

How much do young children know about HIV and AIDS

**Associate Professor Deevia Bhana
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

When: Tuesday February 17th, 4.30-6.00pm
Where: Frank Tate Meeting Room, Room 211,
Alice Hoy Building, University of Melbourne

This seminar explores the ways in which young South African school children (aged between seven and eight) in race and class specific sites give meanings to HIV/AIDS. Using ethnographic methods and interview data the analysis of young children's responses show that their accounts of HIV/AIDS draws from their knowledge of disease more generally and associate it with allergies, fungus, moss as well as contagion. Their knowledge of HIV/AIDS is also intricately connected with their understandings of race, sex and gender. Within the same age group young children's knowledge of the disease vacillates from inaccurate information to graphic accounts of sex as a transmission route and gendered vulnerability to the disease. The findings of this study rejects the image of the child as too young to understand abstract issues relating to health and HIV/AIDS and argues that children are active makers of meanings about the disease and relate it more generally to disease, to contagion and dirt, and to sex and gender. Efforts to scale up young children's understanding of the disease in the early years of schooling are significant in the light of this study.

Deevia Bhana, PhD is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As a Fogarty exchange scholar to Columbia University, she is an established researcher in the field of childhood studies with particular emphasis on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. She is co-author of *Towards Equality? Gender in South African schools during the HIV/AIDS pandemic* (2009) published by UKZN Press.

We will be adjourning for drinks and dinner afterwards. Please RSVP to Eleanor Brignell <eleanorb@unimelb.edu.au> if you wish to join us for dinner.