





## Queering schools: Parental understanding of cisnormative schooling culture in South African high schools

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**Abstract** – Research has demonstrated that parents are critical in transforming cisnormative schooling cultures. However, South African literature has not explored how parents want gender diversity included in South African high schools. This study aims to give voice to parents of South African children of high school age and gauge their understanding of cisnormative schooling culture and how it can be challenged. To reach the objective, this study addressed the question: In what ways do both parents of trans and cis learners understand cisnormative schooling cultures in South African high schools? A qualitative research design was used to gather data through focus group interviews with nine parents with different occupations, such as police, teaching, religious preachers, among others, in a rural part of Free State province. Queer theory guided the study, and thematic analysis was used to identify themes that came out of the data collected. Findings suggest that parents acknowledge that a cisnormative schooling culture is a barrier to the promotion of gender diversity in South African high schools. Furthermore, findings reveal that infrastructure and school policies contribute to a delay in promoting an inclusive schooling environment for both trans learners and cis learners. This research recommends that future research studies should recruit parents from diverse demographics to capture different views on how queering cisnormative schooling culture can be achieved.

**Keywords:** Cisnormative schooling, Gender diversity, High schools, Parental understanding, Queering

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### I. INTRODUCTION

GLOBALLY, there is an emerging trend among parents to play a role in transforming cisnormative schooling culture to promote inclusive schooling culture (Brombos, 2022; Ferfolja & Ullman, 2021). Research has shown that most parents express discomfort when discussing gender diversity issues, especially when discussing these issues with their children (Wagner & Armstrong, 2020). International research has explored what parents of transgender children have to say regarding school cultures (Davy & Cordoba, 2020; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2022). Even though most parents from these contexts are not comfortable with challenging the idea that all learners should identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, some are supportive of their gender-diverse children (Charter et al., 2023; Matsuno & Israel, 2021). Although some parents have a positive stance on gender diversity, there is still a dearth of research about how parents understand school cultures that promote binary gender expression, and whether they can play a role in queering it. The lack of research in this area can result in teachers further embedding a cisnormative schooling culture in schools, believing that most parents do not stand against this culture (Francis, 2024). Gender identities (and sexual orientation) in South African schools continue to be understood through the notion of cisnormativity on the grounds of cultural and religious beliefs that construct gender as fixed (Francis, 2019). Cisnormative schooling is rooted in cisnormativity, which is the assumption that everyone identifies with the gender assigned to them at birth (Robinson, 2022).

Furthermore, trans learners or learners who are perceived as trans are subject to persistent cisnormative violence, bullying, and gender discrimination, which compromise their well-being (Francis et al., 2019; Marquez-Velarde et al., 2023; Msibi, 2012; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2019). Due

to the silent voice of parents, research has shown that teachers are generally reluctant to create an inclusive learning environment for trans learners as they believe gender diversity is against the set norms of society (Mayeza & Vincent, 2019). Trans learners continue to experience these challenges despite the South African constitution, which assures that all gender identities are protected against any form of gender discrimination. Religious and cultural understanding of parents plays a major role in safeguarding the established cisnormative schooling, which affects the constitutional implementation meant to support trans learners.

Thus, to support schools in promoting gender diversity, parents need to reconceptualise their understanding of gender (Mangin, 2020), because most learners reveal their gender identity before completing their schooling. Various studies have found that most trans learners disclose their gender identity before the age of 15 (Francis, 2010; Herman et al., 2017; Turban et al., 2023). However, the current literature does not focus on how parents can help trans learners, who know from an early age that they identify as trans, by ensuring that their school environment is an inclusive one. Furthermore, the literature review revealed that most parents who took part in the studies mentioned above were parents of trans learners. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question, "In what ways do both parents of trans and cis learners understand cisnormative schooling cultures in South African high schools?" From their understanding, ways to queer schools are determined as the focus is on those areas that parents consider as a barrier to an inclusive schooling environment.

#### *High Schools as institutional cisnormativity*

Global literature reports that more trans learners socially transition before or during primary school (Olson et al., 2022; Steensma & Cohen-Kettenis, 2011). Globally, scholars have also found that most trans learners face various challenges at school (Gilbert et al., 2024; Horton, 2020). Risk of discrimination and violence, and experience bullying or

harassment from cis learners to trans learners are mostly reported in high schools instead of primary schools (Davy & Cordoba, 2020; Kosciw et al., 2020; Martín-Castillo et al., 2020). Prominent gender and sexuality education scholars in South Africa attest that trans learners experience challenges regarding gender discrimination, misgendering, and bullying from their peers (Francis & Monakali, 2021). These kinds of challenges create cumulative stress for trans learners as they try to navigate their life path in an unsafe and hostile schooling environment, which can lead to mental health issues (Dhaliwal, 2023; Ferina, 2024).

Global research on parents' experiences of transgender in education has considered how schools can benefit from parents who help to create an inclusive school environment (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2021; Johnson et al., 2014). However, existing literature focuses mostly on the experiences of parents raising trans learners rather than on how all parents can advocate for more inclusive school environments (Galman, 2020; Katz-Wise et al., 2022; Mariotto et al., 2024). Besides solely finding out whether parents can advocate for trans-inclusive school environments, global literature also shows a trend in how parents have begun to reconceptualise their understanding of gender diverse people. This suggests a willingness on the part of parents to advocate for gender diversity in schools (Howe, 2022; Imrie et al., 2021).

In South Africa, trans learners continue to experience greater inequality when compared to their cis peers (Ubisi, 2021). Most research on transgender inclusion in South African schools focuses on the school experiences of trans learners and the challenges they and their parents experience (Brown & Buthelezi, 2020; Francis, 2024; Haffeejee & Wiebesiek, 2021). Although some research does focus on the role that parents play in South African schools (Nichols, 2021), it does not focus on parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling cultures to determine whether they can play a role in suggesting ways to improve an inclusive schooling environment for gender diversity in schools. When schools do not acknowledge trans learners' existence, it indirectly promotes a cisnormative school culture that contributes to transgender learners' gender dysphoria, school dropout rates, and suicide attempts (Bottoman, 2021; Willis, 2021). Indeed, research has recently started to report on the ways that cisnormative school cultures contribute to trans learners' stress (Horton, 2023). A cisnormative schooling culture can be invisible or can go unnoticed by cis learners and teachers, which puts trans learners under perpetual stress (Ingrey, 2023). This suggests that parents' roles in helping schools be inclusive of gender diversity can help trans learners transition without any mental health issues socially.

This study adds to the existing evidence base, experiences, and understanding of parents' views of schools as institutions that promote cisnormativity by analysing parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling culture to determine how schools can be improved to be inclusive of gender diversity.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In 1990, Terasa de Lauretis organised the first conference that introduced the term Queer theory (De Lauretis, 1991). She combined the term Queer with 'theory', which gave Queer a more academic weight. Queer theory critically questions the meaning of identity when based on the dominant dualistic view of gender identities (Jagose & Genschel, 1996; Manning, 2009). Queer theory also disrupts the idea that a binary system of gender is 'normal' and further celebrates the differences in society (Kumashiro, 2003). Additionally, Queer theory states that gender is constructed by society, and this affirms that if parents' understanding of gender is reconceptualised, the gender script can be adjusted, and inclusivity will be promoted. In simple terms, gender is performative and not synonymous with sex (Butler, 2009). Queer theory does not aim to make gender diversity normal but rather questions the unjust standards set by society that cisnormativity should be the basis of how gender identity is described (Penney, 2013; Thurmond, 2015). This is applicable for analysing the understanding of parents about cisnormative schooling cultures as a way of creating an inclusive

schooling environment while queering cisnormativity. One of the predominant scholars of gender and sexuality in South Africa, Msibi (2012), argued that the term "identity" suggests that gender is fixed and, thus, prefers to use the term "identification". Msibi's idea embeds the key understanding of Queer theory: that gender is changeable or fluid and is not restricted to the sex of a person (Herdt, 2020; Sibisi & Van Der Walt, 2021). However, when schools operate from a cisnormative point of view, they suggest that there are only two fixed genders. If parents embrace gender diversity, then schools, teachers, and learners will more likely contribute to a learning environment that accommodates gender diversity (Keating & Baker, 2024; Mariotto et al., 2024). Moreover, Queer theory challenges the traditional binary gender system so that gender diversity can be considered "normal" (Piantato, 2016). In other words, parents' reconceptualised understanding of gender diversity can empower schools to question the cisnormative culture predominant in high schools and create an inclusive learning environment (Humphrey, 2021). This means that teachers are reluctant and silent to implement gender diversity because parents' voices are silent about challenging cisnormative schooling. To conclude, Queer theory is the basis of how cisnormative schooling culture can be disrupted at South African high schools.

## III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study analyses parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling cultures and views of schools as institutions that promote cisnormativity. This understanding helps to determine areas in schools that need queering so that an inclusive schooling environment can be promoted.

## IV. METHODS

### Research paradigm

An interpretive paradigm was employed to understand how parents perceive cisnormative schooling since it is a paradigm that posits that no single reality exists (Gichuru, 2017). It was a suitable paradigm for this study as it allowed us to explore the in-depth meaning parents attach to cisnormative school cultures, which cannot be investigated like physical objects (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

### Research approach and design

A qualitative research approach was adopted to investigate the meaning parents assign to a social problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Gender discrimination, misgendering, and bullying of trans people have become a social problem. The qualitative research approach allowed researchers to explore parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling culture and whether gender diversity should be promoted in South African high schools. A phenomenological research design guided how data were collected since the research design sought to present empirical evidence to help answer the study's research questions (Yin, 2009). Through phenomenology, researchers could capture how the phenomenon was experienced by parents in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Queer theory was a thread on how the interpretive paradigm was used to understand the meanings that parents attribute to cisnormative schooling cultures, because fewer parents were chosen through phenomenology in answering broad questions relating to cisnormative school culture to determine whether schools should be inclusive of transgender learners.

### Participants

Nine parents (seven parents of cis learners and two parents of trans learners) participated in this study at a rural community library selected in the Mahlatswetsa location of the Thabo Mofutsanyane district of the Free State Province in South Africa. Mahlatswetsa is one of the rural areas surrounded by farms, and learners from those farms attend schools there. Some parents in this location relocated from farms. Although the focus was on parents from rural areas, there is a blend of farms as well. This means that most parents in this area have a

background of living on a farm, which is also an area missing from the literature on gender diversity.

Snowball sampling was used to find parents willing to discuss cisnormative schooling culture and how an inclusive schooling environment can be enhanced. However, the sampling was limited because it took us many weeks to find parents, and we relied on parents to assist us in finding participants willing to participate in our study. The research site was selected because participants could easily access it, as it was the community building known by everyone, and it had infrastructure convenient for focus group interviews. A main road passed next to it, making it known to all community members.

#### Data analysis

The principle of Queer theory that gender is socially constructed assisted us to code data through thematic analysis as we were looking for an understanding of parents regarding cisnormative schooling cultures constructed by the society, and how their understanding can play a role in promoting gender diversity in High Schools. We developed one key theme and three subthemes, which were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Queer theory's principle of viewing gender as a social construct assisted in determining whether the theme was relevant in analysing the understanding of parents towards promoting an inclusive schooling environment. The data were stored in the cloud, available to the authors via their institution, and were password-protected using a password known only to the first author.

#### Ethical considerations

Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time were the ethical guidelines that parents were assured of. Parents signed a consent form before participating in this study, which received ethical clearance from the authors' institution. Written consent was obtained from the public library as a research site because it was central to the community members. All data collected from the parents is stored securely in cloud storage sanctioned by the first author's institution and is protected by a password known only to the first author.

## V. RESULTS

### Biographic results

Table 1: Biographic results

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender of participants</b>		
Female	4	44%
Male	5	56%
<b>Age of participants</b>		
30-39	1	11,11%
40-49	4	44,44%
50-59	4	44,44%
<b>Occupation of participants</b>		
Teacher	3	33,33%
Deputy principal	1	11,11%
Soccer coach (National First Division)	1	11,11%
Preacher (religion)	1	11,11%
Police	1	11,11%
Counsellor	1	11,11%
Self employed	1	11,11%
<b>Gender of participants' children</b>		
Trans learners	2	17%
Cis learners	10	83%
<b>School grades of participants' children</b>		
8	3	25%
9	0	0%
10	1	8%
11	5	42%
12	3	25%

Note: All participants were from the same geographical location.

#### Thematic results

##### Theme 1: Queering Cisnormative Schooling Culture

In this study, "queer" is a term that disrupts binary norms and acts as a celebratory symbol of gender diversity (Cahnmann-Taylor et al.,

2022; Twine & Smietana, 2022; Worthen, 2023). Queer is used as a verb in this study to challenge or question cisnormative schooling cultures. This central theme presents how participants understand cisnormative schooling culture. All the participants in the study admitted that cisnormative schooling culture is a barrier to promoting gender diversity. Although most participants confirmed that queering a cisnormative schooling culture can help promote gender diversity, they argued that gender diversity cannot be freely promoted due to the heavily embedded nature of cisnormativity at schools (Davy & Cordoba, 2020). Due to the complex expertise of parents such as teachers, religious ministers, and councillors who participated in the study, we allowed them to determine how the focus group proceedings would unfold since it was as though the parents were sharing information among themselves. The parents could take over the discussion when they had dominant or clear views regarding the posed question. Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021) argued that focus groups can be applied to discuss and challenge, and individuals not qualified in observational analysis techniques can quickly handle it. Therefore, participants were allowed to ask other participants with expertise related to the question. Due to the complexity of terms such as queer, Queer theory, cisnormativity, and transgender, a slide presentation was done before the focus group commenced to familiarise participants with the meanings. After participants were familiarised with the essence of what Queer theory is, they were able to queer cisnormativity during focus group discussions and inspire others to do likewise. The major theme of the study is categorised into three sub-themes, namely.

- Queering infrastructure,
- Queering learners' code of conduct and school uniform, and
- Queering the sporting code.

##### Subtheme 1: Queering infrastructure

All parent participants acknowledged that the infrastructure of high schools is a barrier to promoting gender diversity. Parents mentioned that they were concerned that the infrastructure would not allow for a smooth, inclusive schooling environment for trans learners. Furthermore, some mentioned that trans girls who were assigned male at birth are still boys. Therefore, they believed that they should not share toilets with cis girls. This becomes challenging because most South African high schools do not have unisex toilets. Having trans learners in high schools becomes challenging for schools regarding infrastructure, specifically regarding toilets.

Some example excerpts from the parents regarding the issue of toilets are below.

"..... supposed to be positive towards 'He-She'. treat them like others, the facilities, especially the toilets, we must separate them, so they can be free" (Parent 3).

Parent participants who were teachers introduced the terms "He-She" and "She-He" in the focus group. Almost all participants were comfortable with these terms. These terms of parent participants meant that trans girls (assigned male at birth) are "He-She", whereas trans boys (assigned female at birth) were referred to as "She-He". Although parent participants indirectly maintained their cisnormative idea of gender. However, they acknowledge the gender identity of trans learners.

Additionally, they indirectly maintained their cisnormative understanding that a learner assigned male sex at birth is "He", they further admit that the gender identity of a trans girl, hence "He-She". We attribute this pronoun of participants to a lack of knowledge of the pronouns used in literature. This understanding of parent participants suggests that they admit that trans learners can be accommodated at schools so as not to damage them psychologically. Besides this understanding of the pronouns of participants, their narrative revealed that they acknowledge that infrastructure plays a role in creating a non-inclusive schooling environment for trans learners.

"The first day, I explained everything to the principal, the committee of admission, and the school committee, and then the problem was at the toilets" (Parent 1).

*".....is the issue of toilets, which is the main challenge, because to build new toilets, those that are for unisex make other learners feel as if transgender learners are treated specially" (Parent 8).*

Parent 1, who is a parenting trans child, indicated that the school the trans child attends acknowledges that toilets are contributing negatively to the promotion of gender diversity.

Parent 8 also showed that cis boys are resistant to sharing toilets with trans girls who were assigned male at birth. Despite all participants agreeing that infrastructure is a barrier, few parents expected toilets to be arranged according to the sex assigned to learners at birth (that is, two sexes, male and female) (Parents 6 and 7).

According to one participant, it is challenging to convince transgender learners to share toilets with cis learners because cis learners tease and gender discriminate against trans learners in toilets. Parent 4, who is a teacher, indicated that it requires great effort to convince cis boy learners to share toilets and rooms during school trips with trans girls who were assigned male at birth. An example parent comment follows:

*"We are telling the schoolmates, 'he-she' is your responsibility, make it a point that 'he-she' is protected 24\7, and they are going to do that. They are going to protect, er, 'he-she' 24\7. So, the problem is the infrastructure. That is it (GROUP AGREEING) that is, that is, that is the problem" (Parent 4)*

*"..... they should be accommodated, because if we exclude them, we are damaging their minds, that is where they are not going to complete their dreams, it is where they are going to drop out of school or end up committing suicide" (Parent 3).*

Parent 3 indicated that excluding trans learners in schools leads to mental health issues that contribute negatively to their well-beings. As can be deduced from the findings presented above, nearly all parent participants confirmed that gender diversity can be promoted, but that infrastructure is a barrier to this promotion. However, the narrative of participants revealed a deep cisnormative understanding rooted in cultural and societal expectations tied to infrastructure matters. Furthermore, it shows the necessity for schools to have surveillance cameras around the schools and those that specifically point at the entrance of toilets so that when trans learners raise issues of gender discrimination and bullying within toilets at the same time, surveillance will confirm that both the bullied and the bullies were in the toilets at the same time. For the privacy policy, surveillance should not be installed inside toilets. To conclude subtheme 1, the participants' understanding suggests that policies regarding the infrastructure of toilets need to be strengthened. Subtheme 2 indicates the importance of queering school policies so that infrastructure can contribute to creating an inclusive school environment.

#### **Subtheme 2: Queering learners' code of conduct and school uniform**

The results further revealed the participants' feelings that the school's Code of Conduct for learners was a barrier to creating an inclusive schooling environment. Some participants indicated that schools should use the noun "learner" instead of "boy" and "girl" because the Code of Conduct currently addresses both boys and girls as learners to avoid misgendering among trans learners. A parent of a trans learner also indicated that she had gone to her child's school and had found that the Code of Conduct for learners included several explanations and uses of language that do not contribute to promoting gender diversity. However, the parents were detailed about their discussion of language contributing negatively towards transgender students. One parent further indirectly advocated for the school's Code of Conduct amendment when he said that support for trans learners should be incorporated into a code of conduct.

*"If you must practice a code of conduct, you cannot say, as a code of conduct, to this boy that would be different from a girl. A code of conduct sees a learner; it does not matter the gender. So, er, my view from school started to be different. I said Let us define the boy and a girl as learners, irrespective of gender" (Parent 8).*

*".....cause I did, I did go to the school and made them aware that in their policy (code of conduct) they include some clause not for support of the 'He-*

*she' " (Parent 1).*

*"The 'she-he' who attends to the He, er there is no way you can stop them. Cause we can see is against their rights; to make things better, we must be governed by the code of conduct" (Parent 2).*

One participant in the focus group was critical of the fact that some trans girls had to wear skirts. It sparked a discussion among participants, and one teacher participant responded. Before the teacher participant responded, concern was about the dress code of trans girls on whether they should wear skirts because the code of conduct stipulates how learners should dress. The narratives below display the question and the response given:

*"I have a question, uh, what happens now if a 'he-she' wants to wear a skirt at school, do you leave the learner or what do you do?" (Parent 9).*

*"It is not about wearing a skirt, the child can wear trousers but be a trans girl" (Parent 5).*

The narratives of participants suggest that it is normal for trans boys to wear trousers but 'weird' for trans girls to wear skirts. Although these narratives are discursive constructions of the particular focus group that this study presents, their constructions, which unfolded during discussion, suggest that the gender diversity among trans boys is more easily accepted than that of trans girls, in terms of dress code. The narrative of one parent shows this construction unfolding.

*"It is still not easier for the 'he-she', the 'he-she' born as a male to wear a skirt, but it is easier for the she-he to wear the trousers" (Parent 8).*

#### **Subtheme 3: Queering sporting code**

As stated earlier, the parent participants were allowed to share their insights with other parents with the aim of queering cisnormativity. Parent 6, for example, directed a question to the parent participants who are professional teachers in the focus group. An example question follows:

*"Pardon me, let me ask parents because some work in schools, what happens in sports, let me say, after I transition from being cis boy to trans girl, can I play sports with cis girls?" (Parent 6).*

Parent 8 quickly responded to this question, arguing that schools use sex to measure how sports (such as soccer, netball, athletics, etc.) should be conducted. This means that trans girls are not allowed to engage in sports reserved for cis girls. Parent 8 went further to argue that trans girls have higher levels of testosterone, which can be an advantage over cis girls.

*"Yes, unfortunately, or is still fortunately to my side as a male and female parent, but unfortunately at this moment, er, as South African schools, we do not allow for the official Matches allowing a mixed gender on the same ground,..... You are all the boy's playing netball with other boys, but you cannot join the females who are playing, er netball against other teams that are reb, that the girls" (Parent 8).*

Although the parents raised the issue of sporting codes, they did not mention that some sports are meant for a particular gender. This suggests that the parents confirm that trans learners can engage in all sports but must compete among themselves.

## **VI. DISCUSSION**

The in-depth analysis of the data reveals that a cisnormative high school culture segregates toilets, sports, and uniforms by sex (Buzuvis, 2011; Francis, 2023). Although the findings reveal that some participants have a reconceptualised understanding of gender diversity, most parents still perceive gender as synonymous with sex (Wilson, 2023). Being a trans learner in a South African high school thus comes with challenges, as nearly all participants in the study admitted that infrastructure, such as toilets, is not accommodating of trans learners. A South African study focusing on transgender students in South African higher education institutions also found that bathrooms are one of the common barriers that prevent transgender individuals from being accommodated at institutions of learning (Buthelezi & Brown, 2023). The findings of this study further exposed high schools as spaces that acknowledge cisnormativity despite an emerging trend among parents to promote gender diversity (Nichols, 2023). Cisnormativity is a

yardstick against which learners' gender identities are judged, since cisgenderism is normalised and indirectly creates space for cis learners to direct prejudice, gender discrimination, and misgendering towards trans learners (Brown, 2020).

Despite what this data reveals about participants' willingness to queer cisnormative schooling culture, some of their responses revealed their in-depth belief that we all should be cis (Francis, 2024; Phipps & Blackall, 2023). This is evident from the participants' opinions that when a trans girl wears skirts, it is strange or weird (Purvis, 2024). The participants' cisnormative understanding of issues such as dress code dictates the extent to which they are willing to queer cisnormativity. This constrained willingness to queer cisnormativity is also evidenced by the fact that they believe the main barriers to promoting gender diversity are schools' infrastructure and policies. These findings are consistent with research on cisnormative schooling cultures that reports on teachers who justify gender discrimination and misgendering because they believe in the binary system of gender (Bhana, 2022). The social notion is that the roles that cis boys and girls perform are natural, and this gives cis learners a platform to discriminate, misgender, and make jokes about their trans peers. Although parents attributed the lack of promotion of gender diversity to cisnormative schooling cultures, they did not mention their contribution to enhancing the cisnormative schooling culture. However, their responses do nevertheless suggest a willingness to reconceptualise their understanding of gender diversity with the aim of challenging institutional cisnormativity.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study analysed parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling cultures and views of schools as institutions that promote cisnormativity. The findings suggest that parental understanding of cisnormative schooling culture can be used to promote an inclusive schooling environment for gender diversity, despite their ingrained perception that we should all be cisgender. This suggestion emerged from participants' understanding of what hinders the promotion of gender diversity in high schools. Furthermore, findings reveal that a schooling environment that is queered can create respect for and humanise those who are "not normal". The strength of this study is that parents' understanding of an inclusive schooling environment for gender diversity in South African high schools was the focus. The findings of this study are informative, given that there is a paucity of South African research about parents of both trans and cis learners and their views regarding queering cisnormative schooling culture. However, this qualitative study was limited to only nine parents (small sample size) from a small rural area and, therefore, does not represent the diversity of South African parents. Additionally, for some participants, the focus group interview seemed to hinder speaking more freely because some had difficulties fully engaging with the interview questions in a group. Thus, we cannot generalise the findings of this study to all measures that analyse parents' understanding of cisnormative schooling culture in terms of how schools can be queered. Based on the results of this study, we recommend a larger study that recruits parents from different demographics of families (such as regional locations, religious and cultural background, and socioeconomic status) to capture diverse views of parents. Furthermore, School Governing Bodies (parent component of the school) must create a platform for parents (for example, during parent meetings) to discuss their understanding of gender diversity and how it can be promoted in schools. Additionally, we recommend that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) develop a strategy to assist high schools in modifying their infrastructure to create unisex toilets. We also suggest that the DBE assist schools in amending their policies to include trans learners. The benefits of creating an inclusive learning environment can help trans learners deal with mental issues such as gender incongruity, which contributes to gender dysphoria.

## VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our gratitude to all parents who participated in this study. The University Ethics Committee approved this study.

## VIII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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