Memory-work: a method for researching women's tourist experiences

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Abstract

The lack of innovation in tourism research methods and the failure of many studies to relate theory to method has been commented upon in the tourism literature. The present paper reviews the method, memory-work, and its appropriateness for the study of women's and girls' tourist experiences. Memory-work is considered innovative and a method aligned with a feminist social constructionist paradigm. The key features of memory-work are: memories are the raw data; the subject and object of the research become one; the researcher and researched are "co-researchers"; there is a collective interpretation and theorisation of the memories; and the collective approach allows for the possibility of liberation. In the present study, adaptations to the method were required due to the selected research design and the fact that the study was doctoral research. With such amendments, the method was found to be well suited for a study which sought to uncover the many levels of themes in women's and girls' tourist experiences. Memory-work is recommended to others with a feminist social constructionist approach who are interested in the study of women and tourism. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

An examination of the tourism literature reveals that debate about tourism research methodology and methods is not high on the agenda of tourism authors. In the instances in which authors have looked critically at the current state of tourism research approaches, a number of complaints have been levelled at tourism studies. Dann et al. (1988) made the following observation of tourism research methodology:

> … in the relatively new sphere of tourism research, which is conducted under the aegis of a number of behavioural disciplines, there has been an unfortunate tendency to gloss over questions of theory and method, and a concomitant failure to acknowledge their interrelationship. As a result, "research" often falls into one of the following three categories: theoretical discourse without empirical foundation; descriptive essays which assemble a collection of impressionistic and anecdotal material; and data analyses devoid of theoretical content. (p. 4)

Dann et al. (1988) lamented the absence of a fourth category, one in which there was a harmonious interplay between theory and method. Even prior to a consideration of theory, one might add that there has also been the "unfortunate tendency to gloss over" questions of paradigm.

A further criticism by Dann et al. (1988) was the lack of innovation in tourism research methodology. More recently, Pearce and Black (1996) repeated the criticism: "new research methods in tourism as a whole have not been high in the publication stakes" (p. 419). Similarly, in arguing for greater employment of qualitative methods in tourism research, Walle (1997) claimed that this is an era in which "tourism scholarship needs to expand its toolkit to embrace a wider variety of techniques" (p. 534). The emergence in tourism studies of new paradigms, such as, feminism, necessitates a more critical discussion about appropriate methodology and a reassessment of the traditional research approaches in tourism.

The growing feminist scholarship in tourism (Aitchison, 1996; Craik, 1997; Davidson, 1996; Deem, 1996; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994, 1996; Norris & Wall, 1994; Richter, 1994; Swain, 1995) has reconstructed and reinterpreted an analysis of tourism from a gendered standpoint. Gender power relationships have been

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examined from a number of perspectives: women as employees of the tourism industry; women as hosts in the tourism destination; and women as tourists. Alongside a developing academic interest in women, the tourism industry, in recent years, is beginning to recognise women as a market segment and to respond with initiatives such as: the provision of different services and facilities in some of the more deluxe hotels; women-only tours (particularly for adventure travel); and the publication of travel guides for women (with books, such as *Women travel* (Davies & Jansz, 1990) and magazines such as *Maiden voyages*: *the indispensable guide to women's travel*). Whether the approach behind these industry changes is purely an economic one, to attract a new market segment, or a feminist approach "to bring about social change that will improve the life situation of girls and women" (Henderson et al., 1996, p. 214), management of women as tourists requires knowledge of the experiences of women. Questions need to be addressed concerning the best way to uncover women's experiences. Despite the growing interest in women and tourism, there has been an absence of discussion on appropriate methods for researching women. With a longer history of scholarship in gender issues, writers in the fields of women's studies (Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Reinharz, 1992; Roberts, 1981; Stanley & Wise, 1983) and leisure studies (Deem, 1992; Henderson, 1991; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992; Henderson et al., 1996) have examined (and continue to examine) the topic of feminist research methodology and methods.

This article addresses the concerns expressed about tourism research methodology through the examination of the research method, "memory-work" (Haug, 1987). Memory-work is considered, not only innovative but is also a method with an acknowledged relationship with paradigm and theory. With its basis in feminist theory, it is worth consideration in the study of women and tourism. The present article examines the method as it has been applied in a study of women as tourists, and their good and bad experiences at different stages of the life span. In examining women's understanding of their experiences, the study attempts to identify patterns of experience. It is relevant to the forthcoming discussion to note that the study forms the basis of doctoral research.

With the growing interest in the study of gender and tourism, this method might be of interest to other researchers examining women's experiences of tourism. Such experiences are not confined to women as tourists but include women as hosts at the tourist destination region and women working in the tourism industry.

2. Paradigm, theory, and method

An understanding of the research method firstly requires an understanding of the paradigm which is guiding the research. In discussing the research paradigm, it is important to consider the three elements of a paradigm: ontology (the nature of reality); epistemology (how the world is known, the relationship between the enquirer and the known); and methodology (how knowledge is gained about the world). The paradigm guiding the present research is feminist social constructionism.

The premises accepted in this study and which guide the method, interpretation and implication of the findings are as follows. Ontology is relativist. "Reality" is a mental intangible construction, thus, there are multiple "realities". There is a world beyond our knowing but human knowledge and meaning of this world can only ever be a construction. It is through spoken or written language or other social processes that meaning and knowledge are communicated. Constructions can never be evaluated in terms of "truth" but rather in terms of how well informed, sophisticated, accepted or useful they are. However, this judgement will vary depending upon who is making the judgement. The worth of a construction is considered relative to the context. Gender is a construction. Since members of a particular society or social grouping will share meanings and knowledge, women's knowledge or reality will be different from that of men. Amongst women, realities will differ. "Rather than there being a 'women's way of knowing' … there are women's *ways* of knowing" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 4). Societies are dynamic and within any one society meanings and knowledge change over time. Meanings and knowledge can therefore be historically specific.

With social constructionism, the distinction between ontology and epistemology, as found in positivism, no longer exists since what there is to be known and how it is known is a social construction. In the research process, how the researcher knows what there is to be known is through a process in which the researcher and "object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). The social constructionist approach considers anyone can be a "knower". However, the feminist argument is that in a patriarchal society the knowers have been men and it is their reality/realities which have been acknowledged as "truth". Feminists argue that women and their accounts have been ignored. The aim of feminist research is to acknowledge women as knowers. Not only have women been invisible as "objects" of study but so too have women's perspectives. The focus of feminist thinking is to treat gender as an "analytic category in its own right" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 128) and to try and understand how gender has been socially constructed. The focus of the present study in which memory-work has been employed is to understand how women have constructed the touristic experience.

The methodological approach of a social constructionist paradigm assumes that, in the research process,

> … constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondents … The final aim is to distill a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions (including, of course, the etic construction of the investigator). (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111)

Feminist methodology is defined by a strong relationship with feminist theory, an emphasis on representing human diversity, creating change, and an ongoing criticism of nonfeminist scholarship. Feminist research may be transdisciplinary and frequently includes the researcher as a person, frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied, and frequently defines a special relation with the reader (Reinharz, 1992). While there are certain assumptions about the methodology, there is debate as to whether the methods which emanate from a social constructionist or feminist approach are special for the paradigm or theory. In other words, is there *a* social constructionist or feminist method? Schwandt (1994), in discussing constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human enquiry, commented that, "what is unusual about the approaches cannot be explained through an examination of their methods. They are principally concerned with matters of knowing and being, not method per se" (p. 118).

Feminists argue whether or not there are methods which can be considered feminist. Reinharz (1992, p. 240), in her review of methods employed by feminists in social research, concluded that it was not the methods which could be thought of as feminist but the methodology. Henderson et al. (1996) agreed, "Feminist research is based on the outcomes of the research and not the methods" (p. 214). Nonetheless, while feminists have adopted various methods, they have tended to prefer qualitative methods. It is generally agreed that a method for women needs to be one in which women can present their thoughts and feelings in their own words rather than the words of the researcher. As Reinharz (1992) explained, "This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women" (p. 19). Belenky described her own research employing an intensive interview/case study approach, "We proceeded inductively, opening our ears to the voices and perspectives of women so that we might begin to hear the unheard and unimagined" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19). As Graham (1984) argued regarding the use of narrative in survey research, the emphasis is on the telling rather than the asking. The traditional hierarchical manipulative relationship between researcher and researched can be broken down and interviewing can be an interactive experience. With such methods, where the emphasis is on telling rather than asking, participants can choose what and how much to tell.

The literature presents the case that social constructionist methods are not unique to social constructionism, nor are feminist research methods unique to feminism. In other words, it claims that social constructionists and feminists, despite approaching the research differently from non social constructionists and nonfeminists, have essentially adopted the existing methods.

The focus of this article is an examination of a method which has *grown out* of feminist theory and a social constructionist paradigm. Contrary to the views of the previous writers, perhaps this method *is* "remarkable" and perhaps the researcher's approach *can* be explained through an examination of the method.

Appreciating the link between ontology, epistemology, methodology, theory, and method, memory-work, developed by the German feminist, Haug (1987), was selected to study women's tourist experiences as it is seen to be "tailor made" for a feminist social constructionist paradigm. As explained by Crawford et al. (1992), memory-work is "not merely a technique for data collection but includes analysing and theorizing the data, interpreting and re-interpreting them in the light of the overall theory" (p. 38). The present study represents a development of this method.

3. Memory-work

3.1. The philosophy

The method is a social constructionist method as it focusses primarily "on the process whereby individuals construct themselves into existing social relations" (Haug, 1987, p. 33). Referring to Haug, Crawford et al. (1992) stated, "the strength of her method is that it is integral to her theory of socialisation, of how persons become selves and the part persons themselves play in that construction" (p. 37). It is a feminist method in that it was developed for women. Haug (1987) explained, "Our object … involves a study of the structures, the relations within which women live and the ways in which they gain a grip on them. We are interested in the process whereby individual women become part of society – a process usually defined as female socialization" (p. 33).

Haug (1987) stressed the active participation of individuals in the "socialization" process. She emphasised, "The question we want to raise is thus an empirical one; it is the 'how' of lived feminine practice" (p. 33). The aim of memory-work as a social research method is liberation, "to counter heteronomy with autonomy, unhappiness with a struggle for the capacity to be happy" (Haug, 1987, p. 34). Memory-work is a feminist social constructionist method in that it breaks down the barriers between the

subject and object of research. Everyday experience is the basis of knowledge. Crawford et al. (1992) explained, "This collapsing of the subject and object of research, the 'knower' and the 'known', constitutes or sets aside a space where the experiential can be placed in relation to the theoretical" (p. 41).

The academic researcher positions herself with the group and becomes a member of the research group. The researched become researchers, thus eliminating the hierarchy of "experimenter" and "subject". Haug referred to the participants as "co-researchers". She defended her commitment to subjectivity against criticisms that such findings cannot be generalizable.

> Since it is as individuals that we interpret and suffer our lives, our experiences appear unique and thus of no value for scientific analysis. The mass character of social processes is obliterated within the concept of individuality. Yet we believe that the notion of the uniqueness of experience and of the various ways in which it is consciously assessed is a fiction. The number of possibilities for action open to us is radically limited. We live according to a whole series of imperatives: social pressures, natural limitations, the imperative of economic survival, the given conditions of history and culture. Human beings produce their lives collectively. It is within the domain of collective production that individual experience becomes possible. If therefore a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalization. What we perceive as 'personal' ways of adapting to the social are also potentially generalizable modes of appropriation. (Haug, 1987, p. 43)

There are, of course, limits to generalizability since individuals' experience and knowledge are constructed within a particular social context. While it is considered in the present research that the tourist experience is gendered, generalization beyond the researched group (from one social context) can only be at the level of suggestion.

Crawford et al. (1992) explained, "The underlying theory is that subjectively significant events, events which are remembered, and the way they are subsequently constructed, play an important part in the construction of self" (p. 37). The construction of self at any moment plays an important part in how the event is constructed. In the present research the focus is on the part tourist experiences play in the construction of self and the part the construction of self plays in the construction of tourist experience. Since the self is socially constructed through reflection, Haug (1987) used memories as her initial data, hence the name of the method. Memory-work has the benefit of enabling the researcher to tap into the past. As Haug (1987) argued, " … everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace – precisely because it is remembered for the formation of identity"

(p. 50). Crawford et al. (1992) referred to this act of reflection as one's self engaging with one's memories, having a conversation with them and responding to them. This is Phase 1 of the method in which the individual's reflections indicate the processes of constructions. As stated by Shotter (1984), it is through memory that "past specificatory activities are linked to current specifiability – which makes for intentionality, and gives a 'directionality' to mental activities" (p. 208). Shotter's argument for human agency is based on the ability of humans to reflect.

The method also stresses a collective examination of the memories in which theorisation of the memories and new meanings result. This is Phase 2. "The two foci of memory-work capture something of the duality of self. The self talking with itself is phase 1 and responding to itself as others respond to it is phase 2." (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 40).

Although expressed as Phases 1 and 2, Crawford et al. (1992) stressed, " … intersubjectivity precedes subjectivity" (p. 52). As they explained,

> The meanings of actions are not found in the actor's head but in the common meanings which she/he negotiates in interaction with others – both then at the time of the episode and now in reflection. The memories of events are collectively reappraised. Memory-work makes it possible to put the agent, the actor, back into psychology – in both method and theory – without falling into psychological individualism. (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 53)

Crawford et al. (1992) cited Harre's argument that "human agents are also social beings, persons. Indeed their agency depends upon them being social beings" (p. 53).

At a superficial level, memory-work has characteristics similar to other research methods, such as, critical incidents and narrative accounts (for example, oral history). However, there are fundamental differences between memory-work and other such methods in the positioning of the researcher and researched and, subsequently, the likely outcome of the research.

3.2. The procedure

There are three phases to memory-work. Crawford et al. (1992) outlined the steps in each phase.

Phase 1: A group is formed and each participant is asked to write a memory. The participants in the present study were groups of Australian, white, urban, middle-class women and girls residing in Sydney. There were four to five members per group. The members of the group were friends or acquaintances. Four age groups were studied: girls aged 12, young single women (aged early 20s), middle-aged women (aged 40s) and older women (65 + years). The middle-aged and older women

had children. The researcher was a member, a "co-researcher", of one of the middle-aged groups. For the meetings of the other middle-aged groups and other aged groups, the researcher was absent. Different age groups were studied in an attempt to gain an understanding of the social constructions of various age cohorts. To further understand the construction of tourist experiences and the construction of self, the groups were asked to write a memory at a particular age/s. All groups were asked to write a memory of a recent holiday experience, with the groups (other than the 12 year olds) also writing about experiences at specified younger ages. The specified memory was the focus for a particular meeting. The number of meetings, consequently, was related to the age of the group, with 12 year olds meeting once, 20 year olds meeting twice, the 40s age groups meeting three times and the 65+ age groups meeting on four occasions (see Table 1).

In memory-work, the specified memory is considered a trigger. Since the purpose of the method is to let the group decide the direction of the discussion, a broad topic was chosen for the trigger in the present study. With the focus of the research being the negative and positive aspects of the tourist experience for women, two triggers were chosen: (a) a positive holiday experience and (b) a negative (or not so good) holiday experience. Memory-work requires that the memories are written according to the following set of rules:

1. *Write 1–2 pages about each memory.* The writing of the memory has a number of benefits. It provides a discipline for the group, the group remembers more through writing and it gives the everyday experiences of life a status, which is considered of particular importance for women.

2. *Write in the third person using a pseudonym.* The advantage of writing in the third person is that the participant can stand back and view the memory from the outside which helps to avoid justification of the experience.

3. *Write in as much detail as possible, including even what might be considered to be trivial or inconsequential.* By asking for the trivial it is hoped to avoid an evaluation by the participants of what was important or unimportant. Such an evaluation might well be socially defined.

Table 1
Memory-work – research design

Participants	Memories at different ages			
	12 years	Early 20s	40s	65+
1. Aged 12	√			
2. Aged early 20s	√	√		
3. Aged 40s	√	√	√	
4. Aged 65+	√	√	√	√

4. *Describe the experience, do not try to interpret the experience.* Interpretation smooths over the rough edges and covers up the absences and inconsistencies.

Phase 2: The collective analyses the memories.

1. *The group meets and each woman reads her memory.* The discussion is taped. The venue for the meeting (with the exception of the 20 year olds' meetings) was the home of one of the group members. The venue for the 20 year olds, who were university students, was a small meeting room on campus. Since the group was required to engage in a task involving focussed effort, it was essential that the venue was not only a place in which the women felt comfortable, but was also an environment which was quiet and free from distraction.

2. *The women discuss the written memories.* To lead the group into discussion, it is suggested that the group might: look for similarities/commonalities in the memories and also dissimilarities; identify cliches and contradictions in the memories; and look for gaps, or, what is not being written in their memories (but which might be expected to be).

3. *The group summarises the main themes from the discussion.* This last step was an addition to the method as described by Haug (1987) and Crawford et al. (1992). In the present study, in which the researcher was not always present in Phase 2, asking the group to summarise helped to clarify the themes. When it was recognised at an early stage of the research that some groups were neglecting this rule of Phase 2, the researcher came in at the end of the discussion to ask the collective to summarise: "From your discussion, what makes for a good holiday experience and what makes a holiday experience bad?" In the present study the collective did not rewrite the memories as Crawford et al. (1992) had prescribed.

The essence of Phase 2 is the collective searching for common understanding, common themes about good and bad holiday experiences. The method in Phase 2 allows for the social nature of the construction of the memories to be realised.

The collective reflection and examination may suggest revising the interpretation of the common patterns, and the analysis proceeds by moving from individual memories to the cross-sectional analysis and back again in a recursive fashion … In this way the method is reflexive. It generates data and at the same time points to modes of action for the co-researchers (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 49).

Phase 3: There is further examination and theorisation of the collective analysis in Phase 2. In other studies (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987), the further examination and theorisation was normally the work of one of the participants with feedback sought from the collective. Due to the nature of the present research, Phase 3 was

solely the researcher's analysis of the collective analysis. Thus, whereas Phase 2 was how the collective made sense of the memories, Phase 3 was where the researcher made sense of them. The researcher transcribed the tape and related the discussion to previous discussions by the same collective and to those of other collectives (same-aged and of different ages) looking for general themes and patterns. A further analysis was made of the collective's analysis by relating it to other tourism findings, feminist theory and tourism industry practice.

3.3. Critique of the method

Memory-work was selected as a method as it reflected the researcher's conceptual approach to women's lives. It also seemed to fit comfortably with the subject matter of the research – women's holidays. It was recognised at the outset that, with a research design involving different age groups and a number of groups at each age, it was necessary to adapt the method to the existing situation. The researcher could only position herself with one collective (one group of her own age). Even where the researcher was a member of the collective, adaptations were made to the method as it has been described by Haug (1987) and the core work of Crawford et al. (1992). It was difficult to be a "co-researcher" when the nature of the research was a Ph.D. study. While acknowledging deviation from the "prescribed" method, it is stressed that the value of any research method is reflected in the relevance and quality of the findings. In the final analysis, the test of the method is to be found in the usefulness of the data. The method can also challenge the appropriateness of the research questions themselves.

Deem (1996) made the following observation:

> … holidays are a cultural form about which researchers are much more likely to hear rehearsed and sanitized narratives rather than any account which reveals conflicts, disappointments, difficulties or power struggles emerging from engendered relationships and encounters or indeed from any other source. (p. 115)

In the present study, the data that has emanated from the women's discussion groups is not only unsanitized but also complex, providing an opportunity for in-depth analysis. The two phases of the method, the individual talking to herself and the collective talking together, in most cases, highlighted the contrast between women's public (sanitized) talk and private (unsanitized) talk. The method has generated many layers of meaning from which patterns of experience can be identified. These many layers have also been repeated across groups. It has been possible, through memory-work, to trace women's and girls' constructions of the tourist experience. It is considered that this wealth of data has resulted from the method employed. If the researcher asks the participant

the correct questions and the participant responds fully, whatever method is employed will be appropriate. The difficulty is knowing which questions to ask. The findings from the present study, in which the emphasis has been on the telling rather than the asking, have presented themes which might not have been anticipated. In many cases there is no _a priori_ reason for assuming a construction one way or the other. The opposite response might have been equally plausible. Findings from the discussions of the middle-aged groups (women in their 40s) are presented here to demonstrate themes which emanated from the collective discussion and the recursive manner in which the themes came to be understood.

It was found that for women aged in their forties, the quality of contemporary holidays had little to do with such aspects as the weather, the destination, cost of the trip or quality of accommodation or service but rather the women's relationships with others and level of freedom from responsibility for others. In terms of relationships, one woman summarised the group's discussion,

> … _the key is to be selective not so much about where we go, but who we go with, and who we stay with … It is certainly evident that who we take or who we don't take has a tremendous influence on whether or not we have a good or a bad time._

While social interaction with others was important to the women, they did not want responsibility for others (either hosts or travelling companions). Through discussion with the collective, the women revealed the complexity and contradiction in their experiences. The discussion highlighted the fact that the women's decreasing responsibility for their children (as the children grew older and could go off on their own for an hour or so) was countered with a certain apprehension that danger might befall their adventuring children. They were aware that they would feel responsible and guilty if anything happened to the children. The women considered that they might be "_so busy_" relaxing, having a drink with friends, that they were putting their children's safety at risk. In other words, they could not fully relinquish the responsibility of motherhood. Their newly won "freedom" came with a price. The women's discussion of responsibility highlighted other contradictions and conflict. It was agreed that travelling with other families allowed for the sharing of responsibilities but there were also dangers in _mistakenly_ thinking that "_everyone is looking after everyone else_". As one woman said, "_It's a shared responsibility … but ultimately … if it's your kid that goes missing …_". The women, in trying to make sense of their experiences at the particular age under discussion, moved in a recursive fashion from memories at one age to memories at another age. For the women aged in their 40s, the _lack_ of responsibility they had experienced on holiday at age 12 years and at 20 years was understood in terms of the _responsibility_ they currently experienced on holiday. The

women also situated their experiences in the social context of the time and compared their own holiday experiences at age 12 and 20 years to those of current 12 and 20 year olds. Additionally, they tried to understand how their mothers aged in *their* 40s would have experienced holidays. In attempting to understand their own perceptions, the middle-aged women at times used men as a reference point, comparing their own experiences to how they imagined men would experience a holiday. They also at times made these comparisons with single, childless women.

The following discussion examines the method's components in contributing to an understanding of women's and girls' tourist experiences. The method is also evaluated in terms of the ethical issues which concern feminists.

3.3.1. Writing the memory

The benefits cited by Crawford et al. (1992) in writing a memory were evident in the present research. The writing provided a discipline for all age groups. It created boundaries around a particular experience which allowed the groups to focus on that experience. Participants reported that through writing they were able to recall far more of the detail of the holiday than if they had merely spoken the memory. Although the memory was often written just prior to the meeting, it was only rarely that a participant arrived without a written account. Not only were the women and girls committed to the task through the act of writing, but some also dedicated a considerable amount of their limited "free" time in going beyond a simple description of the memory to write an elaborate, literary account. There was mention that the written memories provided an "autobiography" which could be passed on to the next generation, a documentation of a woman's life. In writing the memory a certain status had been allocated to the everyday experiences. There were times when various members expressed uncertainty in producing a memory as the trigger appeared inappropriate for them; they could not recall having had a holiday at the specified age. However, by the time of the meeting, each had produced memories of experiences at the relevant times. It was recognised by the researcher that by specifying the triggers, the researcher was imposing her structure in Phase 1. However, while the researcher was attempting to answer particular research questions, an attempt was made to keep the triggers as broad as possible.

3.3.2. The collective

The value of the collective was that it allowed for different views to be presented and the construction of new meanings which might otherwise have been overlooked. The commonality in the experiences assisted the group dynamics. Despite the fact that the specific purpose of the meeting was not normal behaviour for the women and girls, they fell naturally into the situation and seemed to enjoy the sessions. Hohnen (1996), in her study using memory-work, reported similar findings. This naturalness was evident in the group's apparent dismissal of the Phase 2 guidelines and, at times, the rule to summarise the discussion. Whereas the women and girls found no difficulty in following the rules in Phase 1, suggestions for Phase 2 were often ignored, either because they were too difficult to follow or, because they were a constraint on the group's otherwise natural behaviour. The collective's rejection of the researcher's guidelines for the discussion suggested that the researcher was indeed capturing a moment of the normal social construction process.

3.3.3. The researcher–researched relationship

The breakdown in the hierarchy between researcher and researched, a characteristic of the method identified by Haug (1987) and Crawford et al. (1992), was less easy to achieve in the current research. Firstly, a research design which involved a number of different age groups meant that the researcher could be a member of only one of the groups. Other memory-work research has usually involved only one group. Secondly, the present research is doctoral work with institutional impediments to all members being "co-researchers" with equal ownership of the research. Farrar (1994), Hohnen (1996) and Koutroulis (1993), similarly, have employed memory-work in student research. Participants in the studies by Haug (1987) and Crawford et al. (1992), on the other hand, have tended to be fellow academics involved in joint research and publication.

Even where the researcher was a member of a group in the present study, the constraints were related not only to the formal rules of academe but also to the way the women and girls had constructed the researcher–researched roles over their lifetimes. Despite assurances from the researcher that "researcher" and "researched" were equal, the roles of each were so entrenched it was difficult to equalise them. From the perspective of the researcher, it was at times tempting to take on the role of facilitator rather than the role of co-researcher. It was difficult to stand back and not remind the others of the possibilities for discussion (looking for similarities, dissimilarities, cliches, contradictions, gaps/silences, etc.). There was a tension between letting the discussion take its natural course and seeking out the feminist concerns of the researcher and others employing the method. It was necessary for the researcher to keep reminding herself that whatever was being produced was data. As Koutroulis (1993) also found, through using memory-work in her Ph.D. research, the researcher is "simultaneously facilitating and participating in the collective with a constant tension between the two" (p. 84). As she explained, "in an effort to resist the all powerful researcher role that feminist methods are critical of, I had to become increasingly willing to accept the dismantling

of the power differential" (p. 83). In the present research it was also difficult for the "researched" to dismantle the power relationship. It should be noted that the women's commitment was impressive. Somehow the women managed to attend the meetings having completed a full day's paid work, cooked the family meal and dropped off children at their extra curricular activities. They might not have had time for dinner themselves but they arrived with their written memories. They were happy to "help" in whatever way they could. However, despite their commitment, they did not have the same investment in the research as the researcher. They relied on the researcher to organise and manage the meetings. They were content to allow the researcher to take control. The "researched" were less willing than the researcher to shed conventional roles. Sensitive to the women's busy lifestyles it was also difficult for the researcher to suggest they take on more responsibility for the sessions. If they were to share control of the meetings, the initiative needed to come from them. This finding confirmed that broad guidance in the choice of memory triggers was not inappropriate in the present study. Having identified the deviation of the method from that described by Haug (1987), it was still possible to identify in the present study (when compared with other research methods) a breakdown in the hierarchy between researcher and researched. Although it was the researcher who had set up the study, the rules were kept to a minimum and the collective as a whole determined the outcome of the analysis in Phase 2. Where the researcher participated as a member of a group, the researcher was positioned with women similar in social background and life experiences to herself. All completed the same task in Phase 1. In Phase 2, self-disclosures were found to be similar; nuances, laughter, subtleties and hesitancies were understood. Despite the special researcher role, for a large part of the process the researcher was positioned, if not together, at least closely with the women. The collective theorising did not appear to have been influenced greatly by the researcher's part-role as facilitator. Hohnen (1996, p. 13), who undertook a related study, concluded similarly. In relation to her perception of her unequal role in the group she commented, " … I can conclude that this self-perceived inequality probably had no direct influence or impact on the discussion or findings".

For the most part, the researcher did not participate in the groups. In these cases, the role of researcher was closer to that of a facilitator. The researcher set up the groups, explained the method and functioning of the tape recorder and appeared again only at the end of the session. Although the researcher was not positioned with the group, the traditional researcher–researched hierarchy was to an extent broken down by the lack of rules and absence of the researcher which permitted the group to have control over the discussion and the outcome of Phase 2.

While Phase 2 involved some amendments to Haug's (1987) feminist "ideal", perhaps of greater concern to an advocate of feminist methodology was the researcher's role of independent analysis in Phase 3 of the present study. Koutroulis (1993) voiced a similar worry in relation to her own Ph.D. work. She considered that,

> There is an assertion of power and domination in the technique of taking away, interpreting, analysing and applying a theoretical framework independently of the group, unless I guarantee to everyone, the right to their theorising and my taking account of that (p. 90).

There was the danger that the hierarchical relationship between researcher and subject, which feminists have sought to dismantle, was being maintained in Phase 3. Koutroulis (1993) asked, "Is a third level of analysis too far removed from the core of memory-work (collective analysis)" (p. 90). Where memory-work has been used in a large study (as in the present case) or has involved groups differing in terms of one or more characteristics (in this case, age), it is not theoretically possible that all members could be involved in the analysis of all groups in Phase 3. While it is possible that each aged group could be involved in the Phase 3 analysis of its own aged group, someone must take responsibility for the collation of the findings across all groups and the identification of themes and interpretation of them. To enable interpretation of the themes in the light of tourism literature and industry practice, those involved in Phase 3 must be knowledgeable of the field. In Koutroulis's (1993) words, what the researcher can offer in Phase 3 is a "meta analysis, not necessarily a better analysis" (p. 90). Even if the researcher has no additional interpretations to make at this stage, there are operational difficulties associated with ongoing input from the members. As Koutroulis (1993) said, " … it is totally impractical and inconceivable to the majority of women in the collective that we reconvene every time each or everyone of us have subsequent reflections" (p. 91).

Regardless of such obstacles to truly egalitarian research in Phase 3, the fact remains that in the case of Ph.D. research, institutional academic requirements dictate that it is the Ph.D. student who "owns" and takes ultimate responsibility for the research.

3.3.4. Ethical issues

In attempting to avoid the perpetuation of the exploitation of women, feminists as researchers are particularly sensitive to the ethical issues of social research. Feminists are concerned that the traditional hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant means "objectifying your sister" (Oakley, 1981, p. 41).

To avoid the possibility of exploitation, feminists have favoured techniques which allow the researcher to position herself with the participants. Ideally, this positioning

occurs at all stages of the research. While such a technique is recognised as being effective in identifying women's experiences, there are still intrinsic moral dilemmas. In discussing research involving interviewing, Oakley (1981) noted that ethical dilemmas, "are greatest where there is the least social distance between the interviewer and interviewee" (p. 55). Finch (1984) echoed Oakley's views:

> The moral dilemmas which I have experienced … have emerged precisely because the situation of a woman interviewing women *is* special, and is easy only because my identity as a woman makes it so. I have, in other words, traded on that identity. I have also emerged from interviews with the feeling that my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves from people like me. (p. 80)

Memory-work, with its emphasis on telling rather than asking, has the benefit of guarding against some of the dangers of manipulation and exploitation. The women have control over what and how much they want to tell. Nonetheless, there is still the concern that the more relaxed the women, and the easier the social situation, the more "off guard" the women might be, divulging information to each other which in another social situation might be withheld. While they may be comfortable with the participants knowing their experiences, they may be less happy having their experiences published. Women's tendency to "want to please" or to "help out the researcher" may make women vulnerable. Perhaps they do not know how to say "No" to a researcher. This raises the issue of using a group of friends as participants. Social pressures may be such that women find it difficult to decline the "invitation"/"request" to participate in a study.

In the present study, Phase 3 presents specific ethical concerns. There is the possibility of manipulation and exploitation when women's (and girls') experiences have been taken away by the researcher to be analysed. Cotterill (1992) stated that, "From now on the researched are vulnerable. Their active role in the research process is over and whatever way it is produced is beyond their control" (p. 604). The question arises, how does a feminist researcher deal with data generated from women who are not feminists? As Cotterill (1992) said, the women "may not agree with the researchers' interpretation of their lives if they do not share the political view which shapes those interpretations" (p. 604). Stanley (1984) recognised "the conundrum of how not to undercut, discredit or write-off women's consciousness different from our own" (p. 201). There is a challenge for the researcher to be faithful to the unique experience of the individual while promoting women's collective interests. Finch (1984) and Cotterill (1992) found they were able to do this by distinguishing between women's structural position and the women's own experience of it. By making this distinction,

Finch (1984) claimed she was able "to see that evidence of women successfully accommodating to various structural features of their lives in no way alters the essentially exploitative character of the structures in which they are located" (p. 84).

When looking at ethics, vulnerability and power of the participants, it is important to recognise that there is a "changing nature of interaction in research relationships and … [a] delicate balance of power between researcher and researched" (Cotterill, 1992, p. 604). While the researcher in the present study held the ultimate power in interpretation of the findings, the researcher also felt vulnerable during Phases 1 and 2 of the research. Having the greatest investment in the research, the researcher was dependent, not only on others' interest in participation, but also on their ability to coordinate their busy lives to find a common time to meet for the required number of occasions (four times in the case of the older groups). Once the groups had formed, there was always the added concern that one or more might cancel at the last minute. The method required that all members should be present on each occasion.

4. Conclusion

Memory-work has been adapted to suit the topic of study and the academic requirements of Ph.D. research. Although most of the basic principles of the method were followed, the relationship between the researcher and the participants was not the close relationship reported by Haug (1987) and Crawford et al. (1992) in which all participants had a shared investment in the research.

Earlier it was reported that memory-work was thought to be a feminist social constructionist method. Experience of the method confirms it as a social constructionist method. Whether or not it is a feminist method is less clear. Memory-work grew out of feminism and in its "ideal" form could be considered a feminist method. Koutroulis, having adapted memory-work for her Ph.D. research, concluded that her adaptation was not a feminist method. She claimed, " … the process of the research is the determining 'feminist factor' rather than the method itself … there is nothing inherent in memory-work to protect it from the wiles of a sexist researcher" (1993, p. 94).

As previously stated, feminists may see the defining factor of feminist research as being the "ways that issues are conceptualized, studied and interpreted" (Henderson et al., 1996, p. 224) rather than a particular research method. Henderson et al. (1996) echoed the views of other feminist writers, "Most feminists would encourage a rich variety of methods and challenge the superiority of any one method" (p. 224). While no one method might be superior in itself, questions of superiority relate to the appropriateness of a particular method to the conceptual

approach of the researcher and the topic being researched. In other words, a superior method is one which reflects a strong relationship between paradigm and theory and which best answers the research questions or questions the appropriateness of them.

An assessment of memory-work in the present study suggests that the method is feminist in that it allowed the researcher, within the constraints of Ph.D. requirements and the specifications of a particular research design, not only to maintain a social constructionist approach but also, to follow feminist principles. While the participants might not have identified themselves as "feminist", the method was feminist in that it gave voice to women's experiences, through women's own theorisation of the issues. Memory-work in an adapted form was well suited to the needs of a study investigating women's and girls' tourist experiences. It is doubtful that another method would have served the purpose so well in generating rich, valuable data and addressing the research questions. Although the "elite" position of the researcher did not conform to feminist ideals, awareness of a researcher's responsibilities and commitment to representing all participants, hopefully, minimised the possibility of manipulation and exploitation of the participants. It is possible to be guided by the principles of the method even where the institutional requirements of the research prevent their application.

Memory-work in its "ideal" form as a feminist method, as described by Haug (1987) and the core work of Crawford et al. (1992), is limited in its application. It can only work in this form if each member has an equal investment in the research, such as a group of academics. The implications of this conclusion are problematic. If memory-work is, as claimed, highly political, concerned with changing women at both the individual and social level, then, in its original design, the only groups who could be liberated are groups such as academics. Perhaps these groups are not those most in need of empowerment. Such an argument leads to the conclusion that there can never be a feminist method for studying women who are in a less powerful position than the researcher. If the aim of feminist research is social change for all women, including those who resist or are constrained from participating equally in research, adaptations to the method are needed. One must be flexible in selecting or designing a research method so as not to lose sight of the critical issue.

The adapted method maintains a strong articulation to theory and social constructionist and feminist ideals which should make it attractive to a researcher with such a perspective. Although tourism is usually defined, for heuristic and technical purposes, as occurring within a specific time and place (away from one's usual domicile), tourism cannot be disconnected from the broader social and temporal context. The construction of the tourist experience is related to the construction of every-day life experiences. Memory-work enables the researcher to locate the tourist experience within the larger context.

Researchers interested in the gendered nature of tourism might consider memory-work as a research method in further studies of women as tourists, women as hosts, and women employed in the tourism industry. Increasingly it is recognised that an understanding of gender is necessary in the management of tourism. It is considered that memory-work offers the research potential for such knowledge. Memory-work is thought to be a useful method for researching women. Whether or not the method is an appropriate tool for researching men is yet to be fully investigated. Although Crawford et al. (1992) included a group of men in their study, they did not evaluate the method in relation to that group.

Dann et al. (1988) and, more recently, Pearce and Black (1996) and Walle (1997) bemoaned the lack of innovation in tourism research. Memory-work is considered innovative. With imagination, a researcher can adapt the method to suit other situations. The adapted method might no longer be memory-work but the birth of a new research method.

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