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Guilty or Not Guilty? Experiencing and Understanding Sweetie’s Guilt as Dissatisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Through a memory-work methodology this paper examines the way in which one woman (Sweetie) experiences a dissatisfying retailing encounter. This method uses stories as a way to gain a detailed insight into the complex nature and process of dis/satisfaction, thus giving voice to women’s experiences. By allowing women to write and critically reflect on their experiences, we as researchers can offer alternative interpretations of consumer behavior to those commonly reported in the literature. Furthermore, the researcher is able to draw on the story of the individual to capture her thoughts and emotions, allowing the reader to “get inside” the experience as it is remembered. In this paper I use Sweetie’s "nasty" shopping experience to illustrate how women reflect on and attach meaning to a retail encounter, and argue for using reflexivity in our research.

It was the last collective discussion of the two women's groups that each had come together five times to share, reflect and analyze their stories of satisfying and dissatisfying experiences shopping for women's clothing. We had come together as strangers but emerged as friends. As I listened to Sweetie read her "nasty" clothing shopping experience, I could feel the group become overwhelmed with disbelief and anger. "How could this possibly be? Yes, Sweetie was Samoan, but she was also a middle-class, well-educated, traveled professional woman - no different from the rest of us." Sweetie had not directly revealed throughout our sessions, but it was obvious in reflection, how being Samoan in a dominant White society both structures and controls her experiences of being dis/satisfied.

This paper is a result of a call from feminist researchers (e.g. Bristor and Fischer 1993; Catterall, Maclaran and Stevens 1997; Woodruffe 1996) to gain a better understanding of marketing phenomena such as consumer satisfaction by examining women's experiences. Bristor and Fischer (1993) address the problematics of linking emotion and satisfaction without understanding the theoretical implications of gender. For example, the fact that men have been socialized to hide their emotions. Moreover, because of their socialization, men and women are likely to use and respond to products differently, and ultimately, to experience dis/satisfaction differently. Parallel to their call to examine women's interests and experiences from a feminist perspective, these researchers have also advocated the need to use alternative methods which are aligned with feminist principles to examine these issues (see Friend and Thompson in press; Woodruffe 1996).
Using Sweetie's "nasty" clothing shopping experience as a basis for analyzing consumer satisfaction, this paper has three main goals. First, it aims to provide us with a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of women's experiences of dissatisfaction. Specifically, it aims to illustrate how Sweetie as a minority woman experiences dissatisfaction. Second, it suggests other concepts besides those addressed in the prevailing literature that may be critical to our understanding of consumer satisfaction. Third, the paper aims to illustrate the importance and use of a reflexive methodology in the generation of new knowledge and the emancipative nature of storytelling and narrative inquiry. The paper thus supports the call to feminist researchers to align ourselves more closely to the theoretical orientations of qualitative research.

EXPERIENCE, STORY TELLING AND KNOWLEDGE

People live "stорied" lives. They understand their experiences and relate them to others through stories (J. S. Bruner 1986, 1990; Edson Escalas 1998; Clandinin and Connelly 1994; Kerby 1991). People construct, rather than simply record, their experiences in that they assign individual, social and cultural meaning to the components, events, responses, actions and outcomes of their stories (Edson Escalas 1998). Stories, which are lived and told, educate both the self and others. Stories give meaning, relevance and value to the experience that would otherwise just be a sequence of happenings (Bleicher 1980; Madison 1990). They tell us about our relations with our "selves" and our environment, while affirming and modifying who we are (E. M. Bruner 1986; Clandinin and Connelly 1994; Kerby 1991). Experience, as such, is made up of the stories we live (Clandinin and Connelly 1994).

A principle reason for a narrative inquiry, both for the researcher and the research participants (or co-researchers), is to gain understanding through "experiencing the experience", and through this understanding to grow and transform (Clandinin and Connelly 1994). Personal written stories can also be used to provide case histories from which to draw inferences about human behavior (Hunt 1993), and to develop, advance and/or disband theoretical perspectives of the phenomena being examined (Clandinin and Connelly 1994; Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton 1992; Haug and Others 1987; Woodruffe-Burton 1998). Additionally, as Woodruffe-Burton (1998) suggests, by allowing different researchers to directly analyze, understand and interpret consumers' stories we may provide more insights regarding consumer experiences than those produced by one researcher.

As the narrative comes from the storyteller's perspective (Bruner 1990), written personal stories can provide a way of representing consumer voices rather than only privileging the voice of the researcher. But even stories told and/or written directly by the participants about a specific account will vary according to factors such as the intended audience and the enlisted purpose (Kenyon and Randall 1997). The presentation of the researcher and participants (or co-researchers) and their interactive analytical style also affects the ongoing and final narratives of the project (Clandinin and Connelly 1994). To further complicate the situation, the meanings articulated in our stories are "always in motion" (Denzin 1996, p. 132), continually evolving by the words and phases we use to tell our stories (Denzin 1996; Polkinghorne 1988).
Holland (1999) argues that reflexivity, as a fundamental human quality, underlies our ability to understand and intervene in human relationships. "All learning depends on the reflexive interpretation of one's experiences together with the experiences of others" (Lafitte 1957, p. 17). Moreover, there is no understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols and texts of the socio-cultural world (Ricoeur 1991). Understanding is a continuous process of interpreting data in relation to our own experience and knowledge to that of others (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Kleinman 1993; Lincoln and Guba 1985). We view the unfamiliar through images we already possess, and shape it into a more or less intelligible view of life (Blumer 1969).

Qualitative research involves an approach to inquiry in which the "inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single (monistic) entity" (Guba 1990, p. 27). The researcher and the participants take a mutual journey (Dupuis 1999), and in doing so are influenced and changed by the research process as they construct meaning through their interactions and interpretations (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). It is through the interactive process of giving, listening, asking questions, and comparing one's own and others' stories that we gain new insight. In doing so, the distinction between the researcher and the researched is blurred (Crawford et al. 1992; Ellis, Kiesinger & Tillmann-Healy 1997).

The intersubjectivity among the researcher(s) and/or participants provides the basis for our understanding and interpretations (Crawford et al. 1992; Ellis et al. 1997). Our knowledge is cultivated and constructed through our thoughts, feelings, and emotions negotiated in interaction (Crawford et al. 1992) and in reflection of the data (Crawford et al. 1992; Dupuis 1999). It is "drawn out" from the data (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), and does not simply "emerge" as suggested in grounded theory (Dupuis 1999). The researcher's self is seen as an "acting, feeling, thinking, and influencing force in the collection and interpretation of the data" (Daly 1995, p. 1 as cited in Dupuis 1999, p. 47). The way the researcher experiences and feels about the information obtained from the participants or co-researchers affects how information is collected and interpreted. Moreover, the researcher's emotions offer significant insight into the social and emotional worlds of those being studied (Dupuis 1999; Ellis 1991a; Ellis 1991b). Emotion as viewed by Nussbaum (1989, p. 218) "is the acceptance of, the assent to live according to, a certain sort of story." They "are our (aesthetic) reactions to the stories we tell ourselves about what is going on" (Kenyon and Randall 1997, p. 56). As such, the emotions that we feel upon hearing a story (such as with Sweetie's story) are viewed by Kenyon and Randall (1997) as a function of the lifestory into which we see that situation fitting.

... [Not only others' stories,] but those we tell ourselves (and/or internalize from others) about ourselves ... [Stories are] neither positive or negative - until we interpret them as such within the context of what we perceive to be the movement of our life as a whole (p. 56).

Qualitative researchers (e.g. Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994) and particularly feminist researchers (e.g. Harding 1987; Oakley 1981; Stanley and Wise 1983; Woodruffe 1996) have called for us to immerse rather than distance ourselves from the research process. Yet in much of our qualitative inquiry into marketing and consumer
behavior the researcher's self seems not to be included.

METHODODOLOGY

Underlying my desire to embrace feminist principles and acknowledge women's experiences as relevant and an appropriate method for obtaining knowledge, this project used the feminist-designed method of memory-work (see Friend and Thompson in press; Haug and Others 1987) to examine the process and nature of consumer dis/satisfaction. In general, memory-work involves a small group of participants, each of whom writes a memory-text on a specific set topic. These memory-texts are then read and analyzed in a collective discussion.

Participants in this study independently wrote a series of memory-texts evoked by different "trigger" topics (e.g. a quick exit; exhilaration, a nasty experience) selected by the group about clothing retail encounters. As outlined by Crawford et al. (1992), these memory-texts were written according to prescribed rules: (i) write about a specific episode in third person; (ii) write in as much detail as possible including circumstantial and trivial detail; and (iii) write without interpretation, explanation, or biography. Then, in a structured discussion of the collective participants for each trigger topic, every participant in turn read and reflected on her own experience, relating this to her dis/satisfaction of the experience. The collective then identified and analyzed gaps, clichés, contradictions, metaphors, and inconsistencies in the individual memory-text providing a "thick description" of the situation. As the collective discussion developed, they looked for similarities, differences and/or patterns across the memory-texts, and analyzed personal and socio-cultural meanings. After three to four hours, the group discussion ended when participants had completed a thorough analysis of each memory-text, and a coherent picture emerged from the set of memories for that particular trigger.

Two groups of women, five in one group and four in the other, voluntarily participated in the study. While they were similar in social class and education level, they varied in their age (31 to 52), nationality, ethnicity, educational backgrounds, and clothing shopping enjoyment and frequency. All were interested in either learning about the methodology and/or retail service encounters.

This memory-work research was a two-way process of interaction and sharing between myself, as the researcher, and the women in each group. Like the other women participants, I was required to give as well as receive information, and share aspects of my personal life. Thus I was viewed as part of the collective rather than as the leader or an intruder.

What follows is Sweetie's "nasty" memory-work text and part of the collective's discussion of her story. While I edited the group discussion so it flows in a cohesive manner and fits within the confined space requirements, I tried not to alter the meaning by rewriting their words or deleting sections which are given or directly implied in Susie's written story. I have done so that you may experience Sweetie's story and part of the collective's discussion, drawing on your own meanings, interpretations and conclusions as they relate to consumer dissatisfaction, and experience the reflective, reflexive and emancipatory nature of the memory-work process. However, in the discussion section, I offer ideas arising from Sweetie's story and collective discussion that might be explored further within this project, and/or in future research.
Nothing here to buy in the women's wear department. Stacks of racks - all the same. Uninspired display. Everything as per every other chain store. Clones!! Boring!! No wonder she doesn't shop here very often! Wait a minute! Wedding presents aside, this looks promising! Just what she's been looking for - a long, olive-green, sleeveless cardigan-thing. Olive is usually a bit dark for her coloring - but needs to get away from blue - and $49.95 is a good price (paid $59.95 for the natural-colored cotton one that did her well over the summer) and she needs something like this to tide her over the autumn and spring periods. Good for chilly mornings - peelable in the hottish afternoons. Would go well with the yellow top, green and yellow Bali pants and scarf combo, and green Brazilian shoes - or the natural-colored jeans and long-sleeved cotton-top bought in Brisbane last year.

H-m-m-m - wonder if there are any other colors? Or anything else to be bought? [Browse, browse - olive garment over arm.] H-m-m-m - seems to be the last one on any of the racks - need to try it up against the bod, to check that the color isn't too dreary on the complexion. No use buying it if the color is wrong. No mirrors out here - have to find a changing room. Usually ask the shop assistant first - but no one in sight - so find own changing room. May as well try it on. [Exit left to a nearby changing cubicle - curtain left open as trying on cardigan over clothes].

Minute later. Center front shop. "Did you notice where that Maori woman with the bun went?" asked an assistant-sounding voice. Ears pricked. Maori? Bun? - did she mean me? (Samoan, I'll have you know - can't you tell the difference! That's like saying she's an Australian?) "No, why?" replied another voice. "I can't see that green jerkin she was interested in" said the first. (Green? Jerkin? Thought it was a cardigan? 'Jerkin' - that puts me off!"
She must mean me. I'm the only person in the shop and I'm looking at the one green cardigan-jerkin! God it's hot in here. Why are the changing rooms always so teeny? Did I remember to put on deodorant this morning - sniff, sniff - perhaps I forgot.)

"Probably pinched it - looks the sort" continued the first voice. (Pinched it? Me? What sort do I look like? I'll have you know I drive a Jaguar!) "Have you seen in the paper - it's all very organized - they go into shops in groups, some distract the staff - and the rest disappear with the till or the goods they want."

"She seemed to be on her own, and looked all right to me" said the second voice doubtfully. (Thanks dearie - you I like!) "And, probably part of the plan - 'how not to look like a shop-lifter'" suggested the first voice. "They're experienced at trying to pull the wool across your eyes. There were probably others skulking around somewhere. Another thing they do is to pinch stuff and then bring it back and try to 'get their money back'. I think we should tell the manager about her and call the police." (Police? This is too much! All I've done is take the garment into the changing room and tried it on. I'm a bit tired of this kind of stereotyping - in fact I'm darned sick of this kind of thing. Aren't I the one doing them a favor, wanting to buy the stuff from their shop? Isn't the customer always right? Isn't my money the same as and as good as anyone else's? Geez - this gets up my nose. In fact it really gets up my nose - and it's not just PMT!). Exit changing room - enter center front stage. Seething.

"Excuse me, are you the shop assistant who just suggested I probably pinched this sleeveless cardigan from this shop?. Surprise. Guilt. "For your information, I was just trying it on in the changing room - but you didn't know because you weren't doing your job properly- and weren't around when you were needed!" Glare. "In fact I would say you were a very incompetent shop assistant!" "There's no need to get nasty, madam." Defensive.

Exiting right - set mouth. "Stick the cardigan up your jumper!." Impolite tone.

NB: Title change: Sweetie gets nasty!

THE COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION

After reading her story Sweetie (S) reflected and the group members responded and questioned her experience:

S: Sweetie doesn't usually do this sort of thing. Sweetie has to be pretty provoked for her to do something like this. She left thinking, "Have I really done this? This is not me, but I've done it."

F: There's lots of anger here? Because Sweetie says, "I'm a bit tired of this type of stereotyping." So this has come up before? How frequent is this circumstance?

S: Mm... It's quite unusual for Sweetie to be caught up in this type of situation. Because as an experienced shopper Sweetie knows how to avoid this conflict. There are stores that Sweetie knows that she can go into and feel comfortable. There are a couple of trendy young shops that have young Indian and Asian women behind the counters and they relate to Sweetie straight away when she comes in. It's acceptable for Sweetie to be in these shops and they're helpful. They don't worry that here's a brown person in their store. But there are some shops that Sweetie knows that she just can't go into without being looked at so suspiciously that she feels uncomfortable. She's never prepared to handle the sort of supercilious
people who are often in what she thinks are the more up-market type of shops.

F: Yet this was not an up-market shop? Sweetie noted in her story, "It was common, with racks of..." From my experience of this retail outlet, there is a whole range of people of different ethnicity and social economic backgrounds who shop regularly at this store. Which makes me wonder how the shop assistants afford this sort of behavior?

S: I don't think this person was actually doing it to Sweetie. She didn't know Sweetie was listening. It was an in-shop discussion.

L: Would Sweetie have got so uptight if they would have started watching her from the very beginning?

S: Probably not. She would have just gone.

L: But because she stayed and it happened, it actually attacked her personally?

S: That's when it hurts. It is no longer a joke. It was a real situation.

D: I like how Sweetie reacted. "Me pinch it? What sort do I look like? I'll have you know I drive a Jaguar!" It's the same as D reacted, "I'll have you know I'm a teacher. I would never shoplift." There is real pride in this. Isn't there?

S: Yes. Something like that.

D: It's just so cutting when you hear comments that slate who you are. It's absolutely horrifying.

F: It's a desecration of the self.

S: Mm. Yes.

D: What gave Sweetie the most pain? The fact that they were accusing Sweetie of pinching it or that they were referring to Sweetie as one of those Maori women?

S: Oh no, it didn't worry Sweetie about being referred to as a Maori woman. It was being stereotyped, and that all brown people shoplift. It's that categorization and that labeling.

F: It doesn't matter what Sweetie does? She can wear her hair in a bun, wear a Christian Dior label, etc. etc., but they will still stereotype and be suspicious because of how she looks?

S: Yes, the brown skin is more important than anything else. Sweetie makes a lot of inferences putting all those things in her story. A lot of these sales assistants have probably never stepped out of the country which is why they're limited in their view. The fact that she has got all these things from different countries is to say, "She has been around. She not just a country bumpkin." It is sort of a stereotyping saying, "Sweetie is an important person."

D: These nasty stories were about relieving stress. We didn't take in any detail. The most significant part of the memory was the accusation. The shock and horror of degradation colored our senses.

F: The negative absorbed the focus. The condescending shop assistants comes through again. Their false accusation against you. You are contaminated by their feelings against you.

S: Judgmental, very judgmental.

D: D is wondering if this is significant of Sweetie's age and gender. Because when D go shopping or to restaurants with Jason, who is young, male and Maori, he doesn't seem to experience this kind of thing. But then he is incredible at diffusing situations.

S: Well, it might be a male thing because my brother has never experienced this kind of thing. But he has lots of money. What I call up-yours money (laughing).

D: Has Sweetie noticed whether it's older shop assistants that treat Sweetie like that?

S: It varies.
F: Do you feel that Sweetie got upset that she got angry with the shop assistants?
S: Yes, because she put herself into almost, not a guilt situation, but a play along to what they expect. So they'll go home and say, "Well, we had this woman in today and she said, "Stick your cardigan up your jumper." So Sweetie is doing what they can consider is the stereotype. Whereas, Sweetie is generally trying not to be the stereotype. So when Sweetie reduces herself to that, then she is being the stereotype. And that, in a way, is where the real nasty comes. Because she feels, "Well, why let it get to you." It is silly.

F: Satisfying?
S: Yeah. Well, in a way at the time. But it was momentary. Sweetie later thought, "What did she do that for?" And she has never gone back into the shop because if she ever sees that shop assistant she'll be slinking off thinking she shouldn't have said or done that. It was just lowering her "self" rather than keeping her "self" at a respectable level of dignity. She'd sort of stooped to their level of thinking and behavior. And she keeps reliving it. It ticks away in her mind - letting herself sink down to that level.

L: Yet it's not a real nasty statement?
F: It's almost funny.
S: Yes, when she thought of it later, she thought it could have been quite clever really. But she said it in such a nasty tone.

F: How might Sweetie deal with it differently now? What would she say and do differently in the same situation?
S: She'd probably either leave the garment in the dressing room and slink out and hope they didn't see her (laughing). Or she would just take it and put it on the counter and just leave graciously without getting them to stick it up their jumper. So she would just say something like, "I've tried this, but it doesn't suit."

F: Sweetie wouldn't indicate that she had overheard their conversation?
S: No. Only because Sweetie feels people who believe those things wouldn't actually be affected by whatever she said.

L: Did Sweetie tell other people about her experience?
S: No. It's not the sort of thing you usually tell people about. I could talk to my mother about it perhaps, but it is not the sort of thing I tell people about.
L: Because they wouldn't understand?
S: Yeah, I don't think they would.

G: Was it hard it write?
S: It took a long time to write. I didn't want to sound too judgmental. I deliberately made them quite neutral in representing them as voice 1 and voice 2. I was just trying to say that they put their own foot into it with what they said. I wrote it like a play where it is an embellishment of life. It's a little picture of life. It was also a way of distancing myself without becoming too intense about it, without putting all the emotion in it. But illustrating what happened in this situation.

F: But Sweetie was devastated. F was in tears when Sweetie was reading this. F had no idea that Sweetie had this type of experiences with stores. It is just dreadful. But writing it as Sweetie did, she didn't have to believe that this was a reality of her life. Because it is just an act that happened. She could leave.
S: And that's really why Sweetie avoids the things she thinks are going to be like that. She won't go into certain shops because she knows that's what will happen. She just avoids them. It is an avoidance strategy, which has taken 47 years to evolve. Forty seven years
of experience (laughing).

F: Sweetie's changing of the title at the end to "Sweetie gets nasty" is like she has taken ownership on herself. As if the nastiness is of her making. Yet there is a sense that the nastiness is very much of the assistants making?

S: When I got down to just about the end, I thought it doesn't actually sound terribly nasty. How can I justify the title? It just sounded a bit tame for a nasty because it is something that happens all the time. To me, a nasty should be something that only occurs every so often. Whereas this happens regularly. So it isn't a nasty in that sense.

G: It's almost as if Sweetie had become immune to it?

S: Yes, and probably just with age.

DISCUSSION

Sweetie's nasty clothing shopping experience suggests a number of emergent themes, which could be analyzed and interpreted, to provide alternative ways of thinking about dis/satisfaction. My aim is not to present a detailed analysis and interpretation of Sweetie's story, but rather to offer a few ideas for further research which are potentially significant to the field. But in doing this, I invite you as another independent researcher to experience Sweetie's story drawing your own understandings and conclusions of her experience.

Sweetie's experience highlights at least four major social concepts: mistrust; moral injustice; power; and belonging. These concepts are not currently discussed within the satisfaction literature. While the concept of trust has been widely discussed in the marketing literature there appears to be little literature on how the firm trusts and/or mistrusts the consumer. Sweetie's story illustrates how retailers can mistrust the consumer, resulting in negative emotion and dissatisfaction, as well as a lost sale and relationship. The importance of a service provider's trust in the consumer in producing a satisfactory experience may be gendered. Doney, Cannon and Mullen (1998) suggest that in feminine cultures, their values system supporting expressive, communal concerns (e.g., social norms honoring moral obligations) are much more restrictive than those of masculine instrumental, agentic cultures. There is some indirect support for this in the marketing literature. Shemwell Jr, Cronin Jr, and Bullard (1993) found that women, in their relationships with service providers, place more emphasis on trust and affective commitment than do males. Palmer and Bejou (1995) suggest that women are more sensitive to and may need more communal and personal
affiliation in financial service relationships than do men. Specifically, their research suggest that the importance of the feminine trait, empathy, in the seller-buyer relationship lies in the buyer responding to and recognizing it, rather than seller simply giving it. Women buyers reported that they received more empathy from both male and female financial advisors than did the male consumers. Last, Michell, Reast and Lynch (1998) found that, in general, females were more trusting of business firms than males. If females, compared to males, hold higher expectations of trust, they may be more sensitive to mistrust or the break down of trust affecting their resultant satisfaction. Besides the context of shoplifting, the concepts of mistrusting customers and/or developing trustful relationships with clients would also appear to be relevant to service organizations, such as insurance companies, banking organizations and health services.

Sweetie's experience also suggest how procedural, interactional and moral injustice and the resultant emotions contributed to her feelings of being dissatisfied. Procedural and interactional fairness has been addressed in terms of the service failure literature (e.g. Blodgett and Tax 1993; Goodwin and Ross 1992), but there is little theoretical discussion or empirical evidence to document how these two types of injustices create feelings of dis/satisfaction in the service encounter. Nor do we understand the type of emotions that result from these types of injustices and their relationship to dis/satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver 1996). Moreover, Sweetie's story (and D's) in being falsely accused of stealing clearly illustrates how moral injustice was a major contributing factor to her feelings of humiliation, distress, guilt and the resultant dissatisfaction. Yet, moral injustice is not addressed in the prevailing satisfaction literature.

Closely linked to mistrust and injustice, as seen in Sweetie's actions and responses to how the salespeople treated her, are the concepts of power and intimidation. The collective's discussion of Sweetie's experience suggest that there may be gender differences in power relations between the customer and retail store. Men might not have the same fear of being mistrusted as women. If this is the case, men will possibly not feel as intimidated or take on the guilt, as Sweetie did (or as other women might do), for her negative treatment in and/or response to the encounter. It is likely, therefore, that women's experiences of dissatisfaction could be directly linked to power relationships within the service encounter.

Lastly, in regards to social concepts, Sweetie's experience illustrates how the concept of belonging to the encounter may be important to feeling dis/satisfied. Sweetie needs to fit in, to feel wanted and comfortable in order to experience satisfaction. To facilitate and provide satisfaction we might need to understand more fully how women (and men) judge whether they belong.

Sweetie's "nasty" encounter suggest how the unfair judgement of who she is relates to her feelings of dissatisfaction. Fournier and Mick (1999) suggest that product satisfaction is connected with life satisfaction supporting this notion that a threat to self identity relates to dissatisfaction with service encounters. To further understand this relationship between threaten self identity and dissatisfaction we need to examine the types and level of threats which may occur.

Sweetie's story and the discussion of her story also address in great depth how she coped with her "nasty" encounter and the underlying issue of racism in her clothing shopping encounters through avoidance. While coping behavior has received some
attention in the satisfaction literature (e.g. Godwin, Patterson, and Johnson 1995, 1999; Stephens and Gwinner 1998), stories such as Sweetie's provide detailed insight into consumer coping strategies. This example shows how Sweetie places the guilt upon herself for how she responded, and avoids telling others due to her embarrassment of becoming stereotyped. In comparison to D's experience of being falsely accused of shoplifting, Sweetie's story illustrates the possibility that minority women may respond differently to such accusations.

This partial analysis of Sweetie's "nasty" shopping experience provides highlights of the complexity and the contextually of endeavors to more fully understand the nature and process of satisfaction. Further, it supports the findings of Fournier and Mick (1999) and Friend and Rummel (1995) that satisfaction is an active, dynamic process, underlined by a number of social concepts that have not been addressed in the literature.

CONCLUSIONS

I entered into this research project using memory-work with the main purpose of gathering data from consumers' stories of satisfying and dissatisfying experiences that would challenge existing and build new satisfaction theory (see Friend and Rummel 1995). But in the act of gathering this data, I was touched and moved by my own as well as the other women's stories. Our strong emotional responses and our critical reflections to our stories allowed us to understand and live these experiences. It is through this experiencing of stories that I have gained deeper insights into the meanings and complexity of the process and nature of dis/satisfaction. Moreover, besides presenting only the researcher's voice by suggesting new concepts which may be important to our further understanding of dis/satisfaction from my analysis of Sweetie's story, I have also been able to give voice to Sweetie and the other participants. In doing so, we have grown and changed.

As (feminist) qualitative researchers, I suggest as does Dupuis (1999), that we take ownership of our work and adopt a more reflexive methodology which is more in essence within the paradigm we work. We can do so, by deriving our evidence from authentic data which acknowledges the life experiences of both the researched and the researcher (Hall, 1996) and makes our belief systems, motivation, tensions, and political agendas explicit. In the process of doing our work we need to use empathy, incorporating our feelings and emotions to understand, direct, analysis and interpret our research. In adopting a reflexive research approach we are able to move towards a more interactive, collaborative method in our data collection acknowledging that both the researcher and the participants (or co-researchers) contribute to the meaning making process. As such, we incorporate critical reflections on the part of the researcher throughout the research process and use participants more directly in the interpretation of data. Last, we need to consider writing our research narratives in a way that we take ownership of our involvement and influence in the research process and findings (Dupuis 1999). But at the same time, we need to find creative and interesting ways of writing that will give voice to: (i) the participants, as documented in transcripts and field notes; (ii) the author as the researcher; and (iii) the author as the a respondent to her own and others' experiences regarding the phenomena being examined (Banister 1999; Kiesinger 1998). In doing so, we make our research more creditable, readable and accessible.
Only part of the collective discussion is provided. Desiree's (D's) "nasty experience" was also about being accused of shoplifting.

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