

COMMS HUB

FOCUS GROUPS: SPAIN *for La Interseccion*

Findings & Recommendations
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FOCUS GROUP CONTEXT

STRUCTURE: Two virtual focus groups were conducted 6 October 2022 by the Comms Hub and La Interseccion to explore public attitudes toward transgender and non-binary people in Spain.

Participants in the focus group were selected to represent the worldview and opinions of a base communications audience that is more likely to work or volunteer with minors. The members of these focus groups are key potential allies in the campaign to protect and advance the rights of transgender and non-binary individuals in Spain. They were selected primarily on four child-rearing questions that estimate an individual's predisposition to authoritarianism. Survey research conducted in 2018 (Comms Hub), 2019 (Comms Hub), and late 2021 (More in Common) confirm that authoritarianism is predictive of behaviors on a wide range of issues in Spain, including attitudes to LGBTI+ people. Members of a base communications audience score on the lower end of the authoritarian scale and, as such, are statistically much more likely to support human rights, diversity and democracy.

To facilitate discussion and capture more accurate opinions, the focus groups were divided by gender. Participants ages ranged between 25 and 54 years. Half of the members of each group had positive opinions of all LGBTI+ people. The other half of each group had positive feeling toward gays and lesbians, but were uncertain or less favorable to transgender and non-binary individuals. Given the strategic aims of ongoing campaign, people who work with minors in school and other capacities were overrepresented in both focus groups.

CAVEAT: This report offers an unvarnished analysis of attitudes and messages on transgender and non-binary issues. Some of the findings will be very difficult to hear, let alone process. Do not let this natural reaction get in the way of learning. The goal of advancing and protecting transgender and non-binary rights is too important.

We know that hard work, passion, and real skill is being poured into this campaign. Confronting how non-activists think and feel is always difficult -- especially when some of the media or messages created to communicate on the issue are evaluated. We recommend using what was learned in these focus groups to sharpen your communications so that they do a better job of activating the public support for all LGBTI+ people.

The key findings and learning presented in this report can help you do just that.

AUDIENCE: We use the term "audience" throughout the report to refer to the participants in the focus groups.

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INSIGHTS

Lesbians and gays are simply “normal” an ordinary, recognized, and accepted part of Spanish society. Transgender and non-binary people are not well known at all – though trans is somewhat more familiar than non-binary.

- Most people in our audience have no clue about non-binary people, simply lacking both reference points and even language to aid their understanding. Even so, they assert, just as they did with lesbians and gays, that trans and non-binary people are normal.

Lesbians and gays are also recognized as a minority in society who need protection.

- Protection has come, in part, from making gays and lesbians visible to and within society.
- Visibility has led to normalization.

➔ Our audience¹ is **socially distant** from trans and non-binary people and **socially close** (or closer) to lesbians and gays.

Many in our audience admitted to being embarrassed by their lack of knowledge about trans and non-binary people and worry their lack of knowledge could create situations where they inadvertently offend trans and non-binary people.

- Our audience may not know or understand trans or non-binary people, but they sympathize with them and the social and physical challenges they confront.

While they don't understand non-binary and, to a lesser extent, trans people, most feel certain that these people deserve to be treated with **respect**.

- Visibility is the key to normalizing trans and non-binary people within Spanish society. The door to do so is wide open.

➔ **Respect** for trans and non-binary people and the **protection** of their rights are two critically important touchstones on which to base communications and campaign strategy.

Some efforts to normalize and increase respect for trans and non-binary people go too far including the imposition of inclusive language, language policing, people who are closely identified with language policing (the Minister of Equality), messaging on rights, and too much focus on sexual orientation.

➔ While word and language policing is greatly disliked and counterproductive, requiring people to call trans or non-binary people by their chosen name is perceived as a fundamental sign of **respect** and widely supported.

¹ The term “audience” is used throughout the report to refer to the participants in the focus groups.

The issue of transgender and non-binary minors is difficult for our audience and, depending on how it is addressed, can endanger progress.

The question for our audience is simple: *When do minors really know their gender identity or sexual orientation?* This is an open and potentially heated debate. **It is not one that we can win, but it is a debate in which we can lose support – a lot of it.**

- The key to our audience is not contesting the debate, it is recognizing the need to **support** and **protect** minors and their families as they work through this difficult search for identity. Schools and education are a central piece of this search.

➡ Our audience wants minors to be given the space, **support**, and **respect** in schools and the broader society to figure out who they are. And they want minors, who are going through this process, to be **protected** from **bullies**. **This is a winning positioning and message for transgender and non-binary advocates.**

Our audience believes that the fundamental **rights** of all are guaranteed in Spain. No matter who you are, you have **rights** and those **rights** are and must be the same for everyone.

- While both men and women believe fundamental **rights** are guaranteed for all in Spain, they also recognize that for other groups of people having a **right** does not mean you have access to it.
- And while “all groups have the same **rights**” and are “equally protected” in Spain, not all are “fully accepted” as an equal member of society. This gap between guaranteed **rights** and social acceptance of minority groups leads to othering discrimination and aggression against them.

For our audience, minorities, including transgender and non-binary people, do not need more **rights**, they need more **protection of their rights**.

➡ The message frame for transgender and non-binary advocates is clear. To win progress, we must focus on the **protection of fundamental rights** from discrimination, bullying and aggressors. We must not focus on the assertion or **establishment of rights**. Whether they are correct or not, our audience believes transgender and non-binary citizens possess the same **rights** as everyone else in Spain. The problem is not **rights**. It is the **protection of those rights** from those who do not accept transgender and non-binary people. Every message should be framed with this in mind.

- The **protection of rights frame** stimulates positive and powerful discussions, among men and women in our audience, of the rights transgender and non-binary people have trouble accessing and the barriers they face.

- On the other hand, the **rights frame** provokes a discussion of working to secure “special treatment,” “preferential treatment,” and “more protection than anyone else.”

Respect is a fundamental Spanish value.

- Equal **rights**, protection of those **rights** and **respect** for all are inextricably linked.
- Showing **respect** for others no matter who they are is a fundamental social good and is part of the fabric that holds Spanish society together and foster solidarity.

➔ **Respect** is the central value component of our **protection of rights** message frame. **Respect** is a key attitudinal driver for our audience. Invoking it as part of our message can activate this audience and enlist them in our work of protecting rights. It defines what we seek – the **protection of rights**. And why we seek it – because **respect** is perceived as fundamental to social solidarity.

- While our audience detests and rejects the societal policing of pronouns and imposition of inclusive language, they think that calling someone by the person’s chosen name (an individual choice) is an important and basic sign of **respect**.
- Examples of using someone’s chosen name, when addressing them, is a central positive story to use repeatedly when advocating for the protection of transgender and non-binary rights because it readily activates a central value – **respect** -- held by our key audience.

➔ **Communications Learning #1:** As we have seen repeatedly in other media test conducted throughout Europe over the last three years, the issue advertising that connects with target audiences almost always includes people and their images, tells their story, is not highly produced, and is direct and to the point. Higher concept, advertising approaches -- polished or not, with illustrations or not, using gimmicks or not -- tend to be rejected or ignored.

The **Trans Flag** is not widely recognized by our target audience. The utility of using the trans flag or the button in communications should be assessed very carefully.

Tested Ad – Grandmother was the favorite image and message among women, but it must be contextualized to communicate in real world communications.

Tested Ad – Ally was the favorite image and message among men.

Tested Ad – Nico has potential but needs to be adjusted. It is a prime example of how easy it is for messages to be misinterpreted.

Tested Ads – Diversity Poem and Slider Triptych miss the mark completely and are irredeemable.

Spokesperson – Trans Girl Video is packed with emotion and passion, but sparks varied reactions among our target audience and backfires with some of our audience.

- Ironically, the eloquence and passion of the trans girl’s presentation creates doubt and questions in the minds of some women. Her delivery is too polished, too perfect. They think it must be studied. It is marketing.

➡ **Communications Learning #2** ...highly polished communications are more likely to be categorized as manipulative marketing and dismissed.

➡ **Communications Learning #3** video and other formats, testimonials from trans people who are 16 years of age and older are more likely to avoid these deeply rooted concerns raised by the **Trans Girl Video**. On the other hand, when talking about bullying and education, younger trans people are obvious and powerful spokespeople. Thus, choose spokespeople consciously and carefully based on strategy and messaging goals.

Tactical Test – Ally and Thank You Buttons: The “gracias” message was preferred over “aliado.” Even so, there was confusion about what the button actually meant, and who would wear such a button.

- At a minimum, the text on the gracias button needs to be cleared up to make it more understandable, but the campaign should carefully reconsider this tactical approach. Visibility is key, but not all visibility is positive.
- **Communications Learning:** When appropriate: a simple “thank you” message should be added to the [respect](#) and [protecting rights frame](#) in communications.

➡ **All Trans Law** messaging must avoid the rights frame and focus on protecting rights, fostering respect, and countering discrimination.

➡ The recognized difference in the accessibility of rights by geography and because of cultural norms is an important message for transgender advocates. While everyone has equal rights in Spain, not everyone enjoys those rights equally.

Most of the women and men in our audience favor setting a national educational standard across Spain for the teaching of diversity and inclusion that includes information about transgender people.

➡ **Communication Learning #4:** Two important language pointers emerged from the discussion of the Trans Law:

1. Refer to any proposed national standard as a “minimum national standard.” The addition of “minimum” makes the national standard seem more necessary and obvious, and less onerous.
2. Dismiss VOX’s argument for parental choice as “a la carte” education.

Our audience thinks it is the role of education to teach, and thereby establish, a common set of knowledge among young people in Spain. This common set of knowledge promotes solidarity in Spanish society.

- Sex education, including information about LGBTI+, should be “part of the education of every child.” Moreover, all members of our audience agree that information about the trans community should be provided to minors in schools.

➡ Schools and teachers must play a key role in teaching about diversity, promoting respect and inclusion, supporting children, modeling behavior and protecting minorities – including LGBTI+ minors -- from bullying.

➡ An Effective, Three-Step Narrative Approach: A communications campaign that

1.) introduces trans individuals,

2.) has each trans individual thanking someone, group, or institution for their support – in other words, the behavior we want others to model, and

3.) reveals a problem the trans individual confronts

is a powerful way to build support.

Examples of three-step narrative building on focus group content:

Photo of person (example: Nico) "I'm Nico. I'm trans and a student.

I'm *thankful* to my parents and teachers for calling me by my name...and I still *fear* being bullied for who I am."

Photo of Grandmother "My grandchild Alex is trans and a young adult now.

I'm *thankful* Alex can be who they want to be...and I'm *worried* about Alex facing housing and job discrimination."

Photo of Lara "I'm Lara. I'm trans and an artist. I'm *thankful* for my friends who accept me fully for who I am...and I'm *sad* I can't get an ID card with my correct gender on it."

PERCEPTIONS LGBTI+

Lesbian & Gay: To the women and men **in our audience**, lesbians and gays are simply “normal” a recognized and accepted part of Spanish society. They know people in their social and work circles who are gay or lesbian. They have gay and lesbian friends. They say they understand who they are and think of lesbians and gays, quite simply, as ordinary people.

- *Well, person, people, normal ordinary people.*
- *I think of normal people, colleagues from work, normal, normal ordinary people.*
- *Yeah, for me, L. G. T. B... Lesbian gays and all that I'm familiar with... [I] used to rent a house from somebody who was a lesbian, and I've had gay friends and everything.*

That said: they also recognize that gays and lesbians are a minority in society who have needed protection. Much of that protection has come from making gays and lesbians visible to and within society. Visibility has led to normalization.

Transgender & Non-Binary: Transgender and non-binary people are not well known at all – though trans is somewhat more familiar than non-binary. Few in our audience know (or at least recognize that they know) anyone who is trans. Only one person says they know (or met) someone who is non-binary.

- *I don't know anyone, never known anyone, never even met them.*
- *I don't know if I'd recognize them.*
- *We don't know what it is.*

Our audience is **socially distant** from trans and non-binary people and **socially close** (or closer) to lesbians and gays.

While they are much more likely to understand at a basic level what it means to be a trans person, most have no clue about non-binary people, simply lacking both reference points and even language to aid their understanding. [There is likely a generational contour to this finding with younger people in our audience having more knowledge of trans and non-binary people, but without a quantitative survey we can not be certain of this.]

- *I've had gay friends and everything but non binary transsexual and all that stuff. I've never known anybody. I've never even met them. Like. I don't know if I'd recognize them...*
- *I'm lost pretty much in this whole thing, even though I have colleagues who consider themselves transsexuals [word used by respondent ~33:35]. But I feel uncomfortable because more me than them, I think*
- *In fact, I don't know much about this even understanding that I work in [social work]. I have people or colleagues who consider themselves transsexuals, but I'm lost pretty much in this whole thing.*

- *When it comes to binary, non-binary, I don't think I know anyone if I do um I don't really identify them I'd like to know how to treat them because I'm sure I do it wrong I totally agree with you [name withheld], I feel super identified with what she's saying. Like if it's binary, it's... it's easier to process.*
- *And it's just total lack of knowledge here. Just ignorance [on my part].*
- *I'm totally clueless about this stuff.*
- *Non-binary is a term that I'm confused about.*
- *I have trouble understanding it.*

The perceived social distance between non-binary people and our audience is underscored by how one person learned about them. It was not through direct social interaction, but instead through popular culture – a TV show called *Sex Education*.

- *Sex Education [the popular show]... explained it really well.*

Another person in our audience, who has had no personal contact with non-binary people, admitted being shock when seeing a non-binary person on TV for the first time.

- *Personally. I don't know people non binary personally, but I can think of someone who came out on Big Brother who wore makeup and yet had a beard. I found it like shocking, like.*

Many people in our audience admitted being embarrassed by their lack of knowledge about trans and non-binary people.

- *I feel out of date, [I] need to google [it].*

And many also worry their lack of knowledge and understanding could lead to situations where they inadvertently offend trans and non-binary people.

- *I don't know how to talk to them, how to treat them, what to call them, [the] right word to use.*
- *I fear/worry I will offend them.*

The tension between our audience's lack of understanding, awareness, and knowledge trans and non-binary people and their certainty about the necessity of respecting other humans is palpable. But in the end, their humanity prevails. While they don't understand non-binary and, to a lesser extent, trans people, most feel certain that these people deserve to be treated with **respect.**

- *[I] Have a hard time, just understand[ing] again. But I **respect it**, but I have a hard time understanding it.*

Importantly, this lack of knowledge and limited social interaction with trans and non-binary people, again among our audience, raises many doubts and questions in their minds; but it does not lead to fear and othering. Participants in the focus groups assert, just as they did with gay and lesbians, that trans and

non-binary people are normal. And they say, trans and non-binary people need to have their rights **protected**.

- *Like. I don't know if I'd recognize them, but uh. I think you've got to **protect** the **rights** of any other group.*

Respect for trans and non-binary people and the **protection** of their rights are two critically important touchstones on which to base communications and campaign strategy.

Empathy Towards Transgender and Non-Binary People: Trans and non-binary people are not well known or understood, but our audience sympathizes with them as well as the social and physical challenges confronting them.

- *So, they must feel very alone, very lonely because, you know, families support you and everything, but there's always a little stigma this person's weird*
- *It's a shame that, you know, if they feel that way, especially during the transformation, they feel rejected by society. I understand that physically that's a process that could be even painful. I don't know.*
- *It's a sensation of sadness towards them because I feel like to go through a process like that must be really tough and just have a hard time with it. And on top of that society doesn't help.*

While sympathy and empathy were the primary emotions our audience felt toward trans and non-binary people, some, in the men's group, wondered if the predisposition was innate or a social choice. This question of innate or choice was quickly rebuffed in the group closing off discussion and preventing a more detailed and certain analysis. There is little doubt, however, that among more authoritarian groups this line of attack that trans and non-binary is a woke social choice will find appeal.

- *No, I think it's societal all right.*
- *What, what strikes me is that, I mean, I understand that it's not something that you choose really. What I'm surprised about my colleagues here [other man in group] is if this person is choosing the sexuality [trans girl in video]. I think this girl isn't choosing anything. Like she just felt like a girl since she was born and that's it's not like today I'm gonna wear a pink dress because I like the pink dog and paw patrol. No, she has always been a girl.*

The Need for Visibility of Trans and Non-Binary People: Our audience is ready to learn more about trans and non-binary people. Their biggest fear is offending them.

Visibility is the key to normalizing trans and non-binary people within Spanish society. The door to do so is wide open with this audience.

Familiarity through visibility will answer questions, ameliorate doubts, normalize differences, and make personal connections. Our audience knows that visibility over time reduced societal barriers to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. They are ready for the same process to spur the normalization of trans and non-binary in society.

- *I mean, if there were not a struggle in this visibility, there wouldn't be women's day or gay pride day or unfortunately it wouldn't, they wouldn't be visible. So, we think this is exaggerated now that there's a day for this day for that. But unfortunately, these minorities, they're more and more majorities by the way, they have to have this visibility.*

Going Too Far in Communications: At the same time, our audience – allies and potential allies who assert that trans and non-binary people must be treated to respect – think

Language: People dislike the focus on and, what they see as, the imposition of inclusive language. No doubt, they are primed to dislike this given their uncertainty about what to call a trans or non-binary person. But a focus on promoting or requiring language inclusivity or creating new language is seen as, excessive, exclusive, and elitist by our audience.

- *Making up new words is going too far.*
- *I think that language is excessive too.*
- *This inclusive language and all that stuff. I think it's almost arrogant at a time because it's like I mean I'm open to everything I respect everyone but, instead of A. Or O entering a word in ease. I just think it's too much.*

Policing language is also perceived as a tool that will do little to produce positive societal change.

- *I don't think there's a lot there and I don't think we achieve a whole lot by changing the end of the word, especially ending in E instead of O or A. I'm not trying to offend anyone, but I don't think you're gonna get rights with that.*

People promoting language: People who are closely identified with language inclusivity, for example the Minister of Equality, are disliked even by our base audience.

- *Like for that woman who is the Minister of Equality, she goes too far way too far. [She] is making up new words.*

While word and language policing is greatly disliked and counterproductive, requiring people to call trans or non-binary people by their chosen name is perceived as a fundamental sign of **respect** and widely supported.

Moreover, our audience thinks that identity cards (for people 16+) should note the gender identity chosen by each person, not the gender assigned to them by the state.

Focus on sexual orientation: Some men are made uncomfortable and object when they feel too much attention or importance is made of gender or sexual orientation. These men do not oppose trans and non-binary people, they just don't want too much focus on them.

- When I introduce myself, I don't ask someone what their sexual orientation is.
- Making so much noise...can be counterproductive.

These men are fine with progress but, in the end, they want it to be made quietly. If visibility is a key component of progress though, how can the objections of these men be avoided? The results of the message tests (discussed below) show one style of messaging that threads the needle with men perfectly.

Messaging on rights: As we will document later, messaging on rights is counterproductive.

Trans & Non-Binary Minors: The issue of transgender and non-binary minors is difficult for our audience and, depending on how it is addressed, can endanger progress.

The question for our audience is simple: *When do minors really know their gender identity or sexual orientation?* Their answers are varied. Some are certain that minors can be quite clear about their gender/sexual orientation at a young age. Others think that is wrong and that most minors really don't know who they are when they are young – gender identity/sexual orientation is something people work out as they grow older.

- *I'm really worried about, you know, minors.*
- *You're not mature enough to even know what you are.*
- *This girl boy, whatever needs to have all the support, [reacting to video of young trans girl], help her to take him to take his decisions. But realizing they don't have normal maturity to take those decisions*
- *I think you've got to be there and help them out be with them so that they can really discover what they need to and go where they need to go.*

- *Perhaps she really feels [that way – reacting to video of young trans girl], but there are other conditioning factors like I think you have to be very careful and there should be very good professionals to support them and their parents too.*
- *Well, I think they're very clear ever since they're very little. And I know one that was another is doubting it. So that's why there's psychologists and one's expert. And then I think also it's very important the mother the father the family.*
- *Somebody wants to change sexes and they allow them to do this. I mean it's horrifying. I would listen to them, support and let them mature, but until you reach a certain age, you're not mature enough sufficiently to take a decision like that. That's why you're with your parents ...and this should be talked about in school. Schools have responsibility here.*

This is an open and potentially heated debate. It is not one that we can win, but it is a debate in which we can lose support – a lot of it.

The key to our audience is not contesting the debate, it is recognizing the need to **support** and **protect** minors and their families as they work through this difficult search for identity. Thus, instead of trying to win an unwinnable debate (at this moment in societal evolution), we should focus on what is necessary to **support** and **protect** minors and their families.

Schools and education are a central piece of this puzzle. Our audience know that as well as we do. Schools need to educate children about all options (sex education), give them the support and safe space to figure out who they are, and protect them from the bullies whose attacks can be especially potent and traumatic.

- *I'm talking about like this affirmative action thing with the trans people and they actually face a lot more difficulties than other people because like when they're children, they'll be facing bullying discrimination, which we can generate a lot of traumas.*

Our audience wants minors to be given the space, **support, and **respect** in schools and the broader society to figure out who they are. And they want minors, who are going through this process, to be **protected** from **bullies**. This is a winning positioning and message for transgender and non-binary advocates.**

PERCEPTIONS RIGHTS

The Fundamental Rights of All Are Guaranteed in Spain: Our audience believes that the fundamental rights of all are guaranteed in Spain. No matter who you are, you have rights and those rights are and must be the same for everyone.

- *Rights exist just because you are people [a person], it doesn't matter who you sleep with and who you get up with.*
- *These people have it [RIGHTS – referring to LGBTI+] too. Exactly the same as everyone else because these are people like you, me, like anyone.*

Every man in the focus groups feels their rights are also protected, while most women feel they still must fight a patriarchal system to realize their guaranteed rights.

- *I agree with what [identity protected] says in terms of, we have to fight for our rights because we don't really have them and just because we're born, we deserve to have equal rights, but we live in a world that's racist, you know, male chauvinist, classist.*
- *Eventually we'll get to where men are*
- *We've gone a long way. We've come a long way and I think we can now talk; we can raise our voice before anybody could do anything they wanted on the street. They could say anything to you and you had to shut up because it was okay. I mean you were supposed to be ashamed, not the aggressor, but actually the victim. And now you can freely say that you have been abused or this or that in general just talking in general.*

While both men and women believe fundamental rights are guaranteed for all in Spain, they also recognize that for other groups of people having a right does not mean you have access to it. They understand that in society minority groups confront many societal and, in some cases, legal barriers to accessing or asserting their basic rights. Conditions are much better than they used to be for marginalized groups, but for many minorities in society,² rights are in “name only” -- a chimera that groups must contest to realize.

Thus, while “all groups have the same rights” and are “equally protected” in Spain, not all are “fully accepted” as an equal member of society. This gap between guaranteed rights and social acceptance of minority groups leads to othering discrimination and aggression against them.

- *Sometimes they have more difficulty accessing their rights*

² When asked to name minorities in Spain, our audience listed a long list of groups including immigrants, disabled, elderly, young, minorities in general, over-weight people, and children. LGBTI+ people were mentioned by a few men and women but this was not a top-of-mind answer.

- *Everyone has the same rights and everybody is the same for me. I don't think it's really differential factor. But society today uh, can lead to discrimination against the minorities for whatever reason. And of course, they should be protected against aggression.*
- *I honestly think that you've got to distinguish two things and to make sure we understand each other. First one thing is to have the same rights as everyone else, which I think they do. I mean, we're all people, men, women, we all have the same rights. I know the law doesn't differentiate me nor [my] sexual conditions. This is constitutional. [Second] But something else... [in the case of transgender and non-binary people] these rights are violated more often because... maybe a misunderstanding way of seeing certain people [a nice way to say othering and discriminatory practices].*

PERCEPTIONS **PROTECTING RIGHTS**

The Protection of Rights is the Key Message Frame: For our audience, minorities, including transgender and non-binary people, do not need more rights, they need more **protection** of the rights -- guaranteed to all Spaniards -- from discrimination, bullying, and other aggressions. Transgender and non-binary citizens are “a group(s) that still needs to be protected. They confront “situations others don’t.” They suffer “trauma” from bullying and aggressions against them.

The message frame for transgender and non-binary advocates is clear. To win progress, we must focus on the **protection** of fundamental rights from discrimination, bullying and aggressors. We must not focus on the assertion or establishment of rights. Whether they are correct or not, our audience believes transgender and non-binary citizens possess the same rights as everyone else in Spain. The problem is not **rights**. It is the **protection** of those rights from those who do not accept transgender and non-binary people. Every message should be framed with this in mind.

The risks of framing a debate in terms of **rights** is clear. Men, in particular, perceive a debate framed in terms of rights as a minority group, including transgender and non-binary people, attempting to secure “special treatment,” “preferential treatment,” and “more protection than anyone else.” They bristle at this and reject it, accusing the group in question as acting “holier than thou” and trying to acquire special privileges

- *Minimum equality [for all], no[t] more, not privilege [for some].*

The potential of framing the same debate in terms of **protecting rights** is also clear. The protection frame stimulates positive and powerful discussions, among men and women in our audience, of the rights transgender and non-binary people have trouble accessing and the barriers they face including discrimination, ID laws, bullying, and lawbreaking aggressions. Transgender and non-binary people can have a hard time “getting work” and “finding a place to live.” They confront ID card problems, discrimination, and bullying in society and, for minors, in school. Some people even refuse to call them by their chosen name – a disrespectful aggression our audience detested.

- *Somebody who's in transformation feels like a woman and yet on her I. D. Card it says male. So, she had to get dressed like a man traveling even though she feels like a woman she's in the transition. So that was to travel to Tenerife.*
- *I know cases like that of people [transgender people] who had to go to [job] interviews [And] you can see that that's not really finished process, and they didn't hire them because they didn't want to -- they didn't like it.*

While both men and women in our audience acknowledge these and other problems transgender and non-binary people confront, women, in particular, relate to it, making the need to protect rights an even more powerful frame.

- *We face this type of discrimination too*
- *I think that's the same risks that we all have because they don't like us because we're women or mothers*

Our audience believes in and, even more importantly, is emotionally invested in the fairy tale that everyone has the same rights. Trying to disabuse them of this belief will not advance the debate in Spain. Focusing, instead, on the **protection of the rights of all transgender and non-binary people in Spain unlocks the support of our key audience and enable advocates to add an incredibly powerful value to our side of the debate – **respect**.**

PERCEPTIONS **RESPECTING PEOPLE**

To our audience, respect is a fundamental Spanish value. If you respect others, you accept them and you stand for the equal protection of their rights.

- *Respect in general...I in general respect of everyone. It doesn't matter if they're non-binary, binary, whatever. Black, white, Chinese, I mean just general respect.*

Equal rights, protection of those rights and **respect** for all are inextricably linked to the men and women in our audience. Showing respect for others no matter who they are is a fundamental social good and is part of the fabric that holds society together and fosters solidarity.

Respect is the central value component of our message frame. It is a key attitudinal driver for our audience. Invoking it as part of our message can activate this audience and enlist them in our work of protecting rights. It defines what we seek – the protection of rights. And why we seek it – because respect is perceived as fundamental to social solidarity.

For example, while our audience detests and rejects the societal policing of pronouns and imposition of inclusive language, they think that calling someone by the person's chosen name (an individual choice) is an important and basic sign of respect. Calling a person by their chosen name shows respect, not doing so is disrespectful and aggressive.

- *So trans kids all they ask for is please teacher, you know, just this is my name, call me this my name. I think it's something so basic.*
- *Like it's so important for people to call [them] by their name. For those of us who don't know about this stuff, this helps you understand ...that is a big deal. It's not just learning to treat them well and all that being super experts in the whole thing and psychological evaluations or whatever. It's just calling the name. That's one of things we can all do. It's the first step. I mean I think it's part of the evolution and these are small steps that they will really appreciate.*

Calling transgender and non-binary people by their own name is something **we can all do**. It requires no special knowledge of or expertise in transgender and non-binary language. It is simply a sign of respect.

Examples of using someone's chosen name, when addressing them, is a central positive story to use repeatedly when advocating for the protection of transgender and non-binary rights because it readily activates a central value – respect -- held by our key audience.

Addressing people by their chosen name is a simple way not only to show respect for them, but also to support them. This support is important throughout society and, particularly for transgender minors and their parents, in schools.

- *That's why I think it's maybe sounds silly, it's the name here but for them it's not a silly thing. It's very important. Like there are teachers or adults who refuse or insist again and again to call them by their old name knowing that it hurts them. And for them it's an important thing before we used to see, you know grandma and grandma recognize that's great, she's an older person with different education. She recognizes that even though she was educated that way is marvelous.*

As we will discuss later, schools are seen as an important institution for educating people about sex and gender identity, normalizing differences, establishing and modeling respect for all types of people, promoting solidarity, and protecting and supporting minority groups – especially vulnerable transgender and non-binary people -- from bullying.

- *I think that schools have a responsibility because if there's a child, who is different, feels different, try to avoid – especially -- that child suffering. [Just] because others don't understand it and they treat him bad. It is support, social support [that is necessary in schools] to avoid bullying and especially [to show/establish] respect [for each child].*

PERCEPTIONS TESTED IMAGES & MEDIA

Tests: Symbols, images, and media were tested throughout the focus groups to understand what struck a responsive chord within the target audience, what did not, and whether messages could be tweaked to improve effectiveness. Some media worked extremely well. Other media missed the mark.

Communications Learning #1: As we have seen repeatedly in other media test conducted throughout Europe over the last three years, the issue advertising that connects with target audiences almost always includes people and their images, tells their story, is not highly produced, and is direct and to the point. Higher concept, advertising approaches -- polished or not, with illustrations or not, using gimmicks or not -- tend to be rejected or ignored. We should always develop and test different creative approaches. Some may pass the credibility test with target audiences and strike a responsive chord. That was not the case in this instance.

Trans Flag Button: Misses the mark.



Very few people in our prime focus group audience (one-to-two in each group) recognize this as the trans flag. Most say, I “didn’t even know there was a trans flag.” Many wonder, when told what the colors on the button represented, why a trans flag was necessary. Some simply do not like flags at all, seeing them as a symbol of in-group versus out-group exclusivity. (This attitude is, in all likelihood, particular to the non-authoritarian audience recruited for the focus groups.) Women in the groups disliked flag symbols more than men.

In either case, the meaning of the button’s colors is not widely recognized even within our target audience of likely supporters. The utility of using the trans flag or the button in communications should be assessed very carefully and is not recommended without a clear and attainable strategic goal in mind.

Grandmother: Favorite image and message among women but it must be contextualized to communicate in real world communications.



This image and its message are the communication preferred by women in our audience. They perceive it as “hopeful” and “tender.” One woman calls it “marvelous.”

- *Grandma recognizes [that her grandchild is trans] that's great, she's an older person with different education. She recognizes that even though she was educated that way is marvelous.*

There are several key attributes that are part of this message and can be replicated in others.

- First, this is a family member recognizing, celebrating, and respecting a close relatives trans identity.
 - Parents and grandparents may be the best campaign spokespeople after trans people themselves.
 - Showing trans people in a family context may be very powerful – with a parent or grandparent or in a family setting.
- Second, this is a senior citizen. The women and men in the focus group assumed an older person would have a harder time accepting a trans relative because of the environment they grew up in.
- Third, seniors and grandparents are perceived as role model and are readily respected by the members of our audience.

Necessary Improvement: In the focus group, because of all the prior discussion of LGBTI+ issues, this communication was recognized as a message about a trans person. In the real world, in most cases, it would not be. People would

miss the *historias_trans* identifier and the point of the communication. Even in the focus groups, with all the priming, some people missed this connection

➤ *No, it's ambiguous* [Without the conversation I would not have known it was about trans.]

Copy must be added to this type of image to make the point of the communication clear. Additionally, adding a trans person into the visual is a way to vary the story and tell it with a different visual vocabulary.

ALLY: Favorite image and message among men.



Men love this presentation. The news article format gives it credibility. They feel it presents objective information, not an ideological or political argument. And they are drawn to the “gracias” framing of the message. Saying thank you, to the men in our audience was something unexpected and appreciated greatly. It is a word and sentiment they rarely see communicated in the present culture war environment. And, because of that, it is an approach that is both surprising and engaging.

Only one woman (possibly two) choose this as her favorite communication. Some remarked that it was informational and not sensational, which they liked. Several, however, were skeptical of it, wondering if it was real news and fearing it was somehow fake or exaggerated.

When appropriate: a simple “thank you” message should be added to the respect and protecting rights frame in communications.

NICO: Has potential but needs adjustment.



This communication is a prime example of how easy it is for messages to be misinterpreted. A few women perceive this message as a sad story of a trans boy who was rejected by his mean family and whose teacher was the first person accepted him. While this was obviously not the story that is told, it is the story people heard.

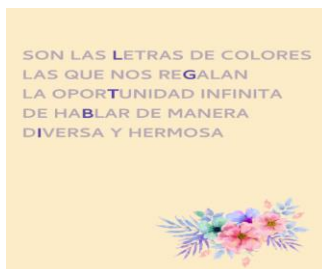
Nevertheless, one woman chose it as her favorite at the end of the message testing.

- Helps us learn...that calling someone by their name is a big deal...we can all do it...it's a small step in (our) evolution that they will really appreciate.

Most men said it was a story that was informative. And the communication fits well into the respect frame and thank you message.

Necessary Improvement: Rewrite the copy to include a family reference so that it is clear the teacher was the first person outside of Nico's family to call him by his chosen name. Making this one simple change make this a viable communication.

DIVERSITY POEM: Misses the mark. Irredeemable.



The visual style is the message as much as the words. And this style does not work. It is perceived as “artificial advertising” and will be ignored.

SLIDER TRIPTYCH: Misses the mark. Irredeemable.



While it is always worthwhile to test new and engaging creative. This creative misses the mark. Two women say “it makes you think.” But almost no one, in either focus group, would swipe to the second image. In the end the concept is “too much” and “too forced.”

SPOKESPERSON – TRANS GIRL VIDEO: Mixed Reviews



While the trans girl video is obviously packed with emotion and passion, it sparks varied reactions among our target audience and backfires with some. For some **women** the video elicits empathy and even joy. But other say:

- *It's pure marketing*
- *Manipulative*
- *I don't believe it. I don't believe this girl has suffered.*

Ironically, the eloquence and passion of the trans girl's presentation creates doubt and questions in the minds of some women. Her delivery is too polished, too perfect. They think it must be studied. It is marketing.

Thus, with some **women** this video works, with other it is suspect. A less polished presentation with the same amount of passion would probably improve this type of messaging with all women in our target audience.

Communications Learning #2 for the campaign is that highly-polished communications are more likely to be categorized as manipulative marketing and dismissed by our audience.

Some men say the video is a “brave testimonial” and “something that has to be respected,” while others wonder about the trans girl’s age and how she can really know who she is at such a young age. If it is true, and she is clear about her identity at such a young age, they conclude, she must be a “unique case.”

The men in our focus groups were not critical of this brave trans girl, in fact they said she deserved support and understanding. But some, thinking through their personal lens about how they came to understand their own sexuality, just didn’t believe she could really know who she was at such a young age. (Please note: the oldest man in our group (50+) admitted he was “flipped out” by the video. He is the last person quoted below.)

- *You're not mature enough to even know what you are.*
- *This girl boy, whatever needs to have all the support, help her to take him to take his decisions. But realizing they don't have normal maturity to take those decisions.*
- *Somebody wants to change sexes and they allow them to do this. I mean it's horrifying. I but I would listen to them support and let them mature but until you reach a certain age, you're not mature enough sufficiently to take a decision like that. That's why you're with your parents,*

For women, varying concerns about young trans people were also front and center after watching this video.

- *I think you've got to be there and help them out be with them so that they can really discover what they need to and go where they need to go*
- *Such an early age That girl looked like she was 8, 9 years old or 10. She's very little.*
- *So, I'm really worried about, you know, minor.*
- *Perhaps she really feels [that] but there are other conditioning factors like...[and] I think you have to be very careful and there should be very good professionals to support them and their parents too.*
- *Well, I think they're very clear ever since they're [she was] very little. So that's why there's psychologists and experts. And then I think also it's very important the mother, the father, the family [support her].*

Communications Learning #3 for the campaign is that in video and other formats, testimonials from trans people who are 16 years of age and older are more likely to avoid these deeply rooted concerns. On the other hand, when talking about bullying and education, younger trans people are obvious and powerful spokespeople. Thus, choose spokespeople consciously, based on strategy and messaging goals.

TACTICAL – Ally & Thank You Buttons



The “gracias” message was preferred over “aliado.” Aliado evokes negative feelings including “sounds like war,” labeling like “I’m on a team,” “tougher” than gracias, “activist,” and “even hypocritical.”

Even though gracias was preferred, there was confusion about what the button actually meant, and who would wear such a button.

- ✓ Without the priming of the focus groups, people wouldn’t have recognized the trans context in which the word appeared.
- ✓ Most people in both groups didn’t know who would wear a button like this. They assumed it was a trans person not someone who supported trans people.

Clarifying who would wear such a button (by showing focus group members the image of Nico and saying Nico would give the button to his teacher), unfortunately did little to clear up the confusion around the button.

At a minimum, the text on the gracias button needs to be cleared up to make it more understandable, but the campaign should carefully reconsider this tactical approach. Visibility is key, but not all visibility is positive.

PERCEPTIONS **TRANS LAW**

Reactions: Trans Law -- Introductory Paragraph:³ The introductory paragraph describing the Trans Law, which was read to our audience, is confusing and triggers a discussion of rights.

- [I] *don't understand.*
- [I] *don't get it.*
- *What are they talking about?*
- *What is the law trying to achieve?*
- *We can't really support these things without knowing what it's about*

The rights discussion that the paragraph activates demonstrates the danger of framing the Trans Law and discussions of trans gender and non-binary issues in terms of rights. Our audience wonders: What new rights will trans people get? The ensuing speculation ranges from sarcastic (free metro?, free cinema tickets?) to sincere (bathrooms for them?). And then, certain that everyone in Spain is guaranteed the same rights, they raise their central question:

- *What are the rights that trans people don't have?*

Based on the information in the introductory paragraph, only one woman in our target audience supports the Trans Law. Her reason for doing so, is telling. Transgender people are:

- *A group that is discriminated against.*

All Trans Law messaging must avoid the rights frame and focus on protecting rights, fostering respect, and countering discrimination.

The need for protecting transgender people is not questioned by our audience. In fact, when asked for examples of protections that are needed, both men and women produce lengthy lists that include:

- ✓ Enforcement of existing laws
- ✓ Protection of personal data
- ✓ Changing IDs to match chosen gender
- ✓ No discrimination in police force or army
- ✓ Psychological aid
- ✓ Education, support, and protections in schools

³ Paragraph on Trans Law read to audience: “Congress is discussing a national law – the Trans Law – that is intended to support and protect transgender people in Spain. This law may include some new rights and public services for trans that go beyond existing laws in many Spanish regions and would have to be provided for by regional and local governments.”

Importantly, while our audience thinks rights and the protection of rights “should be the same everywhere” and “should not vary from community to community” in Spain, they do not automatically think that rights are unevenly accessible for transgender people based on where they live.

When prompted about variations in the accessibility of rights place by place in Spain, they acknowledge there are probably differences because of cultural norms and geography.

The recognized difference in the accessibility of rights by geography and because of cultural norms is an important message for transgender advocates. While everyone has equal rights in Spain, not everyone enjoys those rights equally. Spain must work to protect the rights of transgender people across Spanish regions and throughout cultures.

Reactions: Trans Law – Competing Statements:⁴ Most of the women and men in our audience favor setting a national educational standard across Spain for the teaching of diversity and inclusion that includes information about transgender people. (One man even took it to another level arguing to delete *the word transgender* [in the paragraph because] *if you [really] want diversity, then all groups should be included.*) They want this information to be “neutral,” “basic” and “objective.” And they agreed every school should be required to teach this curriculum and every child should be required to learn it.

The few in our audience who choose the second paragraph did not like the imposition of a national standard. Some said the application of the law should be decided locally.

⁴ The following two statements were shown (and read) to the audience. The audience was then asked which paragraph they favored.

#1. Some people say it's about providing young people across Spanish society with the same base of information about diversity and inclusion. They say... The Trans Law sets a national educational standard across Spain for the teaching of diversity and inclusion in society that includes information about transgender people. Every school is required to include this information in their curriculum and every child is required to learn about it. That is a good thing that creates greater solidarity across Spanish society.

#2. Other people say that setting a national standard across Spain for the teaching of diversity and inclusion in society is fine BUT that regions and schools in Spain must be allowed to determine whether or not they will follow the standard and, if they do, how they will apply it.

Reactions: Trans Law – Vox Argument:⁵ Some in our audience disagree strongly with VOX statement (see footnote). They trust “impartial” public education and professionals to implement the teaching of diversity and inclusion appropriately.

They bristle at and object to what they call “a la carte education” advocated by VOX, where parents can pick and choose which parts of a curriculum their children are taught. To these supporters, those who strongly oppose the VOX argument, there are some aspects of the educational curriculum – including sex education with LGBTI+ information, diversity and inclusion, and respect for others – that all of Spain’s children need to learn. This is basic information whose common knowledge will foster solidarity in society.

Those in our audience who are somewhat supportive of the VOX argument say that while children should learn this information, parents should be able to decide when they are taught it. And one offers a vivid concern, which appears to be top of mind though probably apocryphal, to explain why:

➤ *Teach[ing] masturbation to six year olds in school...that’s too early.*

Others simply acknowledge that, irrespective of a national standard, communities “will do whatever they want.” And they are certain that any standard will provoke controversy and conflict – a new part of the ongoing public culture war they are tired of.

Communication Learning #4: Two important language pointers emerged from the discussion of the Trans Law:

Refer to any proposed national standard as a “minimum national standard.” The addition of “minimum” makes the national standard seem more necessary and obvious, and less onerous.

Dismiss VOX’s argument for parental choice as “a la carte” education.

⁵ The following sentences were read to the audience after the competing statements: *Some politicians – especially members of VOX – have a different opinion. They say: even if there is a national standard for the teaching of diversity and inclusion that requires all children to learn about it, parents should be able to request that their children opt out and not participate in the curriculum.*

PERCEPTIONS THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS & THE PROBLEMS OF AGE

Role of Education: Our audience thinks it is the role of education to teach, and thereby establish, a common set of knowledge among young people in Spain. This common set of knowledge promotes solidarity in Spanish society.

Sex education, including information about LGBTI+, should be “part of the education of every child.” Moreover, all members of our audience agree that information about the trans community should be provided to minors in schools.

- *So, I think we have a lot to learn and these things [LGBTI+ information] I believe need a long time [to be discussed properly]. And we need to start very, very early, very young age in education.* Teacher in our audience.
- *[We need to] use the right language [as well as starting early so] it's not a taboo.*

Visibility and Normalization: Providing children with sex education that includes LGBTI+ information, gives visibility to the community, normalizes it, promotes inclusion and teaches children to respect diversity.

- *I think it has to do with education. It's education*
- *I think it's normal that there is a greater sensitivity and more information about these things because it's necessary to educate,*
- *But I think it's necessary to give them visibility or information and educate in a more rational way.*
- *And this should be talked about in school, schools have a responsibility here.*

Respect and Equality: The teaching of respect for others and the equality of all are core values that our audience wants Spain's children to learn in school and at home. Part of this teaching must include calling children by the name they choose.

- *[Calling someone by the name they want] is so basic.*

Prevention of Bullying: Teaching respect for others and equality of all from an early age on will help protect children who feel, or are, different from bullying in school.

Problem of When/At What Age? While our audience supports education about diversity and inclusion, equality, and respect as early as possible, they worry about the content of sex education with younger children.

- *Sex education [is OK], but not [teaching about] condoms to five-year olds.*

Training Teachers: They recognize that “educational content’ about sex and LGBTI+” will be controversial” no matter when and how it is taught. Once way to address this controversy is to provide teachers with the knowledge they need to deal with these issues and support all children.

- *We've got to learn and be updated if we work with minors to give them the best attention we can.*
[Teacher in our audience.]

Schools and teachers play a key role in teaching about diversity, promoting respect and inclusion, supporting children, modeling behavior and protecting minorities – including LGBTI+ minors -- from bullying.

Role of Home: And as several men noted in our groups, “education isn’t just in schools, education is also when you take your child home and they see what you do.” That is the role of the parent and family, but it does not replace the societal role of schools.

