Article

Living life on the edge: Examining space and sexualities within a township high school in greater Durban, in the context of the HIV epidemic

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Introduction
Throughout this article I demonstrate and build on the notion that compulsory heterosexuality and fixed gender roles are ‘dangerous’ especially in the context of the HIV epidemic (Morrell et al 2001). In order to challenge these dangerous gender performances it is necessary to have a full understanding of these discourses and where and how they are manifested and regulated.

Schools are complex spaces in which identities and sexualities are taught, performed and negotiated (Epstein and Johnson 1998). Performances arise from the expressive power of the body whilst being grounded in the norms of social process such as compulsory heterosexuality (Butler 1990). Space can, therefore, be a useful analytical tool through which to examine gendered performances (Paechter et al 2001).

This article will demonstrate the ubiquitous disposition of gendered performances on three levels. It will map the visible informal use of school space such as where and how males and females spend their break time. It will examine how gender differences are policed within the school walls, for example management structures. It will also discuss how performances are shaped by gender identities when students perform at a beauty pageant. However, before taking this spatial examination I will briefly describe the context of the research.
Engendering HIV
The HIV epidemic in South Africa is localised, racialised, affects many young people and is gendered. The epidemic has had a greater impact on women in South Africa; it was estimated that 2.65 million women and 2.09 million men were living with HIV in South Africa in 2002 (AVERT 2002). The underlying cause for this gender disparity is that females are both physiologically and socially more susceptible to HIV infection than males.

The gender inequalities of every day life in South Africa have prevented many women from taking control of their sex lives. Socio-cultural expectations prescribe female behaviour, such as being in a heterosexual relationship by the age of 20, married by 25, and allowing males to have polygamous relationships. Women have less access to money, education and power, and are forced to use sex as a bargaining tool, reducing their power to insist on the use of a condom (Mthembu 2001).

Another social norm is sexual violence. In 1999 alone 51,249 rapes were reported to the South African Police Service, which is likely to be merely the tip of the iceberg of actual rapes (Vetten 2001:31). Not only does rape put women at high risk of HIV infection but the nature and regularity of the event serves to reinforce male dominance and further subordinate and disempower women.

In an attempt to address the interrelated gender divisions and the HIV epidemic, interventions have often targeted women. However, this has been problematic when they have focused on the effect rather than the cause (Bujra 2000). This has had a fatal result in fuelling the misogynist reaction which blames women for HIV (Maharaj 2000). In 1999 Gugu Dlamini spoke openly about her HIV positive status at a World AIDS Day event in KwaMashu. Two weeks later, on December 12, she was stoned to death by members of her community.

In order for interventions to address the effect of HIV, there needs to be a full understanding of existing gender and sexuality performances. I further develop this understanding by focusing on a space upon which many hopes are pinned for HIV education interventions: a school. Lillian Ngoyi School is a co-educational school located in a Greater Durban township.

Situating the research
This spatial outlook was inspired by Epstein et al (2001) and Karlsson (2002a and 2002b), who have used space to examine social process within schools. Both have illuminated school performances beyond that of the
much researched formal pedagogy (classrooms and lessons) by looking at informal times (breaks), and informal spaces outside classrooms. By using ‘space’ in South Africa, Karlsson has demonstrated that although post-apartheid changes have affected formal schooling, informal spaces have retained inequalities (2002a and 2002b).

The gendered and sex expectations that students and teachers bring to school space greatly influence the rules and regulations that determine their performances, both within and outside the school walls. Heterosexual and gendered behaviour appear as ‘normal, everyday and unremarkable’ (Holly 1989) due to sexual dynamics being shrouded in silence. I intend to challenge this and uncover to what extent gendered heterosexual behaviour is grounded and unnoticed in everyday space.

This research was carried out in April and May 2002. As a feminist ethnographer, I attempted to immerse myself in school culture by teaching, and faced obvious limitations as a white, female, British researcher. I kept a descriptive journal throughout the research period and carried out informal interviews with staff and students when issues emerged. In order to protect the identity of the individuals involved, all names used in this article, including that of the school, are pseudonyms. A more in-depth reflexive account and discussion of these findings and the difficulties in obtaining post-structuralist descriptions can be found in Kent (2002).

**Mapping Lillian Ngoyi**

Lillian Ngoyi is a school which is on the ‘edge’. It is marginalised in terms of location, being in the former township KwaMashu. It has few resources, with only 25 basic classrooms for 1350 students and poor opportunities for the staff and students although matriculation levels are higher than many other schools in KwaMashu.

As already suggested by the case of Gugu Dlamini, KwaMashu is perceived as a dangerous place. During the research period of 25 days one teacher witnessed a women being raped and murdered close to his home. In between January and April 2002 three female students were raped. One girl was raped on her way to her friend’s house in the early evening by two men and another girl was hijacked, blindfolded and raped by five men. During the research period, teachers also reported two cases of female students being physically abused – one girl was beaten by her uncle and another by her stepfather. These reports of violence were the most visible cases, leaving countless stories of violence untold.
The dangerous setting in which Lillian Ngoyi is situated is significant in two ways. Firstly, the violence is gendered; females are commonly the victims and males the perpetrators. Secondly, the school is a spatial unit; management tries to ensure it is a ‘safe’ space into which violence cannot filter. The school stands within an iron barred fence and a guarded gate. Within this space, strict codes of conduct ensure that the students abide by the school’s rules and regulations and not those from outside. The expected result is a performing student body dressing in school uniform, moving according to the school’s timetable and showing respect for the teachers. However, as I will show below, both the expected student performances, and the codes of conduct used to regulate these, are not always ‘safe’. They are both sexualised and gendered. Schools are neither ‘innocent’ nor ‘safe’ but provide a stage which permits the development of violent attitudes and behaviours (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997).

School is not a place for children. It is a place where you learn to love, to share and to hate. (Standard 10 student)

Rejecting the ‘safe’ view of school, this student introduces the ‘real life’ importance of school, where much more is learnt than the ‘formal’ curriculum. The informal schooling of students’ performances and sexualities is a crucial part of school life, a largely assumed practice and rarely examined. Individual cases of small spaces would provide enough evidence for many studies. As I aimed to examine gender and sexuality performances within the school as a whole, I start by mapping the whole space and provide several descriptive snapshots of performances that take place across the school.

**Manning the margins: informal regulations of space and performance**

Figure 1 is a map of Lillian Ngoyi School demonstrating visible sites of power and sexuality negotiation. When walking through the school gate, there was an immediately visible display of masculinities and femininities. Female students played in and out of the classrooms, on display from the public road. In this space five or six women also sold fruit and sweets. The only males around were in inaccessible positions of authority, the guard’s house, in or around the management offices or under the ‘Ultimatum Tree’.
Examining space and sexualities within a township high school in greater Durban.
The ‘Ultimatum Tree’ was where male teachers spent their break and lunch time sharing a bottle of lemonade and sandwiches. Although the teachers assured me ‘girls could come here’, they claimed that ‘only the naughty ones’ would come. Female teachers instead spent this time in the staff room. This tree was introduced to me as the ‘ultimatum tree’ by the only female head of department. As all the management staff other than her spent so much time under this tree, the significance of the ‘ultimatum’, I assume, is the power this site held in decision making, from which she was excluded.

The other immediately visible sites of power were the parked cars. All students, bar one group of boys who drove, walked to school. Those fortunate enough to have their own car, displayed their wealth and prestige through their vehicle. Two of the cars were large and expensive; they belonged to the male principal and a male head of department, who came and went from school alone. The only car owned by a female teacher was old and the windows and seat belts did not work. Her car was always full of other female teachers, to whom she gave a lift to and from school. These privileges of male performance were characteristic of hegemonic masculinities and were highly visible. There were also more ‘covert’ performances of hegemonic masculinities which involved risk taking, and living life on the edge.

At the far end of the school, away from the ‘female’ public front area, behind the disused library, was the male ‘Smoking Saloon’, as announced by large chalk writing on the wall. Every break-time this area filled up with over a hundred male students, who gambled, smoked cigarettes and marijuana. There was an understanding that no female came or went back here. Being on-the-edge was significant in terms of escaping the public eye of the teacher and also in terms of physically buying cigarettes and marijuana through the fence. Every month or two a male member of the school management would come back here and discipline those found smoking by corporal punishment or compulsory gardening. During other times this performance of male youth was expected and tolerated.

This accepted male performance is linked to the grounding of masculinities in outside and dangerous spaces. When I discussed this performance with a male teacher, Musa, he expressed the apparent different gender roles:

*Alex:* Why do you think that is, that boys get in trouble?
*Musa:* Because the life of boys is physical, yeh, it’s physical, so and the fact that you know and us, we have a lot of respect, that girls must stay at home and wash dishes and all that you know, they must not be late
around the streets and all that, this cultural bias, the cultural stereotypes. But boys, at times, may be bad models… because it is the way that we were brought up, we were brought up that way. There’s apparent rules for girls and rules for boys. Like if I might cite you an example. That girls must stay at home, she must cook, she must wash, she must clean, she must do such kinds of chores.

Musa frames ‘respectful’ girls within the rules of the ‘private’ sphere and space of the home, whilst allowing boys to prove themselves by rebelling against these regulations, by taking risks outside of the safe, private sphere of the home. The after school behaviour of the students echoed Musa’s expectations. Whilst girls performed household chores, boys played ball games outside. Boys were more likely to risk arriving late and skip classes, whilst girls commonly had the responsibility of walking to and from school with a younger sibling whom they left at the crèche next door.

Being masculine made these risky performances inaccessible to females. If females dared share these performances, they were deemed far from the norm, and likely to fail. Just as teachers expected female students to be mature and responsible, when a female student showed low attainment, it was justified by her being influenced by boys, and their marginal behaviour. A female teacher expressed her opinion why older female students achieved lower grades than male students:

Especially girls, they can’t balance. Even the girl that was intelligent in grade 8 her grades will drop in grade 10. It’s rare for a boy to be affected by this stage, especially in his school work. Some of them [girls] start smoking and also taking these drugs at school.

Whereas males had ‘male’ spaces such as the Smoking Saloon and the Ultimatum Tree, females had no ‘female’ space within the school. The only private spaces within the school were the toilets, yet privacy was hard to come by; in the female toilets the cubicle doors were either missing or broken. Despite being the school’s one ‘female-only’ space, this was neither a hang-out nor a ‘safe’ space. In 2001 a student attempted an abortion and another attempted suicide. The fact that these acts of violence were perpetrated by the victims marginalised these acts from being of a school management concern.

The female staff spent their break time in the staff room, a relatively public space, busy with members of staff and visiting students. A group of young female staff sat in the corner and shared their daily lunch in what was temporarily the ‘women’s zone’. Although sitting tightly around a table, the
space was penetrable and frequently disturbed by loud and boisterous male members of staff. Male teachers would hover round the table, talking ‘into’ and ‘over’ this space, delving hands in to eat the food that was shared. The ‘female’ space remained small, interrupted and moveable, unlike the male smoking saloon and Ultimatum Tree, no female claim could be made of this tangible table space.

As the map and descriptions demonstrate gender performances are everywhere. Where males live life on the edge and challenge the margins of school space, the females’ behaviour is closely policed enclosing their performances to largely public and ‘safe’ spaces. Each ‘space’ within the school hosts a complexity of gender and sexuality performances; they are part of everyday life and largely go unchallenged. In order to help understand what polices these divisions, the practice of formal schooling should be observed.

Policing femininities: formal regulations of space and performance

The school’s formal structure, rules and regulations also proved to serve a role in maintaining gender divisions. Like other schools, the formal use of time and space at Lillian Ngoyi was controlled by the hierarchy of school management, teaching staff, a timetable and a loud siren (located outside the principal’s office).

Foucault identified school discipline as an important form of regulating the body and mind of students (1978). This discipline takes a variety of measures from the set use of time and space throughout school, such as lining up for school assembly or being punished for bad behaviour. Despite being illegal in South Africa since 1996, Lillian Ngoyi, like many other former ‘African’ schools maintained the practice of regular corporal punishment. Several teachers were known for their harsh punishment, and carried sticks menacingly, in particular the deputy principal. There were no school spaces which were safe from corporal punishment as it was used frequently in the classrooms, offices, staff room and publicly by the school gate for latecomers.

Corporal punishment is a tool of spatial management used to keep students in their place and manage the behaviour of students when in the school space. The male teacher, Sipho, expressed his reasoning for using corporal punishment:

As an African I know what it takes, I know how to discipline and when to discipline because some of them are so rude and they are, they bully
each other, and if you are not careful as an educator you might get seriously injured… if you are too strict if you give them severe punishment you put yourself in danger, I do not want to hide that. So we have to be extra careful not to forget to stamp your authority as an educator. You must demand respect from them, you know. Show them that you are a parent.

Sipho stressed the importance of demonstrating hegemony to the students, he emphasised authority rather than love or care of a parent. Corporal punishment is used as a ‘grooming’ technique, which moulds masculinities, to tolerate pain and learn to ‘act like a man’. By normalising the practice of physical discipline, violent masculinities are brought into the every day space of school culture. These masculinities are so engrained in everyday social practice, that one male student describes them as something one is ‘born with’:

> For us, as black people, we are born with it… we are born to fight… born to beat somebody…a black child cannot understand without being punished. You’re a man if you don’t feel the pain when using the stick, not a little slap.

Another formal mechanism for policing sexualities and gender disparities within Lillian Ngoyi was the patriarchy of school management. Lillian Ngoyi’s principal was an older male teacher, who has been at the school for 20 years. He had the largest office, located centrally within the school. The room had the most valuable material possessions, housing the one functioning computer, important documents, such as examination results, and the school’s awards and medals. He was also privileged in terms of spatial mobility. Not teaching, he was free from the constrictions of the school bell and the school grounds, as he demonstrated using his large car to come and go as he pleased.

The two deputy principals were also male and shared an office beside the principal. This room housed the second most prized piece of equipment, the school photocopier. Both deputies taught, although considerably fewer classes than other teachers, hence they enjoyed a relative amount of freedom over time and space. These members of staff were the most feared and respected within the school grounds.

The school’s heads of department (HODs) were privileged in that they shared an office and had a lighter teaching load than the remaining teachers. However, the only female head of department, Ncane, had a larger workload than her contemporaries, as she explained:
I am a full time teacher and HOD, I’m managing some subjects and at the same time as I’m responsible for cultural activities including the drama and choir, so sometimes it’s got very difficult and I’ve got to do better preparing them for their future careers. I also work as a guidance counsellor. Just now I’ve got to be organising a career’s exhibition so they are exposed to the institutions they will be attending next year… To make classes smaller, I decided to take more classes, so I now have many more than any other HOD in the school.

Ncane was given few of the powers that come with being a head of department. Management meetings were dominated by male teachers and Ncane’s views were often dismissed or not respected. The perceived masculinities which Ncane lacked, but were relevant to the job, were those of assertiveness, forcefulness and un-emotional attachment (Morrell 1998). Being a woman, Ncane was a perceived ‘carer’, someone who teaches and looks after the welfare of the children out of the goodness of her heart. Not only are women expected to prove themselves in the management role but also be able to cope with the domestic responsibilities of the private sphere and caring for friends and family outside the public sphere of the school.

The students too had a male dominated management structure: the student council. Only three of the nine posts were occupied by girls: the secretary, the assistant secretary and the treasurer. The remaining posts: president, deputy president, recreation and cultural officer, education officer, security and safety officer, and even gender officer, were male. On expressing surprise that the gender officer was male, the school president asserted knowledge (if not understanding) of the gender discourse and assured me:

Here we do not discriminate; either sex can do the job.

The school’s gender officer, however, did not inhabit the same space or performance as the females in the school. A frequent visitor of the male ‘smoking saloon’, he occupied a position of hegemonic masculinity and focused his attentions upon talking to girls. His emphasis upon the positive nature of the job was that it gave him authority, which enabled him to get the attention of girls. Although his position had been created by the school’s aim to challenge gendered behaviour, his perceived use of the post undermined this and served to secure the patriarchal hegemony in which school social process is situated.

The practices described above illustrate how the formal performances at school policed sexualities. However a particular femininity was policed with
more rigour than any other. Despite the practice being illegal in South Africa, the school excluded pregnant students. During the research period teachers discovered four students were pregnant in grade 12 and there was another ‘problem’ in grade 8. During my time at the school the principal made an announcement in Zulu in the school assembly. When I asked him what he had said, this was his response:

*Mr. Hlophe:* So I was informing them that it was wrong for them to remain here at school while pregnant because should they, eh, during the labour period, we don’t have the expertise to deal with the problem. There are no ambulances here.

*Alex:* And when is this from, as soon as she becomes pregnant, or in the last month?

*Mr. Hlophe:* No. As soon as it becomes a problem, or prominent, when it becomes conspicuous. Because we are having a problem. It is not even good for the image of the school and a very, very bad example to our young ones in grade 8, they are very young, young, young girls here.

The rights of the student, therefore, decrease when she is pregnant. Once her ‘position’ is visible, her rights are superseded by the appearance of the school. Likewise female teachers expressed their opinion that pregnancy was a form of punishment, and that once pregnant motherhood was the one overarching responsibility of the female student:

*Ncane:* I think the girl should, eh, accept that she has committed something that is going to ruin her time.

*Lulu:* If you are pregnant you must know that your future is doomed. Say if you get a scholarship where will the child go? You are a mother now.

The belief that the life of new mothers’ should be ‘doomed’ or ‘ruined’ was not a consideration bestowed upon fathers. Instead the exclusion of visibly post-coital female students served to re-confirm the male status of school space and keep femininities out of the public eye and in the appropriate domestic sphere. This resulted in the confirmation of different gender performances and the subordination of women within the accepted and performed school regulations.

**Performing sexualities**

The findings above demonstrate the gendered use of school space and how these are regulated. One particular example is a beauty contest. Lillian Ngoyi’s annual beauty pageant was a much anticipated event, captivating all staff and students. It provided a forum in which to observe the performances
of male and female students and the starkness of compulsory heterosexual behaviour. The day was held outside the school space in a local sports complex. Out of uniform and out of school space the students were excited and dressed to impress. Interaction between individuals was less formal than school, and teachers danced and chatted with students. During the day there were parades of female students competing for the Beauty Queen and the male students for Mr Personality.

The pageant displayed a stark and explicit performance of compulsory heterosexualities. This notion is centralised on embodied sexualities, where females inhabit a passive, subordinate, body-for-others and males use their strength to detach themselves from their bodies in a display of violence, virility and unemotional performance (Kehily 2001). The female students displayed emphasised femininities, an identity focused on attracting males using their appearance (Connell 1987), whilst male students displayed indifference and clenched fists in their parades around the hall.

Where male students wore clothes ranging from jeans to suits, females wore swimwear and evening attire. One girl wearing a g-string received a very excited reaction from the crowd and a comment from a male teacher that she was ‘tempting us men’. Although a requirement of the parade, the swimwear was viewed as a male invitation to enter and look into the female space, the less she wore, the more pressing the request. The negotiation of entering this female space was acted out. The females paraded the room, before standing in two lines, facing each other, on either side of the hall. The males entered the room and stood at the far end, before taking it in turns to slowly walk around the hall. Taking his time each male would stop in front of, and gaze at, every female, some for longer than others. When seeing something that particularly interested him he paused, sometimes touching the girl’s cheek or waist. Not easily satisfied, he occasionally shook his head or walked on. On finding the right choice he would kiss and hug the girl or offer her a rose. Proclaiming her ‘taken’, he put his arms around her waist, cradling her from behind.

Throughout this performance of compulsory heterosexuality the females had no power to control this negotiation, despite being cast off time and time again, they remained constant with a fixed ‘pretty’ smile upon their faces. This performance reflects Germaine Greer’s notion of femininity, as being merely a support mechanism for masculinities:

Feminine is not a version of female, but the denial of female. Female does not fit male as the sock the foot, but feminine does. The reduction of
female to feminine is as drastic as transforming a foot into a sock (1998:125)

The performance of compulsory sexualities displayed femininities and masculinities as two very unequal halves where males control the negotiation of power and space. In contrast the femininities were embodied, unable to control their sexual function, to initiate sex, or to say no to the advances of men.

As shown above, performances of compulsory heterosexuality and gender divides occurred throughout school space. There are countless other examples such as accepted male polygamy and sexual harassment. The ‘norms’ of the school culture favour hegemonic masculinities as demonstrated by the males’ right to choose performances and where these performances take place. The performance of femininities are policed by the formal structured use of school, places visited during break and sexual culture, resulting in females being less able to control their use of space and performance.

As the above has illustrated, school space provides a forum for performing and reinforcing compulsory heterosexualities and gender divides. Throughout the school, individual spaces ground gender performances allowing men to live life on the edge and policing acceptable lives of women. This research provides rich data to reveal how gendered practices are ingrained and taken for granted in the use of school space, the management process and accepted social interaction. The findings on their own form a matter of interest but also play an important part in the future understanding of HIV in South Africa.

**Intervening in a sexual space**

Finally I will tie together how this work is relevant in the context of HIV. Firstly, by considering school HIV interventions, and, secondly, by understanding what is needed in order to improve the situation.

Schooling has been seen as the hope for reversing/containing the HIV epidemic in South Africa. The new Curriculum 2005 is intended to ensure HIV and issues surrounding it will be tackled across the board and specifically within the new subject, Life Orientation. Schools may also serve as ports of condom distribution. But to what extent are schools the appropriate places upon which to pin the hopes of change? This article has shown schools to be made up of complex spaces, throughout which gendered performances are embedded, leading to the question of whether they are safe and appropriate spaces for HIV education.
Without tackling the existing performed use of space, HIV education interventions are flawed. South African schools have already been exposed to the HIV education discourse, bringing a language regarding ‘safe sex’ and ‘gender equality’, and subjects previously undiscussed into the public arena. This discourse has made accessible a language about sex, condoms and HIV, leaving few unexposed to this information. This was demonstrated by the male teacher, Sipho, who claimed:

You see, KwaMashu is a township in an urban area. They know everything [with regard to HIV], everything and they can even tell you how to use some of these things, protective measures they know them.

However, without laying the foundations where change is possible, the ability to talk about safe sex does not easily bring positive change in practice.

Despite there being a willingness to ‘do something about AIDS’ as proclaimed by the school principal, this does not automatically lead to active change. In 2001, the school was supplied with 2000 condoms to distribute to the students. Research that was carried out at the time showed how proud the teachers were of distributing these (Morrell et al 2001b:20). Yet, a year later, when I carried out research the same boxes of 2000 condoms were, dusted over, sitting in the corner of the staff room, in a ‘safe’ place.

HIV education has introduced gender equity language, yet the gender equity discourse is yet to be understood, embraced or wanted. The use of a ‘gender equality’ language was demonstrated through sexist jokes in the staff room. Humour is a way of coping with the discomfort of unwanted change. It disguises fear, and can be used to reinforce women’s subordinate position, such as dirty jokes attempting to undermine women through discourse (Kehily 2001). This joke was printed out and passed around the staff room:

A woman comes home late from a gender meeting. The husband was waiting eagerly. When she arrived she said: “Baba Kuthiwe Kube yi 50/50 nani: nipheki, niwashe, nigezise nabantwana” (now we are 50:50 you must do the cooking, washing and look after the baby)
The man replied: “Manje am asende baninikile yini?” (did they also give you testicles so we can be equal?)

Without understanding the existing gender performances introducing a language of change is unlikely to bring about a change in practice, as demonstrated by this joke. In order to challenge gendered performances and
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compulsory heterosexuality their current performances and investment in such must be fully understood. Change is often not wanted or accepted as demonstrated by this male teacher:

A girl might become the president of the country although this government that is in place now, has changed the mindset, has got more than 50, in terms of gender imbalances, got more women as ministers and in parliament, so that has been a little bit reversed. But men are not happy about that, when they see women taking that position…

The women we have these days are empowered, they are liberated, they are emancipated, they are focused, they are learned and educated and have careers so they refuse this kind of a system of polygamy. They say let me leave this. So everything is changing badly for us (laughs) badly for us

This teacher described a characteristic of hegemonic masculinities. The underlying domination of hegemonic masculinity performances are emotions such as confusion, fear, uncertainty, impotence, shame and rage. It is, therefore, unlikely that males will give-up the ‘power’ of hegemony without a struggle (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997). Challenging hegemonic masculinities may serve only to reinforce this fear and result in a stronger display of violent masculinities. In order to intervene there must be a full understanding of hegemonic masculinity performances and its regulations. Like hegemonic masculinities and gender divisions, compulsory heterosexuality also frames performance, constraining females’ sexuality to being the property of men. For any HIV intervention to be successful compulsory heterosexuality must be full understood, and negotiated.

Without both understanding the significance of gender performances, how and where they are negotiated, HIV interventions will be limited. Schools should not be assumed ‘safe’, empty spaces in which to carry out HIV education. Embedded within school space are the performances of gender and heterosexuality.

Concluding that schools are problematic spaces in which to carry out HIV interventions is rather ominous and unpromising. Just as each space within school embeds a host of performances, each individual school will provide different experiences and performances. It is important that this richness is noted. What makes performances and sexualities so complex and requiring further detailed examination is that they are never static. However, it is their ability to change, be reconstructed and be reclaimed that offers hope for the future.
In order to realise further the potential for HIV interventions, there should be more studies like this. A deeper understanding of gender identities, the importance invested in them and where they are situated is necessary before being able to re-negotiate these ‘dangerous’ gender discourses. Without a fuller understanding, gender and sexuality performances will remain ignored and hidden within the very site of HIV education: school space.

References


Greer, G (1998) ‘She thinks she’s on top, he knows better’, *Reproductive Health Matters* 6(12).


