

Alison Nesbitt, *Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland*

**A Phenomenological Account of Sexualised Gender Differences
in Primary School**

nesbitam@tcd.ie

Based on a pilot study for doctoral research and inspired by past explorations of the schooling of genders and sexualities, the current project aimed to sensitise the adult researcher to children's experiences of being in sixth class in an Irish primary school. In order to complement past discourse analytic studies that have asked how young people and their schools produce and reproduce gendered sexualities, the current research focused more on what it is like to be a 'boy' or 'girl', to capture snapshots of the 'being' in order to add to our understandings of the 'doing'. Using anecdotes of school-day observations in addition to transcripts from interviews with the pupils, interpretative phenomenological analysis provided some insights into the experiential aspects of the schooling of the Mars & Venus discourse, the maintenance of which it is argued relies upon translating gender differences into sex differences pertaining to human reproduction. In relation to the Department of Education and Science resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), the author concluded that the gender differences constructed by the curriculum were anticipated by some of the children some of the time but ambiguities emerged more in real lived experience.

Alison Nesbitt developed an interest in genders and sexualities during a graduate diploma in psychology at London South Bank University where she carried out a final year project on heterosexual men's experiences of mainstream pornography and their views of materials produced by a woman pornographer. She is currently in the second year of her PhD entitled "The phenomenology of gender for sixth class pupils" and supervised by Dr Jean Quigley at the School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin.