

# **Gender dissidence in leisure and travel: exploring social vulnerability and resistance in Latin America**

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## **Abstract**

Due to the challenges that gender-dissident individuals represent for traditional binary gender norms, people with gender dissidence constitute a highly vulnerable social group. In leisure, travel, and tourism studies, the experiences of gender-dissident people have been practically ignored. Based on a necropraxis-necroresistance conceptual framework, this research aimed to explore gender-dissident people's leisure and travel experiences and the resistance strategies they adopt in Latin America. Based on twelve interviews, it revealed that while necropolitics (e.g., State policies) and necropraxis (e.g., interpersonal interactions) in the region negatively determine the everyday social experiences of gender dissidents, necroresistance strategies are adopted by gender dissidents to exist within the leisure and travel arena. The main contribution of this study lies in the adoption of a novel conceptual framework as well as the incorporation of gender dissidence and a particular socio-cultural context largely excluded from leisure and travel studies in the Global North.

## **Keywords**

Gender dissidence; gender diversity in leisure and travel; necropolitics; necroresistance; Latin America

## **Introduction**

Gender dissidence denotes a gender-related embodiment that differs from conventional expressions and identities ascribed to the traditional gender binary (male/female) (Alexandrowicz, 2020). Non-conventional gender expressions and identities (e.g., non-binary, gender fluid, trans man/woman) pose multiple social, cultural, religious, and political challenges to traditional gender norms (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Due to social disapproval, individuals holding a gender-dissident expression or identity are vulnerable in modern societies (Bockting, 2016). This has been reflected in their experience of exclusion, discrimination, and violence led by both structural conditions and everyday interpersonal

interactions (Miller & Grollman, 2015; Rodríguez Madera, 2020). Existing research, mostly undertaken in developed countries of the Global North, has revealed that some gender-dissident groups, particularly trans individuals (those whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth but are framed within the gender binary continuum (Castleberry, 2019), experience high levels of unemployment, poverty, limited access to health, education and legal services (Grossman & D'augelli, 2006; Infante et al., 2009; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2015) and tend to experience inequality and unsafety in some public sport and leisure spaces (e.g., swimming pools) (Caudwell, 2020; Elling-Machartzki, 2015). These situations are experienced differently by cisgender people (i.e., 'individuals who possess, from birth and into adulthood, the male or female reproductive organs (sex) typical of the social category of man or woman (gender) to which that individual was assigned at birth' [Aultman, 2014, p. 61]) due to the privileges granted by the power of the cis identity (Cava, 2016).

Based on the specific socio-cultural context, the vulnerability related to gender dissidence is experienced in a differentiated manner (Barrientos, 2016; Rodríguez Madera, 2020). In the particular case of Latin America, where the universe of people with gender identities and expressions is very diverse (OEA & CIDH, 2020), people challenging the cisnormative gender binary system (a social system that distributes resources, roles, power, and entitlements according to whether a person or practice is perceived as male or female, masculine or feminine [Ridgeway & Correll, 2004] based on their biological sex) are the target of severe exclusion, discrimination, and violence (Griner et al., 2020, Kritz et al., 2021; Nemoto et al., 2011). The situations of stigmatization, exclusion and violence experienced by people with non-normative gender identities is largely based on cisgenderism. According to Lennon and Mistler, the cisgenderism ideology 'denies, denigrates, or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth as well as resulting behaviour, expression, and community' (2014, p. 64) and is present in structural systems and interpersonal relationships that justify prejudicial attitudes and discrimination against transgender people, mainly.

Research has revealed that a high proportion of gender-dissident individuals, particularly trans women, have experienced gender-based exclusion, discrimination, and violence in education, healthcare, home, family, work services from police and other State institutions in Latin America (Carrillo, 2019; Lanham et al., 2018, Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2017). Furthermore, Latin America is the deadliest region of the world for gender-dissident people (Rodríguez Madera, 2020). According to the Trans Murder Monitoring, from October 2019 to September 2020, 350 trans and gender-diverse people were murdered worldwide; 82% of the murders registered globally occurred in Latin America (44% in Brazil and 16% in Mexico) (TGEU & Balzer, 2020).

Although the manifestation of violence and discrimination in various domains such as those mentioned above (education, healthcare, home, etc.) have been widely documented in the literature, the experiences of gender-dissident people with leisure, travel, and tourism have remained largely ignored. Until relatively recently, scholars have started to look at how gender dissidence, particularly transgender embodiment, influences recreational and tourism experiences (Caudwell, 2020; Elling-Machartzki, 2015; Monterrubio et al., 2020a; 2020b; Olson & Reddy-Best, 2020; Reddy-Best & Olson, 2020). In the Latin American context, empirical evidence on how gender-dissident individuals -particularly trans people in Mexico- experience

vulnerability during leisure and travel is significantly limited. Previous research showed that Mexican trans people experience violence in tourism, such as sexual harassment and verbal and physical abuse (Monterrubio et al., 2020b). Moreover, the findings revealed that trans men and trans women do not experience tourism constraints equally since the latter are more vulnerable to suffering inequalities in terms of safety conditions, access to opportunities, and use of public space when traveling (Monterrubio et al., 2020a).

In addition to documenting the difficult experiences trans individuals go through, and the elements that place them in vulnerable positions, this type of study is an opportunity to explore the ways in which they resist such constraints. Considering that gender-dissident people are not passive objects but active subjects that resist oppression (Rodríguez-Madera, 2020), it is also important to document how they respond to structural and social constraints for survival within the recreation sphere. This study aimed to fill this gap by investigating the experiences of gender-dissident people in Latin America and how they resist in order to become active participants in the leisure and travel world. To do so, the study adopts the necropraxis-necroresistance conceptual framework (Rodríguez-Madera, 2020), which is a theoretical proposal recently developed that holds potential applicability to leisure and travel studies. The main contributions of this study are the incorporation of gender dissidence and the integration of the necropraxis-necroresistance conceptual framework into the global leisure and travel knowledge. If we consider that the forms of representation and resistance towards gender dissidence are culturally defined (González Ortúño, 2016), empirical research is required to know how structural and ordinary social interactions determine the leisure and travel experiences of people holding gender diverse identities in Latin America.

## Theoretical framework

### Gender dissidence

The gender binary is a cultural device that has historically served to classify and rank people as men and women (*sine qua non* of the masculine and feminine, respectively), based on their biological sex (Hyde et al., 2018). Until recent years there was little information on ways of experiencing gender that were not anchored in the absolute of the male/female binary. Even, for years, the approach to the transgender issue continued to have the binary as a reference. Said artifice was shielded behind 'custom' and 'tradition' (e.g., religion, machismo, Marianism) as a strategy to perpetuate the roles that people should assume for the maintenance of social and gender norms and the economic order (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020; de Oto, 2012; Molina Rodríguez et al., 2015; Rodríguez Madera, 2009; Rucovsky, 2015; Welsh, 2014).

This oppressive gender system has not only restricted human experience but has placed people who do not fit the binary mold in a 'no place'; that is, a tortuous territory marked by social stigma (Caravaca-Morera & Padilha, 2018; Gündüz, 2017; Rodríguez Madera et al., 2015; 2016). These people embody what has been called gender dissidence (Alexandrowicz, 2020). This includes expressions and identities such as trans, queer, non-binary gender, fluid gender, bigender, agender, among others, that exceed the culturally established gender norms. These also include identities that do not have exact equivalents to Western gender categories. In the particular case of Latin America, people with gender identities belonging to ancestral

worldviews such as the *muxhe* in Mexico or the *omeguit* in Panama are also part of the gender dissidence spectrum (OEA & CIDH, 2020). As a matter of fact, as Monroy Cuellar (2020) observes, some of these categories have been constructed in Western contexts and therefore do not fully correspond to the diversity of gender expressions and identities in Latin America.

Since these identities and expressions fall out of the traditional binary gender and therefore challenge dominant cisgenderism (Lennon & Mistler, 2014), gender-dissident individuals experience social vulnerability. According to Misztal (2011), the condition of social vulnerability is influenced by socioeconomic and political processes and is strongly related to poverty, disadvantage, and social exclusion. Yet not all social groups experience vulnerability in the same way. From an intersectionality perspective, social vulnerability can be exacerbated by the confluence of several factors. This perspective recognises that gender is one of the several factors of inequality and thus of vulnerability (Shields, 2008). Intersectionality recognises that gender status intersects and is articulated with other factors such as race, colour, social class, sexuality, immigration status, and disability that represent different forms of oppression and discrimination against individuals (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). The conditions of gender, social class, and sexual orientation are factors of oppression and exclusion, so the intersectionality approach could be useful to study the intersected vulnerability in various social groups, including the gender-dissident population.

There is growing scientific literature in and outside Latin America on theoretical, methodological, and descriptive aspects related to gender dissidence (Edelman, 2016; Quinan & Thiele, 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2020a; Monterrubio et al., 2020b; Ribeiro et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2019; Scharrón-del Río & Aja, 2020). Likewise, some studies show the consequences of embodying this dissidence in the field of law and health (de Souza et al., 2015; Reisner et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2019; Rucoovsky, 2015; Socías et al., 2014; Trans America, 2016; Welsh, 2014). In general, the findings of studies implemented in the Latin American region reflect how gender-dissident individuals, particularly trans people, experience a rugged panorama reflected in multiple forms of oppression and stigmatisation, extreme violence, and micro-aggressions in various contexts such as the family, work, school and communities (Barrientos, 2016; Chang & Chung, 2015; Padilla et al., 2016). In fact, Latin America is considered one of the most dangerous and lethal regions for trans populations and other gender dissidents (TGEU, 2019). However, little is known about other dimensions that are important for an enriching and dignified life in gender dissidents, such as travel and leisure experiences (Monterrubio et al., 2020a; 2020b). Often this type of information has been reported under the umbrella of LGB tourism studies. This has been at the cost of wrongly assuming that the experiences of people who embody gender dissidence are the same as those of other members of the LGB community (Monterrubio et al., 2020b).

The importance of generating knowledge about the elements that facilitate or hinder travel and recreation experiences in the population with gender diversity lies in being able to achieve an understanding of how the violation of these populations manifests itself in poorly documented areas that are of great relevance to this people. Understanding the conditions that harm these populations is an essential step to develop strategies for social change and document the manifestations of resistance to the oppressive system. Certainly, resistance is a liberating

exercise for people who have been oppressed (hooks, 1990) because they are acts that give a strong message: we exist.

### **Necopraxis and necroresistance**

The vulnerability and experiences of gender-dissident people can be approached through the concept of necropolitics. From a necropolitics approach, gender dissidents are affected by structural levels of society and State policies such as laws, rules, and regulations that are manifested in experiences of structural violence; such social structures and policies determine, both physically and symbolically, who gets to live and who is left to die (Caravaca-Morera & Padilha, 2018; Gündüz, 2017). Therefore, necropolitics acknowledges the systematic exclusion and destruction of social groups, often framed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, class, or nationality (Padilla & Rodríguez-Madera, 2021).

However, gender-dissident individuals are affected not only by structural and State policies but also by social conditions and relations experienced in their everyday lives. To acknowledge this, Rodríguez-Madera (2020) coined the concept of necopraxis. Necopraxis involves everyday social practices and acts that systematically eliminate gender-dissident individuals. According to the author, necopraxis refers to

acts induced by the social conditions of necropower that are a threat to life through their constant unfolding in the context of everyday human interactions that happen outside the purview of the more institutionalized structural spheres of society. These are acts that do not emanate “from above” through policies and laws, but rather are reproduced in everyday relations with others (e.g., friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, doctors, teachers, sex clients) and devalue trans people [and other gender-dissident individuals], affecting their sense of worth, and positioning them as unwanted in society (pp. 5-6)

Analysing the experiences of gender-dissident people only from the perspective of vulnerability would mean obscuring individuals' ability to resist conditions of oppression and discrimination. By coining the concept of necroresistance, Rodríguez Madera (2020) argues that gender-dissident people react towards necopraxis through simple strategies of survival and endurance embedded in everyday life activities. Faced with binary gender norms, gender dissidents adopt survival and resistance strategies that are integrated into everyday life to give value and “normality” to their lives. According to the author, necroresistance does not mean necessarily heroic or exceptional actions to challenge structural oppression; it involves everyday and often unnoticed acts to challenge necopraxis. Gender dissidents, therefore, resist necopraxis through ordinary acts such as attending school, going shopping, socialising, and the very act of being in public. Through necroresistance, gender-dissident individuals challenge the threats imposed by the norms and conventions of binary gender. However, studies on necopraxis experiences and necroresistance strategies adopted by gender dissidents in leisure and travel are practically nonexistent.

## Context

According to the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Trans People (REDLACTRANS, 2019), in Latin America and the Caribbean, gender-diverse groups, particularly trans people, suffer disproportionate discrimination and are victims of hate crimes and impunity surrounding these crimes. Some gender non-conforming groups in Latin America have shown collective reactions against the structural violence they are victims of. Some associations such as the Regional Information Network on LGBTI Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, made up of organizations from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and the Dominican Republic, are examples of collective necroresistance against gender violence in the region (TRANSSA, 2019). Active necroresistance has influenced the recognition of human rights in terms of gender identity and with it their legislation and the formulation and implementation of public policies. In Latin American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and very recently Chile, some laws recognise the right to gender identity.

Despite collective necroresistance and legislative progress, acts of violence, crime, prejudice, and discrimination towards gender dissidents are contrasting. In Latin America, there are alarming data on the high levels of violence, discriminatory attitudes, and exclusion against gender dissidents (including acts that characterise necropraxis); which are legitimized by State agents and by groups that preserve and normalize prejudices against these people (OEA & CIDH, 2020). As a result, Latin America has been reported and continues to be reported as the region in the world with the highest number of murder cases of trans people (Balzer, 2009; TGEU, 2019). In the region, there is a lack of state recognition of their gender identity and expression, and, therefore, there is no guarantee of access to their rights (OEA & CIDH, 2020). The lack of guarantee of their rights and the fact that necropraxis becomes a day-to-day experience for trans people cause their lives to be tinged by the need for constant survival strategies (Rodríguez Madera, 2020). In fact, trans people in the region have a short life expectancy (Spizzirri et al., 2021) due not only to murders but also as a consequence of high levels of stress or medical negligence that 'gets under their skin' resulting in chronic conditions, which ultimately lead to truncated lives (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Rodríguez Madera, 2020; Townsend et al., 2011).

The challenges faced by gender-dissident people take place in different countries of the Latin American region. In the case of Mexico, for example, a government survey based on 12,331 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and gender non-conforming participants in the country revealed that discrimination against trans individuals is explicitly evident in the impediments to using public toilets that coincide with their gender identity (51% of the trans people surveyed), invalidations of their official identification (34.4%) and prohibitions to enter cinemas, restaurants, or bars (28.3%) (Conapred & CNDH, 2019). In Argentina, where it is estimated that there are around 12,000 or 13,000 trans people and where the average life expectancy of these is 41 years, 68 crimes against the LGBTQ community were registered in the first half of 2019; more than half of these murders were committed against gender-dissident people (The Associated Press, 2020). From October 2018 to September 2019, with a figure of 130 crimes, Brazil was the country that reported the highest number of murders of trans people and other

people with gender-dissident identities, followed by Mexico with 63 in the same period (TGEU, 2019).

In this framework, there is a wide social scientific lack of knowledge about the experiences associated with the vulnerability experienced by the gender-dissident population in Latin America in the leisure and travel spheres. Given the positive effects that travel, particularly that of a tourist nature, and recreation have on the quality of life, human development, and the identity of those who participate in them (Mora Donato, 2010; Dolnicar & Cliff, 2012; Pung et al., 2019), and that tourism and leisure are a right that everyone must have access to (UNWTO, 1999), the gender-dissident people's experiences in terms of vulnerability and necroresistance deserve to be studied.

## Methods

This study aimed to explore the travel and leisure experiences of gender-dissident individuals from a perspective of social vulnerability and necroresistance strategies in Latin America. To achieve this, this research adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods allow revealing in-depth and in a contextualized way what underlies people's subjectivities, their attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and their association with people's behaviours and experiences in the context in which they occur (Ritchie, 2003). This approach allowed a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of vulnerability and necroresistance of gender-diverse people.

The study was exploratory in scope and adopted in-depth interviewing to meet the aim. The population with gender-dissident identities is usually not very visible to the rest of the population (Maguen et al., 2007). Therefore, knowing the size of this population represents an impossibility (Dutton et al., 2008). The researchers experienced difficulties finding, contacting, and recruiting gender-dissident participants, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic made it challenging to implement recruitment strategies in the countries of the Latin American region. Although social media (e.g., Facebook) has been a useful and effective tool for reaching gender and sexually diverse individuals for research, it is not without limitations (Litter & Joy, 2021).

This paper is grounded in twelve interviews in total; three interviews were conducted in 2019 and nine more in 2021. Although this number is by no means representative, it allowed meeting the exploratory interest of this study. The participants were recruited through Facebook groups, personal contact, and snowball sampling. The criteria for selecting the participants were to be at least 18 years old, live in a Latin American country, and self-identify with some of the variants of gender dissidence. Four interviews were undertaken in person and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the rest were carried out through WhatsApp calls and video calls. All the interviews were audio-recorded, with the prior consent and guarantee of confidentiality of those who participated. The instrument was an interview guide that included four sections: the sociodemographic profile, gender identity, everyday experiences in society and leisure, and experiences and necroresistance strategies during travel and tourism. The interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Based on the literature reviewed, cases, descriptions, arguments, and examples of acts of stigmatisation, exclusion, discrimination,

violence, and necroresistance strategies were identified in each interview. Then, they were grouped under the domains of necropolitics, necopraxis, and necroresistance.

Positionality needs to be reflected on to be aware of its possible implications on the research process (Soedirgo & Glas, 2020). The researchers self-identify as cisgender individuals (whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth) and thus were required to monitor how their 'outsider' condition (cisgender) interacted with the 'insiders' (gender dissidence) and with the research process. Being aware of this and their potential bias, they continuously interrogated the potential effects of their social location across research interactions, particularly during instrument design, interviewing, and analysis. The researchers' previous research and social experience with gender and sexual minorities were beneficial for continuous interrogation and awareness along the research process.

## **Findings**

Within a necopraxis and necroresistance framework, this section presents the social practices of which gender-dissident individuals are victims of and the everyday acts that they adopt to resist social vulnerability. This study included individuals with the following gender identities (as described by themselves): transsexual man/masculine, transgender woman, non-binary, and gender-fluid (see Table 1). Six participants were from Mexico, four from Guatemala, one from Chile, and one from Colombia. Their ages ranged from 22 to 51, and most of them held or were studying for a Bachelor's degree, though others concluded only high school. The vast majority had not changed their official identification to correct their gender identity; as seen later, this is in part a result of structural constraints. Body modifications have taken place among seven participants (trans individuals); these included hormone replacements, mastectomy, hysterectomy, silicone injection for breasts and/or buttocks, and chest masculinization.

Insert Table 1 here

Most participants reported being involved in leisure and travel activities. However, as seen in turn, such activities are significantly constrained by structural and interpersonal practices. While some leisure activities involve public space, such as going out with friends, going to pubs and restaurants, or doing sports, some take place at home; examples of these are watching TV, cooking, reading, playing games, or taking care of plants. Most of them have had travel experiences; they travel three times a year on average, and only a few have had the chance to travel abroad. Their reasons to travel are similar to cisgender travellers; participants travel for purposes such as work, pleasure, knowing new places, visiting friends and relatives, and sport competition, but their experiences are highly influenced by their gender condition.

## **Necropolitics**

All participants reported social vulnerability in their respective countries. Structural conditions determined by both the State and society place gender-dissident people in vulnerable situations. In this vein, the study revealed that necropolitics in these Latin American countries might be experienced in at least three ways. The first is the lack of State recognition of gender identities. Our Guatemalan participants claimed that correcting the assigned gender in their

identification was an impossibility because existing laws in the country do not recognise trans identities. While transgender identities are recognised in Chile, gender fluid is not, and our Chilean participant was well knowledgeable of this. Therefore, in these countries, people with gender dissidence identities beyond trans identities –such as gender fluid or non-binary- are left out the State recognition and protection. Secondly, structural and systematic exclusion, discrimination, and violence towards gender dissidents in Latin America are also ingrained in religion. Religious groups in Latin America have influenced politics impressively and are providing forms, organisations, arguments, and alliances to challenge the region's recognition and expansion of LGBT rights (Corrales, 2020). Guillermo argued,

‘Transgender identity is not recognised in the laws of the country [Guatemala], there are no anti-discrimination laws for gender identity... there are no public policies that guarantee education, work, and health... openly homophobic and transphobic discourses generated by religious groups lead to violence towards LGBT people’

Thirdly, for the particular case of travel, necropolitics is represented in the limitations that visa application processes and requirements pose to international travellers with gender dissidence. Some individuals explained how getting a visa issued for the first time or renewed was a significant constraint for their travel. This was particularly the case for those who applied for a visa from a country that does not recognise non-normative identities. Guillermo said, ‘it is very difficult to get travel visas when one has another name or when one's name does not match one's gender expression’.

### **Necopraxis**

Rodríguez-Madera (2020) argues that necopraxis involves acts in everyday human interactions that are induced by structural conditions through which gradual small doses of death are provided in order to eradicate gender non-conforming people. Based on this study's findings, it is suggested that two types of necopraxis –passive and active- may be present in the leisure and travel experiences of gender-dissident people in Latin America.

By passive necopraxis, we mean subtle, sometimes unnoticed, acts that many perceive as irrelevant and insignificant. Passive necopraxis may manifest in microaggressions that can cause unpleasant, outrageous, offensive, and violent effects on gender-dissident individuals' cognitive and emotional well-being. Examples of how everyday interpersonal relations lead to symbolic elimination of gender dissidents include, but are not limited to, misgendering, stares, whispering, making fun of them, and questioning their identity. All these are factors that influence people's participation and experiences in leisure activities.

Being questioned about their gender expression not matching their official identification document is a recurrent act that prevents people from getting involved in certain leisure activities, particularly those that involve social interactions in public spaces. Being requested their identification places gender dissidents in an uncomfortable, anxious, and fearful situation that impacts their leisure and travel experiences. Esteban narrated his experience this way, ‘I have problems with going to shopping centres, gyms or recreational centres because my identification has not been changed yet, and people ask me questions like, is this your

identification?' A similar feeling was reported by Agnethe, who said that 'when I show my identification, they tell me 'This is not you'.

Stares and being questioned are experienced even by people who have made body modifications to match their gender identity. When referring to going to the beach or a swimming pool, Abelardo put it this way, 'even now that I have my mastectomy, it is not easy, because obviously you have scars and people always look at you as very strange and wonder, why does this person have scars?' People's stares and questioning about their identity and body are necropraxis that symbolically deny gender dissidents' identity, and therefore denies their existence. All these acts constrain individuals from getting involved in leisure and travel activities and, when performed, influence how they are experienced. When necropraxis subtle acts can be resisted, leisure can be part of a gender dissident's life.

Active necropraxis refers to overt, direct, and many times conscious acts of exclusion, discrimination, or aggression towards gender dissidents. These included, for example, prohibiting the use of gendered toilets or other leisure gendered facilities such as pools or their participation in gendered sports; these acts of necropraxis have been documents in previous studies, particularly with transgender people (Caudwell, 2020; Patel, 2017). This was mainly the case for trans men who had not undergone a mastectomy; being a transexual man, Abelardo narrated the case in which he was not allowed to enter a pool wearing a shirt to cover his top. Dana, whose gender expression is insufficient to pass as a cisgender woman, narrated a similar case in which she was not allowed to enter a pool with her nieces under the argument that the pool was for men and women, not for her.

Getting and showing documents to prove their identity during travel has led to acts of active necropraxis. Examples of these are visa applications and traveling through airports. Abelardo recounted his experience when he was retained by anti-narcotics agents at a Colombian airport. He was questioned about the scars of his body and passed through the body scan 16 times, and physically checked by both female and male agents. He had to explain in detail he was a trans man and the need for the surgeries. He reported this as one of the worst travel experiences he has ever had.

Verbal and physical abuse are also part of active necropraxis. Those who decide to travel are exposed to these. Braina recounted the experience in which she and her trans friends were insulted and physically hurt by a group of drunk men at a nightclub in Southern Mexico. Dana, who used to work with a trans group, was physically attacked during one of her travels when she was younger. She recounted her experience: 'The men brutally attacked my colleagues... One of them grabbed and cut my hair with a knife. He cut part of my skin. I still have the scar... and that was just for being trans.' The fear of such violence and being killed restrains individuals from traveling; Joanne, who believes that her gender expression is insufficient to pass unnoticed as a trans woman, does not travel and avoids public spaces as much as possible to reduce the risks of discrimination, violence, and even death.

## **Necroresistance**

Necropraxis turns into an everyday encounter, and its implementation causes gender-dissident individuals' lives to be touched by the requirement for continuous survival strategies. In order

to survive necropraxis during leisure and travel practices, gender-dissident individuals in Latin America adopt certain strategies. Such strategies can be either cognitive or conative. To resist symbolic and physical acts of exclusion, discrimination, or violence, some gender dissident individuals in Latin America tend to ignore such acts. Gisela, who has been discriminated in gendered toilets and was attacked at an international leisure event in Mexico, said, 'some people have talked to me using a male pronoun to make me feel bad... I don't care when people assign me a masculine adjective; I just ignore them'. Turning a blind eye or tolerating other people's acts, mainly during passive acts (e.g., misgendering, stares, whispering), allow them to reduce problematic situations during leisure and travel.

Conative strategies include more active reactions. For some trans people, these reactions range from explaining their gender identity to changing their official identification documents and making changes to their bodies. This reduces the chances of being questioned about their identity in public leisure spaces. Other strategies include always traveling with someone else to reduce the sense of unsafety or changing responsibilities with other people. Guillermo, who recognises that his gender expression can be too feminine to pass unnoticed as a trans man, avoids making travel reservations under his name and uses his wife's instead to avoid difficulties; he said, 'if we make reservations, we usually put her name and use her documents'. Avoidance is another strategy. Avoiding the use of public transport and using a private car reduces interpersonal risks and allows them mobility. Furthermore, avoiding leisure in public spaces and replacing it with leisure at home and within everyday social environments reduces risks.

## **Intersectionality**

Gender-dissident individuals experience intersecting forms of marginalization, discrimination, and inequities (Wesp et al., 2019). As a result, they experience vulnerability not only based on their gender dissidence but also on other factors that stigmatise and stereotype them. This study revealed that nationality increases the vulnerability of gender dissidents in the region. As Latin Americans and, more specifically, Central Americans, gender dissidents are targets of intersecting discrimination. Discrimination against Latin American groups can manifest in forms such as social distancing, social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, and harassment (Arellano-Morales et al., 2015). Within the international travel arena, the fact of being Central American constrains travel experiences. Guillermo has travelled to different American countries, Mexico and Suiza, for work, training, and leisure purposes. He claims, 'due to my skin colour, in Guatemala, I am not a racialized person, but I am when I travel to another country. There are many things against us Central Americans when applying for a visa.' As a result, some Latin American international gender non-conforming travellers experience intersecting social stigma due to both gender dissidence and nationality.

## **Discussion**

Research on gender dissidence in leisure, travel, and tourism is significantly limited. Existing research has mostly developed in the context of the Global North (Olson & Reddy-Best, 2020) or focused on specific gender non-conforming groups (namely trans people) (Caudwell, 2020; Elling-Machartzki, 2015; Monterrubio et al., 2020a). While research on the topic has been

conducted in the Global South until recently (Monterrubio et al., 2020a, 2020b), there is still much to uncover concerning gender-dissident individuals' leisure and travel participation and experiences in different socio-cultural contexts. This study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the leisure and travel experiences of vulnerability and necroresistance of gender-dissident individuals in Latin America.

This study confirms previous research revealing that gender-dissident individuals live in extreme vulnerability in Latin America (OEA & CIDH, 2020). In fact, it empirically demonstrates that gender dissidents in the region experience vulnerability in a more severe way than other parts of the world (TGEU & Balzer, 2020). Necropolitics, represented in the lack of recognition, legislation, and protection of dissident individuals' rights, together with antagonist positions of religious groups, place these people in a more vulnerable condition in Latin America. Everyday acts of homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity, and cisgenderism, which are manifestations of necopraxis, gradually lead to the everyday systematic elimination –both symbolically and physically- of those whose identity does not conform to normative gender in the region.

Both necropolitics and necopraxis extend to gender dissidents' leisure and travel spheres. State restrictions and social practices constrain their participation in leisure in public spaces and travel, and, as Caudwell (2020) argues, such participation tend to be characterized by unsafety and inequality. Either passive social acts such as misgendering, staring, or questioning gender identity or active acts such as overt discrimination and verbal and physical abuse determine such individuals' recreational and mobility experiences. However, this study empirically proved that gender dissidents resist such constrictions through necroresistance strategies. As a result, it revealed the value of the necopraxis-necroresistance framework as proposed by Rodríguez-Madera (2020). This research showed that while gender-dissident individuals are structurally and socially stigmatised, excluded, discriminated, and abused, they actively react to such State and social oppression to participate in recreational activities. Gender dissidents actively resist necropolitics and necopraxis in order to exist within the leisure and travel world.

This study responded to Olson & Reddy-Best's (2019, p. 260) call for studying 'individuals of colour' with gender dissidence in Latin American to analyse intersecting attributes. From an intersectionality perspective, this study proves that intersecting power relations based on categories such as gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and race, among others, make certain social groups more vulnerable than others within recreational practices. As revealed by Guillermo's (and others') experience, individuals holding a gender-dissident identity are stigmatised and stereotyped not only based on gender but also the basis of nationality, mainly those belonging to Central America. This significantly constrains international travel in particular and therefore affects their overall travel experience. Although intersecting power relations in gender dissidence in leisure and travel requires further research, this study confirms that, rather than being mutually exclusive, such powers interact and build on each other, affecting many aspects of the leisure and travel world. Accordingly, this study corroborates that '[i]ntersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences' (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2) including those in the leisure and travel spheres.

Having said this, the contribution of this study to leisure and travel studies is threefold. First, this study incorporates the gender dissidence spectrum into the leisure and travel area, a social minority that has been practically ignored within the leisure, travel, and tourism studies in the global knowledge. Second, it adds unexplored conceptual frameworks to the general topic of leisure and travel experience; to the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that incorporates and empirically tests the necropraxis-necroresistance framework within the leisure and travel fields. Based on the results, this framework can be used in the future for analysing how structural conditions and interpersonal relations affect other vulnerable groups' participation in recreation and how resistance takes place. Finally, this study broadens the contextual and multicultural understanding of leisure and travel experiences -including those of gender dissidents-; it adds empirical evidence of a socio-cultural, economic, and political region, namely Latin America, that has remained practically ignored within the leisure and travel debates of the Global North.

## **Conclusions**

This study investigated gender-dissident people's leisure and travel experiences and the resistance strategies adopted in Latin America. It concludes that structural and socio-cultural factors, manifested in gender-based discrimination and violence, significantly constrain gender-diverse individuals' participation in leisure and travel in Latin America. However, people who do not conform to conventional expressions of gender in Latin America are not passive agents; instead, they are active subjects since they find strategies to resist both symbolical and physical elimination, and therefore to exist within the leisure and travel world.

While this study unveiled the structural and social elimination experiences and necroresistance strategies of gender dissidents in Latin America, many issues are still to be answered. These include, for example, the need for further studying how the vulnerability is exacerbated when, apart from nationality, power relations based on age, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, among others, intersect to determine gender-diverse individual's experiences in the context of recreation. Only by recognising the complexity of gender-based social interactions in different settings can we gain a broader and deeper understanding of how genders, in general, interact with the leisure and travel spheres.

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## **Declaration of interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s)

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