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Femininities in the Field of Tourism Research


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Title: Femininities in the Field of Tourism Research

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Abstract:

Tourism studies are, by nature, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary. Given the diversity of the tourism field, it is likely that the researcher will, time and again, be expected to navigate a new field experience, be it conducting research in an unfamiliar culture, in a foreign language, or within a setting of foreign societal constructs. Despite the diversity of tourism studies, there has been little attention given to the issues surrounding the effects of gender on fieldwork other than an acknowledgement that reflections on gender identities are necessary for tourism researchers (e.g., Ateljevic et al., 2005). In particular, there is a need to advance tourism discourse to the point where outward biases, such as gender, are an expected part of the literature. In this way, the myth of the lone, childless, and objective fieldworker is increasingly challenged by a growing critical feminist scholarship. Tourism is a characteristically cross-disciplinary field with foundations in anthropology and ethnography, where most of the existing literature on gender in field research originates, largely based in a different era (e.g., Golde, 1986; Warren, 1988; Whitehead & Conaway, 1986). Despite the tourism academy's general oversight or lack of attention to gender biases, the influence of gender is obvious in many fieldwork situations. The aim of this presentation and accompanying workshop is to analyse and discuss the effect of femininity in the field and the encountered biases (both positive and negative) specific to women researchers in tourism studies, based on an edited book publication *Femininities in the Field: Researching Tourism* and our own experiences using international case studies.

Special attention will be given to lesser-developed or remote regions, as gender roles are often more pronounced in these areas. Gender is considered a common bias in the collection of field data; yet, the literature discussing the effects of gender biases is fragmented, with the female perspective being largely absent. Historically, with male researchers outnumbering females, general discussions on gender bias tended to default towards weaknesses associated with the female gender. As female participation in the sciences continues to grow, not only do the number of females in the field increase, but also the number of women coupling reproductive and caring responsibilities with academia. The presentation and workshop will cover larger topics including site culture, safety considerations, gender boundaries, accompanied fieldwork, embodied research, and female responsibility. It will conclude by providing recommendations for ethical guidelines and other issues when approaching femininity in the field within tourism research.

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