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Transgender Travel: A Sociolegal Analysis of Safety and Risk

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Content Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The lives of transgender people are complex and nuanced, involving various legal, cultural, and social dimensions. Transgender individuals are often made specific targets of certain regulatory processes and therefore are faced with challenges that would not apply to cisgender people. To investigate these claims, I looked at media and academic content regarding one area of this phenomenon: airport travel. Airports are epicenters of surveillance and risk regulation, which require intense attention to detail and intricate chains of identity confirmation. The narrative of transgender people as gender deviants and potential security risks stems from the social construction of gender as fixed and stable; any transgression is heavily speculated. Thus, transgender individuals encounter discrimination, abuse, and embarrassment at the hands of airport officials whose enforcement of regulatory rules (in)directly regards them as national threats.

I am a white settler on the traditional lands of the **Lək̓ʷəŋən, Songhees and Esquimalt, peoples**. I am transgender and gender non-conforming person of European and South African descent. I settle on these lands with respect and gratitude to the individuals, families, and communities who resided here before me.

OBJECTIVES

- ★ To understand how academic sources chronicle the issue of transgender travel.
- ★ To conduct a scoping review of current literature and come up with a picture of the current state of transgender travel experiences.

METHODOLOGIES

I conducted a thematic content analysis of (**n=9**) academic articles written about transgender people and their experience with airport travel.

KEY FINDINGS

- ★ Airport officials operationalize the law to reproduce gender and body norms through regulatory policies and biomedical technologies.
- ★ ID incongruence and body scanning devices reinforce narratives of biomedical risk.
- ★ Transgender individuals' legal consciousness (Ewick & Silbey 1992) renders them vigilant in airport settings.

DISCUSSION

Transgender people face harassment, embarrassment, and abuse at airports due to the regulatory and legal policies in place. Legal regulatory frameworks turn transgender individuals into security risks through the use of biased pre-screening technologies. Transgender people are made conscious of their alleged risk as they continue to be regarded as safety threats.