"Pre-topsurgery, the body scanning machine would most likely error:" Transgender and gender nonconforming travel and tourism experiences

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing a qualitative, grounded theory approach, we examined the travel experiences of transgender and gender non-confirming tourists, an under-researched segment of the tourist population. We report findings based on 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which were analyzed for emergent themes. We found that traveling as a transgender and gender non-confirming individual can be complex with at least some or many additional considerations, behavioral changes, and emotional labor related to their gender identity and gender expression when moving into different spaces or situations. Transgender and gender non-confirming tourists often have feelings of fear and anxiety related to sharing and avoiding sharing their gender identity when going through tourist processes related to identification documents, security thresholds, and check-in procedures. However, participants also reported having positive experiences while traveling. Based on these findings, a substantive theory of transgender and gender non-confirming tourist experiences was developed.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the transgender and gender non-confirming (TGNC) community has become more visible in the United States due to increased activism, political debates, media attention, and advocacy from TGNC celebrities, such as Caitlyn Jenner and Leverne Cox (Truit, 2016). An estimated less than 1% of the U.S. population identifies as transgender, accounting for about 1 million adults (Meerwijk & Sevelius, 2017), while a recent study by UCLA Law reported that 27% of youth in California identify as gender non-conforming (Lawson, 2017). Other evidence that suggests a growing acknowledgement of the TGNC community includes new non-binary options on identification documents in the U.S. states including Oregon, California, Washington, and Washington D.C. (Sanders, 2018). In this research, we use the phrase transgender and gender nonconforming from the American Psychological Association (2015a) meaning "those who have a gender identity that is not fully aligned with their sex assigned at birth" (p. 832), yet we recognize there are many other terms or phrases used within the community such as trans* or the transgender spectrum (Tate, Youssef, & Bettergarcia, 2014). We also use the term cisgender, which refers to "having or relating to a gender identity that corresponds to the culturally determined gender roles for one's birth" (American

Psychological Association, 2015a).

The current LGBTQ tourism industry is estimated to be over $200 billion a year (Out Now, 2015). According to non-peer reviewed marketing surveys and popular press, TGNC tourists face unique travel challenges as compared to cisgender tourists, such as navigating airport security and accessibility to single-stall restrooms (Greater Fort Lauderdale & Community Marketing Inc., 2014; Mohn, 2017). Although lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ[1]) tourism has recently received increased attention by academic scholars (e.g., Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Melián-González, Moreno-Gil, & Araña, 2011), much of this work has focused on the demographics and motivational factors of wealthier, middle-class white gay men without children living in urban Western societies (e.g., Clift & Forrest, 1999; Hughes, 2003; Visser, 2003). Most of these academic studies have lacked a holistic view of the LGBTQ community and assumed the market was homogenous (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016), leaving a void in the literature, in particular for TGNC tourist experiences.

This void can possibly be attributed to the notion that research on the LGBTQ community "can be most vexing, quite dynamic, and assuredly contextual. Seemingly innocuous words are oftentimes fraught with implicit and unexamined heterosexist and homophobic notions or may be perceived by an LGBT individual as offensive," making this type

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of research entangled with numerous methodical and ethical challenges in particular for inclusion criteria and the related language (Bettinger, 2010, p. 45). Additionally, access to and recruitment of LGBTQ participants can be difficult (Guillory et al., 2018). In one of the largest national studies in the United States in 2011 with 6450 transgender and gender non-conforming participants, the authors reported that much of the sample "lived in extreme poverty" and were "four times more likely to have a household income of less than $10,000/year compared to the general population" (Grant et al., 2011, p. 2), which of course does not leave much room for discretionary income for travel purposes.

Despite such research challenges and the TGNC community's statistics on household income, a few tourism organizations have proactively reached out to TGNC tourists in recent years. For example, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Destination Marketing Organization provides a website devoted to transgender tourists (https://www.sunny.org/lgbt/transgender/) and includes updated information and resources such as organizations and medical resources that are relevant to their needs and interests.

The aim of our research was to obtain an in-depth understanding of TGNC tourists' experiences while traveling. Since many hospitality and tourism organizations attempt to embody an open, welcoming, and accepting environment for guests and employees and then showcase this to the outside public, we hope our findings would be of great interest to them to provide optimal hospitality experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. LGBTQ tourism

LGBTQ tourism has been shown to be a catalyst for economic development and social benefits for tourism destinations (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2017). As early as the late 1980s, several popular press media outlets labeled the LGBTQ community as a "dream" market due to the potential for higher incomes (e.g., Rigdon, 1991), and the acronym DINK (dual-income, no kids) has often been used to describe LGBTQ tourist couples. Despite these reports, a recent study by the Williams Institute showed that the LGBTQ community face heightened burdens relating to economic conditions as LGBTQ Americans are less likely to be financially thriving than heterosexual Americans (Gates, 2014). In particular, as previously stated, TGNC individuals are likely to be living in extreme poverty (Grant et al., 2011).

Tourists make safety and assessments about a destination before and during traveling (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). Risk and safety assessment of a destination is critical for the LGBTQ tourist, yet little known research exists in this area. In 2018, it is still illegal to identify as LGBTQ in 72 countries, and in 8 countries homosexuality can result in death (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 2017). Yet, within the U.S., there are changing cultural attitudes where 64% of Americans believe that people should be accepting of LGBTQ individuals, which leaves a large percentage who still feel otherwise (Brown, 2017). Despite these legislations and attitudes towards the LGBTQ community, LGBTQ tourists engage in travel behaviors. Researchers from the 1990s and 2000s have examined the motivational factors of gay tourists and found that gay men travel with an intention to express their sexuality, meet other gay men, validate one's sexual orientation, explore sexual opportunities, and be in a safe space (Clift & Forrest, 1999; Melián-González et al., 2011; Waitt & Markwell, 2006). For queer tourists, traveling to new destinations is an opportunity to be one's self and explore one's sexual identity. Other researchers found the importance of gay spaces such as bars, restaurants, and neighborhoods in the cultivation of LGBTQ identity, community support, and destination branding (Boyd, 2011; Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Hughes, 2003).

2.2. Mistreatment and discrimination of the TGNC community

TGNC individuals often experience discrimination in employment, health care, and numerous other societal avenues (Bockting, Knudson, & Goldberg, 2006; Coleman et al., 2012; Grant et al., 2011). Homicide rates of transgender people tend to be less than cisgender individuals, however young transfeminne Blacks and Latinas are killed at a higher rate due to the intersections of racial hierarchies and discrimination (Dinno, 2017). In health care, transgender persons rate their general health as fair or poor relative to cisgender adults; transgender individuals are more disadvantaged than cisgender individuals with respect to health care access and use and experience a lack of health care coverage, health care providers, and dental coverage (Meyer, Brown, Herman, Reisner, & Bockting, 2017). Furthermore, economic challenges are often experienced by the TGNC community as 15% of transgender people are unemployed (about three times more than cisgender) and 29% of transgender persons live in poverty as compared to 14% of the U.S. population (James et al., 2016). Thirty-nine percent have experienced serious psychological distress as compared to 5% of U.S. population, and 40% have attempted suicide as compared to 4.6% of the general U.S. population (James et al., 2016). All of these studies highlight that TGNC individuals experience on average more discrimination and distress as compared to cisgender individuals.

A few scholars in hospitality and leisure have examined TGNC individuals and reported mostly negative experiences. For example, Elling-Machartzki (2017) found transgender people in the Netherlands often felt unsafe in environments with mainstream sports and physical activities and venues, such as when visiting swimming pools. Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) examined transgender adults' experiences in public recreation, and found TGNC people often manage their risks, negotiate privilege, and embody their gender while utilizing public recreation. While participants explained they felt safe in some public parks, they also described struggles related to maintaining that safety. To manage their safety, they were hyper vigilant, continually worked to "pass" as a binary gender, and avoided "certain spaces and activities" (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017, p. 113). Their participants were often met with spaces that assumed cisnormativity, yet these leisure activities allowed them to negotiate and fully embody aspects of their gender identity, contributing to an experience that was somewhat positive. Negative travel experience is not limited to TGNC individuals as people of color, a community of people who have historically and today also experience oppression, often face discrimination while traveling (Lee & Scott, 2017).

3. Methods

Tourism is a unique phenomenon of movement of people to a new place. Obstacles may be faced that cisgender tourists do not face or experience while traveling, and unearthing these experiences of the TGNC community is the goal of our study. Due to the lack of research on TGNC individual's experiences while traveling, we used a grounded theory, qualitative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). After approval of all procedures from the Institutional Review Board at our university, we conducted 15 one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews that took place either in person (n = 1), over the phone (n = 6), or video chat (n = 8), depending upon the participant's preference, availability, or location. The in-person interview took place in the second author's single-occupancy work office, which has a great deal of privacy.

A combination of interpretative and critical social science approaches informed our philosophy towards this research (Neuman, 2011). In this philosophy, we assume meaning is constructed "in ongoing processes of communication and negotiation" through human interactions that are culturally constructed (Neuman, 2011, p. 102). We use this approach to "discover what actions mean to the people who engage in them" (p. 103). Our philosophy towards research is best summed that we want to "acquire an in-depth understanding of other

people, appreciate the wide diversity of lived human experience, and better acknowledge shared humanity" (pp. 106–107). Our research philosophy moves beyond interpretative to critical in that we were not simply aiming to study the lived experiences of TGNC individuals, but to "change it" (p. 109). We seek to "transform social relations by revealing the underlying sources of social control, power relations, and inequality." (p. 109).

3.1. Sample, participant recruitment, and consent

We used purposive sampling and concluded data collection once saturation was reached or no new insights or themes emerged, which is an "equally viable" approach as opposed to trying to reach a specific number of participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 189). Our number of participants also reflects other recently published studies using a similar qualitative approach, with the number of participants ranging from 11 to 15 (Tsaur & Lin, 2014; Wong & Lee, 2011; Zavattaro, Darpit, & Adams, 2015). To recruit participants, we created a flyer that was shared on social media and contacted LGBTQ organizations and asked them to share the flyer as well. After each interview, we asked participants if they knew anyone who might be interested, which led to several inquiries.

To be eligible for the study, participants had to be 18 years of age or older, currently live in the United States, identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, agender, or another non-binary gender identity, and lastly have traveled 50 or more miles away from home and spent the night for business or personal reasons at least one time in the last year. There are a diverse range of experiences of individuals who do not completely or even partly identify with the sex or gender assigned to them at birth (American Psychological Association, 2015b; Stryker, 2006), and the language surrounding these experiences is continually shifting and evolving (Coleman et al., 2012). Due to the exploratory nature of the study and the sometimes fluidity and complexity of identity, particularly for TGNC individuals (American Psychological Association, 2015b), we did not limit our sample to one particular identity within the umbrella of TGNC identities. Additionally, we did not limit our criteria to only include specific types of travel such as for personal or leisure reasons, or by a specific mode of transportation. We left the inclusion criteria purposefully open in these two areas to be able to explore multiple possibilities and experiences in an area with little known published research.

Interested participants emailed the researchers after seeing the flyer. After this initial email, the researchers sent the potential participant the informed consent form and asked them to confirm eligibility for the study. Once they agreed they were interested and confirmed they were eligible, we set up the interview time. Before the interview began, the researchers reviewed the consent form to ensure the participant understood the purpose and procedures of the study. After the participant provided verbal consent to be a participant, and they agreed to be audio-recorded, the researcher began recording and asking questions. Participants had the option to opt out of being audio recorded, but all of them agreed without hesitation. Participants were compensated 10$ cash, and payments were sent after completion of the initial in-depth interview.

3.2. Data collection

The interviews lasted between 29 and 90 min with an average of 56 min. On average, the phone interviews were shorter than the in-person or video chat interviews as it seemed much easier to gain rapport with someone when you could physically see the person. In all instances, we respected the request of the participant in how they wanted or felt most comfortable doing the interview. The interviews took place between March and June of 2018 and were conducted by the authors of the study. Both authors listened to the audio and read the transcript for each interview so they could engage in discussions

regarding further data collection and analysis. Interviews were conducted in English, and all participants and researchers were fluent in English.

The interviews were guided by an interview schedule, which contained 36 questions. It began with four demographic questions, followed by 10 questions related to gender identity and sexuality, seven related to appearance, and lastly, 15 specific to traveling and traveling experiences. For travel-related questions, we first asked general questions about traveling such as how much and where they have traveled in addition to their overall impression of their experiences. Then, we asked more specific questions about their experiences prior to travel, during travel, and then post travel. We asked appearance-related questions to get a sense of their appearance as related to being transgender, specifically, if their appearance was consistent on a day-to-day, if they were "passing" as a gender, what they generally looked like and how they felt about or experienced their appearance. We thought these types of questions might provide context to our analysis of their experiences traveling. We carefully analyzed whether any questions were leading. For example, we asked "What has been your experience with identification documents while traveling?" We did not ask "Have you had negative experiences with identification documents while traveling?" as this question may lead them to only think of negative experiences. After all of the questions had been answered, we followed up each interview with the open-ended question, "Is there anything else I should know about your experiences related to being a transgender or gender non-conforming person and traveling that we have not covered yet?" This question allowed for the participant to reflect on the interview, and bring up topics that were not included in the original interview schedule. We allowed flexibility during the interviews in that if they brought up an unrelated topic, we allowed them to discuss, yet brought them back on track if they were too far off topic. Due to the richness of the data, for this manuscript we only present findings that emerged from questions and answers related to experiences during travel.

3.3. Trustworthiness and credibility

To increase the "trustworthiness, authenticity, and creditability" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201) in this qualitative research, we employed several techniques. As much as possible, we worked to gain trust of the participant before the interview. We explained who we were as researchers, and then engaged in small talk by asking them about their day or how their week was going. We also confirmed that they could ask any questions before, during, or after the interview if they had any. We provide a "rich, thick description" when reporting the results (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). To obtain a rich description, we asked numerous probe questions during the interviews if the participant provided a short response. For example, we frequently asked "why," "can you tell me more," or "can you give me an example" so that way we could have a more in-depth understanding of their experience. We had prepared a list of probes to reference while conducting the interviews that we frequently used. We also waited for up to 10 s after the participant finished each response. In some instances, this pause or silence allowed them to think through the question and add more detail. For the in-person interview or the interviews over video chat, we were better able to assess their body language and facial expressions to gauge whether or not they had more to say after each question. Pausing after each response for the phone interviews was particularly important as we were not able to gauge their body language or facial expressions. After listening through all of the interviews a second time, it was evident that the participants had expressed a great deal of trust in the researchers, for example, P3 became so open during the interview, that she had a few tears at the end as she was reflecting on the interview and her journey of identity development as a transgender woman.

We also worked to bracket our own biases throughout the data collection and analysis process (Fischer, 2009). After each interview,

we engaged in reflexive writing about the participant's experiences and any assumptions we may have made or developed based upon previous interviewee's responses or our own experiences. Bracketing was an on-going process throughout data collection, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. We engaged in a type of member checking during the interview, where we frequently summarized the participant's responses and asked them to confirm if our summary was correct to ensure we understood the accuracy of what they were saying. We also asked them to clarify if their answer was somewhat unclear or vague. Lastly, in the results, we present the "negative or discrepant information" for the themes by presenting "information that contradicts the general perspective of the theme" for a "more accurate or valid" account (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and listened to a second time through, to double check for accuracy. Each participant was assigned a number, and any identifying information was removed at this time. We also made interpretation notes directly in the transcript when the language used may be difficult to interpret based solely upon the words. For example, someone may answer a question with, "Yea, no, uh-huh." In this sense, we interpreted whether they agreed or disagreed with what was being said based upon how it was expressed in the audio.

We used the same interview schedule to guide the interviews for all participants. Additionally, we developed and used a codebook, which is described in more detail under data analysis, and we also checked intercoder reliability, which again is described below.

3.4. Data analysis

Data analysis began after the first interview was completed. We began by writing memos or short notes about the data and continued this process throughout data collection. These memos served as the basis for some of the codes and categories developed during the coding process, which followed the constant comparative method using open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). NVIVO, the qualitative data analysis software, was used to analyze the data. After each interview was completed, it was transcribed within a week, and then uploaded into NVIVO for analysis. During open coding, we assigned codes to different chunks (words, phrases, or passages) of the data. At this point, a codebook was developed where each code and category was defined. After our first rounds of open coding, we began with about 175 codes. We read through the entirety of each transcript developing new codes, and continued this process several times for each transcript. Next, we began linking the codes to create higher-order categories in the step called axial coding. This initial phase resulted in about 25 categories. We continually engaged in the constant comparative process looking for new codes or categories, collapsing or un-collapsing codes, all while writing memos for potential linkages to larger themes and re-defining definitions in the codebook. When we were at about half way through data collection, we realized we needed to engage in theoretical sampling, and re-focus some of the probes in the interview schedule to be able to "gain specific information regarding an emerging concept" (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007, p. 1139). Some codes and categories that needed to be focused on or asked more deeply about included restroom experiences, passing or not during travel experiences, and the connection between space and avoidance behaviors.

After several rounds of open and axial coding and refining of the codebook, we checked intercoder reliability, by reviewing the codebook together, independently analyzing 20% of the data, and then comparing our results. We divided the total number of code agreements by total number of codes, resulting in 94.6% agreement, which is an acceptable agreement (Creswell, 2014). We negotiated all disagreements, re-worked the codebook, and then finished the remaining data analysis. The final stage of analysis, selective coding, is where larger themes were created based upon collapsing the categories. The themes, or core categories, "represents the central phenomenon of the study" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 14). The categories and subcategories of

each theme were examined for "conceptual density" to determine whether or not they "have explanatory power" (p. 14). If any of the themes, categories, or subcategories lacked explanatory power, we turned back to the data for further analysis and revisited the open, axial, and selective coding processes. The authors continually discussed the findings throughout the entire data collection and analysis processes. While the data analysis is described in a somewhat linear process, we continually moved between and revisited the data, codes, categories, and themes in a cyclical process. The audio files were also re-listened to during data analysis, to gauge tone and meaning in what the participants were saying. Re-listening is often times essential to understanding how much emphasis participants felt or not towards one code, category, or theme. Overall, data analysis can best be described as an iterative process, with numerous curves and twists. In the final stages of data analysis, we developed a "substantive theory" that was "derived from the data" and "not necessarily applicable to other substantive areas" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 41). We also interpreted the data in regards to relevant literature and related them to managerial implications for the tourism industry.

3.5. Research team

The research team consists of two scholars who are both familiar with the LGBTQ community. The first author is a white person who identifies as male and was assigned male at birth. He identifies as the gender he was assigned at birth and has never swayed from this identity. The second author is also white, identifies as a woman, and was assigned female at birth. She readily identifies as the gender she was assigned at birth and has never felt otherwise. She is a member of the LGBTQ community in that she identifies as bi-sexual or queer, and readily shares her identity with others in so much that she describes her identities on her professional scholarship website. While she identifies within the LGBTQ community, she is not fully immersed in the local LGBTQ culture or community. This balance in identity and only slight engagement with the local LGBTQ community helped create balance and distance to the participants and topic of study. Her connection to some members of the LGBTQ community provided some access to participants during recruitment as her network was able to share the flyer with possible participants, although it is unknown if this lead to successful recruitments due to the anonymous nature of data collection and participant recruitment. Both authors have been researching other aspects of the LGBTQ community for the past 8 years.

Some participants asked about our gender identities during or after the interviews. We readily shared our identities with the participants, and it seemed to give them ease that the second author related that she identified within the community. Two of the participants were extremely interested in our relationship to the research and if we were transgender, as they felt often times studies on transgender people treated them as "lab rats." Yet, after relating this type of comment, one participant explained that it seemed as though we had done our background research on the TGNC community and that our questions were quite respectful, in particular for how we asked questions about identity.

4. Findings

4.1. Participants

Participant's ages ranged from 21 to 60 with an average age of 35. Tables 1 and 2 outline demographic and identity information. In Table 2, we included their quotes outlining how they describe their gender and sexual identity. We asked participants first what their assigned sex at birth was, followed by their current gender identity, which term best describes their TGNC experience, which pronouns they use or want others to use to address them, and then lastly what their sexual identity or sexual orientation is. These questions provided a thorough

Table 1
Participant demographic summary.

Participant #	Age	Race	Permanent location
P1	23	White	Urban, Missouri
P2	21	Black	Urban cluster, Iowa
P3	60	Cajun, White, Caucasian	Urban cluster, Louisiana
P4	26	White	Urban, Arizona
P5	37	White	Urban, Illinois
P6	24	White	Urban, Maryland
P7	50	White	Urban cluster, Colorado
P8	29	Multi-ethnic	Urban, California
P9	33	White	Urban cluster, Massachusetts
P10	49	Caucasian	Urban, New York
P11	43	Caucasian	Urban, Illinois
P12	48	Caucasian	Rural, Ohio; travels 300 days/year as trucker in US
P13	28	White	Urban cluster, Massachusetts
P14	31	African American	Urban, Virginia
P15	24	Racially ambiguous	Urban, Arkansas

insight into their identity experiences as a TGNC person. Since gender and sexual identity for TGNC individuals are complex and continually evolving (Coleman et al., 2012; Stryker, 2006), we included their exact phrasing to highlight these nuances. We found based upon our interviews, that there are many ways to experience identity as a TGNC person. If we refer to a participant's identity with the findings, we utilize their exact phrase. Table 2 also highlights that sometimes the language used to describe gender and sexual identity does not quite match with how they feel internally, or that they prefer to reject certain terms, despite its use by others who may have a similar TGNC experience. We feel it is important to highlight that while the participants expressed interest in using a particular set of pronouns, not everyone surrounding them addressed them in this way, and that sometimes it was not intentional by others, but in many instances, unsupportive family members or friends would not use their newly adopted pronouns.

Despite the differences in TGNC experiences, all of the participants (N = 15) explained that they currently felt internal consistency in who they were as a person in relation to their gender identity, meaning that they have "come out" to themselves and accepted or are working towards acceptance of themselves as outside the sex or gender they were assigned at birth. For example, P13 said, "I think it stays pretty consistent. Maybe there's some fluidity in sort of the language I use to describe it, but my internal sense stays pretty consistent." Participant 3 also related that while there might be fluidity in their physical presentation at times, she explained that internally, "It's pretty solid, pretty solid. It's taken me 20 years to get to this point. I've been thinking about it awhile." This internal consistency could be explained by the idea that most participants had stated they began their transition, transition

processes, or internal negotiation of their gender identity as a TGNC person between two and 30 years ago. There are certainly different stages that each individual was in and aspired to work towards in relation to their gender expression in the sense that some participants took hormones (n = 9), some had different gender reassignment surgeries referred to as top, bottom, or vocal surgery (n = 6), while others mentioned that they desired to physically change their bodies through these surgeries, but have not yet been able to do so (n = 3). All of the participants (N = 15) explained that in their transition or identity negotiation process, they used clothing, accessories, or beauty and grooming practices as a way to signal to others and to feel that their internal sense of their gender identity could then match their outward expression. Like all identities and subject positions, these internal understandings and outward expressions of the self are not static and are said to be constantly evolving (Kaiser, 2012). This is reflected when P9 (Trans non-binary) stated a connection to feeling like they knew what their identity was, yet were open to it changing in the future:

> It's not because I don't feel like this isn't me, it's because it feels really crushing when somebody sees me not as how I think that I'm presenting. I still will get [labeled as] "she, her, miss." I've come to realize that if I'm trans non-binary the world will never just see me for what my gender actually is because, we're so binary. I'm either going to be perceived as female or I'm going to be perceived as male and being perceived as female, I get filled with so much shame and embarrassment, and being perceived as male, I'm like "yes!" Like I'm pulling one over. I'm passing. And that's also something that I'm working out where I was like, OK, well if it feels good to be the gender male or as a man, is that just what I am saying? Is that how I want to identify? And like I'm leaving that option open, I'm leaving the possibility of that one day becoming a truth for me when I feel like I passed. I think I am definitely feeling like I'm reaching my final form in some ways.

When we asked the participants if they felt their clothing style and appearance stayed consistent on a day-to-day basis, almost all (n = 13) related that yes, they mostly had the same style everyday, in that it might be more masculine or more feminine. For the individuals assigned female at birth (n = 6) and who had varying identities of being transgender, they all gravitated towards a more masculine style, or at least they explained they most often shopped in the men's side of the store. While the individuals who were assigned male at birth (n = 7), and who had varying identities of being transgender, described themselves as wearing feminine or female styles. P2 was assigned female at birth, but identified as "gender fluid" in that they were not interested in transitioning to be male, or appear more male. Their gender experience was much more fluid, which can be explained by their description of pronoun usage: "I also use she/her/hers and they/them/their, and he/

Table 2
Participant sex, gender, and sexuality summary.

Participant #	Assigned sex at birth	Current gender identity	TGNC experience	Pronouns	Sexual identity
1	Female	Male	Transgender	He/him	Bi-sexual
2	Female	Gender fluid	Gender fluid	They/them	Pansexual, polyamorous, queer
3	Male	Female	Transgender	In-between, female	80 percent female. Twenty percent male.
4	Female	Non-binary transmasculine	Transgender, somewhere in the middle	They/them	Queer
5	Male	Genderqueer trans woman	Transgender	She/her	Queer
6	Female	Non-binary transgender male	Transgender	He/him	Queer or pansexual
7	Male	Female	Transfemale	She/her	Fluid, queer
8	Male	Female	Transgender, rejects labels	She/her	Pansexual
9	Female	Trans non-binary	Trans-masculine Trans non-binary	They/them	Queer
10	Male	Female	Transgender	She/her	Bi-sexual, lesbian
11	Male	Female	Transgender	She/her	Lesbian
12	Male	Female	Transgender	She/her	Straight
13	Female	Non-binary trans guy	Transgender	They/them	Queer
14	Female	Male	Transgender	He/him	Heterosexual
15	Female	Non-binary	Transgender, gender non-conforming	They/them	Queer

him/his." For this participant, they explained they had more of an androgynous feminine style, yet they internally understood themselves as gender fluid. P15 was similar in that they identified as non-binary, and described that there was much fluidity in how they appeared, and that it was not consistently masculine or feminine. They explained:

> I don't fall on the scale [binary gender scale] at all. The scale just isn't me. I'm just not on it, I'm like somewhere to the left of the scale. The scale is two-dimensional and I feel like my gender is like three or four dimensional so I just don't relate to it. I feel like I'm in another galaxy.

4.2. Thematic overview

Based upon analysis of our findings, several themes emerged from the data surrounding the TGNC experience during travel including while they are 1) in route to or from their destination, 2) activities related to their stay, and lastly 3) experiences at the destination. The impact on the experience during any of these activities largely centered around the notion of passing or not as a binary gender in relation to how they perceived themselves as passing or not, how they thought others might perceive whether they were passing or not, and then lastly how others actually felt as if they were passing or not. Major themes that emerged in relation to "during travel" included fear or anxiety, mistreatment, and positive experiences. A final theme emerged awareness and education needed, which we explore in the section on managerial implications. We present our findings in relation to each of these major themes, which all have several subthemes. Within each theme and subtheme, we discuss, when necessary, how passing or not passing as a binary gender related to these experiences that occurred during their travel time.

4.2.1. Fear or anxiety

In general, participants (N = 15) expressed at least one or more fear or anxiety while traveling that was related to being TGNC. They explained they had fear or anxiety related to the police or authority (n = 6), being harassed or getting into a hostile environment (n = 15), and being murdered (n = 3). For example, P13 related that they have been called slurs before and they think about the place they are traveling to and have internal thought processes such as

> Is this place I'm going to, is that [harassment] more likely to happen? When I visit family in the south, I think is that safer or less safe than if I travel other places? And then I think of, what are the current nondiscrimination laws in that state? If something were to happen, would I have any avenue for reporting anything?

P5 related that her biggest concern while traveling was "not being able to get to my destination without being harassed." Then, when asked by whom, P5 said, "Usually somebody who would be some sort of authority, like the police, TSA [Transportation Security Administration], maybe somebody where I booked my hotel, someone who works at the hotel for whatever reason." P7 also explained fear of harassment when she said, "You're really on guard a lot. You're dealing with, you're not sure if someone is going to come up and punch you just because they want to. I've never had this happen, but you're not sure if the law enforcement is going to treat you fairly." P8 said she often thought about where she was traveling to because of fears related to harassment and those fears were directly related to others finding out if she was transgender, which she felt could ultimately lead to her death. She said,

> I'm predisposed to [be] the "one in six." And then as a trans person that one in six could also lead to my ultimate demise because [someone could think the following] "Oh fuck, you're tricking me, you're a trap, you're not, you're not real. You're pretend, you're a guy pretending and that infuriates me." And it went from, you know,

sexual harassment [to] sexual assault to straight murder one.

Specifically, there was great fear or anxiety related to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) (n = 10). Participants feared or had anxiety about inappropriate touching, harassment, and being detained. All of the TSA fears or anxiety were related to the idea that their gender presentation did not fit into the traditional binary definitions of male or female, which could then lead to possible negative experiences rooting from the TSA agent's own biases or their lack of education on TGNC individuals. For example, P3 said,

> The last couple of times I've flown since I have breasts now [after taking hormones to develop them], I really worry about being felt up. That's kind of a big fear of mine. [the TSA agent might think] 'Oh, what are you hiding?' And then you have to explain what's going on [that they are transgender].

P3 explained in their interview that they preferred to always dress in "female model," but that they dressed in "guy model" when in transit because they live in a small town, and felt uncomfortable or unsafe since everyone knew them as the gender they were assigned at birth. Then, once at their destination, they switched over to "female mode." Therefore, this confusion about her breasts when going through TSA could be related to the mismatch of their outward presentation of appearing more masculine while traveling, yet having breasts that the body scanning machine may have picked up in the scan. For P4, the fear and anxiety about going to the airport was so intense that they opted to pay for the pre-check service, once they realized that was an option:

> The airport is definitely the most anxiety producing. The game changer was when I got pre-check, because [when] I would go through security. First, I would beep because I had a medical device in my arm. Then they would always say there is a gender anomaly, where they have to press pink or blue when you go into the X-ray machine. They could never pick one and then they'd pick pink and say, 'oh this person doesn't have enough breast material.' And then they'd change it to blue and be like, 'well, there's no penis or genitalia down there.' So then I ended up getting a full-body, hand pat-down, every single time and it would send me over the edge. And I'm like, 'when is TSA going to realize that there are trans people in the world?' And [that] they need to have a third button, and not pat down everyone who doesn't fit the binary. Finally, one of my friends was like, 'if you just get pre-check, you'll never have to do that again.' I went ahead and paid the hundred bucks. Pre check is sort of a lifesaver for trans people.

Much of the fear or anxiety for TSA centered around showing identification documents in general (n = 5). P5 explained:

> The hardest part about all traveling has to do with my legal identification. It's really kind of scary and really makes me feel uncomfortable when people have the ability to like deny me what took me a month to save up [for], and a lot of time to figure out and coordinate how to work. And I can just suddenly have it cancelled. I'm sure that there are people who feel that they "pass" less than I do even, and that's even more terrifying for them to go through those kinds of situations [people who aren't as passing as a binary gender]. And I know people who avoid using flights altogether because their identification did not match up to how they present. A few hours leading up to getting past TSA can be very sweat producing.

For some of the participants (n = 7) though, this fear or anxiety related to going through TSA was heightened prior to transitioning or at the beginning of their transition when they first began hormones as their body was changing. Then, once their outward expression of their gender was almost always in or more reflected their new gender, and they felt they were mostly passing, their stress was slightly reduced. For example, P10 (transgender female) explained

> Well before transition I had a huge concern about traveling. I was

very, very, very worried about traveling. Cause I just didn't know what to expect. So pre-transition absolutely. It was really uncomfortable for me, especially while male and then transitioned to female, sometimes I did it in the airport, which was interesting because I didn't need to, I didn't need to be male on the plane, because I didn't, that wasn't me, so I would do that. That was an interesting situation. I'd only done that once [changed in the airport back to female before getting on the plane], but after going through transition, I have less and less of a worry about traveling in any form right now.

4.2.1.1. Avoidance behaviors due to fear or anxiety. The previously described fears or anxiety influenced participants (n = 14) to engage in avoidance behaviors. A few participants avoided tourist or leisure activities (n = 2). P1 explained, "I know one of the big things is, being transgender was a reason I didn't do as many touristy things. I didn't want my coworkers to find out [that he was trans]. I didn't want to be in an unknown area without support." This notion of support is important to highlight, as it highlights fears related to authority. In the context of this statement, they were not necessarily talking about emotional support, but support in the sense that if something went wrong and some type of authority became involved, they may need assistance in the situation. P5 also related that she reduced tourist activities: "There's certain areas of tourism that I completely avoid because it can be too fraught with issues and I don't need that coming up in the middle of my vacation." Participants sometimes avoided or wanted to avoid certain geographic locations (n = 7), such as areas perceived to be less accepting of LGBTQ individuals, which might be small towns in the U.S. or countries outside the U.S. that openly discriminate against the LGBTQ community. P4 explained

> I have made the conscious decision of not to travel to places where I think I will experience intense harassment because I'm not interested in that. Why would I put myself in that situation? That naturally limits where I will go, there are countries I will never go to and not because I don't want to. I would love to go there, but because being gay is illegal or being trans is illegal and I could end up in jail.

They also avoided spaces, if possible, that forced them into a binary decision such as going to a locker room in a pool or spa (n = 4) or even a gender-binary restroom (n = 6). P13 (Non-binary trans guy), who has not had bottom surgery and therefore still sits down on the toilet said the binary bathrooms can be difficult even if they are available so they will avoid them if possible and prefer the single-stall style:

> I think in restaurants there's very rarely a single-occupancy restroom and sometimes the men's restrooms doesn't even have an adequate stall or they'll have one stall. I went to a bar once and the stall didn't even have a door. It was just urinals. So literally having to go around the block to find a restroom that had a stall door because I can't use the urinal.

In one instance, a participant avoided being out in public, and related they felt safer if they were hidden. Lastly, participants tried to avoid TSA by taking another form of transportation or plan to do so in the future (n = 3). P7 opted to take the train from Colorado to California because "I mean like TSA agents they scare the shit out of me. That's why I'm taking Amtrak, that's why I'm taking the train. I'm not going to be harassed, [because] I might be." P15 explained, "If I could avoid flying for the rest of my life, I probably would just because of that experience." They had previously described an instance where they were touched inappropriately on their breasts by a TSA agent after directly telling the agent they were trans and wearing a chest binder.

4.2.1.2. Extra precaution due to fear or anxiety. While most of the participants actively responded to their fears or anxiety about traveling as a TGNC individual with avoidance behaviors (n = 14),

those same participants in addition to P2 also took extra precautions (N = 15) to reduce their fears or anxiety. The most common precaution was to look up information related to LGBTQ rights and cultural acceptance as related to their upcoming travel (n = 11). They did this in many ways by looking up legal rights, discrimination laws, political affiliations of the area, reviews of hotels or restaurants, or if the local community had LGBTQ spaces such as community centers or bars. P13 said,

> I also usually go on trans legal websites and I go on and there's usually like a one-pager about 'know your rights' around airports and IDs and security. So I'll usually print out the latest info and just have it in my bag just in case.

Other participants (n = 3) carried a letter from a therapist or desired to do so, so they could prove their identity as a TGNC person if someone questioned them due to them not passing as one gender or the other. P6 explained

> I usually take some documentation, for example a letter from my physician that says, 'this person has had sufficient medical treatment to transition to the new male gender' or something of that nature. So I usually just keep some document that proves I'm trans and that I'm male, just in case something were to happen where they are questioning me about it, but I've never had that happen.

Prior to changing the gender marker on their license, P12 said she did the same, "I carried a letter from my therapist for a long time, just in case." P12 explained that the letter was needed in a prior instance that was escalating quickly. She's a full-time truck driver and was at a port trying to pick up her next load, when the security was giving her a difficult time:

> I showed them my driver's license and my letter from my therapist and all that stuff. They finally did some calling and this and that, and they called my company I was with and they verified everything and then they let me in. But they [security] goes, 'I was really close to calling the law,' And I'm like, yeah 'that would have been a real fiasco.'

For P12, the instance was prior to changing the gender marker on their license. After changing her gender marker, P12 no longer carried the letter, but for P6, despite changing their license gender marker, they still carry the letter for extra precaution.

P11's fears related to harassment, resulted in her carrying a concealed gun, while P15 wanted to carry a knife while traveling in the car, but feared it might end in their own harm. P11 retired from a 20-year career as a fire-fighter paramedic, and carried a gun during that time, and explained they continued to carry from both the habit in their career, and then also related to fears of being attacked:

> I'm very self conscious of myself, making sure I'm very passable and I take precautions and my wife and I are both armed … It was for my career, I just continued carrying arm because I have been targeted by some gang members from back then. And now, it's still for protection from them. And then now there are still a lot of targeted attacks against the LGBT field and I will use what I have to, to defend myself. Obviously the gun is my final line of defense. I've got, like mace, I've got a knife, I've got my hands. So there's a lot of stuff to do it. I would much rather just avoid the situation before, if I had to take a few more steps and get out of the situation, then so be it. I will.

Another major precaution taken by P13 was having an emergency money fund while traveling. They explained that prior to being able to do so when they were not as financially stable, they traveled less. But now with more income, they explained,

> I have an emergency fund of like, 'well if I need to ditch this place I'm staying at and go somewhere else.' So I do recognize even

though I've never had to do that, I do recognize that people that don't travel with a lot of money probably wouldn't have that option, or you know might not have as many choices in terms of being choosy about either sharing an AirBnB with 4 other people, or being able to get their own space.

4.2.2. Mistreatment

There were varying levels of mistreatment described by participants while traveling from microaggressions (N = 15) to minor or overt discrimination (n = 11). All the participants (N = 15) explained that they experienced microaggressions, which most often took the form of being misgendered (N = 15). In other instances, they experienced staring or whispering (N = 15), or people taking their picture without asking as if they were perceived to be a freak show (n = 1). P5 (genderqueer transwoman) said she experienced

People staring, people asking rude questions. I was in Iowa overnight not too long ago and I was spending some time in a bar and a woman who wasn't very drunk was just very crabby and demanding of things like, "what genitals I had" "how long" and blah blah blah. And she was, anyways she forced me to want to leave.

P8 said that while customer service was not overtly bad, she often felt as though if the server realized she was transgender, then she experienced poor service while in a restaurant:

They can read that [she's transgender] and they'll be like a stuttered service where it's just like, "I don't want to serve you but I have to," this is my function and my job, but I'm going to try to do it in such a fashion where there's no interaction and no comfort-ability given.

P6 (Non-binary transgender male) explained that they frequently experienced subtle acts of mistreatment:

I wouldn't say, I don't have really a specific instance. I feel like this one kind of happens a lot depending on if I'm dressing up. For example, last week I had on like pink shorts and a black floral top, which was a bit more, feminine-looking than I guess what [I] typically wear. Definitely I noticed a few people like kinda confused, especially now that my hair is growing out, just like staring for a long time. But then as soon as I look over, they kind of look away. So it was more like I can feel people looking.

In both of these experiences for P8 and P6, the experiences resulted from them most likely being understood as outside the binary of gender norms. In P6's case, she felt they understood she was transgender. While she is a person of color, she continued to relate that she knew the difference between unequal treatment being a person or color and then unequal treatment due to being transgender.

TSA was sometimes mentioned (n = 6) first when participants were asked if they ever had negative experiences while traveling. The mistreatment related to TSA always resulted from confusion about gender. P13 explained,

I think the first thing that comes to mind for me, is the the process of getting through airport security. As you know, the body scanners are calibrated for particular male [or] female gender sort of body type. Pre-[top]surgery, the [body scanning] machine would most likely error, and I'd have to be patted down or searched or whatever. With my ID, sometimes I'd get questioned because, it didn't really look like me anymore. So I think a big thing is just anytime I would need to show my ID or pay something with a credit card where they didn't feel like my name really matched my gender or any sort of circumstance where it was important to someone that they fit me in a male/female category usually made it a negative experience for me.

Only one participants reported that they have been physically attacked, but there was much verbal harassment reported (n = 11). The restrooms were a space where these instances most often occurred.

Participants were verbally told they were going into the wrong bathroom, they could not use a particular gender bathroom, or even when using the facility in the stall, individuals came in and said they had to leave. P12 explained

Another time I was down in Louisiana, I was staying at a little truck stop down there and, I went in to use the bathroom and they had one of the workers come in there and was telling me, 'Sir, you need to leave here, you need to leave here.' It was very embarrassing. The little lady was really loud about it and everything. [after she left the restroom] I showed them, I showed them managers, I said, 'here's my license, it says female right on here. I don't know what your problem is.?' He goes 'well there were little girls in there.' I said, 'well, I need to use the bathroom just the same as they did.'

Despite the numerous examples of mistreatment, many of the participants (n = 9) related that they felt lucky or that they had passing privilege, in that their experiences were not as bad as other TGNC individuals they knew. P10 said, "I never was assaulted, I was never berated in any way. I was very lucky in that respect." P13 stated, "I'm lucky that, in general my travel experiences through TSA have been relatively incident free. Aside from getting questions about my ID or extra pat downs." P4 also related that they had some mistreatments, but also felt comparatively lucky, "I'm really lucky. A couple of my [TGNC] friends have been denied access on planes or denied access in rental car facilities. Fortunately, I haven't had any of those experiences. But I definitely get questioned, I would say at a higher rate, than my binary friend counterparts."

4.2.3. Positive experiences

Not all travel experiences were perceived to be negative by the participants. Seven of the 15 participants explained that in general their travel experiences were mostly neutral or positive with a few negative experiences. While those remaining eight participants explained that either their experiences were largely negative, or neutral leaning on negative. Participants often related their experiences with hotel and restaurant employees were generally good (n = 9). Some of the participants related that they also had never been verbally harassed (n = 4), and that their (n = 6) TSA experiences were smooth and without issue.

Four of the eight participants who related that much of their travel experience were negative explained that if they were going to describe an exceptionally positive experience that it would be what other non-TGNC individuals might consider a largely neutral or positive experience where nothing happened. They expressed they were so used to having negative experiences, that if everything went smooth, no one questioned their gender, and there was no harassment, then that would be exceptionally positive. P13 said:

I think when things don't go wrong and nothing negative happens, that feels exceptionally positive. When I can just travel and nothing comes up. That feels amazing. I don't even feel anything beyond that needs to happen to make it feel exceptionally positive. Just feeling like I was able to travel and do what I wanted to do and not be questioned. That feels very positive. I can't think of any particular time when somebody went out of their way, as long as it doesn't come up, that feels positive for me, and I'm able to just do what I set out to do.

4.2.3.1. Positive outcomes related to others' gender affirming behaviors. Other people's gender affirming behaviors resulted in many positive experiences while traveling for participants. For example, when the service provider asked the person's preferred name or only asked for their last name, participants (n = 5) expressed great happiness. When the hospitality company hired visibly LGBTQ individuals, this also resulted in feelings of happiness (n = 4) while traveling. For example, P9 said, "There's actually been a fair number of like either trans or queer people who like checked me into hotels, which

is like kind of fun and cool. And we do the like, 'I see you.'"

Some of these positive experiences were tied to the space and whether it allowed for negotiation of or was affirming of their TGNC identity. Specifically related to bathrooms, participants had positive experiences when a gender neutral or family bathroom was available (n = 5). P1 said, "I'd have to find the family or the unisex restrooms [to stay safe], and those are very few and very far in between." P10 also felt "there's not nearly enough of them." Other participants (n = 3) though, did not feel these bathrooms were the best solution, and felt they drew attention from others or they felt self-conscious if families with children were waiting when they were exiting. For example, P1 said he preferred not to use those, "just to avoid the attention that leaving and entering that restroom would bring." P13 related:

> Sometimes I feel self conscious, you know, especially if it's already locked or there's a line or there's like a family waiting in front of me to use it. If I come out of the bathroom and there's people waiting, I'll feel a little self conscious. It does feel more comfortable, when there's just no one around and I can go in and out.

P4 also felt there were complex issues around the family bathrooms that are often labeled for people with disabilities as well (See Fig. 1). They said,

> I saw one a couple weeks ago that said "family bathroom or dis-ability" At that point, I could vouch for that, like, I have Lyme's disease, this obviously is a hidden disability. But, if someone were to question me, I can tell them that. So I don't feel as bad going in. Because my brother is autistic too, I understand like we've had to use those family bathrooms before. I understand the complex politics of, this isn't really my space, but that's not my space [binary bathroom] either. So, which of the two is the lesser of two evils?

Other participants (n = 2) felt more positive when traveling to a metropolitan area or geographic region that they felt was more welcoming of the TGNC community. P9 traveled to Portland, Oregon after he had gotten top surgery and had an exceptionally positive experience:

> In Portland, Oregon it was this hotel transformed from a school and it's got like restaurants, breweries outside, soaking pool. It was the first time that I had gone swimming since my top surgery and I was just in shorts and no shirt and it was amazing. I was just like, yeah, I have scars, and everybody could see them. I was like, this is me, and obviously nobody said anything or done anything. It felt very safe and empowering and freeing in a lot of ways.

Yet, there were contradictions in the perceived acceptance of TGNC individuals in different locations. While P9 felt safe in Portland, Oregon, P15, a racially ambiguous person who sometimes appears to be a person of color (POC), felt unsafe going to Portland, Oregon due to the history of oppression against POC in the state.

4.2.3.2. Positive experience post transition or after transition began. Many participants (n = 6) related that they felt their experiences traveling became slightly more positive once they were passing as their new gender. For some participants this positive experience was directly tied to their bodily expression post surgeries, specifically top or bottom surgery. These bodily changes would reduce some the gender confusion that was occurring when getting body-scanned through TSA. Participants (n = 6) who had also changed their gender marker on their ID also felt as though they had more positive experiences, and also felt safer than before, yet not always completely safe. Participants also sometimes felt that because the hormones changed the shape of their body and appearance, this led to more people assuming the correct gender and using the appropriate gender pronouns. P14, who had been on hormones and had top surgery related: "I'm passing so I personally don't have those hard times."

5. Discussion

The participants in our study had actively traveled within the past few years. They related these travel experiences were for both work and leisure activities. While many TGNC individuals may live in extreme poverty (Grant et al., 2011), participants in our study had discretionary income allowing them to engage in travel activities. Some of the participants expressed that they would like to travel more in the future, and one in particular related that now that they have more income, it allows them to do so and while feeling safer as they can bring additional funds in case they need to leave an unsafe situation with little financial stress.

During their travel experiences, they expressed feeling fear or anxiety at least one or more times. The fears were related to subtler acts of discrimination to overt discrimination including death, and they all experienced at least one instance of mistreatment most often in the form of microagressions, yet verbal harassment was also a frequent experience. Fears related to discrimination are of course not unwarranted as several reports highlight the continual mistreatment and discrimination experienced by the TGNC community (Dinno, 2017; Grant et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2017). Our study confirms these findings and expands them to the travel related processes and experiences such as going through TSA, checking into various entities, and using public restrooms. The fears and anxiety experienced by these participants are not that different from the everyday acts of discrimination faced by many in the community, which was often related by participants when discussing their experiences traveling.

Past work by Elling-Machartzki (2017) and Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) both reported negative travel or leisure experiences for transgender individuals. In Elling-Machartzki's (2017) study, they found safety was a concern in binary areas including pools when traveling in the Netherlands. Our findings confirm this study in that participants

Fig. 1. Single-stall restroom in Detroit airport. Photo courtesy of author.

feared safety when they had to move into binary spaces. Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) reported that to reduce fears of safety, their participants actively worked to pass as a binary gender. Participants in our study confirm these findings in that they felt more stress if they were in-between the binary gender expressions of male and female, which left others feeling confused or acting negatively towards them. Participants in Oakleaf and Richmond's (2017) study expressed avoidance behaviors, in that they avoided different spaces or activities. Our participants did the same, in that they exhibited avoidance behaviors while traveling such as avoiding tourist activities, going through TSA by getting pre-check or taking another form of transportation, or being out in public.

It is well established that tourists often engage in an evaluation of perceived risk in decision making of tourism destination (e.g., Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). Findings from our study also indicated that TGNC individuals engage in evaluating one's perceived safety during traveling in order to make a decision about going to that destination, yet arguably for the TGNC individual there is an additional layer of consideration in regards to their gender identity. The participants engaged in extra precautionary activities during traveling, resulting in increased emotional and planning labor.

While there was much negativity experienced by participants, there were also some positive experiences. Much of them related that they felt passing privilege lead them to positive interactions with others, and they felt lucky as they knew other people who had worse experiences than them who may not be able to pass as much in the binary genders. Great happiness was also expressed when others affirmed their gender identity or when they moved into spaces they felt were more accepting of their identity. This finding is similar to Oakleaf and Richmond's (2017) study who had positive travel experiences when they could fully embody their gender in new spaces.

Our sample was slightly diverse in that we had TGNC individuals who were assigned both male and female at birth. In analyzing their differences, there were not experiences unique to each group. One unique perspective though, was from the participants who had multiple intersections of identities that experience oppression including being a person of color or being overweight. In addition to these participants discussing their experiences as a TGNC individual, they also related issues while traveling related to these identities as well, which confirms previous research (Lee & Scott, 2017).

6. Managerial implications

We asked participants what could make their experience better when traveling, and their responses guide our implications for hospitality managers. Overwhelmingly, participants stated that there is a need for TGNC awareness and training. They felt as though tourism providers were largely unaware of how to treat TGNC individuals with respect and how to create an inclusive environment. Participants emphasized the need to be treated as equals to other cis-gender individuals in that they did not want special treatment. They explained that awareness around the TGNC experience could possibly lead to equal treatment, so that way service providers are normalized to the diversity of individuals who they may interact with. Respondents made it clear that tourism providers could consult with national and local TGNC advocacy groups (i.e., National Center for Transgender Equality) for suggestions, education, and training.

The most significant awareness need stated pertained to gender-inconclusive pronoun usage. Often, tourism employees use incorrect pronouns, or address individuals using only binary title prefixes such as Mr. or Mrs. It is recommended that employees not use binary-gendered pronouns or to ask when unsure of proper pronounce usage. Pronouns could potentially be eliminated from convention and event registration as well as at hotel check-in processes.

Participants also offered tactics to make establishments a more welcoming environment. First, tourism entities could create visible awareness by utilizing way finding and signage to signify tourists that the establishment affirms all TGNC identities, particularly by restrooms, on websites, or social media. The Greater Fort Lauderdale Destination Marketing Organization is one example of publically promoting acceptance of TGNC individuals, and based upon participant's recommendations, other similar techniques would be of benefit. Engraving pronouns on employee badges and business cards could also signal to employees, customers, and other stakeholders that they are aware of and affirm the TGNC experience. Respondents also suggested that human resource practices of tourism organizations could ensure all paperwork and hiring forms include gender options to show support for and affirm the community. Hiring TGNC individuals could also be used to affirm the community. One participant said it could be exceptionally beneficial to have a bathroom escort program available, where a patron could ask for an employee to stand by the door or outside the waiting area.

7. Theory development

Based upon analysis of our themes and subthemes, the following substantive theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) related to TGNC experiences while traveling was developed. Traveling as a TGNC individual can be complex with at least some or many additional considerations, behavioral changes, and emotional labor related to their gender identity and gender expression when moving into different spaces or situations. The considerations, behavioral changes, and emotional labor are influenced by fear or anxiety about their gender identity becoming known and the possible resulting behaviors or outcomes from others. Awareness and acceptance of TGNC identities will impact future experiences of TGNC individuals while traveling. The substantive theory was built up from the following relationships and links of codes and categories observed in the data:

1. TGNC individuals have fear or anxiety related to their gender identity becoming revealed while traveling.
   a. TGNC individuals fear mistreatment or unequal treatment when they are not viewed as a binary gender, which leads to avoidance behaviors while traveling.
   b. TGNC individuals fear mistreatment or unequal treatment when they are not viewed as a binary gender, which leads to precautionary behaviors while traveling.
   c. Visibly appearing as a TGNC individual can result in interrupted travel experiences.
2. TGNC individuals who purposefully conceal their gender identity have uninterrupted travel, yet may experience negative internal experiences related to gender expression.
   a. Passing as a binary gender or concealing identity as a TGNC individual results in uninterrupted travel experiences.
   b. Purposefully concealing identity as a TGNC individual in a way that does not reflect their internal sense of gender identity results in negative experiences of their internal sense of gender identity while traveling.
3. Non-TGNC individuals can impact TGNC individual's experiences while traveling.
   a. Awareness and acceptance of the TGNC experience results in positive travel experiences for TGNC individuals.
   b. Gender affirming behaviors of others results in positive travel experiences for TGNC individuals.
   c. Awareness and acceptance of the TGNC experience results in uninterrupted travel.

8. Future research and limitations

One limitation of the study is that a limited number of participants were interviewed, and results cannot be generalized to the larger TGNC population. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with this in

mind. P15 was unique in the sample in that they had much more of a fluid gender presentation. Focusing future studies on similar individuals who reject all gender norms, and truly embody a non-binary identity and who continually embrace a fluid presentation on a day-to-day may give a deeper understanding of their unique shared experiences. Additionally, in the interviews, most participants had only traveled domestically in the United States. Studying experiences of TGNC individuals abroad would help gain deeper insights into traveling to areas with different cultural attitudes towards TGNC individuals, or perhaps to regions that openly discrimination against the LGBTQ community. We also had a majority white sample. Interviewing TGNC individuals of color (particularly Latino/a/x, Asian, or Middle Eastern), or those who have other intersecting, marginalized identities such as fat bodies, people with disabilities, or those from religions that may not be as accepting of TGNC identities would shed light on the ways these intersecting identities may impact their travel experiences. Since memory is also a limitation, a future study could ask TGNC individuals to do a daily diary during specific instances while traveling such as going through TSA, checking into a hotel, or using restrooms. Overall, there are many more areas to research in regards to TGNC individuals and traveling, and we have only begun to scratch the surface of the experiences of traveling as a TGNC individual.

Author contribution form

Study conception and design: Olson and Reddy-Best.
Acquisition of data: Olson and Reddy-Best.
Analysis and interpretation of data: Olson and Reddy-Best.
Drafting of manuscript: Olson and Reddy-Best.
Critical revision: Olson and Reddy-Best.

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