

## **‘... a huge monster that should be feared and not done’: Lessons learned in sexuality education classes in South Africa**

2015. 17 p.

### **Authors:**

Shefer, Tamara  
Kruger, Lou-Marie  
Macleod, Catriona  
Baxen, Jean  
Vincent, Louise

### **Periodical title:**

African Safety Promotion Journal, 13, (1), 71-87

### **Description:**

Research has foregrounded the way in which heterosexual practices for many young people are not infrequently bound up with violence and unequal transactional power relations. The Life Orientation sexuality education curriculum in South African schools has been viewed as a potentially valuable space to work with young people on issues of reproductive health, gender and sexual norms and relations. Yet, research has illustrated that such work may not only be failing to impact on more equitable sexual practices between young men and women, but may also serve to reproduce the very discourses and practices that the work aims to challenge. Cultures of violence in youth sexuality are closely connected to prevailing gender norms and practices which, for example, render women as passive victims who are incapable of exercising sexual agency and men as inherently sexually predatory. This paper analyses the talk of Grade 10 learners in nine diverse schools in two South African provinces, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, to highlight what ‘lessons’ these young people seem to be learning about sexuality in Life Orientation classes. The authors find that these lessons foreground cautionary, negative and punitive messages, which reinforce, rather than challenge, normative gender roles. ‘Scare’ messages of danger, damage and disease give rise to presumptions of gendered responsibility for risk and the requirement of female restraint in the face of the assertion of masculine desire and predation. They conclude that the role which sexuality education could play in enabling young women in particular to more successfully negotiate their sexual relationships to serve their own needs, reproductive health and safety, is undermined by regulatory messages directed at controlling young people, and young women in particular – and that instead, young people’s sexual agency has to be acknowledged in any processes of change aimed at gender equality, anti-violence, health and well-being.

**Links:**

[📄 '... a huge monster that should be feared and not done': Lessons learned in sexuality education classes in South Africa](#) [1]

**Themes:**

[Sexuality education](#) [2]

**Regions:**

[Africa](#) [3]

[South Africa](#) [4]

**Resource types:**

[Case studies and research papers](#) [5]

[Journal articles](#) [6]

**Keywords:**

[gender roles](#) [7]

[sex education](#) [8]

[sexual and reproductive health](#) [9]

[sexual behaviour](#) [10]

[violence](#) [11]

[youth](#) [12]

**Languages:**

[English](#) [13]

**Record created by:**

IIEP

---

**Source URL:** <http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/documents/huge-monster-should-be-feared-and-not-done-lessons-learned-sexuality-education>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/asp/article/download/136121/125613>

[2] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/theme/sexuality-education](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/theme/sexuality-education)

[3] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/region/africa](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/region/africa)

[4] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/region/south-africa](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/region/south-africa)

[5] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/type/case-studies-and-research-papers](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/type/case-studies-and-research-papers)

[6] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/type/journal-articles](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/type/journal-articles)

[7] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/gender-roles](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/gender-roles)

[8] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/sex-education](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/sex-education)

[9] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/sexual-and-reproductive-health](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/sexual-and-reproductive-health)

[10] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/sexual-behaviour](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/sexual-behaviour)

[11] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/violence](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/violence)

[12] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/keyword/youth](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/keyword/youth)

[13] [http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/\\_all\\_/language/english](http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/search/_all_/language/english)