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Critical Considerations on Gender and Tourism: A Postscript

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We begin this postscript by emphasising that the impetus for this special issue on gender and tourism can be traced to two main concerns. The first is the seemingly intractable nature of gender (in)equality within the tourism sector despite some progress in the last few decades (albeit that this progress has been patchy and uneven within and across different geographical, cultural and historical contexts). In a United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Global Report on women in tourism, published in 2010 it was found that 'women in tourism are still underpaid, under-utilized, under-educated and under-represented' (UNWTO, 2010: p. ii). Yet the UNWTO in the same report argued that tourism still represented one of the best means through which women could become empowered particularly in developing countries. We recognised that seven years after this report was published there has been insufficient change in the circumstances of women in tourism in a general sense, although one can point to some case study exceptions. Even within tourism academia, recent studies have demonstrated the existence of gender inequality in leadership positions (see Munar et al, 2015; Pritchard and Morgan, 2017), demonstrating that academia, despite its laudable rhetoric of developing criticality and reflexivity, is not itself necessarily a site for more equitable practices. Against this background, we felt that serious questions still remained about the complex and interlocking factors that result in the continued disempowerment of women in tourism and which have defied any sustainable transformation.

The second impetus for this special issue was the relative dearth of investigations in tourism studies which sought to unpack the nature of gender relations through the application of different epistemological, methodological and theoretical lens. We have suggested in our introduction to this special issue that in tourism studies, rigorous academic work on gender only emerged in the 1990s (although several other disciplines and fields of study in the social sciences have been interrogating gender for several decades). Perhaps this reflects the relatively late theoretical

development of tourism as a field of study. But it could also suggest that in tourism studies we have found it particularly difficult to throw off the shackles of the wider patriarchal structures in society which have traditionally elided the specific concerns of women and which have further, ignored the importance of effective relationships between men and women for the proper functioning of the tourism system.

The five papers in this special edition have therefore provided very relevant discussions about gender and tourism from different critical theoretical perspectives and covering a range of geographical territories. In the first paper, Maliva et al disrupt traditional essentialist concepts of the Third World woman as disempowered and lacking agency. Drawing on enactment theory, they used qualitative methods to explore the ways in which Zanzibari women in tourism leveraged entrepreneurial activities to challenge religious and cultural norms and practices. By enabling Zanzibari women to speak, to recount their own lived experiences, Maliva et al have contributed to the furthering of critical scholarship which seeks to privilege the voices of black women from the Third World who have been historically silenced within tourism research. Similarly, the second contribution by Foley et al on the activities of women in the villages of the Kokoda track in Papua New Guinea, provided further support for the way in which tourism can contribute to the empowerment of women in the Third World. Through their participation in a community based ecotourism development project, Foley et al demonstrate how women of the Kokoda were able to use tourism to successfully negotiate traditional patriarchal power systems. Both of these papers have therefore provided counter-narratives to hegemonic representations of the Third World woman in tourism as 'victim'.

The discussion in the third paper by Costa et al drew on feminist economics as a critical approach to interrogate the gender pay gap in the tourism industry in a peripheral region of Western Europe – Portugal. Through interviews with women employed in tourism, they found both horizontal and vertical segregation to exist in tourism employment. This confirmed the findings of previous studies on the gender pay gap in tourism (see for example Thrane, 2008; Skalpe, 2007). However, what was interesting about this article by Costa et al was that their argument was grounded in feminist economic theory, a perspective which is scarcely articulated in tourism studies. Feminist economists have argued against the 'gendered nature of

Cartesian thought' (Nelson, 2009, p. 25) which stresses objectivity and rejects the social construction of reality. Nelson argues it is this Cartesian approach to the nature of the social world that has influenced the definition of economics as focusing on choice, a definition which views human decisions as 'radically separated from physical and social constraints...[and] ignores non-physical sources of human satisfaction' (2009, p. 32). Nelson goes further to argue that such a dichotomy (between the physical and the social) 'merely reinforces the separation of humans from the world' and what feminist economics does is to consider 'humans *in relation to the world* (emphasis in original) (2009, p. 32). What this paper by Costa et al has done is to demonstrate how one can apply feminist theorising (in this case to economics) in order to understand gender (in)equality in tourism employment. In seeking to unpack the nature of women's employment in tourism from a feminist perspective, Costa et al listened to the voices of the women themselves in terms of their lived experiences of the tourism world.

The final two papers focused on the gendered nature of arctic landscapes albeit from two different geographical contexts. The first, by Yudina et al directed our attention to British Columbia in Canada while the second by Cassel and Pashkevich explored the Nenets Autonomous region in the Russian arctic. What both papers found was that representations of these arctic landscapes were patriarchal and reproduced dominant gender stereotypes. Yudina et al went further to argue that dominant gender stereotypes were also inscribed onto the bodies of the non-human animals (specifically polar bears) which inhabit these arctic locales. Both papers have therefore contributed to furthering our understanding of the power of representation to (re)produce and (re)create northern landscapes as gendered with all the power relationships that this implies.

The common thread running through all five papers in this special issue is that they have all drawn on critical theoretical perspectives in their explorations of gender and tourism – these have included enactment theory (Muliva et al), postcolonial feminism (Foley et al), feminist economics (Costa et al) and critical discourse analysis (Yudina et al). By so doing they have made important contributions to the critical canon of tourism research and scholarship. Indeed, Small, Harris and Wilson (2017) in a bibliometric analysis of five top ranked tourism journals between 2005-2015 found

that only a very small percentage of the articles published on gender, examined this complex issue from a critical theoretical perspective. All five papers have also drawn on qualitative approaches to facilitate more in-depth understanding of gender and tourism which go beyond the superficial.

However, many avenues remain for the development of gender and tourism research and scholarship and we need to ask ourselves as Morley (2005, p. 211) has suggested 'What are the aspects of gender inequality that universally disturb and discomfort?' We discuss below some of the areas for further research that we see as imperative:

- We particularly encourage more theoretical and interdisciplinary applications. Specifically, we see the need for more interventions in the context of cultural relativism as it relates to 'women's rights as human rights', an issue which we referred to in our introductory narrative. We also propose that more research be done on how globalisation and neo-liberal policies (political-economy approaches) have affected women in tourism, and also how continued sexual abuse and violence against women is relevant in a range of tourism employment contexts including academia.
- We encourage more research into gendered representations of humans, non-humans and landscapes within tourism. In this context, we see room for explorations of the 'gendering of morality' (Dowler et al, 2005) within tourism landscapes and how an uncovering of oppressive practices might inform government tourism policies.
- We see the need to embrace increased polyvocality and intersectionality in gender and tourism narratives particularly from those from marginalised cultures, races, ethnicities, locales, languages and a host of other identifications. Such intersectional approaches would recognise the inadequacy of homogenizing perspectives which elide the importance of diversity and difference. We need to recognise in our research on gender and tourism that not all women are white, middle class, heterosexual, mothers or non-disabled. Intersectional approaches to gender are not as some would argue expressions of a 'kind of interminable negativity evident in the pile up of

oppressions with its implicit hierarchization of suffering' (Friedman, 1998, p. 20). Instead, from such intersectional perspectives can emerge a 'dialectical analysis whereby the multiplication of oppression creates its antithesis, a multiple richness and power centred in difference' (Friedman, 1998, p. 20 citing Audre Lorde).

- We see the need to embrace more critical perspectives, more innovative and creative methods. In this sense, we need to also avoid what Morley (1996, p. 131) has termed the 'insensitive application of inappropriate research methods' that has led to female, black and working-class people (and we would add lesbian, gay, transsexual and queer people) being researched only in relation to the dominant group and 'socially positioned as "other" (Morley, 1996, p. 31).
- There is also more space for work on men and masculinities because as mentioned in our introduction, much of the work on gender and tourism focuses on women and is written by women. Indeed, this point was made by Swain more than 20 years ago (in 1995) and there have only been limited attempts thus far to address this gap in gender and tourism research.

Finally, we see gender and tourism research as central to a wider political project of transformation of ourselves as researchers, of our research participants and of the very structures of our institutions and societies for the enhancement of the lives of all humans, non-humans and the planet which sustains us. But we must end with a caveat – while our project in compiling this special issue is an emancipatory one, we do not position ourselves as arbiters of the 'truth' and do not wish to replace one kind of hegemonic discourse with another which would be both counterproductive and harmful. As tourism researchers we need to be highly self-reflexive about our own subjectivities and to remember that our research is as much about our own journeys of emancipation as it is about that of our research participants.

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