

# Exploring the relationship between transphobia and homophobia and other demographic factors among practicing and future primary school teachers

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## Abstract

Based on an existing measure of homophobia, we developed an instrument to measure both transphobia and homophobia, as well as their relationship with other demographic variables that included attributed sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and political affinity. Research was designed to establish the relationship between homophobia and transphobia, by comparing the results of a validated Homophobia Test with a Transphobia Test that has been designed by adapting the same items; and to explore the relationship between homophobia/transphobia and other socio-demographic variables, specifically including gender, geographic origin, sexual orientation, political ideology, and religious conviction). Our research with 1,133 trainee and 182 practicing teachers demonstrated the reliability of our instrument, suggesting a correspondence between the two types of prejudice. Our results also found that these two prejudices followed similar trends with respect to other variables: respondents who identified as men showed higher levels of both homophobia and transphobia, as did those who professed religious conviction and were affiliated with the right wing of the political

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spectrum. We found that people who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were less homophobic and transphobic than those who identified as heterosexual. Based on these data, we hypothesize that the two types of prejudice explored here derive from a common factor, the broader social construct of cisgenderism, so that any deviation from the heterosexual matrix, whether in terms of gender identity, gender presentation, or sexual orientation, results in social stigma. The professionals included in our sample are entrusted with well-being of all children, and are responsible for teaching about human diversity as part of the curriculum. Our findings will help us understand how teachers might respond to children who transgress, or are perceived to transgress, cisgendered norms, and to design more effective teacher training concerning sex and gender diversity.

### **Keywords**

Queer-feminism, sexuality, teacher education, teaching, marginalisation

## **Introduction**

*The Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity*, better known as the Yogyakarta Principles, were published in response to clear patterns of human rights abuses, with the aim of establishing “binding international legal standards with which all states must comply ([International Commission of Jurists, 2007: 7](#)). Of particular note is the understanding demonstrated by the committee of experts who drafted this document that sexual orientation and gender identity render people susceptible to similar social injustices and require protection under a single unifying set of legal protections. 10 years later these principles were expanded, with an introduction that explained the importance of specifically protecting gender expression (physical appearance, including dress and mannerisms) and sex characteristics (including secondary physical features emerging from puberty), as these also may result in violence and discrimination that manifest in “continuum of multiple, interrelated and recurring forms” ([International Commission of Jurists, 2017: 7](#)).

Since schools reflect the society in which we live, they constitute a space of mandatory attendance and exposure to everyday violence for children who do not conform to sex, gender and sexuality norms. At the same time, schooling has the potential to transform society, and therefore constitutes a privileged space for the prevention of discrimination within and beyond these institutions. Research with teachers in various European countries has revealed a generalized fear that everyday acts of interpersonal peer violence (such as verbal insults or supposed jokes), especially those taking place in informal spaces beyond the range of staff vigilance, may eventually erupt into physical acts of aggression ([Barragán-Medero and Pérez-Jorge, 2020](#)). As these authors point out, these fears have already become a reality. At the same time, we argue that educators need to take more seriously the underlying school climate that normalizes systemic and institutional discrimination, without waiting for more easily recognizable acts of violence to emerge.

The school itself functions, as Preciado (2019) affirms, as the first school of gender and sexual violence, as an institution that pathologizes and sanctions dissidence, a factory that produces normalized subjectivities. In this space for scrutiny, control and domination, heterosexual desire is promoted, and linguistic and social scripts associated with cis-heterosexuality are played out. In this sense, the school is not a mere container in which social stigmas are produced, but rather an active participant in these processes. Given schooling's active complicity, as well as its capacity to do otherwise, education, awareness-raising, and critical reflection on the part of teachers is essential.

It is interesting to note that international organizations like the United Nations and ILGA (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) recognize homophobia and transphobia as distinct but closely related phenomena. The original draft of the Yogyakarta Principles (2007) established definitions of each:

- [1] Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.
- [2] Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

The later draft (2017) refines the earlier text by relating these two categories and adding the additional factors of gender expression and sex characteristics, establishing that "violence, discrimination, and other harm based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics manifests in a continuum of multiple, inter-related and recurring forms", while at the same time recognizing that these situations refer to people with diverse "needs, characteristics and human rights situations" (p. 7). The ILGA includes trans rights advances and violations in its State Sponsored Homophobia Report (2020), which has been published annually since 2006. This report, which ostensibly focuses on legislation specifically related to sexual orientation, nevertheless refers more inclusively to "legal barriers to freedom of expression on sexual and gender diversity," alluding to the difficulty of teasing apart "legal restrictions related to issues of sexual orientation from those that relate to gender identity and gender expression" (p. 16). In a policy recommendation published by a consortium of 35 international human rights organizations, gender stereotypes in patriarchal societies are identified as the common source of misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia, "The construction of gender stereotypes ultimately rests on the assumption that there are two opposite and mutually exclusive biological sexes. The assumption of heterosexuality is central to this gender binary" (IGLHRC, 2013: 5).

There is no shortage of evidence demonstrating that discrimination based on gender identity and/or expression threatens physical and emotional well-being and negatively influences the self-esteem and self-care of those who suffer from it (ILGA, 2020; UNCHR, n.d.). It should

come as no surprise, then, to find extensive evidence of school-based discrimination and violence designed to exclude gender and sexual diversity in a variety of national contexts (IGLYO, 2022; UNESCO, 2019). Recent studies published in Spain have found this to apply not only to students (Feijóo and Rodríguez-Fernández 2021), but also to teachers (FELGTBI+, 2022), and has revealed underlying essentialist, simplistic, and reductionist understandings that continue to normalize heterosexuality (Amat et al., 2018).

In Spain, the Homophobia Test (España Albelda et al., 2001) was designed to measure the degree of homophobia as well as its relationship with other personal characteristics, finding higher levels of homophobia in men, religious people, and those who have had little contact with lesbians or gay men. The International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) have expressed the concern that “Similar to women’s rights, there are those who would claim their culture or religion encourages them to discriminate” (2013: 8) and call for collaboration with religious and other leaders in combating such discourses. This relationship between homophobia and other personal variables has been confirmed in research on teachers (Pérez-Testor et al., 2010), who found that religious belief and church attendance, along with low levels of contact with lesbian and gay people, correlated with higher degrees of homophobia. As for political ideology, higher degrees of homophobia have been found among respondents who hold both socially and economically conservative positionings (Barnett et al., 2018). Particularly in national contexts like Spain, with a relatively recent history of fascist (Catholic) dictatorship, authoritarian, right-wing ideologies remain closely entwined with the patriarchal centrality of hetero-centric family values (Barragán-Medero and Pérez-Jorge, 2020).

Similar trends have been found between transphobia and religious practices, with Christian, church-going, and/or fundamentalist participants exhibiting higher levels than those who claimed Muslim, non-religious, or Jewish identities (Campbell et al., 2019). In addition, higher levels of transphobia have been found in subjects identifying as men (Nagoshi et al., 2008), while lower levels have been associated with friendship with trans people (Barbir et al., 2017).

The cognitive process that leads to discrimination begins with *stigma* - the negative evaluation of a person who shares a trait or attribute with a group of individuals, based on a sense of perceived threat. When this characteristic, considered to be negative, is attributed to other subjects who share the same trait, *prejudice* is established, and tends to persist over time even if it becomes evident that it does not apply to a particular case or is not generalized. Once stigma and prejudice have been established, the more visible behavioral element emerges in the form of abuse, social rejection and denial of rights: *discrimination*. Thus, homophobia could be defined as “the prejudice that involves discrimination against non-heterosexual people” (Campo et al., 2013: 292, our translation from the Spanish). By extension, therefore, transphobia can be seen as “the prejudice that involves discrimination against non-cisgender people,” with cisgender meaning the privileged position enjoyed by those whose gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics conform with social expectations. Some researchers (Airton, 2009; Rogers, 2017) have found the notion of cisgenderism to be a more accurate and comprehensive definition of the stigma leading to the discrimination experienced by trans people, as it

more clearly recognizes the gender nonconformity that lies at the root of such violence and exclusion.

Rubin (1975: 159) defined the “sex-gender system” as “the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied.” Shortly thereafter, in 1980, Wittig (1992) introduced the notion of obligatory heterosexuality, the socially constructed understanding of sexuality and sex-gender that, for example, excludes lesbians from the category of women based on their refusal to enter into the heterosexual contract. Judith Butler consolidated the relationship between sex-gender and sexuality with her definition of the heterosexual matrix:

A hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990: 151)

Bodies, then, are classified according to their reproductive capacity, with the aim of socially regulating this function. In this sense, men and women are distinguished by their differentiated and complementary reproductive roles, and any (perceived or real) deviance from the sex-gender binary as well the implied heterosexual contract results in the stigma of unintelligibility.

These theoretical understandings present homophobia and transphobia as different manifestations of the social penalty for violating the same social contract, and support human rights advocates that consider these processes to be fundamentally linked (ILGA, 2020; International Commission of Jurists, 2017; IGLHRC, 2013). Indeed, much homophobia is enacted based on perceived homosexuality, that is, violations of gender norms that render the subject inappropriately masculinized or feminized with respect to their attributed sex (Namaste, 2006). Whether these violations are based on gender expression or actions denoting sexual orientation, stigma is based on crossing binary, mutually exclusive, and interrelated expectations of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Inspired by these theoretical understandings and on the previously cited research evidence of a pervading hostile climate in educational settings, we have created a Transphobia Test, based on España Albelda et al.’s Homophobia Test (2001), and applied both tests to practicing and trainee teachers (Amigo-Ventureira et al., 2022). By extending an existing instrument designed to detect homophobia to include the equally vital but relatively under-explored area of transphobia, we aim to explore in more detail the ways in which the two phenomena are related, specifically among educators who are entrusted to assuring that all children and youth learn in safe environments that allow them to flourish. These instruments also provide insight into how these processes relate to other demographic variables, including gender, sexual orientation, political ideology, religious conviction, and social contact with LGBT people. Such understandings may prove useful in designing teacher training programs, as well as in-service courses for active teachers. To this end, our study was designed to respond to three key research objectives:

- (1) To establish the relationship between homophobia and transphobia, by comparing the results of a validated Homophobia Test with a Transphobia Test that has been designed by adapting the same items.
- (2) To explore the relationship between homophobia and other socio-demographic variables, specifically including gender, geographic origin, sexual orientation, political ideology, and religious conviction).
- (3) To explore the relationship between transphobia and other socio-demographic variables, specifically including gender, geographic origin, sexual orientation, political ideology, and religious conviction).

## Methodology

### *Research design and participants*

Participants in this study included trainee teachers, who were studying Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Primary Education. All were currently attending one of the three universities in the Autonomous community of Galicia, located in northwestern Spain, that offer these programs (Universities of Vigo, A Coruña, and Santiago de Compostela). Participants also included active teachers working at these year levels in the same region (Galicia). The sample, therefore, consisted of a total of 1,315 people (1,133 trainee teachers and 182 practicing teachers), with a mean age of 24.85 years (ranging from 18 to 64 years).

While those who responded to España Albelda et al.'s original Homophobia Test (2001) were the authors' own classmates who were studying for a degree in Medicine, we've chosen to shift and extend our sample for two reasons. First, we wished to eliminate the element of familiarity, to ensure that none of our participants knew us personally; for this reason, we did not draw upon our own university students or colleagues. Second, as education specialists, we decided to include future (trainee) and current (practicing) teachers because we consider them to be a particularly relevant demographic. Like the future health care workers who featured in the original study, as well as those who work or will work in other social services and public administration, teachers have a great deal of responsibility for ensuring (or denying) the extension of fundamental human rights to all members of any given society.

### *Instruments*

To collect the study data, two tests were used: the Homophobia Test (España Albelda et al., 2001) and the Transphobia Test, which we designed, based on the first. Both tests were administered in Spanish – see Appendix 1 for an English translation of all questions. To facilitate administration, the instruments were unified in a single document, with some minor modifications to avoid sexist language, or to collect more precise sociodemographic data. For example, where the original version only asked for “sex,” we divided this into “sex assigned at birth” and “gender identity.”

The Homophobia Test (España Albelda et al., 2001) is a questionnaire made up of 10 questions that measure the degree of homophobia according to the following dimensions: cognitive aspects about the causes of homosexuality (item 4), affective aspects related to homosexuality in close social proximity (items 1 and 7), educational aspects related to homosexuality (items 3 and 6), perception of the social and personal reality of homosexual people (items 2, 8 and 10) and, finally, perception of social movements and the gay “scene” (items 5 and 9). The scores obtained with this test vary between 0 and 60, with 0 being the highest possible degree of *phobia* and 60 being the highest *philia*.

This test was validated by its developers through an analysis of the homogeneity of the items and an analysis of the discriminatory power of each item. The results showed that the items were homogeneous and discriminatory and, in conclusion, that the test was valid as a tool for measuring homophobia (España Albelda et al., 2001). Taking this questionnaire as a reference, we developed a similar questionnaire with the same structure, but referring to attitudes towards trans people instead of towards homosexual people: assessing the same aspects. We have labelled this the Transphobia Test.

### *Data collection procedures*

The unified questionnaire containing both the Homophobia and Transphobia Tests was personally administered to trainee teachers. To do this, we first contacted university instructors teaching on ECE and Primary Education degree programs at the three universities, explained the research to them, and agreed upon a day and time to administer the tests during class time. A member of the research team entered the classroom at the appointed hour and described to potential participants the research objectives, informed them that participation was voluntary, explained confidentiality protocols, and provided instructions to those trainee teachers who decided to participate.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete, during which time the researcher remained in the classroom to clarify any questions that might arise.

Regarding the practicing teachers, the evaluator contacted all public and publicly-subsidized Early Childhood Education and Primary Education schools in Galicia via electronic mail, using the contact list provided on the website of the autonomic educational authority. The email sent to the schools included a brief description of the project, as well as the reasons why we considered participation to be important, and requested that the online questionnaire be disseminated among the teaching staff.

The process of administering the questionnaires in both formats (face-to-face and digital) was simultaneous, and lasted from the beginning of April to the end of June 2018.

### *Data analysis*

Data was analyzed using the SPSS software package, version 28. We began by conducting a descriptive analysis of the main sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants.

To verify the validity and reliability of the Transphobia Test, which we created by adapting the Homophobia Test, we first carried out an Exploratory Factorial Analysis.

Once the main components had been extracted, the reliability of each was calculated by applying Cronbach's  $\alpha$  test. Then, in order to verify the possible relationships between the sociodemographic variables and the levels of homophobia and transphobia, we applied non-parametric tests, specifically the Mann–Whitney  $U$  test and the Kruskal-Wallis test, depending on the type of variable analyzed.

Finally, we conducted a stepwise regression analysis to verify whether the homophobia scores and the sociodemographic variables analyzed were capable of predicting the variations in the scores obtained in the Transphobia Test.

## Results

We will begin with the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the sociodemographic variables, based on the responses of the participants (see Table 1). Most of the participants resided in urban areas. A high percentage had been assigned women at birth (81.2%), while the percentages of those who selected male and intersex birth assignments were much lower (17.9% and 0.2%, respectively). Sex assignment corresponded almost perfectly with respondents' gender identity, so we can conclude that the sample was comprised of mostly cisgender people. The majority also identified as heterosexual (91%), while 5.6% identified as bisexual, 2.8% as homosexual, and 0.4% chose not to

**Table 1.** Results of the descriptive analysis of participants' sociodemographic characteristics.

Variables		N	%
Profession	Practicing teacher	182	12.1
	Trainee ECE	581	38.8
	Trainee primary	669	44.7
	Trainee double degree	65	4.3
Origin	Urban	1129	85.8
	Rural	186	11.4
Gender identity	Man	234	17.8
	Woman	1069	81.2
	Non-binary	9	0.7
	Other	2	0.2
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	1197	90.9
	Homosexual	37	2.8
	Bisexual	73	5.6
	None of the above	5	0.4
Political affinity	Left	553	42
	Center left	200	15.2
	Center right	74	5.6
	Right	59	4.5
	None of the above	357	28.7
Religious conviction	Practicing believers	94	7.1
	Non-practicing believers	477	36.2
	Non-believers	724	55



identify with any of the above options. In our analysis, since the numbers of non-heterosexual people were so low, we have collapsed these categories into a single one. Most of the subjects declared that they had at least one homosexual friend (84.3%), while considerably fewer (11%) claimed to have a trans person among their friends.

In terms of political ideology, 42.1% of the participants allied themselves with the left end of the political spectrum, 15.3% with the center-left, 5.6% with the center-right, 4.5% with the right, while 28.7% chose not to identify with any of the proposed options. As for religious conviction, more than half of the participants (55.1%) declared themselves non-believers, 36.3% non-practicing believers, and 7.1% practicing believers.

In order to analyze the reliability and validity of the Transphobia Test adapted from the Homophobia Test, we subjected the Transphobia Test items to an Exploratory Factorial Analysis (EFA), which demonstrated that Bartlett's Test ( $\chi^2(45) = 2089.40, p \leq 0.001$ ) was statistically significant and KMO = 0.82, which permitted factor grouping. Factors were extracted via Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and three principal components were obtained with eigenvalues  $>1$ . For a total of 52.43% of the variance, component or factor 1 accounted for 31.27%, component or factor 2 accounted for 11.10%, and component or factor 3 accounted for 10.05%.

Since the factorial charges of component 1 were higher than those of the other two, a Varimax factor rotation was applied. The rotated components matrix revealed that the Transphobia Test items related to education, social, and emotional aspects (items 5, 3, 2, 8 and 6) were grouped in component 1; items related to affective aspects were grouped in component 2 (items 1, 7, and 9); and items related to cognitive aspects (4 and 10), were grouped in component 3.

The reliability of each of these components was calculated using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , with the only satisfactory result being that of component 1 ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ). The reliability of the Transphobia Test was also calculated using Cronbach's  $\alpha$  with the data from the sample used. The results showed adequate reliability ( $\alpha = 0.7$ ).

The possible relationships between certain sociodemographic variables and the levels of homophobia and transphobia were then analyzed. Taking into account the type of variable, an analysis of non-parametric variance was applied, using the Mann-Witney and Kruskal-Wallis U tests.

The results demonstrated statistically significant differences in the general level of homophobia ( $U = 88807; p \leq 0.001$ ), with people who identified as women exhibiting less homophobia than those who identified as men. The data relating to people who identified as gender non-binary was eliminated from the analysis, since they only represented 0.9% of the total sample. There was also a significant, gender-based difference in the degree of transphobia ( $U = 90088; p \leq 0.001$ ), with people identifying as women again demonstrating lower levels than male-identified respondents. We also checked for differences in the levels of homophobia and transphobia depending on the environment of origin (rural or urban), but found no statistically significant differences in either case.

Regarding sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual), the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed statistically significant differences in both homophobia ( $H_{(2,1306)} = 37.49; p \leq 0.001$ ) and transphobia ( $H_{(2,1312)} = 18.48; p \leq 0.001$ ). Post-hoc analyses using the Bonferroni test revealed no statistically significant differences in homophobia and transphobia between

homosexual and bisexual people, but these groups did differ with respect to those identifying as heterosexual.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test regarding political ideology and religious conviction also showed statistically significant differences in levels of homophobia, ( $H_{(3, 886)} = 56.28, p \leq 0.001$ ;  $H_{(2, 1296)} = 45.49; p \leq 0.001$ , respectively). Post-hoc analyses using the Bonferroni test showed that in the case of political ideology, those who declared themselves to be politically left-leaning were less homophobic than those whose views leaned toward the center-left, center-right and right, with no statistically significant differences among the latter three groups.

Regarding religious conviction, the post-hoc analyses indicated that those who declared themselves non-believers showed a lower level of homophobia compared to those who professed religious belief, with no differences between practicing and non-practicing believers.

Statistically significant differences in transphobic attitudes were also found related to political ideology and religious conviction, ( $H_{(3, 886)} = 48.24, p \leq 0.001$ ;  $H_{(2, 1296)} = 49.63, p \leq 0.001$ , respectively). Bonferroni's pairwise comparisons indicated that those identified with the leftist politics demonstrated less transphobic attitudes compared to those who identified with the center-left, center-right, and right. With regard to transphobia, there were also statistically significant differences between those who declared themselves to be center-left and those from the right.

As for religious conviction, group differences were the same as in the case of homophobia, that is, non-believers have less transphobic attitudes compared to both practicing believers and non-practicing believers, with no difference between these last two.

Finally, statistically significant differences were found in the levels of homophobia of participants with homosexual or trans friends, with respect to those who did not claim to have them ( $U = 80595, p \leq 0.001$ ;  $U = 86405, p \leq 0.001$ ). The same pattern was found for transphobia ( $U = 71175.5, p \leq 0.001$ ;  $U = 74206.586405, p \leq 0.05$ ). [Table 2](#) summarizes the differences in the levels of homophobia and transphobia based on the sociodemographic variables. These data demonstrate that the differences in homophobia and transphobia coincide, with an additional difference detected for transphobia, as mentioned above.

A step-by-step regression analysis was carried out to determine the extent to which the transphobia scores could be explained from the sociodemographic variables evaluated, as well as by the scores obtained in the Homophobia Test. Therefore, the dependent variable in the stepwise regression analysis was the total score of the Transphobia Test and independent variables included the sociodemographic variables (age, gender identity, sexual orientation, political ideology, religious conviction) as well as the total score on the Homophobia Test. The results yielded three statistically significant models.

The regression equation of the first model that included homophobia as a predictor variable was statistically significant ( $F(1, 1214) = 1,591.38, p \leq 0.001$ ). The  $R^2$  value was 0.56, which indicates that 56% of the change in the total scores in the Transphobia Test can be explained by the regression model that only includes the homophobia scores. The regression equation obtained was  $2.30 + 0.91 * (\text{homophobia score})$ , where the total scores in the Transphobia Test increase by 0.91, points taking into account the transphobia scores.

**Table 2.** Differences in levels of homophobia and transphobia as a function of demographic variables.

	Homophobia	Transphobia
Género identity	Yes Women < men	Yes Women < men
Origin (rural/Urban)	No difference	No difference
Sexual orientacion	Yes Homosexuals/Bisexuals < heterosexuals	Yes Homosexuals/Bisexuals < heterosexuals
Political affinity	Yes Left < center left/Center right/ Right	Yes Left < center left/Center right/ Right Center left < right
Religious conviction	YES Non-believers < believers	YES Non-believers < believers
Homosexual or trans friends	YES < Yes, homosexual or trans friends	YES < Yes, homosexual or trans friends

The regression equation of the second model was also statistically significant, including, in addition to homophobia, religious conviction ( $F(2, 1213) = 807.57, p \leq 0.001$ ). The increase in the value of  $R^2$  was relatively small, 0.57, which indicates that 57% of the change in the total Transphobia Test scores can be explained by the regression model that only includes homophobia and religious conviction. The regression equation obtained was:  $0.95 + 0.90*(\text{homophobia}) + 0.84*(\text{religious conviction})$ , where transphobia scores increase 0.90 points, taking into account homophobia scores, and 0.84, points taking religious conviction into account.

The regression equation of the third model includes, in addition to homophobia and religious conviction, gender identity ( $F(3, 1212) = 542.45, p \leq 0.001$ ). The increase in the value of  $R^2$  is nearly negligible (in the thousandths), so with the inclusion of this third variable the model continues to explain 57% of the variation in the Transphobia Test scores. The resulting regression equation is:  $-0.33 + 0.88*(\text{homophobia score}) + 0.93*(\text{religious conviction}) + 0.95*(\text{gender identity})$ . In this case, the transphobia scores increase 0.88 points taking into account the homophobia scores, 0.93 points with respect to religious conviction and 0.95 points considering gender identity.

Therefore, we can conclude that homophobia is the variable with the most weight when predicting transphobia scores, specifically more than half of the variations in transphobia scores (56% of variations), increasing the prediction by one more point if the variables religious conviction and gender identity are included (57%).

## Discussion

Our three research objectives were designed to explore homophobia and transphobia among trainee and practicing teachers, by comparing respondents' attitudes toward both

as well as the ways in which their demographic characteristics related to these attitudes. Understanding the ways in which ECE and primary teachers may either consciously or unconsciously support stereotypes and discrimination is crucial because of the impact their actions may have on the social and academic well-being of LGBT+ students and their families. On the other hand, and no less critical, is the influence teachers have over all students, as well as the broader community, as they prepare children to live in diverse societies.

The reliability of the Transphobia Test, which was based on the existing Homophobia Test, suggests a relationship between the two phenomena, a finding which provides a basis for theorizing the nature of this relationship. This relationship also provides a basis for understanding how school-based as well as teacher training diversity initiatives might be designed to address deeper, underlying processes that contribute to both types of prejudice. We will return to this topic in more detail after providing a detailed discussion of the ways in which specific demographic sociodemographic variables related to levels of homophobia and transphobia, in the original Homophobia Test (España Albelda et al., 2001) and the current study.

### *Relationship of sociodemographic variables with transphobia and homophobia*

First of all, our results differ from those obtained by España Albelda et al. (2001) in terms of geographical origin, since they found significant differences between the participants from the cities of Barcelona and Valencia, with Barcelona residents demonstrating lower levels of homophobia. This might be accounted for by the fact that Barcelona is a large city, with stronger historical ties to Europe than most other Spanish cities, with a strong history of queer presence and social activism. Our study was limited to Autonomous Community of Galicia, and the difference in sample size prohibits an comparison between geographical regions of the two studies. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to carry out more research in this area, taking into account that the values obtained in Galicia were higher than in Barcelona ( $M = 50.49$ ,  $DT = 6.89$  compared with  $M = 45.57$ ,  $DT = 8.14$ ), pointing to a lower level of homophobia. This result is surprising if we take into account Barcelona's historical and current associations with sexual diversity, and certainly suggests further investigation.

España Albelda et al. (2001) found significant differences in relation to sex, with women showing a lower level of homophobia than men. As mentioned, we modified our updated Homophobia-Transphobia Test slightly in this regard, asking subjects to disclose gender identity as well as socially attributed sex. Nevertheless, assuming that most of the original sample of respondents who simply selected "man" or "woman" probably was comprised mainly of cisgender people, as our more specific questions indicated, we are confident that the two studies are comparable. Our findings that people who identified as women exhibited less homophobia and less transphobia than those who identified as men, therefore, coincide with the findings of the original Homophobia Test. Our results coincide with those of Nagoshi et al. (2008), who found that men were more prone to transphobia as well as homophobia. We concur with the hypothesis of these researchers, that any kind of deviance from the gender normative, whether in terms of sexuality or

identity or role, might provoke in some men anxiety about their own masculinity. In the following section we will address this interpretation in more detail, as it relates to the reliability of the Transphobia Test.

With regard to sexual orientation, [España Albelda et al. \(2001\)](#) found that those who identified as homosexual demonstrated a higher level of homophilia, followed by those identifying as heterosexual, with bisexuals showing the lowest homophilia levels. Our study, in contrast, did not find significant differences between those identifying as homosexual and bisexual, although both of these groups exhibited less homophobia and transphobia than those who identified as heterosexual. The difference between the findings of the two studies might be partially attributable to sample size ( $N = 129$  as opposed to  $N = 1315$ ), or to the representation of bisexual and homosexuals in the sampling (3% and 2% in the original study and 5.6% and 2.8% in our later study, respectively).

[España Albelda et al. \(2001\)](#) explained their finding of higher homophobia among bisexual people by postulating that those who defined themselves as bisexual might be in a phase of identity development that involves accepting homosexual desires in themselves, which might result in less positive attitudes toward homosexuality. Our interpretation of our own data, which found bisexuals and homosexuals to be somewhat less homophobic as well as transphobic than their heterosexual counterparts, is that those who see themselves as non-normative are more likely to feel empathy for others who deviate from the heteronorm, whether in terms of sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, our data and interpretation are more consistent with an understanding of bisexuality as a legitimate, albeit non-normative, sexual orientation. The explanation provided by [España Albelda et al. \(2001\)](#) includes certain assumptions that we consider to be questionable; for example, that bisexuality is a transitional phase of identity development on the path towards homosexuality. Such an epistemic erasure has itself been postulated as a factor affecting bisexual people's physical and mental well-being ([Pennasilico and Amodeo, 2019](#)).

For [España Albelda et al. \(2001\)](#), having homosexual friendships proved to be a significant factor, which coincides with the results obtained in this study. In addition, our results show that people with trans friends demonstrate a lower level of transphobia and homophobia than those with homosexual friends. There are various ways of interpreting this relationship: having trans friends might increase tolerance, being more open to gender transgressions might increase the likelihood of establishing relationships with trans people, or these factors might mutually interact in more complex ways. These results might also support the understandings that gender transgression lies at the root of both homophobia and transphobia ([Carrera et al., 2012](#); [Plummer, 2014](#)).

Finally, in relation to political ideology and religious conviction, our results coincide with those found by [España Albelda et al. \(2001\)](#) for homophobia, and also show similar trends for transphobia. We found people favoring the political left and religious non-believers to be the least transphobic and homophobic. The right-wing and religious (Catholic) Franco dictatorship (1939–1975) enforced the maintenance of the so-called traditional family, the separation and hierarchization of gender roles, procreation, and national unity, and these values linger in the discourse of certain small but vocal sectors of the population. A similar

relationship between nationalist and homonormative discourses has been explored in other national contexts as well (Ashwin and Utrata, 2020; Chetaille, 2013), where hegemonic masculinity is associated with the powerful nation-state, and sexual dissidence is linked to the decline of unifying moral standards. Recent research has found Spaniards to be “pseudo-tolerant”, that is, demonstrating an apparent tolerance inspired by the fear of being labelled homophobic, but lacking in genuine acceptance (Piedra et al., 2017). For these reasons, particularly in the Spanish context, the relationship between transphobia and homophobia with political ideology and religiosity merits further research.

In terms of pragmatic implications, it may be wise to take these relationships into consideration in teacher training programs, providing spaces to critically analyze assumptions and to provide alternative understandings. In addition, promoting positive interactions with LGBT+ people may be a way to reduce prejudice for those who lack relationships in their own social circles.

### *Relationship between the transphobia and homophobia tests*

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the level of reliability of the Transphobia Test with respect to the Homophobia Test indicates a relationship between the two phenomena, although the data itself cannot specify the exact nature of this relationship. The Exploratory Factorial Analysis revealed that the items related to educational, social, and emotional aspects are those that most adequately explain the scores obtained for transphobia. Based on the importance of gender norms in the production of both homophobia and transphobia, our data can be explained by existing theory that both derive from the rigidity of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). We will explore this issue in more detail in the following section.

## **Conclusions**

Our research supports the results of earlier studies that have found, mainly for homophobia, possible relations with other sociodemographic factors. Women seem to be less prone than men, and friendship seems to be a mitigating factor. Most strikingly, and perhaps related to the relatively recent Spanish history of a Catholic Fascist dictatorship and the its lingering presence in political and popular discourses, religious conviction and political ideology seem to covary with homophobia. These findings support existing research, as well as the IGLHRC’s call for involving more progressive religious leaders in social justice and awareness-raising teaching education.

Our research found similar tendencies for transphobia, a relatively less explored problem. These similarities may point to the influence of a common, underlying factor, supporting theoretical constructs that posit that both phenomena exist as social sanctions towards those individuals whose mere existence is perceived as a subversion of the patriarchal order (IGLHRC, 2013; Platero, 2014). This theoretical model suggests that transphobia, as well as homophobia, is the result of more profound and complex system of stigmatization than a simple irrational fear gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans people might explain. Both emerge as a consequence of dichotomized binary categories, which are

hierarchical, so that men (and associated characteristics) are valued more highly than women. Sexism and misogyny sustain transphobia, since the transition “from one sex to another” is socially perceived in terms of loss or unjustified acquisition of privileges and, consequently, is highly socially penalized (Serano, 2007). Our data support this understanding that transphobia and homophobia are not independent phenomena, especially in the ways in which they challenge social expectations and provoke social sanctions (ILGA, 2020; International Commission of Jurists (2017).

Based on earlier research and a historical analysis of the way in which a binary, exclusionary, and hierarchical sex-gender-sexuality binary system has been constructed, at least in Western societies such as that of Spain, we propose cisgenderism (Airton, 2009; Rogers, 2017), a common stigma that may manifest as transphobia or homophobia depending on the perceived transgression, as a better way to understand these phenomena. Cisgenderism is not an individual, irrational fear of difference, but a collective social strategy that serves to preserve male privilege and the reproductive status quo.

Although it was not specifically included in our research, biphobia also deserves a specific analysis in further research. This interpretation suggests that the most effective response, rather than addressing each kind of stigma as a separate phenomenon, may lie in questioning the binary system that has been largely taken for granted, and expanding our understandings about human diversity.

In this sense, it is especially relevant that our sample focused on practicing and future (trainee) teachers. On one hand, these professionals are entrusted with not only the academic but also the personal and social well-being of all children, regardless of the ways in which they experience and present their own sex, gender, and sexuality. It is particularly important, then, to understand how teachers might respond to children who transgress, or are perceived to transgress, cisgendered norms. On the other hand, these professionals are responsible for teaching about human diversity as part of the curriculum. Therefore, we also recommend that further research continue to focus on teachers: their attitudes and understandings as well as their classroom practice concerning sex and gender diversity.

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## Note

1. Our institutional IRB was not formed until 2019, after this research took place. In the absence of this institutional guidance, we followed the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines, available here <https://www.bera.ac.uk/resources/all-publications/resources-for-researchers>.

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## Appendix I – Homophobia and Transphobia Test items, translated into English

*Responses were given on a scale of 1-7, with 1 = Maximum agreement and 7 = Maximum disagreement*

I would be annoyed if my closest friend, of my own sex, confessed sexual desire for me.

I think that a homosexual person is perfectly capable of holding a high-level public position such as directing a ministry or presiding over the government of a country.

I would feel that I have failed if a daughter or son of mine were homosexual. It is a mistake to consider homosexual people to be psychologically ill.

I would feel uncomfortable in the presence of homosexual people.

A correct sexual education should include information about homosexuality and should be taught in schools.

It would bother me to have erotic dreams in which I had homosexual relations.

A homosexual couple does not fall within my concept of a couple.

I would feel comfortable in a “gay-friendly” nightclub (with mostly homosexual customers).

I believe that hiding my homosexuality would help me succeed socially and professionally.

I would be annoyed if my closest friend, a trans person, confessed sexual desire for me.

I think that a trans person is perfectly capable of holding a high-level public position such as directing a ministry or presiding over the government of a country.

I would feel that I have failed if a son or daughter of mine were trans.

It is a mistake to consider trans people to be psychologically ill.

I would feel uncomfortable in the presence of trans people.

A correct sexual education should include information on gender identity, making specific reference to trans people, and should be taught in schools.

It would bother me to have erotic dreams in which I had sex with a trans person.

A couple in which one or both people are trans does not fall within my concept of a couple.

I would feel comfortable in a nightclub with mostly trans clients.

I believe that hiding the fact that I am a trans person would help me succeed socially and professionally.