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‘Doing gender’ in Critical Event Studies: A dual agenda for research

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Abstract

Purpose: To introduce critical gender theory to events studies and set an agenda for research in this area. This paper focuses on various contexts, approaches, and applications for 'doing gender' in critical event studies. It draws upon interdisciplinary frameworks to develop robust theoretical ways of interrogating issues related to power and structural inequalities in events contexts.

Design/methodology/approach: A conceptual discussion of 'doing gender' and critical gender theory and review of relevant research in this area within event studies. Adopting feminist and intersectional perspectives and applying them to events environments has potential to inform current theoretical developments and wider sector practices, and, ultimately, change the dominant heteronormative patriarchal paradigm of the experiential landscape.

Findings: Event studies has been slow to engage with gender theory and gender-aware research, to the detriment of theoretical and practical development within the field.

Research implications: A call for more gender-aware research within event studies. The goal of this paper is to galvanise gender-aware events research to centralise the marginalised and amplify feminist voices in critical event studies. Feminist and gender-aware frameworks encourage researchers to be critical and to question the underlying power structures and discourses that shape practices, behaviours, and interactions. This creates new pathways to find ways to overcome inequalities, which can improve overall events praxis.

Originality/value: The paper introduces critical gender theory as a fruitful framework for future events research. It is an under-researched area of study, representing a significant gap in ways of theorising and representing different aspects of events. We argue it is imperative that researchers take up the challenge of incorporating feminist and/or gender-aware frameworks within their research as a matter of routine.

Introduction

Gender is a social practice. It is something that is continually created and recreated through social interaction, and is an inescapable aspect of all social relations (West & Zimmerman, 1987), including those related to events, tourism and hospitality. We make sense of ourselves and others, organise societies, distribute roles and resources, and assign meaning, based in part on shared ideas about gender. Gender is a pervasive feature of social interaction and organisation, and is “a system of social, symbolic and psychic relations in which men and women are differentially positioned” (Haraway, 1991: 143). As Ridgeway and Correll (2004: 510-1) argue, gender is a multilevel system of difference and inequality, like those based on ‘race’ and class, and operates on multiple levels: “gender involves cultural beliefs and distribution of resources at the macro level, patterns of behavior and organisational practices at the interactional level, and selves and identities at the individual level”. Given its ubiquity and importance in social interaction, practices and behaviour, it might be expected that gender analysis would be integral to social research and would form an important strand of study within any discipline, subject, or field. That is not the case within event studies, which has been slow to engage with critical gender frameworks that have been developed within the broader social sciences, and has so far failed to acknowledge and examine the gendered aspects of events as social practices, cultural expressions, and places of work. We argue that this is detrimental to the development of event studies and critical examination of events management, and, in this paper, we set out an agenda for critical gender-informed research in event studies.

Morgan and Pritchard (2019) argue that the extent to which any field addresses gender critically is a useful indicator of its epistemological maturity. They find hospitality studies to be very much lacking in this regard, pointing out that gender research still does not exist as a sub-field of hospitality studies. Similarly, Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015: 88-89) describe the tourism academy as “surprisingly gender-blind” and “exceptionally reluctant to engage in introspective gender-aware critique.” Their bibliometric analysis of articles published within the field of tourism reveals a lack of engagement with gender-aware frameworks and topics, and the dominance of male voices in positions of power, such as journal editorships and professorial posts. Pritchard (2018: 145) argues that there has been too little intersection of tourism as a subject area with feminist and gender studies, which is a detriment to the growth of tourism studies. She suggests that the tourism academy offers a “hostile environment” in which to conduct gender research, listing pressures for high citations and personal career ambition as part of a multitude of factors that might dissuade tourism scholars from engaging in critical gender research, leading towards what she calls “a ‘gender-lite’ research future.” This suggests a dire future for gender research in both tourism and hospitality, and indicates a reluctance to engage with critical frameworks that are now widely used within broader fields of management and business.

If the longer-established fields of hospitality and tourism studies show minimal engagement with gender theory and research, then the same can certainly be said of event studies. The vast majority of articles published in this still relatively new academic field focus on either customer perspectives, impacts or planning and management issues and implications (Kim & Kaewnuch, 2018). The subfield of critical event studies might be expected to engage more with relevant questions of power, but has, so far, produced only a few studies that employ gender frameworks to explore issues of voice, representation, exploitation and marginalisation within events (Dashper, 2018, 2019; Platt & Finkel, 2018). In their introduction to a special issue on equality and diversity in the planned events industry, Platt and Finkel (2018, 113) argue, “It is imperative that policy-makers and organisations in the planned events sector consider how gender, equality, and diversity are managed as a legal and moral imperative. We, as social scientists, have a responsibility to inform such thinking and contribute to positive social change.” Recent texts, such as *Accessibility, inclusion, and diversity in critical event studies* (Finkel et al., 2018) and *Marginalisation and events* (Walters

& Jepson, 2019), have incorporated international gender-related research in event and festival landscapes. These edited collections bring together interdisciplinary scholars investigating a variety of diversity and equality issues, including gender issues, as they relate to events frameworks. However, these pockets of scholarship have yet to form a cohesive, significant movement that is widely acknowledged, as it is still seen to be fairly specialised to study events, let alone when it is compounded with the added 'niche' of a gender focus.

In many respects, the emergence of these collections can be seen to be following a similar pattern to that which developed within leisure studies since the 1980s (Aitchison, 1999; Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Mansfield et al., 2017), and some events scholars have built on leisure's foundations in order to find feminist pathways to advance critical event studies (Dashper, 2016; Finkel & Danby, 2018). The development of this work is still in its infancy and we hope to encourage more events scholars to follow this route and engage with critical feminist and gender-aware frameworks.

Gender studies and feminist inquiry do, however, remain marginal even within the broader social sciences and are more likely to feature in special issues or dedicated gender-focused journals than to form a routine part of mainstream publications and outlets. This suggests that gender is still seen as peripheral to core issues in subjects ranging from international relations to management (Squires & Weldes, 2007; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). However, the work of researchers in these and other fields over the last 40 years has led to the establishment of diverse and well-developed theoretical frameworks and an array of studies that show that gender is not just a variable in research but a fundamental aspect of social practice, something that is continually 'done' and performed through social interaction, with profound consequences for all of us (Butler, 2004; Sang, 2016; Ahmed, 2017). Adopting critical gender perspectives has potential to open up new lines of enquiry and debate in event studies, and will advance the field in theoretical, conceptual, methodological and practical terms.

Our contribution in this conceptual paper is to introduce some core aspects of critical gender theory to event studies to demonstrate how this can be a beneficial framework to improve praxis in the field. Additionally, our goal is to set an agenda for future research in this area with the intention of galvanising gender-aware critical events research to centralise the marginalised and amplify feminist voices in critical event studies. This is a woefully under-researched area, representing a significant gap in understanding different aspects of events. We begin by introducing the concept of 'doing gender' and related ideas of undoing and redoing gender. We then go on to suggest ways in which these concepts could inform gender-aware research in events, including more in-depth explorations into gendered safety and perceptions of safety in event and festival spaces, as well as festivals and events as sites of disruption and challenge. In the final section, we set out an agenda for feminist and gender-aware research in events, and highlight the potential of such work to advance events research and practice towards greater 'epistemological maturity' (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019).

Conceptualising gender

This paper is a call for more feminist and gender-aware research in event studies. In this section we set out what we mean by these terms, before moving on to introduce one theoretical way of conceptualising gender which we believe has potential to contribute to enhancing understanding and theoretical sophistication in the events field.

The word 'feminism' sometimes provokes strong reactions, can be overtly political, and is better thought of in the plural - feminisms - as there are numerous ways of thinking that could fit under this umbrella term. In the context of research, we understand feminist perspectives to share three core tenets: the belief that women, as a group, face some forms

of oppression and exploitation; the pledge to uncover and understand what causes and sustains gender-based oppression; and, the commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression (Maguire, 1987; Sang, 2017). Feminist events research thus includes a commitment to both uncover gender-based oppression and look for ways to overcome it. The term 'gender-aware' perhaps carries less of a political slant than that of feminism, but it also signposts a commitment to recognise gender as a core aspect of social life, and integral to all interactions and practices, including those related to events.

There are multiple ways in which gender can be conceptualised and associated with different theoretical frameworks and approaches. In this paper, we focus on the concept of 'doing gender' and some of the ideas that have stemmed from this approach. We acknowledge that even within the framework of 'doing gender' there are multiple positions that can be adopted which place emphasis on different issues and lead to different kinds of arguments, such as ethnomethodological frameworks or post structuralist positions (see Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). Therefore, in this section, we do not claim to offer an exhaustive introduction to these complex ideas, but rather aim to signpost key theoretical insights which can be developed and applied within event studies.

In 1987, West and Zimmerman's seminal paper profoundly altered the ways in which gender was theorised, shaping gender research in subsequent decades. Following the work of Garfinkel (1967), they conceptualised gender as a 'doing' rather than a 'being', something that has to be (continually) accomplished through social interaction rather than a natural essential property of individuals. West and Zimmerman (1987: 127) define gender as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category." Consequently, gender is something we 'do' constantly, although often unconsciously, and is an ongoing activity or 'doing' of everyday life. This means that gender is relevant in every social situation and is an important part of social structures, hierarchies and power systems (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014).

An important aspect of 'doing gender' is "accountability to sex category membership" (West & Zimmerman, 2009: 116). That is, individuals are continually engaged in interactional work and our gender performance is under constant assessment and judgement. Non-conformity to culturally specified ways of 'doing gender' risks severe social censure, and so the ways in which we 'do gender' are relatively consistent and narrow, based on restrictive, usually heterosexual, gender norms (Butler, 1993). Consequently, male and female, masculinity and femininity only make sense in relation to one another (Paechter, 2006). They are defined in binary terms as complementary and opposite, yet inherently unequal. The idealised features of masculinity and femininity (even if rarely embodied by individuals) provide a symbolic rationale for the hierarchical relationship between men and women at all levels of social organisation from the individual, to groups and organisations, to global relations of dominance (Schippers, 2007).

Importantly, within this theoretical framework 'gender' is not taken as a proxy for 'women'. We are all gendered subjects, bound by hierarchical gender norms. These can be both constraining and empowering, for men and for women in different circumstances, although given the hierarchical nature of gender power relations the ways in which these effects are experienced is likely to differ between men and women. Research has focused more on the implications of doing gender and gender power relations for women, perhaps because women are more likely to suffer discrimination, marginalisation and censure in relation to gender. In contrast, men and masculinity are often presented as the norm, largely ungendered and unaffected by gender power relations, and gender is seen as a 'women's issue'. In much the same way as whiteness frequently goes unmarked and questions of 'race' and ethnicity are usually not acknowledged to be relevant to the experiences and practices of white people (Fletcher & Hylton, 2018), men and masculinity often remain the silent, but powerful, norm. That said, restrictive gender norms can also be very damaging for

men and boys, as many researchers have illustrated (Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2017). To date, little research in event studies has focused on the gendered experiences of men and how masculinities and doing gender may affect men and boys in event spaces.

If gender is not something that one 'has' or 'is', but is rather something that is 'done', then this means that there is the possibility that gender can be 'undone'; that is, gender norms can be challenged, troubled and ultimately transformed to become less restrictive and non-hierarchical (Deutsch, 2007). Theoretically at least, there exists the possibility that gender can be done differently; thus, researchers need to remain open to identifying moments of gender trouble in order to "trace the moments where the binary system of gender is disputed and challenged, where the coherence of the categories are put into question, and where the social life of gender turns out to be malleable and transformable" (Butler, 2004: 216). Gender is usually conceptualised as a binary - male/female, masculine/feminine - yet increasingly people are self-identifying as non-binary, opening up possibilities to undo gender and challenge deep-rooted systems and ways of thinking. In some situations, and in some social, cultural and geographic contexts, it may be possible for people to challenge the gender binary in this way, and this is promising for how we might seek to dismantle that binary and begin to 'undo' gender. Events may be one forum through which such challenge is enacted.

This revolutionary potential exists within the theoretical framework of doing/undoing gender, and it is important to imagine a more gender-equal world. However, research suggests that gender norms are incredibly persistent, and, although we have seen profound shifts in gender relations in the last fifty years, the hierarchical relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity, remains largely unchanged. Connell's (2010) study of the workplace experiences of transpeople illustrates the persistence of binary, hierarchical gender norms even in a context that would seem to challenge entrenched ways of thinking about and doing gender. She concludes that "the accountability structures that maintain gender may shift to accommodate less oppressive ways of doing gender, but they are never entirely eradicated" (Connell, 2010: 32). West and Zimmerman (2009) concur, arguing that the notion of 'undoing gender' implies that gender can be done away with, when empirical evidence suggests that we are very far from this being a possibility. They prefer to see challenges to gender norms, practices and structures as a 'redoing of gender', as they fail to fundamentally disrupt the gender binary that contributes to male hegemony. Yet, this does not mean that such challenges are not important, even if they do not result in radical change. As Westbrook and Schilt (2014: 53) argue, "Like all other norms and social systems, people create gender. Challenges to the gender system modify rather than break it." Event researchers may thus need to be alert to ways in which seemingly small actions and practices begin to redo gender in less oppressive ways that "may, in concert with other actions, begin to 'modify' the gender system" (Dashper, 2016: 364). The concepts of doing, redoing and undoing gender have been applied to a wide range of practices, including craft beer consumption (Chapman et al., 2018), religion (Darwin, 2018) and divorce (Waltzer, 2008), but have yet to be engaged with in critical event studies.

Our discussion here briefly introduces the critical theoretical framework of 'doing gender', which we believe has potential for application in the field of event studies. Critical gender theory is complex, and the ideas encompass much more nuance than our brief discussion here suggests. We have set out some of the core aspects of this theoretical framework, and in the next sections we consider how this could be used to inform studies in events research.

Events as gendered spaces and practices

When thinking about the intersections of events and gender, both empirically and operationally, it is useful to consider how feminist and gender-aware approaches can be applied to events and event practices. Although there had been a tendency to confine

feminist event study to specifically feminist events, such as Ladyfest (O'Shea, 2014), Riot Grrrl festivals (Pavlidis, 2012), and lesbian womyn festivals (Browne, 2011), there has more recently been a shift to expand this view to include all types of events of different scopes and sizes, not only those that would be considered gender-related based on content and design. For example, this includes popular music festivals (Coyle & Platt, 2018), Olympic Games (Matheson & Finkel, 2013), international conferences (Henderson, 2016), and so forth. As part of examining the 'doing', 'undoing', and 'redoing' of gender in event spaces, the gender-aware researcher must ask, how are gender identities re/constructed in festival and event spaces? How are performances of structural inequalities being expressed in experiential environments? How might events provide space for disrupting and challenging normative ideas about gender? As Morgan and Pritchard (2019: 38) suggest, "Gender research encompasses our emotional, embodied, sensory experiences and expectations." This includes, but is not limited to, a focus on intersectional analyses of event case studies, examinations into the ways ritual is intertwined with power relations; analyses of emotional labour, symbolic meaning, identity politics; and attention paid to inclusions/exclusions. In line with feminist research more broadly, methodological approaches are usually qualitative, often auto/ethnographic, and try to take into consideration an ethic of care for both researcher and participants.

As Said (2005) states, "Gender-based inequalities are linked to society, politics, history and culture and to power relations between men and women rehearsed across different historical and cultural contexts" (in Morgan & Pritchard, 2019: 40). Thus, event spaces can also be considered as sites where inequalities are performed, re/negotiated and reiterated. By entangling people and places, event spaces can be considered reflections of or responses to societal norms at specific times and locations. Events are imbued with meaning, symbolism, and significance. We can learn a lot about the cultural architecture of a society by the way people gather and celebrate. Ephemeral and bound by physical geography, festivals and events are positioned to both develop and disrupt relationships amongst individuals and communities as they share experiential spaces. Investigating performances and participation in event landscapes allows for insight into who and what is considered important - and unimportant - and how this may manifest in collectively held beliefs and values.

Yet, for every inclusion, there is exclusion. As allegedly liminal spaces open for transformation and escapism, events are often viewed as sacred spaces linked to the building of social and cultural capital (Platt & Finkel, 2020), where utopian versions of society can be played out and the world can be 'turned upside down' for a temporary period of time (Stallybrass & White, 1986). However, this can be contested as idealistic and ignoring the lived realities for many women and minorities, whose experiences of prejudice and marginalisation do not disappear when entering contemporary event spaces. Indeed, it can be argued that hegemonic structures and controls still govern most cultural festivals. Festivals and events are often regarded as spaces of rupture; yet, like the societies they represent, they are not entirely free from the (re)production of cultures of (in)equalities (Fletcher and Hylton, 2018). An example of this is illustrated in Danby and Finkel (2018)'s work about Texas rodeo, where they found that traditional dualities between men and women and men and nonhuman animals were being reinforced through the performances at a heritage event, with an emphasis on masculine power, toughness and domination. This can be seen to be a reflection of the ranching way of life historically found in Western America which is expressed in the event space of the rodeo as a nostalgic and romanticised view of society, based on heteronormative ordering (Danby & Finkel, 2018).

Gendered safety in festival and event spaces

Gendered safety and perceptions of safety in event and festival spaces has a tremendous impact on individual experiences amongst marginalised groups. Recently, there have been more and more accounts in the international media about sexual harassment and sexual

violence at events, specifically festivals, and the links to drugs and alcohol consumption. In the UK, a 2018 YouGov study found that two in five young women (and approximately one in five young men) had been subjected to unwanted sexual behaviour at festivals (Fileborn et al., 2018). In Spain La Manada (wolf pack) case in 2016 attracted international headlines regarding the sexual attack by five men on a woman at the San Fermin 'running of the bulls' Festival in Pamplona. Almost overshadowing the horrific accusations of sexual violence, this case opened discussions and debates regarding women's physical presentation and performances of emphasised femininity (Connell, 1987) during Spanish festivals, and the policing of women's bodies and actions in public spaces, even during times of festivity (Beltran & Calvet, 2020). There was a victim-blaming mentality in response to this case (Silvestre et al., 2020). It was suggested that although men can be given allowances to be drunk and disorderly this is not a luxury afforded to women, who must stay sober to keep up their guard, restrict their attractive appearance, and not 'invite' unwanted attention from men in order to protect themselves from violence (Baddock, 2017). It is only in the past few months that scholars have begun to use this example in their research to examine gendered safety issues and sexual violence in an event space. Much of what has been published already has focused on violence against women in Spanish mass media surrounding this case (Revelles-Benavente and Jimenez Arroyo, 2019; Angulo Egea, 2019). There is potential to develop this scholarship to consider how such horrific cases reflect and reinforce culturally dominant norms of gender, and position men and women, and their bodies and actions, very differently in the public space of a festival.

Perceptions of safety, and how people feel in festival and event spaces, is an area of emerging scholarship, which has been led by criminologists, often through gender deviant leisure lenses. For example, a study by Fileborn et al. (2020) based in Australia found that men more consistently said they felt safe at music festivals compared to women and LGBTQ participants. They found that drug and alcohol consumption and overcrowding were the factors participants most associated with feeling unsafe at a festival, and such experiences profoundly affect women's ability to fully participate in music festivals. A study by Durham Law School found that more women than men are concerned about sexual harassment and safety at festivals (Marsh, 2018; Bows et al., 2020). Some festivals have responded to the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and assault (and ensuing negative media coverage) by having women-only areas and other segregationist strategies (Beaumont-Thomas, 2017). However, this falsely assumes only men are perpetrators of sexual violence and only women are victims of it. Also, isolating women from mainstream festival experiences does not solve wider societal issues concerning safety in public spaces. Instead of separating men and women in events environments, properly addressing structural inequalities and normalised violent behaviour in society, as well as training staff and introducing zero-tolerance policies in festival spaces, would be more impactful (Fileborn & Wadds, 2018; 2020). Organisations, such as Safe Gigs for Women, seek to educate festival goers about creating safer festival environments for all genders.

Feminist and gender-aware approaches to the study of safety at events and festivals place these issues in wider debates about the policing of public space, gendered violence and attitudes to men and women, their bodies and behaviours (Platt & Finkel, 2020). Providing 'safe spaces' for those who feel vulnerable in such places is only a short-term solution that fails to address the deeper underlying causes, and a feminist perspective could add to understanding in this area by considering why some people feel unsafe at some events and festivals, while others feel free to act in ways that would normally be prohibited. The ways in which gender is done in these spaces is revealing about wider gender power relations, and is connected to broader debates about equality, safety and personal and social responsibility.

Festivals and events as sites of disruption and challenge

Although festivals and events can be sites for the (re)production and performance of dominant masculinities and femininities, they also can be sites for disruption, where different ways of doing gender can be played out. A key example of this is LGBTQ Pride Parades. There is a growing body of scholarly work on Pride and its empowering potential for gender identity awareness (Lamond, 2017), disruption of gender norms and activism (Caudwell, 2017), and embodied sexualities (Markwell & Waitt, 2013). However, there also are critiques of such events with regard to the increasing commercialisation of larger, more well-known Pride Parades, which can “create geographies of (not) belonging” (Johnston & Waitt, 2015: 116). It is argued that the more sponsorship and other capitalist involvement in Pride, the more mainstream these events have become (Browne & Bakshi, 2013). This commercial imperative can limit some of the disruptive potential for these events to nurture creative ways of doing gender and effective ways of undoing or redoing gender due to the emphasis on commoditization of lifestyle and related material culture (Grabher, 2020).

Societally marginalised communities are not always constrained in event spaces, especially if these events are expressions of their own culture and heritage, where they can feel more of a sense of belonging and community cohesion. For example, Watson and Khan's (2017) research on the Leeds West Indian Carnival asks questions about how events respond to contemporary multicultural political discourses, who can occupy these event spaces, and what are the spaces available for women. Indeed, spaces occupied by women in festivals and events, especially those based on traditional rituals and cultural heritage, can often be insightful about gender norms and what kinds of gender performances are considered acceptable for that society or community. The ways gender is done and redone in these kinds of celebratory sites are often routes to catalyse new conversations, and sometimes even social change, concerning the roles and expectations of women outside of the temporary time frame and limited arena of the event. As Warren (1993: 175) points out, “under the guise of fantasy, popular culture can make statements about social needs... It can remain sublimely outside conventional structures of logic and always just beyond the reach of dominant forces. Fantasy's role in popular culture is as a forum where fundamental social anxieties and concerns can be expressed.”

Additionally, Up Helly Aa, the Viking-style fire festival on Shetland in Scotland, is an example of the re-negotiation of event spaces by and amongst women. A traditionally exclusionary event space, where only men and boys could engage in festival activities (King, 2010), Up Helly Aa is now under pressure to open up more festival spaces and participatory roles - as opposed to just supportive cooking and cleaning roles - for women, due to grassroots campaigns for equality. A reason this is still seen by some as controversial is that the festival is viewed by many in Shetland as a meaningful expression of their distinct identity based on a (reconstructed) Viking heritage. This collective sense of self includes preconceived gender dualities, which have manifest themselves into Up Helly Aa traditions. Any alteration in festival proceedings is seen not only as an affront to Shetland heritage, but also a challenge to personal and community identity (Finkel, 2010). With the added dimension of gender, the entanglements between identity, place, and events become even more complicated and affective.

Along with these examples, possible ideas for improvements with regard to gender equality in events involve designing them in more inclusive ways which do not disadvantage or endanger participants. For example, Aborisade (2020) suggests something as straightforward as providing better lighting and transport options can make the difference in deterring gendered violence. Beyond festivals, the MICE industries are also becoming more aware of the need for fairer accessibility (Henderson, 2018). Walters (2018) suggests a tripartite approach to improving conference organisation with a focus on physical accessibility, financial accessibility, and cognitive accessibility (i.e. mental and emotional wellbeing). However, Dashper & Finkel (2020) argue, “There is yet to be full agreement in the industry of how this is to be adopted as a priority.”

It is clear much more research is needed from feminist, gender-aware and intersectional perspectives to understand fully the diversity of experiences in event spaces and the in/equality being designed, practiced, and re/negotiated. Considering how events are consumed, what is performed, and whose voices are and are not valued has potential to provide insight into complex relationships in the social world and better understanding of experiential and often emotional encounters.

Doing gender in events research: An agenda for research

As Finkel et al. (2018: 1) suggest, “It is only recently that issues of under-representation, marginalisation, and intolerance have begun to emerge in the critical events discourse”, arguing that, despite recent popular and media attention to some of these topics, “research focusing on non-hegemonic populations as they relate to events environments still is in need of further exploration.” Addressing gender ordering and structural inequalities in event spaces requires more than tokenism or short-term interventions (Ahmed, 2017; Platt & Finkel, 2018). In an effort to progress event studies beyond a narrow focus on managerial perspectives and dominant narratives of privileged groups, we propose an agenda for future research to draw events gender researchers out from the shadows and gendered events research in from the margins of academic scholarship.

Events research has been criticised for focusing predominantly on operational and management issues at the expense of theoretical and critical depth and development (Getz, 2007; Jago, 2012; Dashper, Fletcher & McCullough, 2015). Platt and Finkel (2018: 113) called for “robust empirical research and debate which is underpinned by engagement with critical theory” in an effort to move beyond the current emphasis on event industry trends and developments. Rojek (2013:18) argues that “in focusing on the operational, technical aspects of event design, publicity and management, event professionals unwittingly obscure the relationship of events to deeper, wider questions of history, power, personal gratification, control and resistance.” Our discussion in this paper illustrates that events research has potential to respond constructively to this critique, and, indeed, many researchers are increasingly adopting critical theoretical frameworks and insights from outside the events field in order to consider questions of power, representation, and responsibility. Feminist and gender-aware perspectives have an important role to play in this and can help advance the field of event studies in numerous ways.

First, in response to the critiques mentioned above, feminist and gender-aware events research can encourage scholars to adopt more critical and theoretically-rich approaches to the examination of events and their roles in societies. At the moment, gender is a largely neglected area of focus in event studies; however, our discussion above illustrates various ways in which this could be overcome. As we have argued throughout this paper, gender is omnipresent and relevant in every social interaction; therefore, to fail to engage with feminist and gender-aware perspectives is to fail to acknowledge a fundamental aspect of social life. Currently, much events research remains largely gender-blind, and, thus, fails to account for some of the many ways in which experiences, practices, and associated meanings are performed, reinforced, challenged, and sometimes disrupted in and through events. For us, this represents a significant gap in ways of theorising and representing different aspects of events. We argue it is imperative that researchers take up the challenge of incorporating feminist and/or gender-aware frameworks within their research as a matter of routine.

Second, feminist and gender-aware frameworks encourage researchers to be critical and to question the underlying power structures and discourses that shape our practices, behaviours, and interactions. As we discuss above, feminist research shares a commitment to not only identify (gender-related) inequalities, but also to look for ways to overcome some

of those inequalities. It is thus inherently critical, prompting researchers to question whose voices matter in a particular context and whose do not, who has authority to act and make decisions and who is disenfranchised, whose interests are taken into account and whose are overlooked. As we explain above, doing gender is not always an active choice or something of which we are consciously aware. As we do gender constantly in all of our social interactions and gender is a key way through which we become intelligible to others, it is easy to overlook the salience of gender and the ways in which it shapes practice, especially in event contexts, which are often associated more with freedom, hedonism, and enjoyment. Gender and power may not seem obviously relevant in such circumstances. Adopting feminist and gender-aware frameworks ensures that event researchers are sensitised to these issues and are attentive to how gender may shape encounters and practices in subtle ways that may not always be immediately apparent. Gender is an important aspect of social interaction; but it is of course not the only one, or even always the most important in a given situation. Intersectional analyses encourage consideration of how different axes of power, such as gender, 'race'/ethnicities, age, sexualities, and class intersect, shape and have an impact on individual and collective experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). This encourages more complex ways of theorising identity, (in)equality, and oppression (Nash, 2008). Intersectionality, like gender, has yet to be fully engaged with in the events field, but we are hopeful that scholars will increasingly adopt such perspectives to increase theoretical sophistication, deepen critical analysis, and advance understanding of how events both shape and reflect wider social power relations.

Third, events management and studies is a popular subject with students and a growing sector of the global economy (Events Industry Council, 2018). In line with feminist perspectives, we believe that as educators we have a responsibility to our students to engage them in real-life issues which they may encounter in their personal and professional lives and to help prepare them for some of those situations. Gender-aware events research will help educators bring the importance of some of these issues into the classroom, prompting critical discussion and debate with students and hopefully helping them develop a broad and nuanced understanding of the industry in which many of them will forge their careers. As Getz (2007: 6-7) argued more than a decade ago, "The professional event manager has to have more than skills... They also have to possess a well-developed sense of ethics and a professional responsibility." Being cognisant of how gender shapes event sites and practices, and the experiences of working within the global events industry, is an important aspect of helping develop students who are 'philosophical practitioners' (Tribe, 2002) as well as practical and strategic thinkers. Our students will go on to shape the events sector and an early introduction to feminist and gender-aware perspectives, as well as other critical positions, may help develop their approaches to events in ways that can challenge current inequitable practices to the benefit of all.

As we have discussed here **in this conceptual paper**, there are many gender-aware events research topics that have potential to be theoretically and methodologically developed further for establishing a more robust body of work. Exploring contemporary critical issues, such as those related to identities, emotions/affects, mobilities, and how these intersect with event production, design, and consumption are relevant areas for further investigation. Other current topics exploring less mainstream communities, such as those involving accessibility and disabilities, have also gained traction lately (Walters & Jepson, 2019; Finkel et al., 2018). Much of the critical events research in this area has drawn on advancements from sport management and leisure studies, which has meant that the focus has mainly been on sporting events; e.g. athletes' experiences at the Paralympics (Misener et al., 2015; McGillivray et al., 2017). However, festivals and conferences are also becoming sites of inquiry with regard to improvements and appropriate adjustments for staff, performers, and attendees with physical and mental impairments. This not only progresses more critical events research, but it also can inform better, more widespread inclusive practices.

Drawing upon more creative and perhaps disruptive methodological approaches, such as those already adopted in sociological and geographical research, also can promote more interesting and impactful gender-aware events research findings. Innovative approaches to ethnography, including digital ethnography, as well as adopting visual, mobile, and participatory and co-creation techniques could provide fresh insights when interpreting the fluid and entangled spaces of many festivals and events. Although these kinds of approaches often feature in academic conference presentations and occasional special collections, it is imperative to 'normalise' this kind of research, so it is not considered niche and, thus, cannot be easily sidelined. This is one of the key drawbacks to this area of study at the moment. Both gender-focused research and also, to a certain extent, events-related research are often subordinated in masculine-dominated research agendas, which centre on traditional canons of established disciplines mainly written by (white) men. This patriarchal priority perceives women academics and the work they produce to be inferior and fails to recognise how gender shapes all aspects of social life. Even men who engage with feminist issues and topics viewed as belonging to women's concerns, such as emotions, marginalisation, and discrimination, are often perceived in this way (Sang et al., 2015). Moreover, critical event studies, due to its primarily qualitative, symbolic, and affecting attributes, is sometimes considered trivial and obscure by those in long-established subject areas and disciplines. This can cause the events scholar, let alone the feminist events scholar, to wonder where their work fits in the current publishing landscape with its constructed hierarchies. Therefore, more widespread critical engagement with inequalities in festivals and events contexts is needed to build legitimacy and improve both scholarship and praxis.

Although there has been a recent swell of media attention and public interest in gender inequalities, we have shown that research specifically focusing on gender as it relates to events environments still is in need of further exploration. The contribution of this paper has been to set out disruptive (yet feasible) research agendas for future opportunities to encourage more gender-awareness in critical event studies and, by implication, adoption of gender-aware and feminist approaches and theoretical frameworks in events research. By investigating the doing, undoing and redoing of gender in events spaces, researchers can gain a better understanding of the experiential social worlds they are studying. Critical event studies, through employing interdisciplinary, intersectional approaches, can contribute to knowledge through understanding the ways in which events-related gender, equality, and diversity policies have an impact on people and places. It also has the potential to further discussions related to power relations, sites of challenge and resistance, and models of good practice. Through the cultivation of a more robust body of gender-aware research, not only can critical event studies as a subject achieve greater 'epistemological maturity' (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019), but it also can contribute in a meaningful way to positive social change.

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