GESTHIMANI MOYSIDOU, Edinburgh Napier University
PHIONA STANLEY, Edinburgh Napier University

Theorizing gender in homestay settings: Mobilities and/as power relations

ABSTRACT
A contribution to critical work in hospitality, this article theorizes gendered power relations in various homestay settings. As such, it is an endorsement of – and response to – Shelagh Mooney's call for critical problematization of 'gender', not least as a lens to better understanding the hospitality experiences of – and research approaches to – marginalized people, including women but also LGBTIQA+-identifying people. Discussed are the following ideas: intersectional identities and positionalities as these relate to gendered power relations; the role of mobilities in host/guest conflicts and resolutions; and the contested axiologies, epistemologies and ontologies that may undergird host–guest conflicts. We draw on our empirical research among homestay guests and hosts, including qualitative interviews with au pair, Workaway and WWOOFing hosts and guests and ethnographic research undertaken among Spanish-language learners in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Across all contexts, we focus on women's and LGBTIQA+ people's experiences in homestays – as part of wider mobilities – as prisms through which to understand the ways in which gendered identity work is undertaken and gender roles may be performed, negotiated, constructed and – above all – contested in hospitality settings more broadly as well as the associated mobilities, affordances and constraints. As such, this article contributes to the critical hospitality literature by queering gender in this context, understanding it as something one does/performs rather than is.

KEYWORDS
critical hospitality; gendered power relations; mobilities capital; LGBTQIA+ identity; WWOOF; au pairing; volunteer tourism

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, gender has been defined and problematized rather narrowly within hospitality. As Mooney (2020: 1862) notes, as recently as 2018, the notion of 'female leadership' – as if a binary of biological sex were sufficient to explain the complex notion of 'gender' – went largely untroubled. Such a naturalistic view, in which sex and gender are conflated and perceived as static characteristics, fails to consider societal/institutional norms, gendered practices and, importantly, intersectional identities. This is why Segovia-Pérez et al. (2019) have examined the intersection of the individual, interactional and institutional-level barriers to progression in hospitality workplaces, proposing an intersectional level of analysis within a model of gender in a social structure. Nevertheless, their focus remains 'female executives'. Scholars writing outside of hospitality have deepened and pluralized gender, proposing paradigm- shifting notions such as gender as performance (Butler 1990, 1993), gender as hegemony (Connell 2005), critiques of gender within compulsorily able- bodied heterosexuality (e.g. McRuer 2006) and queering as onto-epistemology (Ahmed 2006). This is to say: there is a great deal happening at theoretical and empirical levels in disciplines

conceptually adjacent to hospitality, including the idea that gender affects all people and, indeed, that the category of 'woman' is rather more complex than the 'female leadership' or 'female executives' labels suggest (e.g. Peters 2019). For this reason, hospitality scholars have begun to highlight the need for greater engagement with and complexity surrounding gender within hospitality research (e.g. Morgan and Pritchard 2019). Similar gaps have also been identified in hospitality-adjacent areas such as events (Dashper and Finkel 2021) and tourism (Chambers and Rakic 2018; Wilson and Chambers 2023; Figueroa-Domecq et al. 2015). We need, in other words, to '"normalise" gender-aware research, so that it is not considered niche and, thus, cannot be easily sidelined' (Dashper and Finkel 2021: 79). In this vein, Lucena et al. (2021) explore the intersections of gender and sexuality in tourism and hospitality academic discourses, and, like Mooney (2020), they highlight the hegemonic masculinity that is considered normative in tourism and hospitality employment, practices and academia. Similarly critical, Ong et al. (2022) have found that there is often a homogenization of different identities in studies related to LGBTIQA+ experiences in tourism, with the diversity within the group and intersectionality rarely being considered. These are important beginnings.

There is more to do, however, and this article therefore aims to broaden thinking about gender within critical hospitality studies and to cross- pollinate between disciplines; to this end, we draw on work from applied linguistics and gender studies. We understand gender studies (alongside queer theory) as an 'intersectional project of problematizing relationships of gender, sexuality and power, [which work] to displace heterosexuality as the normative mode and structure for gendered and sexual relationships' (Holman Jones and Harris 2019: 3). Gender research thus que(e)ries putatively feminine and masculine characteristics – 'women are nurturing', 'men are strong' and so on – that are projected onto sexed human (as well as animal) bodies before being reified by seemingly common-sense discourse (Appleby 2019), which is why applied linguistics perspectives are useful for analysing how power operates.

We discuss these ideas using examples drawn from empirical critical hospitality data created within two qualitative studies of homestay experiences. The first was conducted among homestay hosts and guests undertaking au pair and/or work-exchange homestays, including Workaway, HelpX and WWOOFing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), in many different national contexts (Moysidou 2020a). The second study considered commercial homestays in Central America in which guests were predominantly North American young adults staying with local families as part of Spanish-language immersion programmes (Stanley 2017, 2021). The present article is therefore theoretical in nature, as our aim is to deepen the theorizing of gendered power relations within hospitality. However, we purposefully sample from both data- sets so as to offer an account of gender and power relations that has yet to be told within the hospitality literature.

While hosts' perspectives are included in this article to illustrate their perceptions of the encounters and, specifically, the expectations for their guests, we focus primarily on the experiences of homestay guests. They are at once powerful and powerless, conceptualizable as nasty colonizers and/or as relatively powerless transnational workers and learners – always both/either, their identities and perspectives ever emerging and assemblage-dependent (Manning 2013). For this reason, we refer to Alistair Pennycook's (2001, 2021) problematizing practice – drawn from applied linguistics and discussed below – to guard against a structural determinism that would attribute, too simplistically, ideas about who is or is not powerful based on assumptions by those outside of the groups themselves.

Our second framing heuristic is Urry's (2007) work on mobilities and Mimi Sheller's (2018) extension into mobilities justice. A mobilities framing describes not just the practicalities of human bodies moving within and between social spaces but also the underpinning imaginaries that enable or constrain such movement. Within both mobilities affordances and constraints, there are the tangible and the intangible realms. It may therefore be that movement is enabled practically (such as by the possession of a 'useful' pass- port) and/or intangibly (such as through participation in a social script in which travel confers cultural capital by 'broadening the mind'). Conversely, movement may be curtailed by social imaginaries in which overseas travel is, at best, illegible and, at worst, associated with risk, desperation and illegality. Similarly, gendered social roles (Butler 1990) may constrain people, such as where normative expectations limit women's mobilities. The inequity of affordances and constraints helps explain the presence of certain young people in certain homestay settings with certain power relations framing their experiences. Mobilities justice allows for an unpacking of relative power relations and an exploration of the meanings of mobilities to those involved.

The article is structured as follows. First, we locate the study within what has hitherto been said about gender within the hospitality literature and, widening the focus, what has been said more generally about how power operates in hospitality settings, including homestays. The literature review then turns to a theorizing of power relations and/as mobilities. We problematize the definition of 'gender', expanding it to encompass hegemonic and performance-related accounts, including LGBTIQA+ identities. We then give a brief account of the research methods used in producing the two studies discussed in this article before presenting findings from both studies. These are iteratively theorized before the article wraps up with notes on where these ideas might go next.

We write as two White, European women who each, in various ways, both fit and do not fit gendered (and broader societal) norms (see Moysidou 2020b for a discussion of intersectional identities and fitting in, or otherwise). Neither of us is partnered. Neither of us is a mother. We each live alone. In these senses, we do not fit in. In other ways, though, we are conventional: both homeowners and both employed as academics, we present conventionally as (cis-)women (e.g. Gesthimani – long hair; Phiona – painted toenails). One of us (Gesthimani) is in her late thirties, a life stage in which deviance from the couple norm (Roseneil et al. 2020) might still, just, be seen as a safely temporary, pre-couplehood phase (Hopper 2019). The other of us (Phiona) has just turned 50 – an age at which long-term spinsterhood, in and of itself, may be deemed queer (Cobb 2012) – although she also identifies as asexual-spectrum Queer (e.g. Przyblo 2019; Stanley 2022). We are also people who travel, have stayed in many homestays of one sort or another and who constantly question the gendered power dynamics therein. We therefore approach the data discussed in this article very conscious of our own positioned – at times non- normative – readings.

LOCATING THE STUDY

Gendered power relations, with which this article concerns itself, is a compound noun phrase whose elements need unpacking if we are to shed light on its meaning. In common with genre, gender as construct traces its etymology from the Latin genus, meaning type. Precisely as a genre describes a particular type of text – with its own conventions, expected layout and common inclusions/ exclusions – so gender describes a particular type of identity work with its own expected norms and conventions. Judith Butler (1990) critiques the existence of an ontological core to gender roles, instead positing that gender is socially constructed. Individuals perform their identities in relation to extant roles; genderfuck, for example, is

playful, conscious critique that pushes back against normativities (Elder 2016). However, gender roles themselves are beyond the control of any individual. Thus, people who identify and perform their identities within the gendered category of 'woman', for example, may behave in ways that are more (or less) 'nurturing', more (or less) competent at trad tionally 'domestic' work, and more (or less) 'outdoorsy', for example. Gender is sufficiently broad as to be able to accommodate myriad performances. However, where individuals do not adequately conform to established roles, society closes ranks, reinforcing gender boundaries by rejecting as 'develop- mental failures or logical impossibilities' (Butler 1990: 24) those who perform gender 'wrongly'. This is to say that, although gender roles evolve, they do so slowly, and when presented with putative deviance, judgement tends to fall on individuals.

While much of the academic hospitality literature focuses on commercial domains, viewing hospitality as an economic activity, this study explores the private domain: hospitality in the home (Lashley 2000). However, Lashley's domains are not mutually exclusive, as home-based hospitality can also be commercial. Bed and Breakfasts are the most common example, wherein hospitality towards strangers is payment-conditional (Lashley and Lynch 2013). On the other end of this spectrum are encounters like Couchsurfing, where the stranger is offered home-based hospitality for a generalized type of imagined, future reciprocity (Germann Molz 2012). The home-based hospital- ity explored in the two studies discussed here lies between these extremes, being neither entirely commercial nor 'pure' hospitality. Guests and hosts each want something from the encounter, which takes place in the home – a social semiotic place more than a physical structure, full of meaning, emotions, relationships and memories (Heller 1995).

The home is a contested setting when it comes to gendered power relations. It has been constructed as a feminized space of care and nurture, yet women have historically had increased responsibilities and, simultaneously, limited power over it, with second-wave feminist writers characterizing the home as a place of oppression and tyranny (Madigan et al. 1990). Mallett (2004) argues for a more nuanced analysis, critiquing the limiting view of studies focusing on gender that do not acknowledge how intersectional identities and issues of class, age, sexuality and race can affect experiences and perceptions of the home. While this problematization is valuable, it remains the case that women are often considered responsible for care and domestic labour, as these duties have traditionally been connected to femininity and motherhood (e.g. Hess and Puckhaber 2004).

Hospitality is a complex phenomenon, with encounter-specific power relations stemming from multiple, shifting identities and roles; this is no less true when home-based hospitality is offered to strangers. The notion of welcoming strangers into one's home has been widely analysed in disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology and sociology. The focus is usually on Lashley's (2000) social domain, that is the performance of hospitality in the public space, such as countries' treatments of asylum seekers and immigrants. In theorizing ethics and control in such settings, Derrida's writings have been influential, and of particular relevance to the present study are the Derridean concepts of unconditional or absolute hospitality – that is welcoming strangers with no restrictions or expectations of reciprocity – versus conditional hospitality, namely imposing constraints on guests (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). Derrida recognizes that one cannot exist without the other, arguing that they are 'both contradictory, antinomic and inseparable. They both imply and exclude each other, simultaneously' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 81). As a result, acts of hospitality and acts of hostility are intertwined: the very act of welcoming a person into one's home is an expression of control and conditionality, as it denotes sovereignty over the space and a level

of power over the visitor (Caputo in Leung and Stone 2009).Yet the host needs to retain this power if they are to offer hospitality to the guest (Derrida 1999). Thus, power and control over the space and, to an extent, over the guest are necessary conditions to the offering of hospitality. However, power wielded by each side is far from static or rigid.

Power relations have been theorized within critical applied linguistics, and Pennycook (2001) distinguishes between emancipatory modernism and problematizing practice, among other models. Emancipatory modernism is exemplified by those critical discourse analysts whose scholarship is overtly political, aiming to 'uncover the operations by which the political nature of language is obscured and to reveal the political implications' (Pennycook 2001: 36). However, this approach constructs a binary of oppressor versus oppressed, framing goodies and baddies in terms of capitalist accumulation, for example. The result is a structural materialism that problematically attributes group belonging and inter-group oppression from the outside. But power is much more complex than such an approach can account for. Thus, Pennycook proposes problematizing practice as a nimbler model of power relations; this is the framework that we apply in this article. Problematizing practice seeks to interrogate power relations in action, that is, as an ongoing and agentic practice. Thus,

> [T]he questions have to do with the social, cultural, and historical location of the speaker. But rather than assuming that the speaker is already marginalized as a member of [a given group] and looking for signs of that marginalization in the speech, this approach seeks a broader understanding of how multiple discourses may be in play at the same time. What kinds of discursive positions does the speaker take up? How does the speaker position herself or himself, and how may they also be positioned at different moments according to gendered and cultural positionings?
>
> (Pennycook, 2001: 44)

We need, therefore, to be aware of strategic positionings, hybridities, context and more. We cannot ascribe relative power to categories without taking account of living, breathing people who may be, variously, long-time home- stay 'parents' or nervous new hosts opening their homes for the first time. Conversely, the living, breathing people may be those turning up, hopeful and young and not yet proficient in the local language, as a first-time au pair, or they may be mobile transnationals enjoying the opportunity to experience yet another new place via a homestay. In framing this study, therefore, we take an assemblage view in which power relations are emergent and constantly shifting.

METHODS

The present article explores how we might theorize gendered power relations within homestay hospitality. To do this, we present and retheorize data from two extant studies, purposefully sampling so as to offer an account of gender and power relations that has yet to be told within the hospitality literature. Study 1 (Moysidou 2020a) was conducted from 2017, exploring the negotiation of rules between hosts and guests in au pairing, WWOOF, Workaway and HelpX exchanges. In such settings, the overlap between work, homestay and cultural exchange – with added aspects of education and interpersonal relationships – blurs the roles and subsequent power relations. A lack of formal contract, ethical accountability and clear communication can often exacerbate these issues and lead to tensions between the two sides (Wengel et al. 2018). The study set out to find how people negotiate the rules of such exchanges and how their perceptions of power affect their reactions when faced with uncertainty and/or perceived unfairness during these encounters. The support of au pair agencies and national WWOOF organizations led to the identification of the first few

interviewees; then through snowball sampling a total of 50 participants (26 hosts and 24 guests) were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews took place either face to face or online, based on the participants' locations. Participants were from the United States (N = 21), Western Europe (N = 20), Eastern Europe (N = 5), Australia (N = 2) and Asia (N = 2), and the exchanges took place all over the world. The sample consisted mainly of women (N = 38), an unsurprising proportion due to the gendered nature of au pair work; studies have found that the vast majority of au pairs are women (Dalgas 2014) and, on the hosts' side, it is usual that mothers/wives are charged with managing au pairs in order to 'compensate' for their working outside the home (Anderson 2007). The interviews resulted in 64 hours of recordings, which were transcribed and analysed thematically. The findings suggested that negotiation strategies ranged from indirect and passive approaches (when the person feels they have limited power in the relationship) to more direct and assertive approaches (when the perception of power is high). However, power relations were mutable, resulting from an amalgamation of elements including contextual roles but also identity factors, subjective notions of fairness and interpersonal relationships between hosts and guests.

Study 2 was conducted over a three-year period, from 2013 to 2016, predominantly in Guatemala and Nicaragua (Stanley 2017). Its purpose was to understand the extent and processes through which young westerners devel- oped intercultural competence during a Central American sojourn lasting several months; their activities included studying Spanish, volunteer work and tourism more broadly. Most such experiences were 'bundled' to include home- stay component/s, often constructed as a means of fast-tracking Spanish- language proficiency through immersion. One hundred and twenty people participated directly – in interviews and focus groups – including 85 sojourners, with participants from the United States (N = 63), Western Europe (N = 14), Canada (N = 5) and Australia (N = 3). In addition, 35 Central American homestay hosts, teachers, volunteer coordinators/NGO staff and language school directors participated. In total, the study was based on 104 hours of audio recordings and 407 pages of field notes, its data coded and analysed inductively (although see Stanley 2019, 2020 for a discussion of the postcolonial and other problematics of 'data' and its analysis in such settings). The main finding was that, unless mediated, intercultural competence did not generally develop. Instead, most sojourners – particularly those from the United States – arrived with firm imaginaries of Central America's putative backwardness, poverty and violence (borne of US media discourses), with sojourns selectively curated/consumed to confirm existing paradigms.

The original studies were disseminated in 2020 and 2016, respectively, and the data remains theoretically as well as empirically current. This is because developments such as the #MeToo movement and increased public awareness of gender-related issues have led to social change in many western countries and, to some extent, some non-western countries. These have also generated backlash, however, with a notable rise of anti-feminist movements as well as far-right political ideologies focusing on 'traditional family values' (Maricourt and Burrell 2022; Graff et al. 2019) that have led to a regression of women's rights from Iran to the United States (Mittelhammer et al. 2023; Glenza et al. 2022), for example. Thus, the underpinning gender issues discussed here have become all the more pressing since the datasets were first presented. However, the examples themselves may be different now (or not, and in unknowable ways), and future researchers would do well to revisit these themes to find out how guests' gendered homestay experiences may have changed in light of recent events. What we do know is that the closing of borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic put homestays – and data collection – on hold for a few years, making these datasets rather more temporally recent than would other- wise be the case. For this

reason, there is merit, still, in reconsidering these stories with the aim of theorizing more deeply in this ever more important area.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is iterative, moving forward and back to and from the data, to exemplify and deepen thinking on the core area of focus: gendered power relations in homestay settings. We begin by considering power relations broadly before focusing on gender specifically. In each case, we cite and briefly discuss data excerpts, with quotes labelled as follows: pseudonym, role if not guest, home country, country of homestay, year of interview, which study.

Power Relations and Im/mobilities Justice

This section presents data segments in which participants tease out power relations in their homestay experiences. Together, the excerpts tell a complex story of mobilities justice, relative status derived from economic and other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), historical and contextual power relations, and various forms of dis/comfort in private homestays.

> They are giving me food, a room to live [in], they are paying me [as an *au pair*]. So …I feel like I owe them for those things. …So that's why I'm shy. I know they wouldn't kick me out of the house, I know [laughter]. But I felt like, 'What if I complain about something and I make the things uncomfortable?' Cause I have to be here, I cannot leave. …So that's probably why I haven't complained about little things.
>
> (Ane from Spain, England, 2017, Study One)

> We had only *au pairs* from, from, let's say, in German we say *Dritte Welt* [Third World]. Yeah, … they improved their CV, they get German [language proficiency], they have the, what they earn is mostly more [than] they earn in their countries, so they took the money back, they have some good money in their own country.
>
> (Jan, *au pair* host from Germany, Germany, 2017, Study One)

> Sean: I really think we might have had a distorted experience [of WWOOFing] because we're White Australians with a car, with our own tent, and money. As opposed to maybe other people. … People might be more exploitative of foreign nationals; we've heard plenty of examples.
> Irene: We've heard some shocking stories.
> Sean: Plenty of examples where people are not quite as mobile, they haven't got their own car, and they're taken out into the bush [i.e. rural areas] somewhere to work, and they've got no way of escaping. We're lucky, we're lucky in that respect.
>
> (Irene & Sean from Australia, Australia, 2017, Study One)

> One of the things that comes up frequently [in conversations] is that we have so much freedom. Opportunity. We get to travel everywhere. We get to see more of their country than they do. It's weird right? I do feel kind of terrible about it.…like, somebody doesn't even have enough money to visit their parents, you don't want to tell them, 'I'm going to Matagalpa next weekend'. … I have a lot of guilt about it.
>
> (Beth from USA, Nicaragua, 2014, Study Two)

These excerpts speak to guest-host power disparities relating to perceptions of immobility ('I cannot leave'; 'they've got no way of escaping'; relative earnings) versus mobility ('we get to see more of their country than they do'; 'we're White Australians with a car…').

In addition, participants commonly described a sense of feeling child-like, having chosen immersive, homestay experiences in unfamiliar lingua-cultural settings. This was often noted among those undertaking unfamiliar work in exchange for homestay experiences:

> [As a WWOOFer, you need] adaptability and willingness to not know what you are doing. You have to take on the place of being the unknowing child. You don't know the work, you're not familiar with it, even though you're, like, an adult who probably feels capable in whatever they're doing outside of WWOOF. Going there you're new to everything. Being ok with, you know, being corrected and instructed and all that.
>
> (Zoe from USA, USA, 2017, Study One)

> When I was *Facetiming* my mom, I said, 'I feel like a child'.…I've done well academically and I would consider myself a well-read, articulate English speaker. Then to come into a country when I can barely [speak Spanish].…I feel like a child when they're talking to me and I can't understand what they're saying or they have to use really simple terms and talk very slowly. I don't know the impression that I'm conveying to them. I'm sure it's not becoming [laughs]. It's very humbling.
>
> (Tina from USA, Nicaragua, 2015, Study Two)

These are some of the framing power differentials in which guests may (perceive themselves to) be trapped and/or infantilized, or, conversely, relatively 'free'. In turn, these inspire feelings of being 'lucky' and perhaps also 'guilty'.

Power Relations and LGBTIQA+ guests

Dis/comfort is also a recurring theme around the specific issue of values, and many guests commented on hosts whose values differed substantially from their own. For example:

> [My host mother] is really racist.…She was describing [a student] who had previously stayed with her.…For the purpose of the recording, I will describe to you what I am doing. She did the thing where you…stretch your eyelids to demonstrate somebody who is from East Asia. She was like, 'Yeah, she was', and did that to say she was of Chinese origin.…Which was very ironic since she also complained about racism in the United States against Hispanic people. Then she said quite a few things about Indigenous Mayan people.
>
> (Alice from UK, Guatemala, 2015, Study Two)

> Interviewer: Any other house rules [in your *au pair* homestay]?
> Faye: No smoking. No excessive alcohol consumption. No male company.
> Interviewer: Do you mean not staying overnight, or not at all?
> Faye: Not at all. It was written down. And it was the first time that I saw it and I'm like 'Ok, not that I am — how about female [company]?' Yeah, I mean, what can I say?
>
> (Faye from Greece, USA, 2017, Study One)

While these values mismatches —overt racism and covert heteronormativity— were doubtless confronting experiences, they were perhaps less threatening than instances where the hosts' values statements —and/or assumptions by the guests of what hosts' values *might* be— pertained directly to guests' sexualities and performed gendered identities:

> All my Latino friends in the United States, told me, 'Latin America is an extremely conservative place.…You're really going to want to be careful about how you demonstrate your identity as a gay person'. So, I just said, 'I'm not', quote, 'flaming' unquote [laughs]. 'I can pretty much…do the straight thing'. But I didn't realize [that] everybody that you interact with on a significant level including my homestay

> [family], is just like, 'My friend saw you and she thinks you're super cute or she wants to meet you'. Or 'We need to get you a *novia* [girlfriend]'.…A *novia*, not a *novio* [boyfriend].…At first, you're just like, 'Yeah, I can do this. This is fine. Acting's easy'. But then…it starts to really wear you down.…It's like you're a pillar of sandstone or something. It's just a tide coming in and out, and in and out, the tide…it's wearing you down. It's making you weaker and weaker. It's a really slow process but you can feel it.…Do I have to be a straight person for the next two months?
>
> (Sam from USA, Guatemala, 2015, Study Two)

> The big thing is I can't tell anyone about my [male] partner. We actually just got married.… I don't know what my [host] family's religious background is, but I do know the teachings of most of the churches in Guatemala where they're the crazy evangelical religions or the Catholic Church on social issues is like, you know it doesn't really favour my orientation. Not only that, but like it can actually be like interpreted in really weird ways around children and stuff.
>
> (Kyle from Canada, Guatemala, 2015, Study Two)

As Kyle suggests, homosexuality may be equated in Guatemala with paedophilia; indeed, this is a perspective recorded with Guatemalan participants in the data set. Perhaps wisely, then, Kyle stays closeted throughout his homestay experience, as does Sam. But in Sam's quote we see the lived effects: he feels worn down, like 'a pillar of sandstone'. This is poignant and terribly sad. However, set within a larger context of power relations —in which Sam is steeped, as a history/politics major at a US university— he feels unwilling to complain:

> I don't feel like you can go into a place that's not yours, where you're a foreigner and where your [USA] passport gives you incredible privilege…and your country has a terrible legacy [of overthrowing elected governments in the name of 'fighting communism'], I really don't feel like you can go into a place and lecture people. Even though I feel uncomfortable, after a while [of] my [host] family [saying], 'You need a *novia'* [girlfriend]…at the same time I still don't feel like I'm in a position where I can be like, 'Okay, you need to shape up'.…As much as I would love to see a flowering of LGBT acceptance in Guatemala and Central America…I think it's kind of the white man's burden and is it the *gay* white man's burden if I come in and lecture…the people I interact with on a daily basis to say, 'Okay, this is my identity [as a gay man] and my identity's getting accepted in my country and you need to accept it'?
>
> (Sam from USA, Guatemala, 2015, Study Two)

Sam's position is nuanced. While he struggles with the 'wearing away' he experiences as a gay man enduring his host family's (well-meaning) heteronormativity, he is also aware of the interplay between, on the one hand, his potential to advocate for 'a flowering of LGBT acceptance' and, on the other, the risk that this is a colonizing discourse. The complexity of power relations, bundled with LGBTIQA+ identities, make these situations gnarly indeed.

Performing and Evaluating Gendered Identities

However, in many instances, the subaltern *is* very clearly identifiable, as the (potential) guest. Indeed, where there are issues with guests' (anticipated or real) gendered performances, some potential sojourners did not even get to *be* homestay guests in the first place:

> There was a hostel in…Serbia, and the host said [in a message] well, 'We don't allow couples, because we don't want the girl getting jealous if the boy in the couple is talking to female customers'. So, I just replied back saying, 'That's totally discriminating against couples. It also is so patronising'. As, like, we've been in a relationship for, like, four years, there's no issue if [my boyfriend] is talking to any female, regardless if it is a customer or a friend. And I just thought, 'You're supposed

> to be a business owner who's looking to take on volunteers and that's your attitude? …Like, what kind of hostel are you running if that's your preconceived idea of couples?'. I wrote this back to him and I also complained to Workaway …So, I just think, if that's the way they treat couples, how do they treat LGBT+ Workawayers? Like if they have a narrow mind like that. There's no inclusiveness there.
>
> (Pauline from Scotland, Serbia, 2017, Study One)

> I found that Bulgarians, most of them were really young girls looking for a way to go abroad, didn't look serious. Even the way they would present their profile, the pictures that they would put. I couldn't even understand how they could think that the mother would find that appropriate [laughter]. So, I thought 'Ok, they might have more luck with single fathers rather than a family'. It was more about that.
>
> (Natasha *au pair* host from Bulgaria, England, 2017, Study One)

In these deeply gendered quotes, potential guests are rejected before they even set foot in the homestay. In Pauline's case, the issue —beyond the infantilizing terminology of *boys* and *girls*— is that the host assumes damningly stereotypical gender roles within which women behave jealously towards their partners, who are necessarily men. Wishing to avoid such a scenario, the host rejects Pauline and her partner outright. Natasha's quote points to a rather more subtle —although no less rigid— expectation of gender performance, as she makes the generalization that 'most' young Bulgarian women perform their gendered identities through photographs that she deems 'inappropriate', judging them to be non-serious and suggesting that they might appeal only to 'single fathers'; that is, she condemns them as too sexualized.

Hosts' filtering processes did not just affect women, however. Men were also discriminated against by hosts who deemed *their entire gender* insufficiently hardworking, 'domestic', nurturing, and/or 'easy on the eye':

> I'm trying to get women as well [as men]. Men are good, but I think they want, some want a free holiday and someone to cook their meals and provide their food and their internet. I'm not the free holiday.
>
> (Rachel, WWOOF host from Australia, Australia, 2017, Study One)

> After filtering [the *au pair* profiles], I decided I didn't want a male. …I['ve] got two young daughters in the house, and I'm not suggesting anything but you have to filter criteria. … Also, I guess that there was going to be a degree of domesticity about the role as well. There would be, kind of, washing, possibly a bit of ironing if they had any skills, cooking involved as well. So, in a way, not wanting to sound too traditional, but that these skills were more likely to be inherent in a female rather than a male. And, also, that there would have to be a caring element to it as well. A natural instinct for care for these youngsters.
>
> (Ellis, *au pair* host from Ireland, Scotland, 2017, Study One)

> [The *au pair* I was going to choose, she] had to be easy on the eye. I didn't want, you know, uhm, well, not putting it delicately [laughter]. Yes, but you've got the picture.
>
> (Nick, *au pair* host from Scotland, Scotland, 2017, Study One)

The process by which hosts and guests find and choose one another is thus fraught with stereotypes, rigidities, and heteronormative assumptions, all originating from unexamined expectations as to how gendered identity *should be* performed.

Such expectations followed participants into the homestay experiences. There, with the relative power of actually *being* there (rather than excluded by search criteria), guests were

able to demonstrate skill and agency even within settings in which they had, on paper, very little power. This included inappropriate sexual advances and comments:

> [My *au pair* host mother's boyfriend] sometimes, when she was away, he sometimes just texted me like, 'Oh, so how are you? Do you want to have a drink with me?', I was like 'Oh not really'. … Like, he was alright, I didn't have any problem with him, I'm not saying that. … But sometimes he was just too friendly. Not like, he would not, like, touch me or anything, nothing. He would not do anything bad, no. Sometimes just the words like 'Oh, you look good in this,' and... Like, yeah, it's nice when someone tell[s] you, but there had to be some boundaries in this.
>
> (Kasia from Czechia, England, 2017, Study One)

> Irene: There was one place where we stayed in their house [as *WWOOFers*] and it was all fun, all good but towards the end of the stay, I think we only stayed for a week. Towards the end of the week, I just, I don't know why, there was maybe one or two comments from the husband that felt a bit aaah—
> Sean: —Made her feel a bit uncomfortable.
> Irene: Yeah, a bit uncomfortable, like I'd take my jumper off and he'd say something. It was just …a bit weird. Like nothing too forward or anything. It was only once or twice but I sort of was like 'Oh, I'm ready to go I think' [laughter]. It was getting a bit weird. I don't know what it was.
> Sean: Yeah. Again, like, comments which probably wouldn't be acceptable within a workplace. Not fully, not full-on sexual harassment but, yeah, I think, yeah, different people can take it different ways.
> Irene: Just a bit bizarre. I don't know. … [laughter] it was just a bit weird.
>
> (Irene & Sean from Australia, Australia, 2017, Study One)

Sometimes, however, where guests failed to conform to anticipated gender roles, and also where they did not strategically navigate the discrepancies between their own performance and expectations,, they —and/or their gendered *type*— were negatively evaluated:

> Sean was out…doing all the boy jobs and whatever, and I was pretty much a housemaid [laughter]. … I was just vacuuming, washing and making lunches and not really WWOOFing, not organic-[farming]. I think we did a day of weeding. And we helped with some fencing and things like that, but I was pretty much a housemaid [laughter]. I was really over it. We might have actually left a few days early because of it. It wasn't… what I was up for. WWOOFing needs to be farming. But it was sort of a situation I couldn't really say anything.
>
> (Irene from Australia, Australia, 2017, Study One)

> [T]he girls are the best [laughter]. I mean they're, again I don't know if it's because maybe I'm the age that I could be their mother. That maybe there's, with the boys, a little bit more [of a feeling] like they don't want me telling them what to do or asking them to do things. … I found it much easier working with the young women, they just seem much more willing to do whatever and [they're] enthusiastic and generally interested in the farm and garden work.
>
> (Niharika, WWOOF host from USA, USA, 2017, Study One)

The first quote here speaks to gender rigidity, in which Sean undertook physically demanding farm work while Irene was expected to be a 'housemaid'. As Irene notes, the problem was not the work itself, simply that it was not as described ('WWOOFing needs to be farming'). Although less obvious, the second quote describes rigidity that is just as problematic. Even as

Niharika says she prefers young women, she maligns them, as her comment is founded on normative gendered performances in which women are (or should be) politely compliant.

THINKING WITH THEORY

It is clear that wider power relations frame the homestay experiences discussed above. This is a question of what we might term 'mobilities capital', that is Bourdieu's (1986) work on *forms of capital* brought to bear on Urry's (2007) mobilities model and Sheller's (2018) mobilities justice. The result is shown in Illustration 1. The guests' (varied and plural) perspectives are complexified by a web of assemblage-specific power relations that can be theorized into four quadrants: tangible versus intangible affordances (enabling mobilities and thus, contextual power), and tangible versus intangible constraints (which limit power).

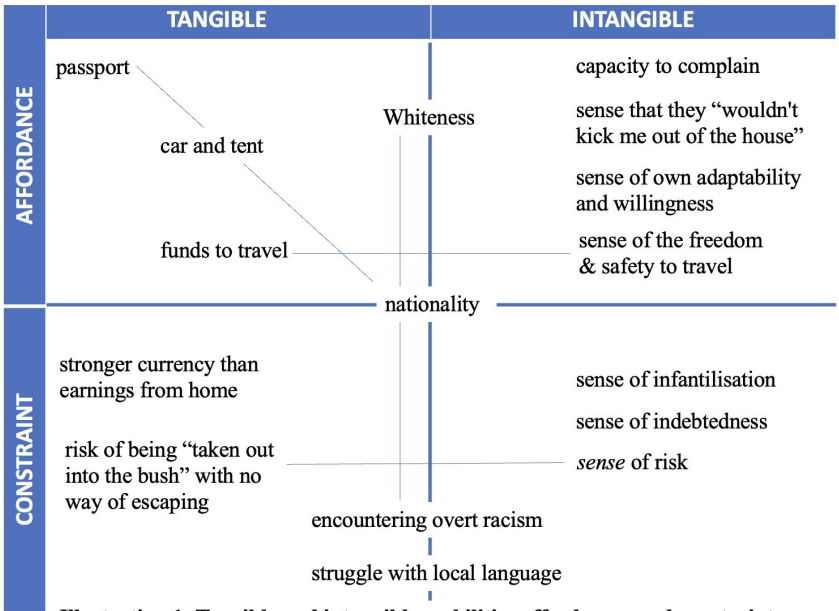

Illustration 1: Tangible and intangible mobilities affordances and constraints

As shown in the top left quadrant, tangible mobilities affordances (e.g. accommodation, cars, and money) mean that guests are not beholden to hosts, so they can leave if things go wrong (or, indeed, even if they do not; part of power is the *choice* of whether or not to stay). Tangible affordances, then, enable guests' (potential) mobilities, which are proxies for relative homestay-setting power.

However, it is not just about *tangible* affordances and constraints. Just as powerful are guests' own *imaginaries*, that is, their own sense of relative power. These are intangible affordances. In the top right quadrant, then, we see mobilities-enabling imaginaries. Knowing how to complain, and feeling that the complaint will be acted upon, are latent forms of power. So, too, is the sense of one's own adaptability and willingness (and thus, one's desirability as a homestay guest who is also a worker), and the sense of safety: these allow guests to relax without feelings of precarity. Thus, although guests have been positioned as necessarily powerless in the face of hosts' relative power (e.g. Derrida, 2000), when framed by wider mobilities capital, host-guest relations become rather more nuanced.

Power is not only in guests' hands, of course. The bottom two quadrants of Illustration 1 show constraints on homestay mobilities. Thus, we see precarity and risk, again binarized into the tangible and intangible. On the left, there is the lure and perhaps the necessity of greater earnings —which Jan identified as an issue primarily for guests from the so-called *Dritte Welt* [Third World[1]]. There is also a very real physical safety risk for guests who have, quite literally, 'no way of escaping' if they are without their own transport and are beholden to hosts in remote places, such as the Australian bush. Again, too, guests' own imaginaries play a role. Those who feel indebted and/or infantilized are stripped of agency, resulting in a sense that they 'cannot complain' (as Ane noted), or that they feel humbled by their own struggles with the local language (as Tina experienced). Similarly, the very real risks of being powerless in situations outside of their own control may translate into a *sense* of risk, and thus the tangible and intangible constraints may compound one another.

Between the intangible and the tangible, there are also the inter-linked factors of passport, Whiteness, and nationality and, related, overt and covert racisms and linguistic struggles. Sam's American nationality and passport, for instance, are affordances that are both tangible—he needs no visa for Guatemala— *and* intangible: Guatemala is steeped in a long history of US military meddling, resulting in a sense that Americanness *is* power. So, too, is Whiteness, which means that when Alice (who is White British) encountered anti-Chinese racism she felt shocked, even though there was little direct effect on her. While this paper is not primarily focused on race, it would be irresponsible not to note that Whiteness appears to be a powerful form of cultural and symbolic capital for guests. Race is largely invisible in much of our data, although this suggests not that it is unimportant but that the predominantly White participants may not realize the extent to which Whiteness opens doors. It is our strong recommendation, then, that these studies be repeated among homestay guests of colour.

In the meantime, the interlinked, tangible-and-intangible factor of nationality *also* straddles the affordance-or-constraint horizontal line, because one's nationality may be either/both a constraint and/or an affordance, and either/both tangible and/or intangible. This explains why Sam's (American) passport conferred great symbolic and practical power even as the (young) Bulgarian (women) guests' nationality worked against them. There is also a gendered component to such intersectional identities, and it is to these that we now turn.

[1] This is a direct translation of the interviewee's own chosen term and not the authors' choice of wording.

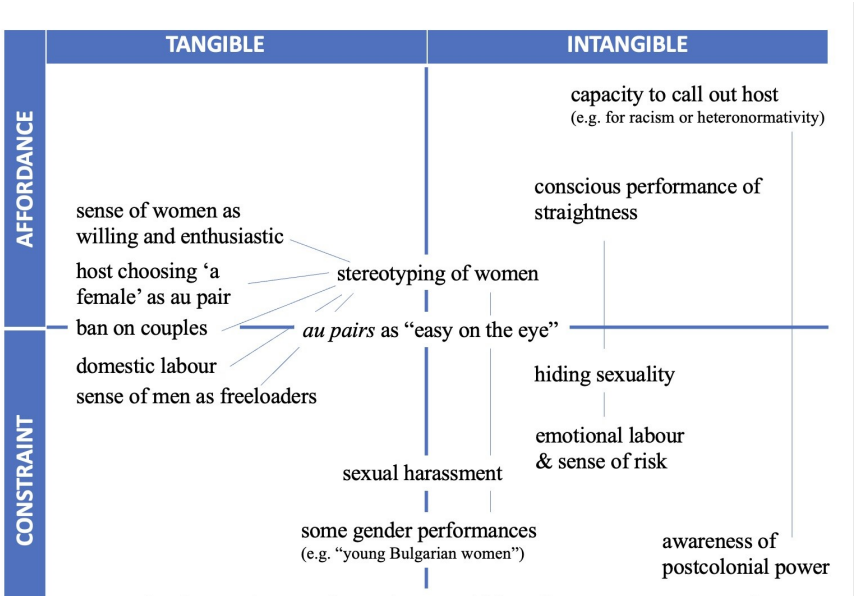

Illustration 2: Tangible and intangible mobilities affordances and constraints *as related to gender*

In Illustration 2, we contend that beyond the general power relations of im/mobilities justice (shown in Illustration 1), there are specifically *gendered* ways in which power operates in homestay settings. As discussed above, Dalgas (2014) found the vast majority of *au pairs* were women, while Anderson (2007) found that women hosts tended to manage *au pairs,* and Lynch (2005) found that hosting in small family owned Bed and Breakfasts tended to be seen as women's work. We should perhaps be unsurprised, then, at the stereotyping of women in homestay contexts, including those in which work is exchanged for accommodation. Given that the majority of homestay guests in both studies were women, reductive stereotypes about 'domesticity', willingness, and enthusiasm —as well as negative stereotyping about young men's putative freeloading and lack of capacity to undertake domestic labour— worked in most working guests' (i.e. women's) favour. Thus, it falls into the (upper) affordance box of Illustration 1. While problematically over-coded and reductive, such stereotyping serves to enhance women's homestay mobilities, provided that they do not mind being seen as 'housemaids'. However, where individuals fail to live up to such stereotypes, are they rejected as 'developmental failures or logical impossibilities' (Butler, 1990: 24)? It seems so. Gender is performative, after all, and the existing social categories are those into which guests' performances must either fit (as Irene's did, largely submitting to the 'housemaid' role) or not fit (as the over-sexualized Bulgarian 'girls' apparently did not, never even getting to *be* homestay guests, as their photograph-mediated gendered performances were deemed too sexualized and insufficiently 'serious').

Of course, though, gender is so much more than second-wave feminist critiques of women's domesticity. Drawing again on the Butlerian model of gender-as-performance, we see —in the top right quadrant— the positions that Alice, Faye, and Sam strategically and variously take up against their hosts' heteronormativity and overt racism. All make use of the intangible affordance of making choices, whether through critiques to an interviewer (Faye), complaining to the homestay-organising agency (Alice), or the deployment of strategic identity work to 'do the straight thing' for his homestay audience (Sam). In Sam's case, though, the emotional labour of such a performance is more difficult than anticipated, and what begins as power-imbued agency becomes a 'wearing away' of identity, sandstone-like.

Thus, while both Kyle and Sam undertake conscious performances of straightness, they are burdened by the emotional labour and the sense of risk that they find in the toxic closet.

This is compounded by Sam's concerns about his potentially re-colonizing presence in Guatemala and the relative power accorded to his US nationality. He notes that, while elsewhere he might 'lecture people…[in pursuit of] a flowering of LGBT acceptance', there is a very real risk of this becoming a '*gay* white man's burden', that is, a culturally imperialist discourse. He therefore resists, finding an intangible constraint to his own power in the setting as he then struggles to reconcile his own gendered identity with his performance.

Finally, in the bottom half of Illustration 2, we see a very tangible way in which gender operates as a constraint on homestay guests' mobilities: sexual harassment. This may be physical and overt —as in the cases that Kasia and Irene describe— or it may be more subtle, such the belittling and humiliation that Pauline describes, of a homestay's refusal to accept couples on the assumption that women are 'jealous' partners.

In terms of theoretical implications, we have proposed that power relations within homestay hospitality settings are much more nuanced than has previously been described. Taking up Alistair Pennycook's model of problematizing practice from applied linguistics, we reject a model that assumes, *a priori*, that hosts are powerful and guests are powerless. Instead, we consider guests' and hosts' nuanced discourses, bringing John Urry's mobilities model to bear on the complex, intersectional power relations in homestay settings. By doing this, we have shown that mobilities seem to operate as proxy for power. This works in both general terms (as shown in Illustration 1) and also specifically as power relates to gender (shown in Illustration 2). As we have shown, the hosts do not wield all the power, and there is a great deal that guests can do to push back against hosts' sometimes troubling discourses, values, and behaviours. As our analysis has shown, gender is far more complex and interesting than some of the more reductive earlier writing in the discipline of hospitality would suggest.

CONCLUSION

This paper has theorized gendered power relations through prisms of hosts' and guests' homestay experiences in a wide range of hospitality settings in various national contexts. Starting with Mooney's critique of the parlous state until very recently of 'gender' thinking in hospitality, we have cast a wide net, drawing on interdisciplinary resources from human geography, gender studies, critical applied linguistics as well as critical hospitality. The result is a teasing out of how gender works in homestay settings: it undergirds mobilities capital and, thus, helps explain power relations within complex assemblages.

This is to say: we have begun *queering* gender in critical hospitality studies, per Ahmed's (2006) tracing of the etymology of 'queer' from notions of *cross*, *adverse*, and *oblique* and Butler's (1993: 220) depiction of queerness as a 'collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and future imaginings'. We do not see gender as a noun, then, so much as it is a verb. Gender is something that one *does*, not something that one *is* or *has*. For this reason, while it may be possible to identify powerlessness, it is important not to essentialize who is affected from the outside. Instead, we see power in homestay settings as contingent and ever-emerging. Power is also predicated largely on mobilities capital, which is why we propose Urry's mobilities model as a proxy for understanding power relations in homestay hospitality settings.

At the same time, the study is very much context-specific to these types of homestay settings and, indeed, to the specific people that we interviewed. This is to say that the generalizability here is conceptual rather than inter/intra--contextual. Mooney (2020) has suggested that one way forward for gender-focused critical hospitality studies is for them to respond to context. Therefore, the findings and discussion in this paper should not be seen as claims about all settings or people. Instead, we focus on *phenomena*, our findings an examination of power and (the doing of) gender. Guided by Pennycook's (2001; 2021) problematizing practice model, discussed above, we reject structurally deterministic readings that would attribute perspectives, experiences, and behaviours by categories (e.g. 'women homestay hosts think X'). Instead, we pluralise and problematize, drawing on Butler to view gender as rather more agentic and performative than categorical. Centring Pennycook's questions (e.g. "What discursive positions does the speaker take up? How does the speaker position herself or himself, and how may they also be positioned at different moments according to gendered and cultural positionings?" 2001; 44), our study contributes to critical hospitality literature by getting beyond the heteronormative men-women binary. By focusing on non-hegemonic masculinities and women who, in navigating their experiences, question or resist established femininity scripts (Messerschmidt and Messner, 2018), we aim to spark conversations about gender and power in critical hospitality studies.

This paper is not without its limitations. There are a number of other types of homestays that were not included in the two original studies that could provide further insights into the dynamics between host and guest in different settings and with different responsibilities, types of work and expectations. Moreover, although gender featured heavily in the original studies, it was not the main focus. If it had been, the sample could also have been more focused and, as such, inclusive of all genders, comprising of more people falling under the LGBTIQA+ umbrella, particularly trans, intersex and gender non-conforming individuals. While the ongoing relevance of the data was justified earlier in the paper, a more up-to-date set of findings could explore how the current return to "traditional values" as well as the recent rise in anti-trans sentiments and narratives may be affecting experiences of guests falling under our target group of women and LGBTIQA+ individuals.

In terms of practical implications, the findings may be of use to intermediary organisations in better understanding issues arising during these exchanges for particular groups of guests. Some of the organisations have support in place; for example, Workaway offers an Emergency Help Plan that covers accommodation if a guest faces difficult or dangerous situations with their hosts (Workaway, n.d.). While these types of contingency plans can increase guests' mobility affordances in cases of emergency, the findings of this article highlight a variety of tangible and intangible constraints that can affect the experiences of guests. At the same time, they highlight issues of gender that potential guests can be aware of and prepare for before engaging in such exchanges.

Where might the conversation go from here? As noted above, while race cropped up in our data, theorising more deeply on race and/as power was beyond the scope of this study. As a matter of urgency, then, we suggest that critical hospitality scholars consider the imbrications of gender-and-race —an intersectional compound, after Boylorn (2016), who refuses to separate gender from race— studying gender among homestay guests and hosts of colour, to understand how power relations work when overlaid with race. Evidence suggests that much more research is needed in this space. For example, Edelman et al (2017) studied Airbnb in the USA, finding that users with distinctively African-American names were 16% less likely to be accepted as guests relative to otherwise-identical White guests. However, this is not to

suggest that studies should be devised comparing Airbnb acceptance rates for men's and women's names, as this returns us to the same problematic categories —such as 'female leadership'— that Mooney (2020) rightly critiques. Instead, if gender is to be theorized more discursively —as we have shown in this paper— how might homestay guests' *contingent gender performances* be overlaid with other axes of identity, including race but also so much else?

Alternatively, scholars might turn to the thorny philosophical question of reconciling zero-sum values differences in homestay hospitality settings. For example, it is perfectly legal and culturally acceptable in many parts of the world to discriminate on grounds of gender identity/expression. As discussed in this paper, Kyle and Sam both chose to remain closeted during their time in Guatemalan homestays; indeed, in March 2022 the Guatemalan Congress passed the *La Ley para la Protección de la Vida y la Familia* (Law 5272), which expressly forbids both marriage equality and the teaching of sexual diversity in schooling. And yet, as Sam himself noted, the USA has a 'terrible legacy' of political meddling in Guatemala, therefore resisting 'lectur[ing] people' there. This pits two laudable aims against one another: decolonizing, on the one hand, and the valuing of human rights, on the other. Well beyond the scope of this paper, such questions are integral to homestay hospitality, requiring critical scholarly and industry discussion.

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