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## Patrolling the Boundaries of Gender: Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Trans and Gender Diverse People in Portuguese Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This study had a double goal: (i) analyzing the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of Portuguese adolescents regarding trans and gender diverse people; and (ii) validating the short version of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale. **Methods:** A sample of 1,005 Portuguese adolescents aged between 13 and 18 years took part in the study. **Results:** Results indicated that boys exhibited more negative attitudes toward trans and gender diverse people than girls did, and girls exhibited more favorable attitudes toward trans women and gender diverse men than toward trans men and gender diverse women. The bidimensional structure of the scale was confirmed. **Conclusion:** These results highlight the close relationship between beliefs that reaffirm gender norms and mark the limits of the heterosexual matrix, transphobic attitudes and gender bashing. They are discussed in the context of a queer educational practice.

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Genderism; transphobia; gender-bashing; trans and other gender non-conforming people; adolescents; queer theory

### Introduction

The murder of a 46-year-old Brazilian trans woman named Gisberta Salce Júnior on 22 February 2006 by a group of 14 adolescents aged between 13 and 16 years shook Portuguese society. Gisberta was murdered by drowning, after having been repeatedly tortured and raped for three days and finally being thrown into a well when she was still alive. Despite the shock caused by the brutality of the crime, the legal treatment, media coverage and general social attention focused mainly on the age of the perpetrators, which prevented the law from holding them criminally liable (except for one who was 16 years old and was eventually charged only with failure to provide assistance). This general attitude was based on the idea that because of the age and circumstances of the perpetrators—they were all institutionalized in centers for at-risk youth, mostly in the Oficinas de San José Catholic center—, this could not be considered as a hate crime (Campos, 2016), although it had all the

features of such crimes. Gisberta was dehumanized and presented by the media as Gisberto, a homeless, immigrant, transvestite prostitute and drug addict who was HIV-positive and faceless. Except for the discourses generated by the arts scene, all the others emphasized the transgressive and abject sexuality of the victim (Baptista & Himmel, 2016) while at the same time pitying the “poor children” capable of such cruel actions, which a judge defined as *uma brincadeira de mau gosto de crianças que fugiu ao controle*, “a child’s game that spiraled out of control” (Filho, 2016).

Gisberta’s life and death, which may well represent those of other trans and gender diverse (hereafter “TGD”) people,<sup>1</sup> can be understood as being included in the heteronormative matrix. This matrix refers to social discourses regarding sexual identity that uphold the existence of two sexes that are congruent with two genders and are hierarchical and complementary and expressed through heterosexuality (Berlant & Warner, 1998). People who do not reproduce these intelligible identities are positioned beyond

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the boundaries of the heteronormative matrix and become targets for exclusion, pathologization, and violence (Butler, 1990, 1993). Their lives do not count as such (Burgos, 2008; Butler, 1990, 1993), meaning that causing their death, even symbolically, is not considered as killing an equal.

Over a decade later, the situation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersexual, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ) community in Portugal has improved, if only from a legal point of view (Oliveira, Costa, & Nogueira, 2013). However, discriminatory and violent practices are still present and TGD people are the most affected group (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Considering this, the purpose of this study was to analyze the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of Portuguese adolescents regarding TGD people and validate the short version of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale, GTS (Hill & Willoughby, 2005), developed by Carrera-Fernández, Lameiras-Fernández, Rodríguez-Castro, and Vallejo-Medina (2014) in a sample of Spanish adolescents.

In the following sections, we focus on attitudes and behaviors toward TGD people, paying particular attention to Portugal and to the variables related to such attitudes and behaviors. Finally, we present the properties of the GTS and other similar instruments.

### ***Experiences of perceived violence and discrimination and attitudes toward trans and gender diverse individuals***

Attitudes are defined as a learned disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a given object in a consistent way (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the three-dimensional model, attitudes have three components: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Chaiken & Stangor, 1987). Transphobia is a prejudice against people who do not conform to society's gender expectations (Hill & Willoughby, 2005). Prejudice against TGD people is made up of three components: (i) a cognitive component—genderism—that refers to a social belief system built on the dual and biological nature of sex, two congruent genders and a complementary heterosexual

orientation; (ii) an attitudinal component—transphobia—that refers to negative feelings of threat, fear and aversion toward the trans community; and (iii) a behavioral component—gender-bashing—that is closely related to the two previous components and implies harassment and violence toward people who transgress the gender norm (Hill, 2002; Hill & Willoughby, 2005).

Almost half a century after the Stonewall riots, progress is undeniable regarding the situation of the LGBTIQ community in practically all self-proclaimed “advanced” societies. The depathologization of homosexuality, removed from the American Psychiatry Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973 was a milestone in this process. Recently, some improvements have been made regarding sexual identity. For example, gender identity disorder was renamed “gender dysphoria” in the fifth edition of the DSM-V (APA, 2013), in reference to the anguish and suffering experienced by TGD individuals due to their circumstances. Following the same trend toward depathologization—at least formally—, trans-related categories were removed from the ICD-11 chapter on Mental and Behavioral Disorders (World Health Organization, 2018). They are currently included in the chapter on Conditions Related to Sexual Health. The term “gender identity disorder” has been replaced with “gender incongruence”. This important change is based on the understanding that distress and impairment, considered essential characteristics of mental disorders, can be explained by experiences of social rejection and violence rather than being inherent features of transgender identity. In fact, the study by Robles et al. (2016), conducted with 250 trans adults, revealed that the distress and dysfunction experienced by these individuals were very common but not universal and were more strongly predicted by experiences of social rejection and violence than by gender incongruence.

In this context, in Portugal, a country highly influenced by the Catholic Church and where homosexuality was criminalized from 1912 until the 1982 Penal Code (Santos, 2012), sexual orientation was introduced in 2005 in the seventh revision of the Constitution of the Portuguese

Republic [Constituição da República Portuguesa], specifically in Article 13 (Principle of equality). Later on, in 2010, the national law enacting civil marriage for same-sex couples was adopted (Lei 9/2010), nevertheless this law did not allow same-sex couples to adopt children, thus maintaining and reiterating this form of discrimination. This was the case until the recent amendments introduced in Law 2/2016 [Lei n° 2/2016]

to eliminate any discrimination in access to adoption, civil guardianship, and other legal family relations. With regard to TGD people, the gender identity law on gender reassignment and name change in the Civil Registry (Lei 7/2011) was adopted in 2011, allowing them to change their sex in official documents without having to undergo sex reassignment surgery. However, they must be diagnosed with gender dysphoria by two health professionals, one of whom must be a doctor. This law has been recently modified by the Law 38/2018 [Lei n° 38/2018], that recognizes individuals' right to self-determination and lowers the age threshold for this formality from 18 to 16 years, although people aged 16–17 need a medical report as a testimony of their willingness to make a decision. Moreover, this law prohibits medical treatments in intersex children. Other countries such as Denmark, Malta, and Ireland also recognize the right to self-determination (ILGA-Europe, 2017).

However, it would be an overstatement to say that the Western world is an oasis of freedom and rights for the LGBTIQ community; it is more of a mirage. As the latest international macro-surveys show, rejection of sexual diversity is still evil with many faces, ranging from very hostile and explicit ones to others that are apparently more silent and benevolent. This rejection permeates our societies from north to south and east to west (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014, 2016; Kann, Olsen, & McManus, 2016) and especially and mercilessly targets TGD individuals (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; ILGA-Europe, 2017). Such individuals experience high rates of rejection in most types of environments such as the family (Winter, 2007), the workplace (Grant et al., 2011) and health care (CIDH, 2014) and more generally rejection on a social level

(European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Along these lines, in the United States, the results of the U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) (James et al., 2016), conducted in 2015 with 27,715 TGD individuals from over 50 American States, revealed high levels of abuse, harassment and violence in the various dimensions of the lives of these individuals, especially in the school and work environments. Moreover, one of the most concerning findings was that 40% of respondents reported attempting suicide at some point in their life – a percentage almost nine times higher than the average suicide attempt rate among the general American population.

In the same vein, a national American survey conducted in 2015 in 25 States on sexual identity, sex of sexual contacts, and health-related behaviors among 15,713 students in grades 9–12 (Kann et al., 2016) revealed that 60.4% of LGBTIQ adolescents, as opposed to 26.4% of their peers who adhered to the gender norm, had experienced sadness almost every day for the past two or more weeks; in addition, 42.8%, as opposed to 14.8%, had seriously considered suicide in the past year. The data also revealed that this group of adolescents experiences significantly more situations of sexual violence and school bullying, as well as insecurity at school or on the way there, resulting in school absenteeism. Johns et al. (2019) also found that these situations increased the risk of suicide, substance abuse and sexual risk behaviors.

Meanwhile, a study was undertaken on TGD people in Europe, in the framework of a wider survey conducted in 2012 on the situation of LGBTIQ individuals in the European Union. The study is the largest data compilation in this field available in Europe and the rest of the world so far (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). In this survey, 6570 self-defined TGD individuals were identified. Results show that discrimination against the LGBTIQ community is more of a norm than an exception, with the worst of the abuse being directed at the TGD community. Specifically, 54% of the TGD persons surveyed stated that, in the year previous to the survey, they had experienced situations in which they felt they were the victims of

discrimination or harassment due to their being perceived as trans persons; this percentage increased to 57% in Portugal. Additionally, the annual incidence rate of violent or harassing acts was shown to be approximately one for every two TGD persons surveyed, with cisgender and heterosexual men as the main perpetrators. These experiences, which affect all areas of life but particularly work, health care and education and especially affect trans women and gender diverse men, are generally not reported. This is because the victim perceives that this would change nothing and would lead to the suffering of the community, which prefers its true identity to remain invisible, even in the context of the family.

As can be observed in the aforementioned studies, bullying is a painful experience that is frequently endured by LGBTIQQ adolescents at school. However, traditional research on this phenomenon has tended to pathologize and individualize it, ignoring macro-social variables related to power and identity that could contribute to a better understanding and prevention of this problem (Carrera-Fernández, DePalma, & Lameiras-Fernández, 2011; Poteat & Espelage, 2005). In Portugal, bullying and abuse toward these communities are kept silenced at school (Rodrigues, Grave, Oliveira & Nogueira, 2016). Among the limited empirical evidence available on this topic, the study carried out in 2012 by António, Pinto, Pereira, Farcas, and Moleiro with 184 Portuguese LGBT adolescents aged between 12 and 20 years revealed that bullying is highly prevalent among these adolescents. In fact, 42% of them reported having been victims of it, a figure that increased to 67% when they were asked if they have witnessed or experienced these situations in the school context. The study also showed that victimization is higher among boys, that witnesses tend to not interfere in abuse situations, and that this abuse carries significant psychological consequences. In addition, the most recent study by Rodrigues et al. (2016), carried out with 351 LGBT persons, showed that about half of them considered themselves as victims of school bullying. It additionally revealed that boys experience bullying at an earlier age than girls, that the abusers are always cisgender and heterosexual males and that none of the victims told

their family about the abuse for fear of losing its support by revealing their sexual orientation.

Undoubtedly, the murder of TGD persons or those perceived as such is the most hostile and explicit manifestation of the discrimination experienced by this community. Since April 2009, through its Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) project, Transgender Europe (2016) (TGEU) systematically collects and analyzes reports of homicides of TGD individuals worldwide. The data published, which must be considered as the tip of the iceberg, reveal daunting numbers: 295 people murdered between 1 October 2015 and 30 September 2016, and a total of 2264 reported killings of trans and gender-diverse people in 68 countries worldwide between 1 January 2008 and 30 September 2016 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016). In Portugal, the torture, rape, and murder of Gisberta in 2006, with which we introduced this study, was not included in these figures, as it took place before the start of the records; this is not the case of the murder of Luna, a 42-year-old trans woman whose body was found in a garbage container in Lisbon in 2008, which was one of the 116 murders recorded in Europe.

The experiences of discrimination and violence recounted by TGD individuals and compiled in various surveys and international observatories highlight that positive attitudes toward the LGBTIQQ community are still an unachieved utopia and that transphobia is truly deadly. The study carried out in Spain by Carrera-Fernández et al. (2014) with 800 adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years identified beliefs that reaffirm gender norms as well as negative attitudes and behaviors toward TGD individuals. Such beliefs were found to be higher among boys and more negative toward trans women and gender diverse men than toward trans men and gender diverse women. Few studies of this type have been conducted in Portugal. It is worth highlighting the study conducted by Costa and Davies (2012) with 188 adolescents aged between 15 and 19 years, which revealed significantly higher negative attitudes toward TGD persons among boys than girls. In a recent study, Lopes, Oliveira, Nogueira, and Grave (2017) analyzed prejudice against the gay and lesbian community in Portugal –but not



against the trans people in a sample of Portuguese heterosexual young adults. Cisgender male, Catholic, right-wing respondents with fewer lesbian and gay (LG) friends proved to be the group exhibiting the highest levels of prejudice.

Among the variables related to negative attitudes toward TGD persons, the most consistently visible ones are socio-demographic variables such as sex, with boys expressing the most negative attitudes (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Costa & Davies, 2012; Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Tee & Hegarty, 2006; Winter, Webster, & Cheung, 2008); another major variable is the gender identity of the person targeted by these attitudes, with a significantly higher rejection of trans women and gender diverse men compared to trans men and gender diverse women (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Konopka, Prusik, & Szulawski, 2019; Winter et al., 2008). Attitudes toward TGD persons are also associated with other variables related to gender and sexual prejudice, such as sexism (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Nagoshi et al., 2008), homophobia toward gay and lesbian persons (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Costa & Davies, 2012; Konopka et al., 2019), the endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs (Costa & Davies, 2012; Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Konopka et al., 2019), and the defense of the binary nature of sex and the biological nature of gender (Konopka et al., 2019; Tee & Hegarty, 2006).

### **The Genderism and Transphobia Scale**

The Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS) was developed and validated in Canada by Hill and Willoughby (2005). To this end, the authors conducted three studies involving undergraduate and graduate students, with a mean age of 22 and 25 years respectively, along with individuals who raised, or were currently raising, a child, with a mean age of 45 years. This instrument measures the system of attitudes and beliefs—the cognitive/attitudinal component—(genderism/transphobia) as well as the behaviors—the behavioral component—(gender-bashing) toward TGD persons or those perceived as such. It differentiates between attitudes toward trans women and gender diverse men, and trans men and gender diverse women. Although it was originally

proposed as having three factors, the high correlations between them led the authors to state that it could be considered to be one-dimensional. However, the final dimensionality of the scale was composed of two factors: Transphobia/Genderism, with 25 items, and Gender-bashing, with 7 items. This instrument has shown good internal consistency and optimal levels of reliability.

The scale was subsequently validated in Hong Kong (Winter et al., 2008) in a sample of 203 undergraduate students. This validation led to a different dimensionality, made up of five factors: (i) Anti Sissy Prejudice; (ii) Anti Trans Violence; (iii) Trans Unnaturalness; (iv) Trans Immorality; and (v) Background Genderism.

More recently, Carrera-Fernández et al. (2014) proposed and validated the short version of the GTS in a sample of 800 Spanish adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years. The short form comprises a total of 12 items, organized into two subscales: *Transphobia/Genderism*, with 6 items (e.g. “A man who dresses as a woman is a pervert”); and *Gender-bashing*, with 6 items (e.g. “I have teased a woman because of her masculine appearance or behavior”). Each scale has a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*) in which lower scores correspond to more negative attitudes and behaviors toward gender non-conforming persons. All the items showed good discriminating power and the scale demonstrated adequate reliability and validity. Similarly, Konopka et al. (2019) validated the scale in an adult sample in Poland and also obtained a two-factor structure with good reliability and validity.

Costa, Bandeira, and Nardi (2015) validated a version of the GTS in Brazil (2015) in a convenience sample of teachers, administration staff and secondary education students. Specifically, the authors developed the Scale of Prejudice against Sexual and Gender Diversity. The scale includes items from the Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gays scale (Herek & McLemore, 2011) and the GTS selected by an expert panel and a new item that measures attitudes toward transvestites. The final scale is composed of 16 one-dimensional items that analyze prejudice toward sexual and gender diversity.

Other instruments developed for the analysis of attitudes toward TGD persons are the Transphobic Scale by Nagoshi et al. (2008), validated in Arizona; the Beliefs about Gender Scale (BGS), which specifically analyzes beliefs on sexual binarism; and the Beliefs about Transsexuality Scale (BTS) by Tee and Hegarty (2006), validated in the United Kingdom, which analyzes beliefs on the biological nature of gender.

### **The current study**

As illustrated by the previous theoretical framework, although prejudice against the LGBTIQ communities has been regularly addressed within the scope of psychosocial research, this research has mainly been carried out in the United States and other English-speaking countries (Costa & Davies, 2012; Lopes et al., 2017). Studies have focused on the gay and lesbian community at the expense of other communities, such as TGD people. This situation is particularly striking in the case of Portugal where, with only a few exceptions, there is no empirical evidence on attitudes toward the LGBTIQ community and, more specifically, TGD people (Costa & Davies, 2012). Moreover, the analysis of the phenomenon has mainly been conducted from a psychosocial, individualized and pathological approach. Very few studies have addressed this topic from a post-structuralist feminist or queer approach (Renn, 2010), which seeks to humanize the victims and do away with the normalization discourse, taking into consideration the macro-social variables related to power and identity in the context of the heteronormative social discourse.

Furthermore, most of the research has been carried out on young and adult persons, and studies with adolescents are virtually non-existent (Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Winter et al., 2008), with few exceptions (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014). This is a severe limitation, as adolescence is a critical evolutionary stage in the development of individuals at which it is much easier to intervene in order to promote positive attitudes and change negative ones than at other stages (Lameiras, Rodríguez, Ojea, & Dopereiro, 2004). Likewise, few instruments are available to conduct valid and reliable analyses of this

phenomenon, especially regarding adolescents, for whom short scales with high reliability and validity indices are needed (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014).

This study, contextualized within the framework of Queer Theory, had a double goal: (i) analyze the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of Portuguese adolescents toward TGD persons and persons perceived as such, depending on the sex of such adolescents and the identity of the persons toward whom these attitudes are expressed (i.e. trans women and gender diverse men, or trans men and gender diverse women); and (ii) translate the short version of the GTS into Portuguese and validate it in a sample of Portuguese adolescents. Based on the premises explained above, we developed the following hypotheses: (i) boys will express more negative beliefs, attitudes and behaviors toward TGD persons than girls will; (ii) both boys and girls will express significantly more negative attitudes toward trans women and gender diverse men than toward trans men and gender diverse women; (iii) the bidimensional structure of the scale will be confirmed; and (iv) concerning the external validity of the scale, both transphobia/genderism and gender-bashing will exhibit: (a) moderate and positive correlations with instrumentality, hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes, negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, and moral disengagement regarding school bullying; and (b) moderate and negative correlations with expressiveness.

This research is innovative in that it addresses the phenomenon in the framework of Queer Theory, addresses a topic that has been scarcely studied in non-English speaking countries, and conducts this analysis in adolescents. By doing so, it provides greater insight on this reality, which could have a key impact on coexistence between individuals at school and the broader society, at a development stage of individuals in which these behaviors are easier to modify. This study also provides a brief and effective instrument to measure attitudes toward TGD people, differentiating between those regarding trans women and gender diverse men and trans men and gender diverse women, and taking into account the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral

components. Moreover, in contrast with the short version validated in the Spanish sample, the present validation was carried out by administering only the items of the short form, confirming that the items not included in the model did not have any effects on the items included in it.

## Method

### Participants

The sample was composed of 1005 adolescents from two districts in the Northern Region of Portugal who were in the last year of basic education (9th grade) or the first year of secondary education (10th grade). This number is above the CFA golden rule of 20 people \* item. Among participants, 52.6% were girls and 47.4% were boys, with a mean age of 15.15 years ( $SD = 0.78$ ) and ages ranging from 13 to 18 years. A total of 25 subjects did not answer all the scales and were removed from the total scores.

Regarding their cultural/ethnic origin, 97% defined themselves as Portuguese, 0.6% as South American, 0.3% as Asian, 0.2% as African, 0.2% as Roma, and the remaining 1.7% identified with other identity categories, notably the French one. Regarding the level of education of their parents, 59.5% of students' mothers had primary education, 25.9% had post-compulsory secondary education, 13.1% had a university degree, 1.1% had no education, and 0.4% had compulsory secondary education. This distribution was similar to that of the students' fathers: 68.1% had primary education, 19.7% had post-compulsory secondary education, 10.9% had a university degree, 0.9% had no education, and 0.4% had compulsory secondary education.

We chose two districts from Northern Portugal and randomly selected 14 schools that taught 9th and 10th grade and belonged to the public education system.

### Measures

Participants were administered a questionnaire that included socio-demographic variables as well as the *Genderism and Transphobia Scale* (GTS, Hill & Willoughby, 2005; short version by Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014). As previously

noted, the GTS measures *Transphobia/Genderism* (attitudes and beliefs) as well as *Gender-bashing* (behaviors). Given that one of the goals of this study was to validate the scale in Portuguese adolescents, its psychometric properties are presented in the Results section.

In addition, with the goal of analyzing the external validity of the GTS, we also included the following scales concerning gender stereotypes, sexism, homophobia and moral disengagement regarding school bullying:

*Femininity Trait Index –expressiveness–* (FTI, Barak & Stern, 1986). This scale measures the degree to which each participant describes her-/himself in terms of expressive personality traits, which have traditionally been viewed as feminine traits (i.e., “affectionate”). It is made up of 10 items and has a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (*never describes me*) to 6 (*always describes me*) in which higher scores represent a higher presence of these traits ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ).

*Masculinity Trait Index –instrumentality–* (MTI, Barak & Stern, 1986). This scale measures the degree to which each participant describes her-/himself in terms of instrumental personality traits, traditionally considered masculine qualities (i.e., “competitive”). It is also made up of 10 items with a Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (*never describes me*) to 6 (*always describes me*) in which higher scores represent a higher presence of these traits ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

*Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996; short version by Rollero, Glick, & Tartaglia, 2014). This 12-item scale analyzes sexist attitudes in both their hostile manifestation –those that have a negative affective tone and demote women to an inferior status– and benevolent manifestation –those with a positive affective tone toward women who assume traditional roles, based on a traditional ideology that idealizes women as romantic objects, good wives and mothers. Both the *Hostile Sexism* subscale (e.g. “There are many women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances”) ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) and the *Benevolent Sexism* subscale (e.g. “Men are incomplete without women”) ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) are made up of 6 items with a Likert-type response format in which higher scores represent more sexist



attitudes in both their hostile and benevolent manifestations.

*Modern Homophobia Scale* (Raja & Stokes, 1998). This scale assesses interpersonal unease regarding gay and lesbian persons. It is composed of two subscales: *Attitudes toward gay men* (e.g. “I welcome new friends who are gay”), with a total of 9 items ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ); and *Attitudes toward lesbians* (e.g. “I wouldn’t mind going to a party that included lesbians”), with 10 items ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). The scale has a Likert-type response format in which lower scores reveal more negative attitudes regarding gay and lesbian persons.

*Moral Disengagement Regarding School Bullying Scale* (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, & Bonnano, 2005). This scale comprises 13 items that analyze moral disengagement regarding the phenomenon of school bullying. This refers to a cognitive restructuring of abusive behavior that allows the link to be broken between what an individual believes he/she should do –theoretical moral judgment– and what he/she actually does –harmful behavior. It takes place by activating a series of cognitive mechanisms such as the justification of behaviors, the minimization of consequences, the diffusion of responsibility, and the blaming of the victim (Bandura, 1986) (e.g. “Some kids need to be picked on just to teach them a lesson”, “In my group of friends, bullying is okay”, or “Some kids get bullied because they deserve it”) ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ). This scale has a Likert-type response format in which higher scores reveal a higher degree of moral disengagement regarding school bullying.

Due to the age of participants, the number of instruments and the complexity of the items, a 6-point Likert response format was included in each instrument in order to simplify the response mode. This modification of the scale never reduced the reliability of the instruments. In the GTS, the change from the original 7-point scale to a 6-point equivalent made it easier for the students to answer and also allowed us to eliminate neutral responses and reduce central tendency bias (Velez & Ashworth, 2007). Moreover, in previous studies conducted with the GTS, only a small proportion of the responses scored a full 7, which would also justify eliminating this end of the scale.

## Procedure

An instrumental study was conducted during the 2013–2014 academic year by means of a cross-sectional random sampling survey. Initially, approval was requested from the Portuguese Ministry of Education, which referred the matter to the National Data Protection Commission. Once approval was granted by both bodies, several schools that taught the last year of basic education (9th grade) –covering ages 6 to 14– and the first year of secondary education (10th grade) –covering ages 15–18– were randomly selected in two districts of Northern Portugal.

Subsequently, a letter was sent to the directors of the selected schools, presenting the study and asking for their cooperation; their involvement was confirmed by telephone. Of all the selected schools, only one declined participating in the project, so it was replaced by a similar school. Finally, active informed consent from parents or legal tutors was requested in every participating school, and students who failed to provide this authorization were excluded from the study.

The questionnaire was self-administered (i.e. paper-pencil), voluntary and anonymous. It was administered during school hours between May and June 2014 by two researchers in educational psychology who were specifically trained for this task. The students had about 50 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Additionally, with the aim of minimizing any skewing of the results, specifically adjusting for the order effect, two variations of the questionnaire –*form a* and *form b*– were distributed, one to each half of the students in each class. For the translation of the scale into Portuguese, the language adaptation was carried out using the forward-translation method (Hambleton, 1996), that is, translating the items from English into Portuguese and then presenting this translation along with the original English version to a bilingual expert.

## Data analysis

EQS 6.1 software was used to evaluate the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The maximum likelihood method estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used since multivariate

**Table 1.** Sex-Related Differences in the Subscales Assessed.

	Sex	Mean (SD)	Differences
Transphobia/Genderism	Girls	4.28 (1.10)	$t(984) = 15.61, p < .001, d = 1.00$
	Boys	3.10 (1.25)	
Gender-bashing	Girls	5.77 (0.51)	$t(991) = 9.27, p < .001, d = 0.56$
	Boys	5.29 (1.01)	
Attitudes toward trans women and gender diverse men	Girls	5.43 (0.62)	$t(992) = 16.26, p < .001, d = 1.04$
	Boys	4.55 (1.01)	
Attitudes toward trans men and gender diverse women	Girls	5.31 (0.73)	$t(992) = 13.01, p < .001, d = 0.83$
	Boys	4.56 (1.03)	

normality was not met. The overall fit indices used were the Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) with a 90% confidence interval and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Values below 0.06 in the RMSEA and greater than 0.95 in the CFI were considered indicative of a good fit. We followed the recommendations of Jackson, Gillaspay, and Purc-Stephenson (2009). Other results were obtained with SPSS software. The omega coefficient and its confidence interval were obtained using R (R Core Team, 2017) and the psych package (Revelle). Total scores met all the assumptions for a parametric test and no outliers were observed. A  $t$ -test was the parametric test chosen for comparisons.

## Results

Regarding the scores obtained in both subscales of the GTS, analyzed according to sex (see Table 1), statistically significant differences can be observed, with boys scoring higher on both the Transphobia/Genderism and Gender-bashing subscales.

Differences according to the identity of the person targeted by those attitudes were analyzed next (see Table 1). To this end, we compared the differences in means between items that explored attitudes toward trans women or gender diverse men (items 1,3,4,6,9 and 10), and those that explored attitudes toward trans men or gender diverse women (items 2,5,8 and 12). Once again, boys were found to express significantly more negative attitudes and behaviors than girls toward TGD people.

These differences (according to the sex and identity of the individuals targeted) were further analyzed, revealing that girls exhibited significantly more positive attitudes toward trans women or gender diverse men,  $t(516) = 5.01, p < .001, d = 0.18$  (trans women/gender diverse

**Table 2.** Psychometric Properties of the Items of the GTS Subscales.

	Item	M	SD	i-tcc	$\alpha$ -item	Total $\alpha$	Omega (CI)
Gender-bashing	GTS_1	3.14	2.00	0.47	0.81	0.82	0.83(0.74–0.94)
	GTS_2	4.33	1.70	0.55	0.79		
	GTS_3	4.09	1.81	0.66	0.77		
	GTS_4	4.02	1.78	0.69	0.76		
	GTS_5	2.53	1.81	0.51	0.80		
	GTS_6	4.20	1.77	0.62	0.78		
Transphobia/ Genderism	GTS_7	5.61	1.05	0.68	0.83	0.86	0.87(0.70–0.99)
	GTS_8	5.73	0.83	0.71	0.83		
	GTS_9	5.24	1.28	0.66	0.84		
	GTS_10	5.49	1.12	0.51	0.86		
	GTS_11	5.48	1.05	0.70	0.83		
	GTS_12	5.62	1.03	0.72	0.82		

Note. M: mean; SD: standard deviation; i-tcc: corrected item-total correlation;  $\alpha$ -item: alpha if item is deleted; total  $\alpha$ : Cronbach's alpha; CI: confidence interval.  
(see Annex I)

men:  $M = 5.43, SD = 0.62$ ; trans men/gender diverse women:  $M = 5.31, SD = 0.73$ ); by contrast, boys exhibited similar attitudes toward both trans women or gender diverse men and trans men or gender diverse women,  $t(471) = -0.47, p > .05$  (trans women/gender diverse men:  $M = 4.55, SD = 1.02$ ; trans men/gender diverse women:  $M = 4.56, SD = 1.03$ ).

Regarding the validation of the GTS, Table 2 shows some of the items' psychometric properties. Overall, low means and standard deviations between 1 and 2 were observed. Corrected item-total correlations were always higher than 0.30 and the deletion of an item never improved the Cronbach's alpha of the scale.

After this, the construct validity of the scale was tested. The Mardia test (Mardia = 126.06) revealed the multivariate non-normal distribution of the data. Consequently, the dimensionality observed in previous studies (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014) was tested using the MLR, a robust estimator. Specifically, two related factors (Transphobia/Genderism and Gender-bashing) were tested. Results showed a good fit of this model: Satorra-Bentler- $\chi^2 = 254.59, p < .01, df = 53$ ; CFI = 0.982; RMSEA = 0.062; 90% CI

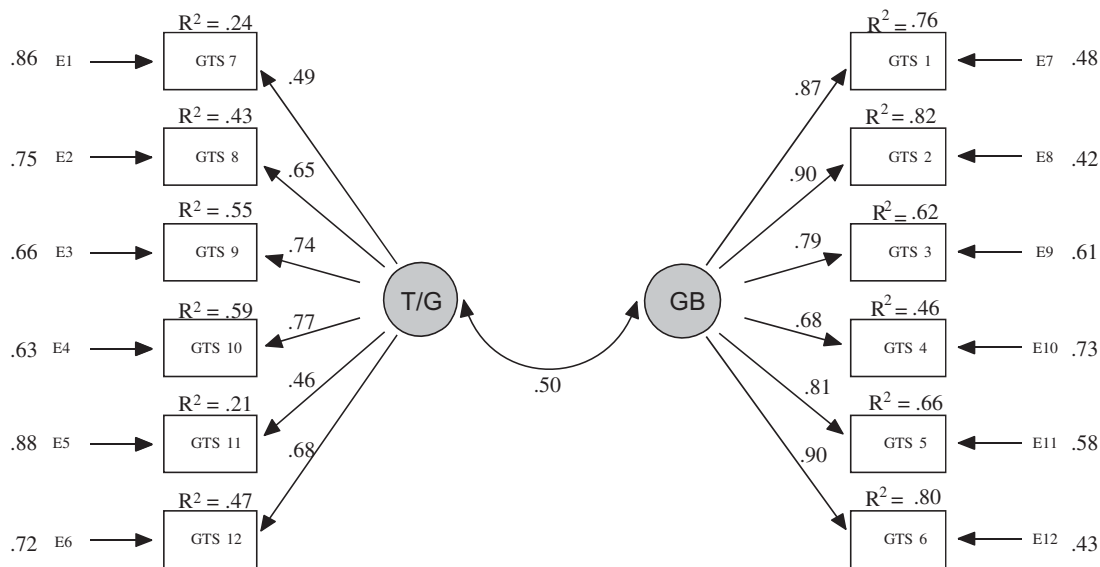


Figure 1. Standardized weights of the two-factor solution. T/G: Transphobia/Genderism; GB: Gender-bashing.

Table 3. Correlations Between the GTS Subscales and Other Variables.

Girls	Boys								
	T/G	GB	E	I	HS	BS	AG	AL	MD
Transphobia/ Genderism (T/G)		0.331**	0.179**	-0.193**	-0.241**	-0.136**	0.526**	0.188**	-0.336**
Gender-bashing (GB)	0.220**		0.108*	-0.226**	-0.261**	-0.022	0.268**	0.184**	-0.485**
Expressiveness (E)	0.026	0.090*		0.250**	0.112*	0.198**	0.273**	0.147**	-0.092*
Instrumentality (I)	0.003	-0.057	-0.088*		0.242**	0.049	-0.146**	0.036	0.297**
Hostile sexism (HS)	-0.131**	-0.137**	-0.065	0.120**		0.264**	-0.079	0.066	0.342**
Benevolent sexism (BS)	-0.214**	-0.049	0.226**	0.073	0.255**		0.050	0.087	0.070
Att. gay men (AG)	0.476**	0.209**	0.127**	0.051	-0.172**	-0.094*		0.469**	-0.287**
Att. lesbians (AL)	0.475**	0.177**	0.093*	0.113**	-0.153**	-0.119**	0.767**		-0.037
Moral disengagement (MD)	-0.168**	-0.246**	-0.090*	0.119**	0.275**	0.193**	-0.129**	-0.086	

Note. Att. gay men: attitudes toward gay men; Att. Lesbians: attitudes toward lesbians; \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$

RMSEA (0.055–0.070) (see Appendix). The standardized weights are shown in Figure 1.

Finally, a number of external validity indicators were calculated using the GTS subscales and other related variables (see the correlation matrix on Table 3). Overall, significant low or moderate correlations were found between Transphobia/Genderism and Gender-Bashing on one side and all the analyzed variables included in the matrix on the other. Specifically, in boys, transphobia-genderism was found to correlate moderately and positively with negative attitudes regarding homosexuals, moral disengagement regarding bullying, and hostile sexism; by contrast, low positive correlations were found between this variable and instrumentality, negative attitudes toward lesbians, and benevolent sexism; in addition, a low negative correlation was found between transphobia-genderism and expressiveness. Gender-bashing was also moderately and

positively correlated with moral disengagement regarding school bullying, negative attitudes toward homosexuals, hostile sexism, and instrumentality; low positive correlations were found between this variable and negative attitudes toward lesbians; by contrast, low negative correlations were found between gender-bashing and expressiveness (see Table 2).

A similar correlation pattern can be observed in girls (see Table 2). In this group, transphobia-genderism exhibited moderate positive correlations with negative attitudes toward homosexuals and lesbians, and low positive correlations with benevolent sexism and moral disengagement. Gender-bashing showed moderate positive correlations with moral disengagement, low positive correlations with negative attitudes toward homosexuals and lesbians and also with hostile sexism, and low negative correlations with expressiveness.

## Discussion

In this study we analyzed the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of Portuguese adolescents toward TGD people. Results showed that boys exhibited significantly more negative attitudes toward TGD individuals than girls, both in the affective/cognitive (Transphobia/Genderism) and behavioral (Gender-bashing) dimensions; this applied to both trans women or gender diverse men and trans men or gender diverse women. Girls were found to exhibit more positive attitudes toward trans women or gender diverse men, while there were no noticeable differences regarding boys. We also validated the short version of the GTS in a sample of Portuguese students, confirming the bidimensional nature of the scale (i.e. Transphobia/genderism and Gender-bashing), the good discriminative power of the items, and adequate reliability and validity indices. Along these lines, in order to analyze the external validity of the scale we also explored the relationships between attitudes toward TGD people and several variables related to gender, sexual prejudice and school violence. We observed significant correlations between Transphobia/Genderism and Gender-bashing on one side and sexual stereotypes, sexist and homophobic attitudes, and moral disengagement regarding school bullying on the other.

Regarding *participants' scores as a function of their sex*, boys expressed significantly more negative beliefs, attitudes and behaviors toward TGD individuals than girls, which is consistent with other studies on this phenomenon (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Costa & Davies, 2012; Hill & Willoughby, 2005). This applied both to trans women or gender diverse men, and trans men or gender diverse women.

However, contrary to empirical evidence (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Winter et al., 2008), no significant differences were identified between attitudes regarding trans men or gender diverse women and trans women or gender diverse men in boys. By contrast, girls did show differences in this regard, exhibiting more positive attitudes toward trans women or gender diverse men than toward trans men or gender diverse women. It is worth noting that various

studies have shown that transgression of gender norms is more penalized in men than in women due to gender socialization, which is stricter for boys (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). In addition, masculinity is socially more highly valued than femininity (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012), which is likely to imply a harsher punishment for the transgression of the most socially accepted gender norm. However, it appears that boys value stereotype transgression negatively in equal terms, regardless of the gender identity of the “non-conforming” individual. In fact, the devaluation and fear of femininity or the specter of homosexuality could well be a variable to take into account in the appraisal of such issues (O’Neil, 2008). Specifically, boys may feel threatened equally by trans women or gender diverse men and by trans men or gender diverse women, manifesting their rejection of both communities as a means of preserving their identity (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016).

As regards girls, their higher support of trans women and gender diverse men could have two different reasons: first, their higher awareness of the rejection of women in patriarchal societies may lead them to empathize with trans women and gender diverse men, who as women and “effeminate men” are hence subordinated and considered to be the “second sex” (Beauvoir, 1987); second, and in relation to the above, the more expressive nature of girls may facilitate their perception of the higher vulnerability of these people, leading to their increased support and protection, in line with the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982).

Concerning the *validation of the GTS*, the short version translated into Portuguese and applied in Portugal seems to have adequate psychometric properties. We found means above the theoretical mean of the scale (3) in all items except item 11, as could be expected from a normative population; furthermore, deviations ranged between 1 and 2, showing a good variability of responses. As expected, the corrected item-total correlation was above 0.30 in all items and the deletion of an item in a given subscale never led to a better alpha value of the subscale; all this indicates a correct performance of the items.



In addition, the study confirmed the dimensional structure tested by the original authors (Hill & Willoughby, 2005) and international adaptations (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014). Specifically, two reliable factors were observed: Transphobia/Genderism and Gender-bashing. This model with two related factors perfectly fits the bidimensional model. The item-factor standardized weights were also appropriate. Both factors showed high reliability indices and adequate external validity, which we discuss further below.

In the analysis of the *external validity of the scale*, regarding gender stereotypes, we observed that boys and girls with higher scores in expressiveness exhibited less negative behaviors toward TGD. We also found that boys with higher scores in expressiveness showed more positive feelings/beliefs regarding these people, and that boys with higher scores in instrumentality exhibited more negative feelings/beliefs as well as behaviors. This is consistent with the findings of studies that have found a relationship between transphobia and the endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs (Costa & Davies, 2012; Hill & Willoughby, 2005).

Along with gender stereotypes, sexism is a key variable (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Nagoshi et al., 2008), as we observed that boys with higher scores in sexism, particularly hostile sexism, but also benevolent sexism, exhibited more negative beliefs and attitudes. In addition, boys with higher scores in hostile sexism also exhibited more negative behaviors. Similarly, girls with higher scores in benevolent sexism exhibited more negative beliefs and attitudes, and those with higher scores in hostile sexism also exhibited more negative behaviors.

Homophobia toward gay men and lesbians is also a relevant variable, as reported by previous studies (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Costa & Davies, 2012). Specifically, boys with more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men—especially the latter—expressed more negative beliefs/attitudes and behaviors toward TGD individuals. Likewise, girls with higher scores in homophobia—toward both gay men and lesbians—expressed more negative attitudes and beliefs and also showed more negative behaviors regarding these people, although to a lesser extent.

We also observed that both boys and girls with higher levels of moral disengagement regarding school bullying expressed the most negative beliefs, attitudes and behaviors toward TGD persons or those perceived as such. Moral disengagement regarding school bullying has been associated with involvement as an aggressor (Hymel et al., 2005) and support of the aggressor's role (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009). Similarly, strong relationships have been identified between involvement as an aggressor in bullying situations, the endorsement of traditionally masculine stereotypes (Carrera-Fernández, Lameiras-Fernández, Rodríguez-Castro, & Vallejo-Medina, 2013; Morales, Yubero, & Larrañaga, 2016) and attitudes of sexism and rejection of sexual diversity (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2013). These findings, along with the discriminatory and violent situations experienced by LGBTIQ adolescents at school, observed at an international level (António et al., 2012; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Kann et al., 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2016), highlight the need to analyze the bullying phenomenon from a socio-ecological perspective that takes into account power and identity-related variables in male-centered and heteronormative societies (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2011).

These results can be interpreted from the perspective of post-structuralist feminism and more specifically from the framework of Queer Theory, where all the pieces of this puzzle can fit. This refers specifically to the space delimited by the cis-heteronormative matrix. This space is built on the artificial and forced duality of sex (Butler, 1990, 1993; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Based on this duality, agents of socialization or gender technologies (De Lauretis, 1987) develop the process of gender differential socialization, which leads to the duality of gender, always congruent with sex and complementary in compulsory heterosexuality (Berlant & Warner, 1998). This process of building intelligible identities is necessarily marked by sexism and rejection of sexual diversity (Sharma, 2009), highlighting that the gender norms that define the boundaries of the heteronormative matrix are related to the use of violence. The results of this study showed that students with higher instrumental, sexist and



homophobic scores who supported bullying to a greater extent were also those who exhibited more negative attitudes and behaviors toward TGD people.

The fact that boys exhibited more negative attitudes and behaviors toward sexual diversity than girls indicates a reaction of self-defense aimed at preserving and protecting hegemonic masculinity, which is overvalued by society.

This need to protect one's own hegemonic identity highlights the fact that violence based on gender norms affects everybody, as any identity that aims to be intelligible must fit in the narrow scope of the matrix, displaying a coherent and solid self through the process of performativity. This process consists precisely of imitating and reproducing a gender identity in which the categories of sex, gender and sexual orientation are consistent and complementary, excluding the parts of the self that do not fit with the norm as well as people who transgress the norm. (Butler, 1990, 1993). It is undoubtedly a painful process, as the gender norm is too rigid to be flawlessly reproduced. This is achieved through a process of "self-rejection" of the parts of ourselves that are not consistent with the norm; this process, defined by Butler (1997a) as "melancholic attachment mechanism", consists of the boy's identification with his father and other male figures—repudiating any of the mother's feminine traits in the development of his self— and the girl's identification with her mother and other female figures—repudiating any masculine trait in her identity. In both cases, this identification must be carried out in an opposite way to the process of eliciting sexual desire. In other words, the "sex" individuals identify with must be the opposite of their object of desire. An unstable and inconsistent self is thus configured, which must necessarily repudiate these other "selves" that challenge the norm but are also a part of this same person.

Alongside this painful process of imitation and reproduction of the norm, gender performativity also entails the exclusion and rejection of other unintelligible, "outsider", monstrous or abject individuals positioned beyond the boundaries of the heteronormative matrix, as a strategy to reaffirm and protect the otherwise vulnerable and fragile identity of the self (Butler, 1997a, 1997b).

In this regard, we could wonder what pushed a group of adolescents to torture, rape and murder Gisberta Salce. Among the numerous variables that could have combined to end in such a tragic outcome, the fact of facing the absolute arbitrariness and instability of gender norms represented by Gisberta may have sparked this brutal violence. It may have been an attempt to restore the supposed order of the norm that states the existence of intelligible identities and non-human ways of being, rejecting the unsettling possibility of thinking of the world and human nature otherwise. Gisberta's death, and that of many others, highlights that the commitment to the realization of an impossible ideal ("making gender intelligible") unleashes fear and terror at its fragility, and imposes the need to believe that compliance with the norm is possible; by contrast, noncompliance with the norm leads to a certain death sentence (Burgos, 2008).

### Conclusions and implications for educational practice

The results of this study revealed that boys exhibited more negative attitudes toward TGD people than girls did. The bidimensional structure of the short version of the Genderism and Transphobia scale was confirmed.

This study has several limitations that are worth mentioning. First, the sample was probabilistic but is not representative of the population of Portuguese adolescents. Second, neither the gender identity nor the sexual orientation of the participants were ascertained so it cannot be assumed that they were cisgender and heterosexual individuals; therefore, they might identify with minority sexual identity categories, which may have influenced the results obtained. Another limitation is the potential bias resulting from the tendency to give socially acceptable and politically correct answers, which would yield a positively distorted image. In this regard, it would be interesting for researchers to identify participants' gender identity and sexual orientation. It would also be advisable to conduct qualitative studies to further explore students' responses and analyze the perspective of family members and/or teachers.

Despite these limitations, the results of this research are useful and innovative in that they

provide greater insight on an issue that has been scarcely studied in adolescents and in non-English-speaking countries. Moreover, they represent significant progress in measuring attitudes toward TGD people in adolescents.

From a *queer* approach, they highlight the close relationship between beliefs that reaffirm gender norms and mark the limits of the heterosexual matrix, transphobic attitudes and gender bashing. They show us the murder of Gisberta as a way of reproducing and upholding the gender norm and particularly of protecting the stability of the intelligible identities challenged by Gilberta's lifestyle.

These results have significant implications for the development of an inclusive educational practice, which is highly necessary and urgent during childhood and adolescence and must be addressed in a crosscutting and systematic way. Its main goal must be to do away with the imposition of a consistent, fixed and unitary gender identity. As Butler (1993) pointed out, this strict gender identity represents the basis of violence and exclusion of identities perceived as unintelligible or abject, rendering any way of life beyond the heteronormative framework impossible. To this end, this educational practice must start with the deconstruction of the biological and binary nature of sex and gender, and enable a process of "unlearning" gender roles and stereotypes; it must also promote positive, inclusive and respectful attitudes toward sexual diversity. Another key aspect is the education of students' emotional intelligence, promoting the expressive roles and traits related to sensitivity and caring for others traditionally associated with femininity. Likewise, empathy with the suffering of others should be promoted to counter moral disengagement. We believe that a critical and queer educational practice aimed at the search for transformation and social justice that not only benefits TGD identities but also expands the narrow boundaries of the heteronormative framework for all would encourage social coexistence and prevent violence.

### Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

### Internal Review Board (IRB) statement

This study was approved by the Ministry of Education and by the National Commission of Data Protection of Portugal. All aspects of data collection in this study, including participant involvement based on active informed consent of parents/legal tutors, were conducted in full compliance with standards for ethical treatment of participants.

### Note

1. We chose the terms "trans" – understood as an umbrella term that refers to a person whose sex assigned at birth does not match their gender identity regardless of whether the person has undergone surgery or hormone treatment or not – and "gender diverse" – referring to individuals who express gender nonconformity but do not necessarily ascribe to trans identity. We use "gender diverse" instead of "gender non conforming", which has a less inclusive meaning, following the recommendations of Adams et al., (2017).

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## Appendix

### Genderism and transphobia scale

#### Response scale

1. Strongly agree/Concordo totalmente
2. Agree/Concordo
3. Somewhat agree/Concordo em parte
4. Somewhat disagree/Discordo em parte
5. Disagree/Discordo
6. Strongly disagree/Discordo totalmente

#### Gender-bashing

1. I have beat up men who act like sissies/Agredi fisicamente rapazes que se portavam como maricas.
2. I have behaved violently toward a woman because she was too masculine/Fui violento/a com uma rapariga por ser demasiado masculina.
3. I have teased a man because of his feminine appearance or behavior/Fiz troça de um rapaz pelo seu aspeto ou comportamento efeminado.
4. If I saw a man on the street that I thought was really a woman, I would ask him if he was a man or a woman/Se visse um homem na rua de quem suspeitasse tratar-se de uma mulher perguntaria-lhe o seu sexo.
5. I have teased a woman because of her masculine appearance or behavior/Fiz troça de uma rapariga pela sua aparência ou comportamento masculino.
6. I have behaved violently toward a man because he was too feminine/Fui violento/a com um rapaz por ser demasiado feminino.

#### Transphobia/Genderism

7. God made two sexes and two sexes only/Deus criou dois sexos e apenas dois sexos.
8. I cannot understand why a woman would act masculine/É incompreensível que uma mulher se comporte de forma masculina.
9. A man who dresses as a woman is a pervert/Um rapaz que se vista de mulher é um tarado.
10. Feminine men make me feel uncomfortable/Os rapazes femininos incomodam-me.
11. People are either men or women/As pessoas são homens ou mulheres.
12. It is morally wrong for a woman to present herself as a man in public/É imoral que uma mulher se apresente em público como um home.