..

55 And Sandy telling how nice it is to talk to someone, because no one really wants to
56 know how it is .. how she really feels ...

- 1 **Tom Danielle Ryland Session 1**
2 *11 March 2004, Session 1*
3 *To – Tom*
4 *R – Ryland*
5 *D – Danielle*
6 *C – Carien/ interviewer*
7 *5 other kids visiting, 3 kids next door and 1 other friend*
8 *Played Ungame*
9 *Then I asked other kids to kindly excuse us and give us some privacy, they were*
10 *very disappointed but left...*
11
12 C: Mom told me that she told you guys that I'm writing like a book on families,
13 and people that live together, okay, imm, so what I want to say to you is that,
14 ja, its all about getting to know me and I must get to know you, imm, it's not a
15 once off like I come in here and we talk about it and I leave, I'm going to be
16 like, come three or four times, okay that's usually how long it takes and then
17 the stories are finished and then we're starting to talk about the same stuff all
18 over again, imm, so please feel free to chip in and ask me anything you want
19 to know about me, okay, and
20 I will try to answer them as truthfully as possible, I don't know if Ryland will
21 cooperate, his comments, but you two can scrutinise his comments, alright
22 (smiling – previous comments in game that Ryland always lies/ not truthful – in
23 his "adjective game")
24 More specifically in choosing families I'm focusing on families, imm, that the
25 literature or books call gay families or families by choice, where it's two moms
26 or two dads living together, alright (I remember Tom looking explicitly at me –
27 almost with "I was wondering when / whether you are going to say that)
28 So it's about that as well, but you guys know that, alright, so how did you feel when
29 mom told you this, what...
30 To: No... (if I remember correctly it's something about I didn't mind ... "I didn't
31 feel.... that's what ?made it?")
32 Danielle also says something
33 R: I was happy
34 C: alright
35 To: No
36 Laugh
37 To: Tell her the truth
38 C: okay
39 D: I/ we just said why my ...broken up...if you're going
40 C: Ja, so it's like what's the reason for this, 'cause she's happy, okay and that's
41 fine. You say you were unhappy, what did you think will happen, what am I
42 going to look for
43 D: I thought, "oh no" (loud sad/ afraid voice) "my mom"
44 And then when, when auntie Sandy was coming it's 'clean up clean up'
45 C: imm, okay, so there were some differences when she came, into your life
46 D: - - -
47 C: okay,
48 D: I like
49 C: Okay, we'll talk some more about when auntie Sandy came and before all
50 these changes, I just want to focus on Mr R who said he was happy and then
51 his brother intervned and I'm picking up on something here, but okay, let's go
52 with your first version
53 R: He killed him
54 C: Who killed who

55 Tom and D and Ry laughs, shows his drawing and we talk about that
56 We all laugh
57 C: Alright, my dear Mr Ryland tell me about your comment
58 To: I.. I..
59 C: Sjuut, first version. I think we are going to have different versions here
60 R: I felt like, I thought like another nasty lady coming in and I did not like that
61 C: Oh I'm so glad I'm not the nasty witch that walked into this door, but it's good
62 that you say that, okay, because we must be on the same rugbyfield with this.
63 So tell me more about the nasty lady coming through the door?
64 R: I don't really know now
65 D: I didn't think you were nasty I thought you were very kind
66 C: okay, alright
67 To: - - -
68 C: And you ?
69 C: It's not about me, it's not personal, cause you've never met me
70 D: But then the moment I saw you it's like, oh she's fine
71 To: I thought you were going to look like my teacher "listen people, you must use
72 your brown.. that's a brain, yes, your brain
73 Laughter
74 C: And I was a teacher...so you can bring out the teacher in me again, okay, it's
75 not about me, its fine you can, you can tell me what you, the main thing for me
76 is what went through your mind and what you were concerned about and
77 maybe scared and think about and that's good. Okay, cause it's very, I think,..
78 intrusive for someone totally unfamiliar to walk in
79 To: - - -
80 R: There's "Liewe Heksie" and her bird
81 C: Okay, that's great, it's like Harry Potter...but I like the...
82 R: No it's Liewe Heksie
83 C: Okay, so these two weren't that happy. Did they say anything when mom told
84 them?
85 To: I don't want her to come here, she mustn't be here, .. talk together
86 D: Ryland said that
87 To: my mom... sjuut
88 D: And I asked is she going to ask us questions and my mom said she don't
89 know, and I said aagh please can she ask me a question
90 C: smiles, and now you've got your turn
91 And I look at you and said...
92 Everyone talks simultaneously – about pictures
93 D: I like dolphins and flowers
94 C: Okay, so what did you think?
95 To: I just asked why that you're coming, and she told me and I said okay, and then
96 I ran to the ?dumping? and that's all
97 C: okay, so for you
98 To: I didn't make no big thing cause I know I must first know a lady
99 C: okay. It sounds to me like it's all about the person, ja...who's this lady going to
100 be
101 They smile/ laugh
102 C: So what did you think about the topic
103 To: mmm, what?
104 C: The topic, about me looking at gay families
105 D:I just thought, okay, fine, imm
106 To: I thought it was interesting cause you don't get many writers that do that, so
107 for me it was like wow
108 C: Alright, mm, and you Ryland, what do you think about me looking at gay
109 families?

- 110 R: Nothing
111 (playing with his picture)
112 C: Nothing, okay
113 Is it that different, that's the question that one needs to answer, okay
114 To: When my dad was here it was horrible
115 C: Alright
116 D: Yes
117 To: We couldn't even talk
118 C: Like very strict
119 To: Yes, and if these two did something it was always me
120 D: Ihih (meaning no)
121 To: I always got blame for everything so I decided to turn this and blame it on
122 them
123 (talk about cars' wheels they broke and Danielle got accused;
124 talk about they had to go to the bathroom if they were naughty – every week)
125 R: I still remember the day I got these very expensive truck and me and my
126 brother broke it and it got blamed on my sister
127 When these 2 fight now I leave them
128 To: My dad's fiancée changed my dad a hell of a lot
129 C: Okay
130 To: Nice, he gives us like pocket money and we've never ever got pocket money,
131 now, you only get into trouble for like the big things, now my dad is much
132 much nicer; now we go out, we've never ever got out of the house before
133 (Danielle confirms) Go out and visit all kinds of places
134 C: So how frequently do you see him
135 To & D: every second weekend
136 To: If we want to see more we can just ask
137 C: And how's the change between that
138 Laughs
139 C: Is it difficult to adjust from like this home and dad's home, or do you know the
140 setup
141 To: It's like natural, whatever my dad does we just go along
142 R: My dad's got a nice flat but sometimes it's not nice, then we can go
143 swimming...
144 C: What's not nice about that?
145 D: Sometimes people complain.... They complain about stuff
146 C: So what's the stuff they complain about
147 R: *Talks about:* My father's noisy – listen to loud music, keen interests in musical
148 equipment...."DJ-amp" and all that
149 C: What's his girlfriend like?
150 To: Sjoe
151 D: She's as kind as..
152 R: She'll help us keep a secret from my daddy
153 To: And every time my dad wants to hit us she's like no, no, come, come ...and
154 then when, when they're like, they're very playful and they hit each other with
155 pillows we all join in, and all those things
156 ---
157 To: She's excellent, and the amazing thing is I've never seen an ugly side of her
158 and they've been together for 6 months
159 ---
160 C: It's very nice to hear that because a lot of kids that go through divorce and
161 especially when the mother and father start meeting and dating new people
162 there's a lot of tension and trouble, but you guys are like ...it's great
163 To: No, when they were divorced I was angry

- 164 C: Okay, we'll get to that, but see now that his happy with his new partner and
165 mom is happy with her new partner
166 (To: look
167 Mom brings cooldrink)
168 "cheers"
169
170 C: Tell me about the divorce, you said you were angry
171 To: Ja, when I heard,
172 R: Me too
173 To: But a week after I went and buy my punching bag, cause I was... I just wanna,
174 I had a big problem at school...
175 C: ...lots of stuff going on, okay, school as well
176 To: They would come to me and I would just all of a sudden have "lus" and I start
177 killing them
178 C: Why do you think that was
179 To: No, cause somehow the school found out and they were like "huhu", shame,
180 poor you, must I hurt you know
181 C: Is it your friends or like your classmates
182 To: No it's like people who never liked me, so
183 C: They commented
184 To: Ja, and then so I just hang out loose...and then
185 C: And you said you were angry yourself?
186 R: I forgot
187 D: At school..
188 C: Next time I'll stop him and talk to you, cause you loose all your thoughts
189 D: It's weird, for over 2 years I was like everybody could torture me and
190 everything like that and now I'm the biggest torturer in the class, like don't you
191 touch me..
192 C: Okay, is that after the divorce, that, or that they picked on you
193 D: They've used to pick on me and I've used to get so angry
194 C: What did they say
195 D: But I knew I can't use my stress on them, I start to get angry all the time and I
196 hold it in and then I used it
197 C: Ja, I think it's good
198 D: Now nobody picks on me
199 R: Now I remember it,
200 C: hold on a bit (to N)
201 R: She can go I will remember it
202 C: Will you, okay
203 R: Yes
204 D: So nobody had to pick on me and everything
205 C: What would they pick on?
206 D: Like when they stole into my house and then they just find out and then they
207 were teasing me, and I said stop that, and you're not supposed to do that and
208 I'll hit you
209 C: Is it like this week?
210 D: Today
211 (talk about burglary)
212 R: And if my brother never ever had the punching bag we wouldn't be alive,
213 cause when, when he gets too much stress he runs to the punching bag and
214 then after his finished then you can just put your finger on him and he just
215 growls like that/ touch the ground like that???
216 C: Do you use the punching bag as well or?
217 R: Imm immm, it's just him

- 218 C: Or were you afraid that if he didn't have a punching bag you were going to be
219 the punching bag
220 Laughs
221 To: Imm, put them in a bag, hang them upside down, doem-doem (like boxing),
222 okay, done
223 C: What was it like for you when dad left?
224 R: I was crying every time, it's like cause my father, they always used to fight...
225 C: How old were you then
226 R: I was like 7 or 8, so small
227 C: imm, alright
228 D: I have to be honest know the way I found out is all my father's .. things were
229 gone, and I thought, I guess I'm going to be much happier now, no fights,
230 when they're fighting we heard my mom crying and then we had to sit in the
231 kitchen, I was actually happy when he left
232 R: You're not supposed to be happy
233 C: Why not, you can be happy and angry at the same time
234 R: He can't be happy, he's dead
235 Laughs – Ryland talks about picture
236 C: Alright, and then, we you found out about mom's new partner, what..
237 To: A bit shocked,
238 C: Tell me about that
239 D: I knew she's going to be gone cause I heard about the computer. I had it in my
240 room and then it was...
241 C: So your concern was with the computer (I remember that I didn't understand
242 her exactly – next time, zoom in, say that again, I don't understand now/ don't
243 follow...)
244 C: Okay, let's go back to you, shocked
245 To: Ja, I was shocked, and like mommy, why didn't you tell me, and
246 Cause you weren't old enough
247 D: Cause, cause I guess you had a certain time to tell me
248 C: Okay, and is that about the divorce or the new partner
249 D: The new partner
250 C: How did you find out about that
251 To: How did you find out about that?
252 C: ja, about, when you see her or ..
253 D: We just saw her move in, come more often, just come, we thought ? that
254 there's a reason there... and then she start to move in and they told us and
255 then she moved in and then my mom told me
256 C: Okay, and what did mom say?
257 D: My mother said that they're together and then she said, and then we talked
258 about it and then I said I understand mommy and it's feeling much better than
259 when you were with daddy
260 C: Okay, alright
261 To: I was fine but then when I heard who it was then I was feeling?
262 C: Sorry I didn't hear that, when you heard?
263 To: When I heard the first time she was like that then I didn't mind, but the person
264 that she was with, then I got very angry
265 C: Okay
266 To: I felt like running away and never coming back
267 C: Why's that?
268 To: First of all I've never liked her in my life, she's been there before I was born
269 and I never ever liked her and still today
270 C: Doesn't work for you, she's not a nice person
271 D: I like her a lot, imm, Auntie Sandy, last years we were against each other, now
272 all of a sudden now we're very nice with each other

- 273 C: okay, we'll talk about that
 274 D: So it's coming out very well
 275 C: How was it last year?
 276 D: It's it's I felt like ...
 277 Cause I wasn't used to work, now I'm used to it, now I know okay must clean
 278 now...And when you get to know her she's actually very nice. But it's very
 279 hard to get to know her
 280 C: Mmm, okay, so in the beginning it was hard
 281 Okay, and what can you do with those feelings, can you talk to mom or
 282 D: Every secret I has I always tell my mom
 283 C: Okay, that's nice
 284 D: With my boyfriend or just something or how my father, or how, if my father
 285 gets angry how he gets angry or
 286 C: Okay, alright, imm, what do you think changed between last year and now and
 287 getting to know Auntie Sandy?
 288 D: Okay, now she's saying much more nicer things to me, she's know, I told her
 289 that I take it seriously when she tells me, when she says, when she tells me
 290 that I'm lazy and she just jokes with me and now I know that she jokes with me
 291 and she knows I don't like it
 292 C: Okay, so it's the same thing (D: and then she stops) that your brothers
 293 mentioned that sometimes you know, people tease you and you don't realise..
 294 D: And I told her I don't like it that much and she said I'm just joking with you all
 295 the time I didn't knew you take it so seriously, and I just said I really don't like it
 296 C: So you're learning to like filter her words and deciding whether it is a joke or
 297 not and she's doing it less and less, okay, alright
 298 To: Auntie Sandy was cool to me in the beginning but she's starting to, starting ..
 299 becoming...
 300 But my mom's first partner, I couldn't handled that
 301 It was tough... , and she had twins, I couldn't have my privacy, I couldn't go to
 302 the bathroom, I couldn't do anything, it wasn't my house anymore
 303 C: Alright, and could you talk to mom about that or
 304 To: Imm I told her and she said I was you know, 'cause I was still small, I was in ?,
 305 C: And she really didn't listen to you
 306 To: She didn't knew what I was talking about, she thought I was a bit mad or
 307 something
 308 D: And I have to be honest, né, and her friend Karen, né and her brother, Karen
 309 also lived near and he always used to play with her and I always used to get
 310 upset and that's why I always fight with her cause it's Tom
 311 - - -Talks about fighting with friends and then she's angry and then Tom plays
 312 with them
 313 Tom says that she fights with them and pushes them sway and shoves them
 314 "totally out" and then he wants to take baby steps back, but then friends
 315 playing with him
 316 She feels he plays with them - - -
 317 C: Back to you.... How did you feel when mom first, imm, what will we call it,
 318 ended up with another lady or when T moved in?
 319 R: I was really angry
 320 C: 'Cause then things started to get... ?
 321 R: When I got into my room I had those funny Christmas sock hanging on a ball
 322 with my
 323 The other kids were definitely a big issue taking away your space, privacy
 324 To: And still like that today, it's still going on, you can't even put a sweet under
 325 your pillow
 326 C: How often do you see them?

- 327 To: Lots of times, too much, like three times a week, but once you see them, the
 328 moment you're with them for like 5 minutes they irritate you and
 329 C: It just happens some times, you meet people and ja, ..
 330 D: And me and my brother can not take shopping, my mom likes to stay in one
 331 place the whole time
 332 (talks about shopping for new CD/ DVD and how irritated they get with them)
 333 C: What's nice about having two moms?
 334 R: 2?
 335 C: Two mothers in the home
 336 R: Nothing's wrong, cause I don't really worry about that
 337 C: Alright, so nothings wrong and you don't worry about it, okay, I'm going to pick
 338 on you know, why do you say wrong, if there's nothing wrong, is there some
 339 other people that maybe say its wrong or think it's wrong or tell you it's wrong
 340 R: Like what
 341 C: That having 2 moms is not like, it's not, it's wrong to have 2 moms
 342 R: No one talks about it cause no one knows about it, it's only my family that
 343 knows about it, and other people and, like Anel, It's not, nothing's wrong. No
 344 one tells the children at school and that's fine. Like if Danielle goes and she
 345 says "I've got two mothers at home" (funny girlish voice) then there's a big
 346 problem.
 347 D: We've got three mothers
 348 C: Why would it be problem, do you think
 349 R: Then the children comes 'warawara', Ryland tell us about your mothers
 350 To: It's like.. imm.. practice
 351 R: Then I can't go and play like rugby with my friends, then they just asking me
 352 this, and asking me that, then they ask
 353 C: Mm, okay, but you say it hasn't happened
 354 R: Imm imm, so it's...
 355 C: So you don't like questions, you like to play
 356 R: I'm very tired, cause this whole day I was playing rugby with my friends
 357 C: That's nice to play, ja, okay, and that's why I'm going to come again so we can
 358 talk some more, but it's nice to hear that you mention that that there might be
 359 some people asking questions and ja, changing it all, okay
 360 C: And you two, what's nice about having two moms
 361 D: Imm
 362 R: More presents
 363 To: Ryland
 364 (laughs)
 365 D: She tells us to clean up, if she wasn't here imagine how our house would look
 366 like
 367 C: Okay, so that's nice for you
 368 D: Sometimes when I 'lus' then I can clean, then I like it, but sometimes when I'm
 369 not lus I don't wanna do it, then it's not nice
 370 C: Okay
 371 D: And then Auntie Sandy says to me do the dishes and I'm like the only one that
 372 does the dishes and I want to try something different, "do the dishes", "okay I'll
 373 do the dishes"
 374 C: Okay, no negotiation for you yet, and for you?
 375 To: Aghh, it's not so bad my friends know about it they don't mind nothing, it's like
 376 normal
 377 C: Okay, that's great, ja
 378 To: Aunt Sandy is like the discipline without her these two would be under the
 379 ground, 6 feet you know with rock on...
 380 - - -
 381 To: If these two fight I have to say "shut up"

- 382 Continues chatting about sister's attitude problem and think up things on how to
383 make people angry; and brother is a "woosie", cries for nothing
384 Danielle chips in at times...
385 "And my brother practice expressing his feelings"
386 Ryland talks about one time when ran into glass door where Sandy stayed or
387 worked
388 Laughs a lot...
389 I say:
390 You guys are getting personal now...
391 Talk about next time, giving them separate turns and talk together...
392
393 They ask me questions about process:
394 To: Have you written any books in the past? (I answer and refer to M-skripsie,
395 explain academic and popular books)
396 C: And that's why I started off with this, because we can't use your names
397 because no one must be able to trace you, except if you want to, but usually
398 you get a different name, so people can't recognise you
399 R: Like say, for instance, say how will you call me
400 C: So, that's where I need your help
401 D: When you imm, write down the book can we please just read it
402 C: Yes definitely
403 R: Is everyone going to read it in this whole world
404 C: Hopefully,
405 (explain academic book that only the professors or students read, but also
406 thinking of popular book will depend on whose interested in it)
407 D: Cause I'm just scared that children take, buy my books and they say that my
408 parents are and they find out who my parents are, but I really want to be in the
409 magazine
410 C: Ja, but they won't know it's you, they won't know it's Danielle, you'll have a
411 different name like whatever you want to
412 D: I like Danielle
413 - - -
414 T: Do you use the surnames?
415 - - -
416 C: No... but I think it's nice when you choose your own name so you'll know, oh
417 this is me, but your friends, no one else will know except if you tell them
418 D: I'm not going to tell anybody, it's a secret
419
420 T: How many days do you take on one person so that you can find out all about
421 them and all of that?
422 C: About an hour, hour and a half at a time, 4 times usually, about - but you can't
423 know all about someone
424 D: I would like it a lot of you and my moms were friends then you can come often
425 C: Maybe that will happen maybe not, but that's all the stuff that we need to talk
426 about, and actually what is important to talk about from the beginning is that
427 this will end, maybe we won't become friends and then I need to leave and
428 then, ja, maybe it will be sad or maybe it would be a relief
429 D: It won't, I will be crying
430 C: Ag shame
431 C: Okay, you just say know that you don't want your friends to know, about your
432 mom
433 D: I want to buy the magazine so I need to save money for that
434 - - -
435 Prepare them for long time before it's going to be ready

- 436 C: And I'm interviewing other families as well so maybe I'll merge the stories, I'll
437 blend them
- 438 D: So there's a lot of families but you chose us, that's actually nice
- 439 C: imm, anything else you want to tell or ask today...
- 440 Thanks for sharing and talking to me and for being so honest, and you are
441 actually very honest hey...(to Ryland)
- 442 To: You want to take our pictures
- 443 C: Yes, I'll think I'll take them now...
- 444 R: So you're going to come next time
- 445 C: Yes, let's ask mom when will suit her

Addendum F: CD-Rom

Original transcripts

Guidelines:

- All the names of persons and institutions have been changed to ensure anonymity. In some cases the names or any other potentially revealing information has been blocked out (e.g. ■■■).
- All the individual data creation-sessions are in separate folders for each child. The interviews conducted with the parents are separately saved, as well as the combined session of the first interview of Tom, Danielle and Ryland.
- The phrases where I spoke are indicated with "C:", except in the transcripts of Carl, where he is "C:" and I am "I:", indicating "interviewer".
- As indicated in Bubble Three, some of the transcripts are memory sessions.
- Symbols used in transcripts:
 - - - Poor sound quality, no transcription possible
 - Pause by a specific speaker
- **Contents of folders:**
 - **Carl's** folder contains 4 sessions
 - **Kim's** folder contains 2 sessions
 - **Luanne's** folder contains 7 sessions, as well as a file of my reflections as from January to March 2004
 - **Kashni's** folder contains 3 sessions
 - **Erid's** folder contains 2 sessions

- Kashni and Erid are brother and sister, therefore there are two files containing my diary notes on the two sessions I had with their **parents**, namely:
 - "Erid Kashni Parents Session 1"
 - "Erid Kashni Parents Session 2"

- **Tom's** folder contains one session
- **Danielle's** folder contains 2 sessions
- **Ryland's** folder contains 2 sessions
- Tom, Danielle and Ryland's first session is a **combined** session, namely "Tom Danielle Ryland Session 1";
- as well as a session that is my reflection on meeting their **parents**, namely "TDR Parents session 1"