

Sissies, Tomboys & All Those In-between: Moving Towards Gender Expansive Schools
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With contemporary science liberating us from the binary concept of *boy* and *girl*, our understanding of gender has become a shifting landscape. But has society kept up with this radical change in our understanding of gender as being more fluid and expansive than what we previously thought? When we consider South-Africa with its still deeply entrenched patriarchal, heteronormative and homophobic attitudes, the answer is an echoing no. Indeed, these restricting attitudes continue to sternly prescribe behaviour, activities, appearance and traits that are considered normative for a particular biological sex, while firmly holding onto a binary view of gender.

Children are not unsusceptible from the influence of these social and cultural attitudes. In fact, children at a young age already react more negatively to peers who do not exhibit gender stereotyped behaviour. This is especially evident when we look at the alarming rates of school bullying towards gender creative children and adolescents – those whose identity or behaviour are broader than the commonly held definitions of gender and gender expression. More disquieting is the fact that bullying of gender creative children before age eleven, has been related to elevated risk for depressive symptoms across adolescence and early adulthood.

It is therefore imperative to develop school-based policies and interventions that aim at including the full-spectrum of gender fluidity and diversity. This presentation will aim at providing a key to unlocking this door to gender-expansive schools, revealing pathways to celebrating the gender rainbow which will allow all students to fully express their true gendered-selves.

About Fred Schouwink

Fred Schouwink is a registered Educational Psychologist with the HPCSA, holding a position at SAHETI School as the Head of Department of the psychology and multi-disciplinary team. In addition, he consults in private practice with his focus on psychotherapy and assessment. Fred is also a part-time lecturer and clinical supervisor at the South African College of Applied Psychology. As one of six selected candidates, Fred is currently completing his professional structured Doctorate degree in Child and Adolescent Psychology from the University of the Free State. His research focus is on gender non-conforming children, bullying and the development of psychoeducational interventions to address homophobia towards this vulnerable group of youth. Fred has presented at numerous local and international conferences. His therapeutic approach is positioned within a trans-theoretical, evidence-based approach. He has a special interest in Internal Family Systems Therapy, Creative Expressive Arts Therapy and Neuropsychology.