MOBILE IDENTITIES OF GENDER AND TOURISM: THE VALUE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

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Abstract

This thesis explores the interrelationships between the holiday experience and social identities of gender, singlehood and midlife. The theoretical framework rests on a feminist approach to Bourdieu’s phenomenology of social space, which builds bridges between material and cultural feminism. The interrelationships are studied as lived social relations enabling the scrutiny of incorporated and fixed, as well as discursive and fluid, power relations. This approach reveals that gender/singlehood/midlife identities in tourism settings are informed by people’s *habitus* and *the tourist gaze* (Urry 1990) in addition to being shaped by individual agency. The research offers a holistic approach to the understanding of tourism phenomenon and gender identities with this approach acknowledging both material power relations and cultural acts of resistance. This thesis thus considers the holiday experience and its relationship with social identities as a mobile project which is the result of people’s and places’ embodied performances shaped by both material and cultural relations. Within this analysis Putnam’s concept of bonding social capital is explored as a valuable asset for tourists with holiday experiences identified as important for social integration. Tourism mobilities refer to performed holiday experience.

These tenets are used to explore 32 Norwegian midlife (35-55) single women’s accounts of their holidays and identities. The empirical research combines focus group interviews conducted before and after the participants’ holidays with solicited diaries completed during these holidays. The methodological approach is informed by feminist research principles.

The analysis provides five main findings: first, solo holiday experiences are first and foremost associated with fears of loneliness and marginalisation; secondly, many of the midlife single women seek shared holiday experiences and the social identity of the friend; thirdly, the temporal lack of social capital results in the largely negative social identity of the loner; but, fourthly, a positive, interpretation of the loner is linked to the restaurant experience in cities and during the day; when the experience is less constructed to require social capital. Finally, a few of the women have learned to manage several aspects of solo holidays and thus developed the social identity of the independent traveller. These women, in particular, have agency, but the research shows that many of the other women also engage in tactical behaviour to negotiate holiday experiences.

Whilst recognising the material constraints of economic capital and other structural factors, the evidence presented within this thesis demonstrates that women do have cultural agency and that it is the women’s repeated acts, within the space previously defined by Aitchison (2003) as the social-cultural nexus, which have the power to reshape both the material and symbolic nature of not simply the holiday but of everyday life. This transformation of *habitus* is greatly influenced by the development of social capital. The value of social capital is thus seen to accommodate the needs and desires of individuals rather than, or in combination with, structures and regulations inherent in the holiday experience. Emanating from the findings, and extending beyond tourism studies, is the conclusion that investments in social capital associated with ‘the holiday’ have wider significance for developing a sense of belonging in everyday life.
Declaration page

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of West of England. It is the result of original research and has not been submitted for higher degree to any other university or institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed ………………………………………………………………………………….. Date
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Without the midlife single women who willingly shared their stories in voice and text this research would never have been successfully completed. Thank you for the willingness to spend time and energy in focus group discussions and for keeping a diary during the holiday. Your stories have truly inspired me to keep going over the last four years. I feel privileged to tell your stories.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The holiday and identity

This thesis is about the interrelationships between the holiday experience and the social identities of gender, singlehood and midlife. It seeks to explore and offer explanations for the meaning of holiday making and social identities in contemporary societies. The theoretical framework rests on a feminist approach to Bourdieu’s phenomenology of social space. This means that gender/singlehood/midlife identities are lived social relations affected by *habitus* and the tourist gaze and imbued with agency. It gives a holistic approach to understanding the tourism phenomenon which easily detects power relations and acts of resistance. I believe that it can be used for understanding all forms of holidaymaking and all kinds of tourists. The strength lies in its ability to embed the experience in material and cultural structures as well as to investigate social interactions and mobile experiences.

This thesis is therefore mainly informed by feminist perspectives on gender identity. Such theories often link the formation of gender identities to theories of subject formation and agency by dealing with the ‘dialectic of freedom and constraint’ (McNay 2000:2). Different theories of subjectification and gender identities are therefore often closely linked to different epistemological positions. This thesis is also partly informed by theories of tourism mobilities which see the holiday experience as ‘networks and flows’ (Urry 2000:1). This implies that the holiday experience is both temporally and spatially located, thus situated in the being, becoming or ‘happening’ of the performance of hosts and guests (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). Such an approach suggests that the effects of gender identities are contextual and relational. I introduce this thesis by outlining the central theories and concepts which are then developed more thoroughly in Chapter Two and Chapter Four.
By way of illustration, there are three broad approaches to gender identity in feminist theories. First, standpoint feminism bases gender identity in women’s perspectives of social life and how they are affected negatively by material structures (Harding 1993). This means investigations of women’s real lives and the exposure of a subordinated identity. The feminist project is then to challenge this identity by enforcing social changes which transform women’s family, leisure and work life and, hence, subordinated identity. Secondly, post-structural feminism links gender identity to cultural constraints and linguistic practices. Butler (1993:42) therefore suggests that gender identities are about ‘performativity’. Performativity means that women and men reiterate a set of norms or a heterosexual matrix that constitutes society’s understandings of being male or female (Butler 1993) and, hence, how to act as women or men. Such reiterative norms give the sex a naturalized effect, but they also allow productive changes (Butler 1993, 1999). McNay (2000:9) argues that the latter perspective gives a negative understanding of subject formation; seeing it as a ‘discursive effect’ emerging from cultural constraints. Thirdly, McNay (2000) therefore suggests instead that gender identity not only depends upon cultural power relations imposed on the individual through the heterosexual matrix but also upon material structures as identified by standpoint feminism. In McNay’s (2004a, b) approach both types of or sets of power relations intersect through Bourdieu’s ‘phenomenology of social space’ (1990, 1993) and the concepts of ‘field’ and ‘habitus’.

Bourdieu’s theory is then the basis for McNay’s (2004b:175) approach to gender identity as ‘lived social relations’, a perspective which is drawn on in this thesis. The perspective rests on the concepts of ‘field’, ‘habitus’, ‘agency’ and ‘experience’. Experience is not the ‘privileged’ experience of women in standpoint feminism or the multiple concept found in feminist poststructuralism. Experience is rather situated within a ‘phenomenology of social space’ (McNay 2004b:184). This means that gender identity or subject formation is based on social positions as spatial positions of a field. The holiday experience is one example of a field. It consists of various social positions such as tourists, staff, locals, men, women, children, families, and singles and so on. Following Bourdieu (1986, 1990, 1993) the people of the field struggle to control the social identities available. Such struggles are fought with different forms of capital; economic, cultural and social. The distribution of forms of capital or ‘capitals’ then partly shapes the social identities available to midlife single women. Furthermore, each
field is marked by symbolic capital. The field is therefore intersubjectively situated; it is affected by material and cultural structures as well as the people struggling for control over it. On the other hand, gender identity is also part of women’s *habitus*; they have incorporated the ways of being a midlife single woman. Gender identity is then in many ways part of the *doxa*, or the women’s acceptance of how to play the game as midlife single women on holiday. Midlife single women are therefore not always aware of the effects of gender identity and how material structures or the heterosexual matrix positively and negatively affect actions available on holiday. Gender identity is then also the reproduction of cultural norms.

One of McNay’s intentions is to develop a theory which sees gender identity as neither fixed nor fluid. She then accepts different gender identities. On the other hand, she also sees gender identity as at least somewhat fixed. To McNay (1999a) changes in gender identity happen when women enter a new field. It is at such points that gendered *habitus* becomes a reflexive state of mind. Women are then able to reflect upon their subordinate positions and change or alter their gender identity. On the other hand, I also draw on the work of Adkins (2004a) and Skeggs (1997) who are critical of McNay’s reduction of *habitus* to the pre-reflexive level and of agency to simply the entering of new fields. To Adkins reflexivity on gender identity in contemporary societies is not pre-reflexive or only part of *habitus*, but also a habit or routine in itself. It is something women engage in all the time. Agency is ‘habitual forms of actions’ or ‘mimesis’.

Mimesis means that norms are incorporated but also resisted through practice (Adkins 2004a:207). To Skeggs (2004) *habitus* also operates on a conscious level and therefore always has to be understood in tactical and reflexive ways. *Habitus* as ‘tactic’ means that people are reflexive in gaining a sense of control of a situation (Certeau 1984:49, 59) enabling social transformation and changes in gender identities. Tactics are furthermore also determined by the absence of power; it is the ways people reflexively manipulate events and turn them into ‘opportunities’; it is how they manoeuvre the pitfalls of social life (Certeau 1984:xix). Tactics are then the mechanisms of turning negative gender identities into positive assets which, in turn potentially change both gender and the *habitus* within which gender is situated. In this perspective social transformations are also possible in ‘old’ fields such as the holiday experience and, hence, enable several gender identities to be created and/or sustained.
This theory of gender identity as lived social relations is placed within the conceptual framework of the ‘social-cultural’ nexus (Aitchison 2003:1); it seeks to overcome the binary of material/cultural by replacing it with a ‘both/and logic’ (Lather 1991:104). The concept of the ‘social-cultural nexus’ combines material or standpoint feminism and cultural or post-structural feminism and, hence, renders visible the respective power relations embedded in class and other social structures as well as cultural norms and linguistic practices (Aitchison 2003).

The theory of gender identity as lived social relations also embeds gender identity in the field. The interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities are then relational. This does not mean that similar interrelationships are not found in other fields, but that they are first and foremost linked to one spatial phenomenon. In this study the holiday experience is therefore the case under investigation.

The notion of the holiday experience as part of an intersubjectively situated field affecting gender identities is a new approach to understanding tourism. Traditionally the holiday experience or the ‘tourist experience’ is understood in terms of products, destinations and consumption patterns. On the other hand, this thesis also partly follows the logic of the ‘new mobility turn’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a; Urry 2000, 2006) in tourism studies which sees it as performance (Crang 1997; Edensor 2000; Minca and Oakes 2006), surveillance (Cheong and Miller 2000, 2004; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Urry 1990), play (Sheller and Urry 2004a), embodied encounters (Crouch 2002), relationships ‘at-a-distance’ (Haldrup and Larsen 2006:282; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006, 2007), the impermanence of ‘sandcastles’ (Bærenholdt et al. 2004) and place making (Birkeland 2005). By ‘tourism mobilities’ I refer to dynamic networks or systems of ‘hosts-guests-time-space-cultures’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a:6). I see the meaning of the holiday experience as linked to tourists’ use of them at different times.

The ‘new mobility turn’ is not only present in tourism studies, but is Urry’s (2000:1) attempt to rewrite sociology from being about ‘individual societies’ and manifest structures to ‘global networks and flows’ and spatial metaphorical thinking. The turn in tourism studies is marked by five principles (Gale 2007); it studies the mobilities of individuals; it acknowledges material and immaterial structures; it deals with
immobilities and power relations; it recognizes virtual and imaginative forms of mobility; and it is concerned with environmental and global consequences.

The new mobility turn in tourism studies, as the theory of social relations as lived, then deals with power-relations permeated in visual or cultural paradigms emphasising cognitive processes of thinking, imagining, interpreting and representing tourism. Both also acknowledge the material paradigm, which views tourism as a physical activity involving objects, machines and technologies (Haldrup and Larsen 2006). Both perspectives therefore consider the ‘sign-value’ and the ‘use-value’ of the holiday experience (Haldrup and Larsen 2006:286). The holiday experience as a ‘social-cultural nexus’ in the mobility turn then also situates it as a site and process, wherein gender relations are ‘constructed, legitimated, reproduced and reworked’ (Aitchison 2003:1). It is then not a carefree environment where people at pleasure consume services and goods. The holiday experience, as a power-embedded space, rather means that not all play is fun and that not all the players are having a fun time (Sheller and Urry 2004a). It entails that such experiences take place on inscribed surfaces intersected with a material structure affecting the identities of tourists, locals and employers positively and negatively (Crouch 2002). On the other hand the understanding of such power relations is not yet central in actual studies within this turn (see for instance Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006; Sheller and Urry 2004b)

The mobility turn still introduces additional insights to research on gender identity; it suggests that holiday experiences are like sandcastles ‘tangible yet fragile constructions, hybrids of mind and matter, imagination and presence’ (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:2) made in the intersection of people and places. The nature of each holiday experience then affects gender/singlehood/midlife identities slightly differently. The field is not fixed but consists of several identities available for midlife single women, depending on the objects, technologies and people involved.

This thesis, furthermore, acknowledges that the holiday experience is a social project (Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007) and that social capital is a valuable asset for tourists (Bourdieu 1986). It draws on both Bourdieu’s and Putnam’s understandings; ‘social capital’ is both understood as ‘strategic positioning’ (Bourdieu 1986) and as ‘social integration’ (Putnam 2001). Social capital is therefore social
networks used for personal gain and to mark distinction (Bourdieu 1984). It is exchanges of material or symbolic services and goods used by people to construct and control the social spaces they occupy (Bourdieu 1986). It is an individual asset partly used for strategic positioning in the field. Social capital therefore gives credit in social interactions and settings such as the holiday. But, it is also about social integration and bonding; social networks build upon obligations, trust and friendship, and institutional rights through the exchange of gifts, mutual knowledge and recognition. Social capital therefore exists in different forms. I draw on the distinction between ‘bonding social capital’ and ‘bridging social capital’ (Putnam 2001:22). The former concept refers to membership in friendships groups or in groups of comparable people, strategically used in the holiday. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is the distant acquaintances or groups of dissimilar people such as locals at a remote destination.

Research on solo holidays (Jordan 2003; Wilson 2004) indicates that sociality in particular is an important asset for women. This asset, on the other hand, is rarely recognized by those who are positioned as within the space (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006), although the hospitality industry acknowledges the importance of the creation and the extension of relationships (Andrews 2000). This is perhaps one reason most tourism studies focus on the value of economic and cultural aspects, however, often without labelling them as forms of capital or seeing them in the broader perspective of a field. The significance of social capital is rather part of the normalized discourse. For those positioned against it, it significantly informs the responses and experiences of the holiday. In this thesis it is assumed that the sociable character is especially important to midlife single women as they often have to search for travel companions and may end up travelling solo or holidaying alone at home. In each case the social capital, or lack thereof, may involve different sets of conflicts and tensions affecting gender/singlehood/midlife identities. This suggests that social capital is one key concept for understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities.

In the rest of this chapter I continue these preliminary discussions in order to substantiate and outline the research questions informing this thesis. I then conclude the chapter by outlining the structure of the thesis.
1.2 Why study the holiday experiences and identities of midlife single women?

The intention with the next three subsections is to outline a context for the research questions. First, I explore social reasons for investigating midlife single women’s holidays and social identities and I define the subject matters. Secondly, I draw out the academic reasons for studying the interrelationships between identity and holidaymaking, hereby briefly introducing more important concepts. Thirdly, I introduce my personal agenda for doing the research.

1.2.1 Social rationales

Midlife, single and women are three significant social identities and holiday travel is an important activity in the contemporary Western World. Holiday travel is the norm in Norway and each summer three in five Norwegians holiday for more than four nights away from home (Lystad 1999). At the beginning of the 21st century an increasing numbers of adults also lived alone (Chandler et al. 2004): In 2000, 42 per cent of all US women were unmarried (Trimberger 2005) and in 2001, 16.5 per cent of all Norwegians lived alone (Statistics Norway 2001a). Of a population of 4.5 million people this constitutes more than 700,000 Norwegians, half women, half men. This has resulted in the identification of the ‘young adult’, as a new period in young people’s life-course (Frønes and Brusdal 2000:49) and a later starting point to midlife (Moen and Wethington 1999:4). In Norway the expected marriage age therefore has increased from 20 years old in 1970 to 30 years old by the end of the 20th century, meaning that midlife starts after young adult phase, and at 30 at the earliest (Statistics Norway 2005).

In this thesis midlife is defined as the period from age 35 to age 55, which is within a common, fluid understanding of this phase of life (Jordan 2003; Ogle and Damhorst 2005; Rossi 1980; Segraves 2004; Simmons 2003; Thompson, Grand and Dharmalingham 2002). I use ‘midlife’ rather than ‘middle age’ as it has more positive connotations and less of a focus on chronologically determined age-related status (Featherstone and Hepworth 1991a:384). I understand ‘single’ to relate to a person who does not live together with anyone, whether a child or other people (Hauge et al. 2000:10–11). Divorcees, widows, ‘empty nesters’ and never married women are therefore singles (Gordon 1994a; Stein 1981; Trimberger 2005). Single mothers living
with their children are not ‘single’. In Norway this means that about 15 per cent (197,313) of the population in the age group are singles, of which 40 per cent (70,491) are women (table 1.1).

Table 1.1  The Norwegian population, 35-55 years old, distributed after gender and marital status. Absolute numbers and N. Population and Housing Census 2001 (Statistics Norway 2001a).

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<td>318 439</td>
<td>304 244</td>
<td>306 600</td>
<td>1 331 883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>161 896</td>
<td>154 662</td>
<td>156 388</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>196 555</td>
<td>156 543</td>
<td>149 582</td>
<td>150 212</td>
<td>652 892</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Norwegians</td>
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<td>43 925</td>
<td>43 576</td>
<td>48 976</td>
<td>197 313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>44 072</td>
<td>30 068</td>
<td>26 591</td>
<td>26 091</td>
<td>126 822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>16 764</td>
<td>13 857</td>
<td>16 985</td>
<td>22 885</td>
<td>70 491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Until the Population and Housing Census in 2001 (Statistics Norway 2001a) little was known about being a midlife single woman in Norway. The Census 2001 introduced a new standard for registration of family and household statistics and enabled a separation of single parents from solo living (Hauge et al. 2000). As a consequence it is possible to tell the exact number of singles in Norway, their living conditions, opinions and preferences.

An analysis of socio-demographic characteristics from the Census 2001 presents Norwegian mid-life single women as a complex and interesting category (Appendix One). The ‘thirty-something (white, young, single middle-class) woman’ often portrayed in the media is just one part of the picture (Gordon 2002:49). Norwegian midlife single women are rather heterogeneous in relation to marital status, age and social class; some are middle-class, others working class. Some of the women are highly educated and well paid, urban, never married, childless, and in their late 30s/early 40s, while others are 45 plus, divorcees with grown up children, rural, and neither highly educated nor well paid. Norwegian midlife single women’s holiday experiences, choices and opinions are therefore potentially diverse, and the holiday can influence them differently.

The number of Norwegian midlife single women perhaps does not make it a substantial
category for developing mainstream tourism research, but for feminists it is one interesting category for understanding gender identity and changes in familial societies (see for instance Adams 1976; Gordon 1994b; Reynolds and Wetherell 2003). Living alone is nowadays often an expanded and permanent part of adulthood for many women over 30 (Chandler et al. 2004) leading to changes in holiday consumption and family patterns (Gordon 2002). As the family is an important part of married midlife women’s holidays, both positively and negatively (Small 2002), singlehood means other experiences. There is therefore a need for an insight into, and understanding of, the holiday experiences of midlife single women.

In this thesis I apply the term ‘holiday experience’ not ‘tourism/tourist experience’ to include a variety of midlife single women. The concept of ‘tourism’ is often linked to the industry (Mill and Morrison 2006:1) whereas ‘holiday’ is a generic term including all ways of spending vacation time whether with family/friends, package tours or alone; at home, at the second home, visiting friends and relatives (VFR), or long haul or short haul holidays. I thereby do not limit the discussions to holidays sold through the tourism industry and to the midlife single women liking or being able to afford such holidays. The holiday experience is therefore understood as time away from work. Extended weekends, for instance, are holidays, but regular weekends are not. Leisure travels as well as off-time during the week at home are also holidays.

The thesis then includes all forms of holiday making; at home or away, alone or in a group. When referring to ‘solo holidays’ I mean both holidays away from home without prior arrangement to be with people and holidays away from home with elements of solitude (Jordan 2003:72). ‘Group package tours’, on the other hand, are all-inclusive guided group holidays retailed through sales agents (Wang, Hsieh and Huan 2000; Wong and Lau 2001:57; Yale1995:87), but not packages sold directly to pre-arranged groups as the latter implies a level of personal knowledge among the participants before the tour.

1.2.2 Academic rationales

Tourism studies is a rather new, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary field of studies (Echtner and Jamal 1997; Graburn and Jafari 1991; Tribe 1997, 2004). As a multidisciplinary field of studies it applies theories or concepts from other disciplines
such as sociology and psychology and as an interdisciplinary field of studies it uses concepts and theories applied by a combination of disciplines. As a new field of studies there are still many interesting disciplinary theories and concepts to apply and explore.

McNay’s approach to gender identity (see section 1.1) is not common in tourism studies or for understanding the holiday experience. On the other hand, it partly intertwines the critical turn in tourism studies which focuses on understanding power relations (see for instance, Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw 2000; Cheong and Miller 2000; Enloe 1989; Little 2002; Pritchard and Morgan 2006). Such understandings sometimes approach power relations of the holiday experience through the concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ (Cheong and Miller 2004; Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Urry 1990). The ‘tourist gaze’ means power through ‘inspecting’ or ‘surveillant’ gazes which are based on knowledge and the normalizing discourse of what is acceptable or not in the field (Cheong and Miller 2000). The tourist gaze then deals with cultural power relations, or the doxa of McNay’s approach. In this thesis I broaden the understanding of power relations in tourism studies by combining the concept of the tourist gaze with the concepts of habitus and capital. This enables me to incorporate analyses of the effects of the power relations on tourists in addition to giving tourists the means to exercise power.

Furthermore, I also add to the discussions on power relations in tourism studies by drawing on Certeau’s (1984:xix) concept of ‘tactic’. This concept makes it possible to distinguish strategic power relations embedded in habitus and the tourist gaze from power embedded in ‘ways of using’ the holiday experience; strategic power relations makes the tourist accommodate the holiday experience as a social project (Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007), whereas tactics are the many adaptations of the norm and ways of successfully dealing with it. One example is solo tourists who write postcards or text in the restaurant, hereby creating an illusion of social capital without having to holiday with social contacts they are communicating with. Tactics then give habitus a reflexive and habitual touch (Adkins 2004a).

The focus on power relations in identity formation and the holiday experience is also suitable for shedding new light on the holiday experience. So too do recent tourism studies pointing to ‘the social turn’ (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007). Unlike other researchers who link tourism to discovering new people, places and spaces, I explore
the holiday as a ‘time for togetherness with significant others’ (Trauer and Ryan 2005:490), and I assume that access to social capital affects the social identities available to the midlife single women in the holiday.

I then intend to shed new light on the importance of the social character of the holiday experience. But, contrary to Bauman (2001:71), I do not perceive the holiday experience as a ‘peg’ community. I still draw on his concepts of ‘mixophobia’ and ‘mixophilia’ for understanding the social nature of the holiday experience. Mixophobia means ‘the drive towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference’ (Bauman 2003:110); it is people’s desires for the reproduction of bonding social capital. Mixophilia, on the other hand, refers to ‘the never-ending and constant dazzling spectacle’, the many attractions, strangers, opportunities, ambivalences, skills and tastes (Bauman 2003:112). It is the urge for freedom and individualism which is also a part of the human condition. Mixophilia opens up for and invites and appreciation of otherness, qualities imbued in bridging social capital.

This research, furthermore, not only explores multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary concepts and theories but contributes to the growing body of research on gender, midlife and singlehood in tourism studies. By focusing on women’s experiences, I contribute to the gender awareness present in tourism studies since the 1990s (see for instance Aitchison 2001; Bartos 1982; Gibson 2001; Hall, Swain and Kinnaird 2003; Kinnaird and Hall 1994, 1996; Norris and Wall 1994; Sinclair 1997; Swain 1995; Swain and Momsen 2002; Veijola and Jokinen 1994), which is sometimes based on age and marital status (Jordan 2003; Simmons 2003; Small 2005; Wilson 2004). I thereby also contribute to the literature on tourism and the life course or the family life cycle (Bojanic 1992; Caballero and Hart 1996; Collins and Tisdell 2002a, 2002b; Gibson and Yiannakis 2002; Hill, McDonald and Uysal 1990; Lawson 1991; Stone and Nichol 1999). This study, furthermore, contributes to the generic research on midlife single women (Byrne 2000; Gordon 1994a, 2002; Liebler and Sandefur 2002).

In the research I also seek to contribute to the debate on alternative epistemologies and methodologies in tourism studies, which is called for (Ateljevic, Prichard and Morgan 2007; Phillimore and Goodson 2004; Ritchie, Burns and Palmer 2005). Tourism studies is still often linked to positivism (Riley and Love; 2000; Walle 1997), leaving other
theoretical perspectives such as feminism and poststructuralism less developed (Aitchison 2000b, 2005; Fullagar 2002; L. Johnston 2001). Positivism is based on natural science’s assumptions and objective knowers’ ability to predict patterns of behaviour (Code 1993:18) whereas feminism acknowledges situated, located and embodied knowers (Harding 1993). I therefore apply feminist principles of inclusion and reduction of power relations, I have an agenda and I make ethical and reflexive considerations (Cancian 1992; Cook and Fonow 1986; DeVault 1996; Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998); goals which typically are not considered in most tourism studies. I then openly and honestly situate myself in the research process and try to lessen my control over the research participants and the research process. The use of the first person in my writing, for instance, is indicative of my reflexive approach and the choice of research methods including focus group interviews and diaries are attempts to empower the women participants within the research process. Furthermore, unlike much positivistic research, I see the research process as a ‘wheel’ (Rudestam and Newton 2001:5). It may seem as a linear process, but it is the result of four years of constantly revisiting theory, literature and data. The research questions, for instance, have been explored and reformulated several times.

The lack of engagement with gender and identity in particular theoretical perspectives in tourism studies is also reflected in a lack of engagement with particular aspects of qualitative methods. On the other hand, qualitative method are more accepted and used today as new scholars have entered the field (Dann and Phillips 2001). I seek to add to this development by basing the empirical work of my research on focus group interviews and solicited diaries, a combination of methods still underused in tourism studies.

1.2.3 Personal rationales

This research was conceived at the beginning of 2001 when I was working as an applied tourism researcher in Northern Norway. An important part of the job was to develop new research projects and get funding from local or regional governments. At the time I had just returned from my first solo holiday and was very much imprinted by the experience.

Very excited about exploring the holidays undertaken by midlife single women I drafted
a research proposal. I was absorbed in the importance of understanding this category of ‘tourists’ and paid little attention to the market demands for research. It took two years and a change of employer before I could start the research. In the marketplace for applied tourism studies in Northern Norway there was little interest in my ideas. It was not assumed to create new sources of income for the local tourism industry. After a long wait, I finally started the research in 2003 as a Research Fellow at Lillehammer University College with four years partly to teach, but mostly to develop and execute the study.

This research is therefore the outcome of my first solo holiday and how it made me aware of issues related to gender, singlehood and midlife. As an experienced traveller I was not previously confronted with these issues as strongly. Travel had played an important role in my adult life since my first ‘Eurorail’ experience with a good friend at the age of 18. We toured Europe by train on a very restricted budget, and visited major attractions such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Coliseum in Rome. We felt quite liberated as young, single women tourists. In my twenties I went on several Eurorails trips with different friends, and by the end I had experienced almost every European country. As a result of this travel I learned to appreciate Cohen’s (1972:174) ‘non-institutionalized forms of tourism’, such as the backpacker. As a backpacker it was important to meet new people, and explore new places and spaces outside the industry’s parameters. In my late twenties I continued backpacking but now to destinations on other continents such as Africa, Asia and America. On occasions I bought a package holiday, but I always travelled with a backpack and notions of exploration. On one such week long holiday to a seaside resort in Morocco we took the local bus to Marrakech and spent a few nights in a cheap hostel close to the medina.

I travelled with several people over the years, but eventually ended up with one regular companion. We developed the same taste in holidaymaking and, as single women we were able to travel almost when we wanted and where we liked. In my mid thirties my regular travel partner became pregnant and moved in and out of a relationship. The changes in her life situation affected my holidays considerably, and I realized that as a single woman I was vulnerable. As my friend was ‘indisposed’ I had to deal with the holiday alone. Other previous travel companions were settled with husbands and/or children. My freedom to travel when and where I wanted was somehow gone. I
considered solo holidays, group package tours, home-based holidays or visits to friends or family as alternatives.

In October 2000 I embarked on my first solo holiday, the one which initiated this study. I bought a one-week package tour to a seaside resort in Turkey. It was an uncomfortable experience. I was alone the entire week, felt lonely and very self-conscious. The destination was not made for the mid-life single woman travelling alone. My second solo holiday was a more positive experience. Instead of staying at one resort, I had learned it was better to travel around. I therefore bought a plane ticket and travelled in Bulgaria for two weeks. I was then able to combine a need for lying on the beach with learning about the culture. I took more control over the experiences. I was still self-conscious and lonely, but the frequent travelling made the days less conformist and boring. I was also empowered by the travel in a culturally and geographically different territory. That most of the Bulgarians I met did not speak English made it easier to be isolated. My third solo holiday happened after a tourism conference in Croatia, following which I went to an island to relax and sunbathe. It turned out to be a strange experience. I considered myself an experienced solo traveller after the previous trips. Furthermore, having worked with this research for a few years I felt empowered and knowledgeable. But, this was only theoretically so. In real life I was still constrained, especially by the eating out experience. On one occasion I found it hard to select a restaurant and really had to work hard mentally to overcome my fears of public solitude and feelings of loneliness.

This study is of course not only based solely on negative experiences of solo travelling, but on the fact that I as a midlife single women am challenged by the summer holiday, with what to do, with whom, with how to deal with new friends and so on. Over the last few years I have handled these issues by holidaying with new friends or my mother and sometimes by staying at home. I have considered group package tours, but have so far found them too expensive. In spite of these new options I feel in limbo when the summer holiday approaches.

When developing the study, I discussed it with other midlife single women. I realised that others have conflicting thoughts as well; they also associate the holiday experience with certain constraints. One single woman, for instance, recounted how stressful the
summer holiday was. She revealed that she never made any plans until the last minute. In this way she did not have to decide or talk about it if people asked. This conversation was at a mutual friend’s house over a few glasses of wine at night. When we met again the next day she expressed remorse about revealing her thoughts and feelings. I was surprised by her reaction. At the time I felt that the holiday was an easy and enjoyable topic. On reflection, I felt that her strong reactions were probably not linked to the holiday per se, but to her status as a midlife single woman, as mine were in many ways.

In summary, understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is of significant interest to me academically and personally. I find the intertwining of the professional and the personal very fruitful when developing and doing research. A thesis is a long and lonely endeavour and it challenges the work ethic and personal life of most students (Rudestam and Newton 2001). In some ways it feels like a never ending story. One way to succeed, I believe, is to combine the professional with the personal, to make sure the rewards are fulfilling on more levels, to involve the personal need for insight into one’s own life, to develop one’s academic standing by exploring new territories of theories and methods, and thereby hopefully make some new contribution to both knowledge and practice. Some scholars argue that the mix of professional and personal interests make the research biased. As a feminist researcher I reject the notion of unbiased research and instead embrace the opportunity to unfold my interests so that the reader knows who I am, where I come from and where I am heading (see also Dunkley 2007).

1.3 Research questions

The overarching research question in this study is the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. The research objectives are to examine individual and collective motivations for, and experiences and memories of summer holiday-making among Norwegian midlife single women (35-55 year old) and the impact on their social identities as midlife single woman. By choosing this category of women I do not ignore the fact that married women, or older or younger single women may experience the same issues or see themselves in comparable ways (Trimberger 2005). However, I have selected the lives of one category of women as the focus of the research. In this sense I consider gender/singlehood/midlife identities as sub
identities of gender identity. In order to address and answer the research question I am guided by a number of sub questions. These questions are mainly based on the theoretical reflections made in section 1.1 and partly in section 1.2.2.

One way to do the research is to consider the holiday experience and formation of social identities as a process within which meaning occurs. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) identify five distinct phases of an experience: anticipation and planning; travel to the site; on-site experiences; travel back; and recollection of the experience. These phases are also acknowledged by tourism researchers (Chon 1990; Echtner and Ritchie 1991; Parrinello 1993), and the model informs my early research questions, and especially the data collection methods. Midlife single women do not conform to the ways of adults living in familial societies (Gordon 1994a) where, for instance, holiday travel is important (Lystad 1999). It is therefore interesting to ask how this ‘otherness’ is embedded before, during and after the summer holiday through posing the following nine sub questions:

1. How do anticipations of the holiday experience affect the women’s social identities?
2. How does the actual holiday experience affect the women’s social identities?
3. How do memories of the holiday experience affect the women’s social identities?

Research on midlife women’s solo holiday experiences indicates the importance of social capital. Wilson (2004) identifies feelings of loneliness during the holiday. Jordan (2003) discusses the effects of the sexualised gaze. A combination of social and cultural surveillance and of bodily self-surveillance in response to the gaze of others leads these women to experience feelings of discomfort and self-consciousness, but it also makes them develop resistance strategies in order to create positive holiday spaces for themselves. Feelings of loneliness and the sexualised tourist gaze are also likely to affect the midlife single women in this study, although they are not necessarily solo travellers. Still, such previous findings make me ask:

4. How do holidays with friends affect the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?
5. How do encounters with strangers affect the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?
6. How does *habitus* impact upon the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?

7. How does the tourist gaze influence the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?

8. How do spatial experiences affect the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?

9. How do temporal experiences affect the women’s holiday experiences and social identities?

The overview question in this research is the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. The nine follow up questions define and give a structure for analysing and understanding such meanings by focusing on the different phases of the holiday experience, power relations, social capital, and tourism mobilities.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two sets out the process of doing the research by engaging in feminist epistemological and methodological debates concerning knowing and doing. It explores notions of embodied, located and situated knowledge production. It outlines my epistemological standing as based on a feminist relational phenomenology where knowledge and gender identity are the results of lived social relations. Then it discusses methodological issues and explores different ways of ‘doing’ knowledge. It acknowledges the applicability of both qualitative and quantitative methods and it examines how the research is situated in reflexive practice imbued with power relations. Based on these considerations Chapter Three explores the use of different methods and provides a rationale for selection of the mix of the focus group interview and the solicited diary. It also maps out how the research is done by outlining the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four shifts the focus by exploring theories and concepts which form the basis for understanding and analysing the data. It engages in wider debates on identity formation linked to gender/singlehood/midlife and the holiday experience. It takes the reader through various approaches to the holiday experience since the 1960s until today.
It places ‘tourism mobilities’ and sociality at the centre for investigating the spatial and temporal characters of the holiday experience.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six are the empirically-informed discussions on social identity, social capital, power relations and tourism mobilities mediated through the 30 midlife single women’s stories. Chapter Five illustrates the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia by investigating holidays with friends and group package tours. It argues that bonding social capital reduces the stigma of being a midlife single woman in certain holiday situations. The power relations are mostly latent and hardly seem to affect the holiday experience or the women negatively. It introduces the social identity of a friend. Chapter Six explores manifest power relations by analysing solo holidays. It argues that the power relations are structurally based on *habitus* and the tourist gaze, and tactically in ‘ways of doing’ solo holidays. It also argues that temporal lack of social capital renders such power relations visible. Many of the midlife single women link solo holidays to fears of loneliness and marginalisation which enhance the stigma of being a midlife single woman. It introduces the social identity of the loner, but also the independent traveller. Not all midlife single women travelling alone feel constrained by the experience, but are tactically able to take some control over the solo holiday experience. Finally Chapter Seven concludes the research by summarising key theoretical findings and contributions, future research, and my academic journey.
2 Knowing gender/singlehood/midlife identities

2.1 Introduction

An understanding of the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities depends upon questions such as ‘Who is the subject of knowledge? How does the social position of the subject affect the production of knowledge? What is the impact upon knowledge and reason of the subject’s sexed body and what is the connection between knowledge and politics?’ (Alcoff and Potter 1993:13). The answer to such epistemological questions clarifies the foundation and production of scientific knowledge. This research is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from disciplines and subject fields such as gender studies, tourism studies and sociology. It is within mainstream gender studies and tourism studies on social life as it involves a potential blending of various disciplines and perspectives (Echtner and Jamal 1997; Littlewood 2004; Tribe 1997, 2004).

Tourism’s multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character constitutes both a potential strength and a challenge for epistemological and methodological concerns in research (Botterill 2001; Coles, Hall and Duval 2006; Phillimore and Goodson 2004; Tribe 1997, 2004). On the one hand it makes the epistemological underpinnings unclear as there are so many meanings of the term ‘tourism’ (Tribe 1997:639). On the other it enables scholars of many disciplines to study other researchers’ strategies by reading outside their ‘home’ discipline. Some tourism scholars are therefore unwilling to reach across such boundaries (Echtner and Jamal 1997) and others debate whether tourism is a discipline or just a field of studies (Leiper 2000; Tribe 1997, 2000). According to Tribe (2004:59) tourism is a field of studies in which knowledge is created ‘through multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and extradisciplinary approaches’. It is multidisciplinary as it uses concepts and theories from a number of single disciplines, it
is interdisciplinary as it applies concepts and theories used by a combination of disciplines and it is extradisciplinary as it employs concepts and understandings produced outside the disciplinary framework. Coles, Hall and Duval (2006), on the other hand, argue that tourism studies have entered ‘post-disciplinarity’. Post-disciplinarity forgets about disciplinary boundaries and focuses on the learning about complex issues. It is thus a hybrid form of knowledge production which appears as a discipline with a ‘lighter touch of regulation’. It is ‘beyond disciplines’ based on a need for flexibility in knowledge production (Coles, Hall and Duval 2006:313). This, for instance, marks the ‘new mobility turn’ in tourism studies (Sheller and Urry 2004b; Urry 2000, 2006). It is not the intention of this research to provide an extensive discussion of whether tourism is a discipline or not, but rather to be clear about its epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

Very often knowledge production in tourism studies occurs within a positivistic paradigm (Phillimore and Goodson 2004; Walle 1997). Riley and Love’s (2000) review of four tourism journals concludes that positivism is the dominant perspective across these studies. Positivism means that knowledge is produced by so-called ‘objective researchers’, that the research agenda is rigid, and that the focus is on quantification and not the underlying philosophical questions (Phillimore and Goodson 2004:7). The positivistic paradigm is based on natural science’s assumption of ‘empirical observations of predictable, manipulable patterns of behaviour’ (Code 1993:18), also common in structural functionalism of social life (Littlewood 2004). It sees the researcher as value-free and independent, and is reluctant to critically question objectivity, subjectivity and power relations; Botterill’s (2001) investigation of five tourism PhD theses reveals that none of them deal with issues of power in the research. In positivism the testing of hypotheses is considered a scientific method and there is a close link to quantitative methods (Aitchison 2003). The connection between positivism and tourism in international tourism journals is perhaps due to the masculine dominance of the editorial boards (Pritchard and Morgan 2007), but also that economics was one of the first disciplines to embrace the tourism phenomenon (Aitchison 2006; Coles, Hall and Duval 2006).

This research intends to understand midlife single women’s holidays and social identities. An interest in the subordinate experiences, lives and circumstances of women
is the focus of attention in feminism (DeVault 1996) and sometimes the critical turn in tourism studies (Ateljevic, Prichard and Morgan 2007). Such perspectives mean new dialogues and arguments challenging traditional positivistic underpinnings (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001). The critical turn of tourism studies, for instance, embraces reflexive and complex understandings (Harris, Wilson and Ateljevic 2007; Tribe 2007) which are also the fundamentals of much feminist tourism research (Aitchison 2003) and the ‘new mobility paradigm’ in tourism (Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Sheller and Urry 2004b).

Not all tourism research is then based on positivism; some is founded on critical research paradigms and in qualitative methods; post-positivistic grounded theory (Mehmetoglu and Olsen 2003), constructivistic grounded theory (Jennings and Junek 2007), feminist perspectives (see Aitchison 2000b, Fullagar 2002; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Pritchard 2001; Swain and Momsen 2002) and tourism mobilities (Urry 1995, 2000, 2006). Grounded theory is inductive in nature and does not use data to illuminate theory in representative ways, but to discover theory from data (Glaser and Strauss 1977). This often means theoretical sampling (Jennings and Junek 2007; Mehmetoglu 2003) or non-probability sampling (Wilson 2004), and parallel collection and analysis of data. In post-positivistic grounded theory knowledge is produced a posteriori. It is seen as based on the experiences of the research participants and its validity follows positivistic criterion (Mehmetoglu 2003; Mehmetoglu, Dann and Larsen 2001). The researcher is an objective, neutral observer. In constructivistic grounded theory, on the other hand, the researcher is a co-producer of knowledge and the tools and techniques for collecting and analysing data are less rigid (Jenkins and Junek 2007). The emphasis is more on the phenomenon than the method of study and it rejects pure induction (Charmaz 2005).

In feminist theory knowledge is viewed as political, embodied and often as subjectively embedded (Aitchison 2005; Alcoff and Potter 1993; L. Johnston 2001; Veijola and Jokinen 1994, see also section 2.3). The new mobility paradigm partly builds on ‘social network analysis’ in that all social life is a network of ‘social connection strung between people and technologies’ (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006:14). Knowledge is then based on the intersection between social networks and the technologies used to enhance such relationships. It also partly builds on performance theories by embedding place in people’s experiences (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). An understanding of tourism then means
to view place as ‘contingently stabilised source’ embedded with meanings and attachments linked to tourists’ and hosts’ ‘particular embodied and material performances’. The relationship between subject and object is then not straightforward, but marked by ‘the atmosphere of place’; neither reducible to its materiality nor its discourse (Urry 2006:viii). This perspective then combines structural and poststructural theory. It is not my intention to explore all these perspectives in detail here, but to outline them briefly. Only the feminist perspectives and partly tourism mobilities are examined more fully in this chapter. I also return to tourism mobilities in section 4.3.4 and briefly to grounded theory in section 3.3.5.

Feminist studies are also interdisciplinary (Littlewood 2004). In the remainder of this chapter I first map out the differences and similarities between epistemology, methodology and method in feminist perspectives. Secondly, I briefly explore the epistemologies of feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and poststructural feminism. I examine how feminist research is situated and embodied, and discuss the notion of objectivity. I outline how material feminism links knowing to an understanding of patriarchal and systemic power relations, and how cultural feminism sees power as deeply entrenched in linguistic systems and discourses. Thirdly, I discuss the epistemological basis for this research, which draws on Bourdieu’s phenomenological analysis and the notion of ‘lived social relations’. I explore how this approach expresses the relationship between material practices and symbolic relations in a complex way. To understand how such power relations operate I examine how feminists develop Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus by linking them to the concepts of experience and agency. Fourthly, I shift the focus to methodological issues such as feminist research goals and the discussion of qualitative and quantitative paradigms. I consider how the relationship between researcher and research participants builds partly on reflexivity and partly is permeated with power relations not always controllable by the researcher. I explore quantitative and qualitative methodologies and quantitative and qualitative methods in feminist research and call for a liberal understanding of the link between methodology and methods.
2.2 Epistemology, methodology and method in feminist research

Epistemology, methodology and method are three interrelated concepts in the research process. In this section I clarify their meanings in feminist research and, by emphasising differences rather than similarities, I show that the boundaries are not always clear. This approach illuminates research as a process and helps me conduct it more carefully.

Before beginning this study I was not fully aware of feminists’ ways of knowing and doing research and the contribution of feminism to research philosophies. Tourism as a field of studies has traditionally overlooked gender differences and phallocentrism in research, but in the last decade it has begun to embrace such thinking (see for instance Aitchison 2001, 2005; Phillipore and Goodson 2004; L. Johnston 2001; Swain and Momsen 2002). Phallocentrism or androcentrism in research refers to the ‘Law of the Father’ or the white, male, Eurocentric philosophical tradition that does not always reflect women’s ways of knowing. It is malestream knowledge production (Beauvoir 1994; Braidotti 1993; Butler 1999; Keller and Grontkowski 1983; Stanley and Wise 1990; Wearing 1998). I am grateful for the opportunity to explore feminist thinking in this chapter, but I acknowledge that the review is not exhaustive.

Traditional research often operates within four, often male centred, research paradigms; positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism (Guba and Lincoln 2005). By contrast, feminist epistemology or epistemologies tend to focus on women’s ‘ways of knowing’ or ‘women’s experiences’ (Alcoff and Potter 1993:1). It is about the nature of women’s knowledge, how it is recognized, how knowers are identified; how one becomes a knower, and by what means some knowledge-claims are chosen above others (Stanley and Wise 1993:188). Feminist epistemology links feminism to philosophy, making it a political perspective (Alcoff and Potter 1993). It is possible to explore feminist research in relation to three broader categories; feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and poststructural feminism (Aitchison 2005; Harding 1993; Letherby 2003; Weedon 1987). The labels are not fixed as the researcher sometimes moves between them (Lather 1991) and it sometimes forces an agenda upon the researcher (Smith 1992). It is the intention of section 2.3 to explore these perspectives in more detail. Here I only introduce the various understandings.
Feminist empiricism consists of an original ‘spontaneous’ version and a more recent philosophical one (Harding 1993:51). The former is more a method than a feminist epistemology, as it is often linked to positivism and a feminist way of doing research rather than philosophy. It embraces liberal feminism which often deals with gender as a variable (Aitchison 2005). The latter is a feminist epistemology critically questioning positivism. The main goals of standpoint feminism are to map power relations to change marginalized categories’ consciousness of oppression and produce changes to the situation (Harding 2004). It includes several standpoints based on sexuality class and/or race as the locus of power relations and incorporates different theories such as; Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, Black feminism and radical feminism (Aitchison 2005). Standpoint feminism is mostly located in productive/reproductive experiences (Longino 1993) and it is labelled ‘constructionist materialism’ (Harding 2004:38) or ‘material feminism’ (McNay 2004a). This means that it mainly focuses on patriarchal and systemic power relations by, for instance, studying class and economic relations. It then resembles the traditional critical research paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Weedon (1987) introduces poststructural feminism which is critical of the totalizing, grand theory of phallogocentrism embedded in traditional science. This feminist perspective claims that scientific knowledge is not objectively attainable, but only one of many ‘truth games’ (Lather 1991:104). This notion changes scientific knowledge from being objective, subjective and valid into being the ‘effects of power’ (Lather 1991:105), and hence, a reality that is constructed (Guba and Lincoln 2005). This perspective is also labelled cultural feminism (McNay 2004a). Lately a fourth category in feminism is emerging; one that builds bridges between material and cultural feminism to render visible ‘systemic power’ and how it intersects with ‘localized, contextualized and pluralized’ power relations (Aitchison 2003, 2005; McNay 2000, 2004a, b).

Methodology is about theorizing the research practice in line with one’s epistemology. It is the discussion that surfaces from the feminist critique of phallocentrism and malestream research practices (DeVault 1996). It acknowledges the feminist research principles of inclusion, reduction of power relations, political agenda, and ethical and reflexive concerns (see also Cancian 1992; Cook and Fonow 1986; Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998). Furthermore, as feminist research belongs to at least one of the four philosophical stances, its methodology is not one-dimensional. Feminists deal with issues such as objectivity, subjectivity and power relations in different ways;
poststructural feminism’s view on knowing differs from standpoint feminism’s. For the former it is ‘partial and located’ (Weedon 1987:178) as there are no objects or subjects, for the latter it is founded in the lives and experiences of the underprivileged subject (Harding 1993) and, hence, a strong objectivity is possible. The example shows how interlinked the concepts of epistemology and methodology are, in that methodological reflections are epistemological in nature when they deal with the production of knowledge (Letherby 2003).

Methods are the techniques used to undertake a study (Cook and Fonow 1986; Harding 1987). Epistemology and methodology provide the researcher with a broad theoretical framework, which sometimes denotes a specific method such as the survey, the interview or observation (Stanley and Wise 1990). A clear distinction between methodology and method makes it easier to recognize what is distinctive about feminist compared to masculinist or positivistic research (Harding 1987). The method does not eliminate sexism and androcentrism; this is placed in the epistemology and how it reflects the relationship between knowing and being; the feminist research principles (Cancian 1992; Cook and Fonow 1986; Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998) are not linked to method but to perspectives.

Epistemology and methodology in feminism are at times used as interchangeable concepts, making methodological implications an implicit part of the philosophical position (Letherby 2003). Similarly methodology and method have sometimes been regarded as synonymous. One of the first books on feminist epistemologies, *Breaking Out* (Stanley and Wise 1983) is, incorrectly in the authors view, viewed as a discourse on method and methodology (Stanley and Wise 1990). An awareness of the distinctions between the three concepts is increasing (Ramazonoğlu and Holland 2002), and Stanley and Wise’s book from 1983 is today acknowledged to be about methodology not method or epistemology (Aitchison 2003; Cook and Fonow 1986; DeVault 1996; Oakley 2000).

I distinguish between epistemology, methodology and method in this research. The former describes the nature of the knowledge and how it is recognized. My epistemological position determines how I treat the nature of knowledge. Methodology is the theoretical consequence of my philosophical perspective. Method is the
techniques I use for answering the research question. I return to the choice of method in Chapter Three.

2.3 Knowing in feminist epistemologies

Feminist researchers often share critical views of purely male-centred research. Feminists are generally committed to the politics of epistemology and research, and convinced that gender hierarchies or patriarchy influence the production of knowledge (Alcoff and Potter 1993). Feminism is heterogeneous and difficult to label as it is based on different epistemologies or even standpoints, and there are many ways of producing knowledge on gender and women’s issues. Feminists have divergent views on objectivity, subjectivity, power relations and the relationships between ideas, experiences and realities (Ramazonğlu and Holland 2002). The meaning of ‘objectivity’ has been widely debated in relation to the construction of true and valid knowledge. That feminists may disagree is obvious, as Eichler (1997) identifies 10 understandings of objectivity in the literature: as neutrality, as denial of subjectivity, as objectification of the researched, as patriarchal power, as an external social world, as non-biased observations, as non-emotional, as quantitative methods, as a hierarchical relationship in the researcher – researched dyad, and as decontextualisation.

Spontaneous feminist empiricism or first wave feminism originates from feminist biologists and social scientists seeking to explain new procedures in research (Harding 1993). These liberal feminists did not question the positivist research paradigm but automatically used the same techniques to render visible women’s oppression in society (Aitchison 2003). Feminist empiricists just follow ‘more rigorously and carefully the existing methods and norms of research’ (Harding 1993:51). The main message in a guide for such research in the 1980s is that an awareness of sexism in every step of the research process, by using a proposed checklist, reduces it (Eichler 1988). Spontaneous feminist empiricists therefore do not question phallocentrism, objectivity or validity (Oakley 1998; Eichler 1997) and it is not a separate feminist epistemology. The goal is not to change existing structures or systems but to reform them from within, making such research focus more on effect than cause (Aitchison 2005:211). Feminist research on constraints to women’s participation in tourism is therefore spontaneous feminist empiricism as it focuses more on what, where and when than why and how when
exploring gender-power relations (see for instance Little 2002; Wilson 2004; Wilson and Little 2005). Although spontaneous feminist empiricism does not critically challenge positivism, it forms the starting point for feminist epistemologies as it argues the importance of understanding women’s lives and experiences (Harding 1993).

In the next three subsections I briefly explore philosophical feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and poststructural feminism’s views on power relations and objective/subjective knowledge. I then make such methodological reflections epistemological considerations (Letherby 2003), and draw on them to outline the epistemological underpinnings for this research.

2.3.1 Knowing as situated
Empiricism in philosophy emphasizes the role of experience and rejects the notion of intrinsic ideas. Grounded theory then draws on this theory (Charmaz 2005), as does philosophical feminist empiricism. Philosophical feminist empiricism differs from spontaneous feminist empiricism as it questions the positivistic underpinnings to the research. In doing so it takes different turns dependent upon how it incorporates elements from standpoint feminism and/or other theoretical approaches (Harding 1993). It is interesting to explore the contrast of such perspectives, but my goal is to briefly explore all three main perspectives. I therefore limit the examination to Code’s (1993) empirical-realist feminist empiricism as it is critical of value free and objective researchers, aiming rather to situate the researcher within the research process.

Code (1993) rejects the notion of objective knowledge as superior to subjective knowledge on the basis that it silences certain human being and therefore does not offer a complete epistemology. She is also critical of the foundation of positivist-empiricist orientations, which states the hierarchical relationship ‘S knows that p’ (Code 1993:15, emphasis in original). S-knows-that-p means that every researcher (S) is able to claim the same, true knowledge about the researched (p), hence, that scientific knowledge is universally found and that it is a privileged form of knowledge belonging to the knower. S-knows-that-p sets out research ideals like pure objectivity and value-neutrality and it rejects the interplay between emotion and reason, and between power and knowledge. It is a ‘view from nowhere’ that even allows ‘surrogate knowers’, as one researcher can easily replace the other (Code 1993:16). As a consequence knowledge transcends
subjectivity. Subjectivities are rendered powerless. Scientific knowers are detached and neutral so that they can predict, manipulate and control the known. Only such knowers have the power to know.

To Code (1993) the researchers’ subjectivities, however, are only hidden. They are people with agendas and personal claims. Furthermore, knowing is a complex phenomenon making most researchers’ observations into perceptions at a distance rather than scientific knowledge. They are personal not objective claims. Positivism also excludes controversial and local variables. Code (1993) on the contrary argues that S is always in a situation and at a location which affects his/her knowledge claims ($p$).

Knowledge is affected by many factors, making value freedom and objectivity a messy and tricky business. It is not possible for the researcher to be an objective observer. Gender and other personal variables always affects knowledge production, and not in a simple, unitary way. They intersect with other variables such as class and race making knowledge production a complex process (Code 1993). A constructivist reorientation of feminist empiricism preserves a realist orientation without becoming subjectivism or relativism. It is a better way to knowledge as it takes subjectivity into consideration and, hence, questions objectivity and power relations in research (Code 1993). Researchers are then situated and subjective, unable to achieve objective knowledge. I draw on these notions in section 2.5.1 when I explore the relationship between the researcher and the research participants.

### 2.3.2 Knowing as strong objectivity

Standpoint feminism is a sociological approach, a methodology and a critical epistemology (Harding 2004). Epistemologically it rejects the notion of objective knowledge as superior to that which is subjective. It takes the critique of positivism even further than Code (1993) as it offers a new logic to doing research, one which ‘starts thought from marginalized lives and takes everyday life as problematic’ (Harding 1993:50). The main goals are to map practices of material and political power which is necessary in order to change marginalized categories’ consciousness of oppression and produce changes to the situation (Harding 2004). It then not only situates the knower, but also privileges the way of knowing by naming it. It is based on the Marxist and New Left idea of the ‘epistemic privilege’ to the subjects on the margin over those on the centre (Bar On 1993:85). It is suppressed people such as women, Blacks or lesbians.
who are able to powerfully critique society and introduce new discourses. The powerless have ‘epistemic legitimacy’ (Longino 1993:107).

Standpoint feminism does not reject the concept of objectivity but claims that it has to be more rigorously applied (Harding 1993). The starting point of scientific knowledge is the many marginalized lives of women, as this produces non-phallocentric knowledge and introduces new subjects of knowledge (Harding 1993). It intends to liberate silent voices and to legitimate women as knowers. It introduces subjects of knowledge that are embodied and visible, that are historically located and similar to the objects of knowledge, both of which are shaped by the same social forces. It embraces both communities and individuals as knowers because all knowledge is socially legitimated and it encourages a multitude of knowers; women’s lives are differently influenced by class, race and sexuality. By introducing a sense of ‘strong’ objectivity, the subject of knowledge becomes an equal to the knower; ‘Starting off research from women’s lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women’s lives but also of men’s lives and of the whole social order. Women’s lives and experiences provide the ‘grounds’ for this knowledge’ (Harding 1993:56). In memory work, for instance, the status of women as equal knowers is realized (Haug 1987). According to Smith (1992) standpoint feminism does not necessarily privilege women as knowers but often places them at the start of an inquiry as women are often suppressed in everyday life.

Standpoint feminism acknowledges that women’s lives are diverse, but still rejects relativism. There are always some social situations that are better for producing knowledge (Harding 1993). It then differentiates between sociological relativism and epistemological relativism. But, as Bar On (1993) notes, it can be difficult to decide which category is more epistemically privileged and a person can be marginalized in multiple ways such as in race and sexuality; is a black man more marginalized than a white lesbian? By claiming the position and fighting it the values and practises used to marginalize it are also reinscribed (Bar On 1993) and the category is no longer marginalized. Despite such epistemological challenges to the known and selecting the knower, standpoint feminism acknowledges and seeks to overcome the power relations embedded in research and epistemology. By valorising women’s different experiences and situating knowledge in time and place it is possible to maximize objectivity in research. This form of objectivity rejects epistemological relativism and acknowledges
heterogeneity among women’s everyday lives (see also DeVault 1990; Maynard 1994; Stanley and Wise 1990). Harding’s ideas are then similar to Code’s; they both situate the knower, but Harding takes it a step further by also naming the knower for understanding systemic oppression.

Humberstone (2004) links standpoint feminism to tourism research and notes that it entails studies of the lived experiences of host communities, host environments and tourists, and it is based on the perspective of the epistemic privilege of all three. She highlights ecofeminism as the post-standpoint in tourism research as travel has major effects on natural and cultural environments that are often rendered powerless. Aitchison (2005) identifies gender, class and sexuality as other standpoints in tourism studies.

### 2.3.3 Knowing as psychological and embodied

Feminist philosophical empiricists and standpoint feminists are critical of positivism and introduce the subjective knower as equal to the objective, but they do not point to the real reasons behind the binary opposition, just its material effects (Grosz 1993b; Lather 1991). This is the concern of poststructural or cultural feminism (McNay 2004a) based on French psychoanalytic, linguistic and cultural theories of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan (Aitchison 2005), which is similar to the traditional constructivism paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Influenced by Foucault, feminist poststructuralism places patriarchal power relations in the discourses. Such discourses ‘serve to construct, legitimate and reproduce’ power relations (Aitchison 2003). This makes Jordan link solo holidays to a ‘power-tourism-sexuality-triplex’ (Jordan 2003:231). Her study suggests that the tourism industry marginalises women travelling alone and that solo women are sexualised in tourism spaces.

Other feminists argue that Lacan’s ‘phallogocentrism’ is a symbolic foundation of our culture, of our ‘natural’ way of thinking and speaking (Fürst 1998). Phallogocentrism means a hierarchical relationship between the binaries reason/male and unreason/female that is a taken for granted part of much Western ontology and philosophy (Braidotti 1993; Fürst 1998; Stanley and Wise 1993). L. Johnston (2001:184) therefore points to the binaries self/other, mind/body, same/different and work/play in tourism which make tourism studies the ‘master subject’ nowhere to be found in the field; it is marked by the
masculine, heterosexual, white and middle class. It is less interested in understandings that equalise the Other such as women, homosexuals, blacks, disabled, working class and so on. In this subsection I explore feminist poststructuralism’s deconstruction of the binary body/mind in knowledge production.

Deconstructions of discourses mean that the taken for grantedness of everyday life or the ideologies are contested and that it is possible to value them differently and even change them. This means that deconstructions of the dichotomised categories governing Western reason such as mind/body, culture/nature and day/night, make it possible to claim that they are embedded with logic privileging the logos and the phallus and thereby excluding women and subjective experiences (Fürst 1998). Such deconstructions suggest that knowledge is phallogocentric. Lloyd (1984) shows how reason in Philosophy has been associated with maleness since Plato, but even more so since Descartes. Since the 17th century, as a result of the Cartesian thinking, male rational reason is a character ideal and a systematic method of knowledge creation in the Western world. It is through the mind that knowledge is produced. Descartes therefore creates a philosophy based on disembodied minds and isolated individuals (Longino 1993).

Vision and touch become a binary of hierarchical positions (Keller and Grontkowski 1983). The former is considered a phallic sense and is linked to the man’s mind and the latter to a woman’s sense and her body/emotions. Descartes, building upon Plato’s theory of anamnesis as recollection, claims that mental vision is the basis of all knowledge (Keller and Grontkowski 1983). He also sees the actual eye as a passive observer of the material, thereby turning the mind’s eye, the ‘I’, into the intellectual knower separated from the body which houses it (Grosz 1993a:6). In this process the soul or thinking substance is separated from nature as the extended substance. Sight therefore becomes the metaphor of knowledge, and this ‘sense’ is linked to the mind not the body as touch is. Descartes thereby establishes a dichotomy of mind-body which is still present in positivist research (see for instance Thomas 2004). The consequences of phallogocentrism are on the one hand a scientific knower that is forced out of the bodily realm (Keller and Grontkowski 1983), one who is the observer of knowledge. On the other hand, it means a knowing body that is considered part of nature; it is looked upon as a self-moving machine rather than a lived body of emotions and meaningful
experiences that produces knowledge (Somerville 2004). This means an exclusion of women’s thoughts and emotions as the basis for knowledge. In times and places where women are not formally educated or part of the public sphere they are not knowers (Weedon 1987). Their reason is traditionally considered irrational or a different sort of rationality. It is linked to emotional and sensuous sides of the body not the intellect or the mind.

The notion that modern Western philosophy is embedded with purely intellectual knowers is also criticised by feminists such as Braidotti (1993) and Grosz (1993a, b) who point to the importance of the body and embodiment. Embodiment means to give something a tangible body or a concrete form (Swain 2004:104) and to situate knowledge within this body or form. When bodily experiences are not acknowledged as ways of knowing, women are often rejected as knowers. To change this Braidotti (1993) draws attention to an embodied subjectivity in the theory of the feminist nomadic subject. She claims that the feminist nomadic subject is a multiple, complex process ‘… without dualistic oppositions, linking instead body and mind in a new flux of self’ (Braidotti 1993:11). It is a way of redefining the process of thinking by building a new conceptual framework for thoughts about change and transformation. The feminist subject is both subjective desire and willful social transformation; she is a ‘will-to-know’ and affective in the production of knowledge (Braidotti 1993:6). Social changes are not possible without new understandings of the feminist subject. The binary logic is replaced with a ‘both/and logic’ (Lather 1991:104).

Grosz (1993a) also argues that it is necessary to rethink the binaries of reason/vision/male and unreason/body/female that have had such an impact on social science. It is necessary to explore the body as ‘the unacknowledged condition’ of reason (Grosz 1993b:195); to examine why the body is still associated with women and the feminine, and the mind with men as this does not lead to more nuanced concepts of human beings. More adequate concepts accept differences, differences which are based on bodily experiences of sex, class and race and so on. This entails an understanding of power relations as embodied. It operates on the body and affects people’s experiences and behaviours. Instead of considering body and mind as oppositions one should therefore see them as interlinked as they ‘are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives’ (Grosz
1993a:xii). The deconstruction of the binaries makes it possible to rewrite them and make them equal (Wearing 1998).

The importance of embodiment and phallogocentrism is also acknowledged by tourism researchers; especially those interested in feminist poststructuralism or the critical turn (see for instance Ateljevic, Prichard and Morgan 2007). In *The body in tourism* Veijola and Jokinen (1994) explore non-phallogocentric ways of knowing with contemporary tourism researchers; when MacCannell (1976) claims that the tourist is a middle-class sightseer or even a seeker of difference, they ask for the acknowledgement of embodied experiences and a more nuanced concept. When Urry (1990) links tourism to the tourist gaze they wonder if it is not the entire body that goes on holiday and that it requires other conceptualisations of the experience. Veijola and Jokinen (1994) also explore how not only the tourist but also the tourism researchers are lacking a body. They call for a greater awareness of such issues.

Since Veijola and Jokinen’s (1994) seminal article other tourism researchers have taken up the challenge of exploring more complex ways of knowing (Aitchison 2005; Crouch 2002; Swain 2002; Urry 2006; Wearing and Wearing 1996); Wearing and Wearing (1996) develop the concept of ‘choraster’. Choraster originates from Plato’s concept of ‘chora’, which refers to a space that is occupied and given meaning by the people who use it (Grosz 1995:50; Wearing 1998:133). Chorasters are ‘tourists who bring meaning to the ‘chora’ from their own position in their own culture and who creatively incorporate into their sense of self the experiences of interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds in the tourist space’ (Wearing and Wearing 1996:235). L. Johnston (2001) argues that to overcome hierarchical binaries such as self/other and body/mind in tourism, it first needs to be recognized and then to be unsettled. In a study of gay pride parades she shows how it is possible to conceptualise the (re)sexualisation of tourists without understanding tourists and hosts as separate bodies.

By questioning phallocentrism and phallogocentrism in philosophy, feminism contributes to a critical constructivist perspective, situating knowledge production in the entire body, not only the mind. It disputes notions that women’s knowledge is not scientific by deconstructing the dichotomies body/mind and woman/man. In this research I intend to overcome hierarchical binaries such as mind/body, self/other and
nature/culture. But, as they are embedded in language it is a challenging task (Fürst 1998), which maybe never is fully obtainable. A focus on knowledge including the entire body is perhaps easier to maintain. Knowing the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities then not only demands a focus on the entire body, but also on the bodies participating in the research. It means acknowledging my own body or ‘positionality’ (Rose 1997:308) and how I affect the production of knowledge. I return to such issues in section 2.5.

2.3.4 Knowing as in flux
Deconstructions of the logic behind reason mean rejecting the totalizing, grand theory of phallogocentrism which is entrenched in language and communicative research practice (Aitchison 2005; Weedon 1987). It also means fluid and contingent scientific knowledge. Such knowledge is no longer objectively attainable, but only one of many ‘truth games’ (Lather 1991:104). It is in flux because culture is not a static entity but ‘dynamic, expansive and intrinsically shaped by power and the struggle against it’ (Lather 1991:xvi). This changes scientific knowledge from being objective, subjective and valid into being the ‘effects of power’ (Lather 1991:105), and hence, a reality that is constructed (Guba and Lincoln 2005).

Scientific knowledge in poststructuralism is multiple and constructed in the discourses of knowing and there are no criteria for knowing (Ramazonoğlu and Holland 2002). Concepts such as truth, objectivity, subjectivity and reason do not signify valid knowledge but are embedded with powerful cultural values (Lather 1991). They are limited categories that do not grasp the complex relationships surrounding both the researcher and the researched. Subjectivity is not an essence but ‘precarious, contradictory and in process’ reconstituted in the discourse (Weedon 1987:32). It is therefore not possible to understand ‘women’ as a stable concept and to talk about women as one subject (Butler 1993:4). Women are defined by the political system; ‘she’ is discursively shaped and a ‘performative construct’ (McNay 2004a:173).

Research therefore does not produce facts but constructs based on the researcher’s questions and the research participant’s answers, both formulated out of the material that culture provides. As knowledge exists within, and follows, a discourse there is no ‘object to be objective about’ (Lather 1991:105) and no ‘subject of women’ to know from. Scientific knowledge is relative and multiple and only exists within a language of
knowing. It is attainable when each step and concept of knowing and the discourses and power relations surrounding it is deconstructed. Such deconstructions reveal scientific knowledge as a ‘value-constituted and constituting enterprise’ within the ‘power/knowledge nexus’ (Lather 1991:105, see also section 2.3.3). In this perspective, research projects that are funded or the research institutes that are supported by governmental institutions are always embedded in the discourse of scientific knowledge.

To feminists the relativistic notions embedded in poststructuralism challenge assumptions of suppression, liberation and a political agenda. One danger is that every aspect of life is deconstructed and accepted as equally right, moral, true and important. An absolute relativism is unsuitable for feminist poststructuralism as it endangers the search for justice, emancipation and political agenda (Flax 1990). The intention not to fix knowledge sometimes feels like anti-humanism (Weedon 1987). If black, white, married, single, heterosexual, lesbian women are more or less suppressed is it difficult to know what feminists are fighting for and how to induce changes in society. Lather rejects the fears of relativism and claims: it ‘seems to me an implosion of Western, white male, class-privileged arrogance – if we cannot know everything, then we can know nothing’ (Lather 1991:116). Although poststructuralism means multiple truths, a disbelief in subjectivity and objectivity, it also provides analytical tools for feminists that are interested in deconstructing taken for granted grand narratives and exploring how they are produced and made powerful (Ramazonğlu and Holland 2002). It reveals power relations in new ways by deconstructing basic assumptions and linguistic practises. It thereby gives other inputs to change and makes it possible to explore partial and local stories (Weedon 1987).

Standpoint feminism and poststructural feminism are in many ways opposites. The former believes in guidelines for scientific knowledge, the latter rejects them. The former places power relations in material dispositions and structures, the latter in discursive practices. The former claims than women are knowers, the latter that there are no women. The relativism which is the utmost consequence of poststructuralism is, however, seldom embraced by poststructural feminists who see the necessity to compromise and combine the ‘partial, historically specific and interested nature of theory and practice’ (Weedon 1987:178) with a belief in stable subjects’ experiences.
They seek to overcome binaries by replacing them with a ‘both/and logic’ (Lather 1991:104) and they explore possibilities to combine material feminism with cultural feminism (McNay 2000, 2004a; Fraser 2000). Aitchison (2005:220) suggests building bridges between the two as they are both necessary in order to understand how ‘systemic power’ often intersects with ‘localized, contextualized and pluralized’ power. The concept of the ‘social-cultural nexus’ combines material and cultural analyses and renders visible the two respective power relations (Aitchison 2003).

To McNay (2004a:172) Bourdieu’s concept of ‘field’ is a way of combining material and cultural feminism. It enables an understanding of social relations that is ‘intersubjectivity situated’. Contrary to other feminists who try to solve the opposition between material and cultural feminism, McNay (2004b) leaves the abstract level for Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) phenomenological analysis and sees the subject as praxis or practical reason. She places the experience at the centre of knowing. By intervening with Bourdieu’s social theory McNay renews feminists’ relationship to social theory (Adkins 2004b). In Bourdieu she finds concepts of power and social action that are embodied, reflexive and generative; a foundation for reworking and redefining feminist theory (Skeggs 2004). McNay is of course not alone in this endeavour (see for instance Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Lovell 2000; Moi 1991; Skeggs 1997).

2.4 Knowing as situated intersubjectivity

McNay (2000, 2004a, b) does not explicitly name subjects of knowledge or discuss how the social position of the subject affects knowledge production. She rather takes the discussion a step further by exploring ways of ‘reconfiguring the subject’, thereby suggesting new foundations for scientific knowledge based on a both/and logic. She is critical of Butler’s work and claims that it builds upon symbolic determinism and a notion of the subject as instituted through constraints (McNay 1999c). Butler’s (1993) poststructural notion that ‘women’ is an unstable concept does not accommodate the fact that women have similar ‘lived social experiences’ and that women often only take a limited number of forms (McNay 2004a:174). The work and family life of most women create similar opportunities and constraints, making women a somewhat stable concept. A reflexive theory on the subject cannot only focus on cultural structures, but must also acknowledge its embodied nature (McNay 1999a, 2000). It needs to
intertwine insights from material and cultural feminism and demands ‘a differentiated analysis of new dimensions of autonomy and dependence’ (McNay 2004a:171).

One way to do this is to consider ‘social relations as lived’ (McNay 2004b:183-184). McNay develops the idea from Bourdieu’s ‘phenomenology of social space’ and the concept of ‘experience’. With experience, McNay (2004b) does not refer to the privileged experience of women in standpoint theory; she does not question how it relates to knowledge or how it is constituted. Neither does she refer to poststructural notions of experience as a multiple concept in flux as this may abandon it completely. Experience is rather situated within a ‘phenomenology of social space’ (McNay 2004b:184). In knowing social action, in understanding the subject or getting insights into power relations the actor’s worldviews is then at the centre of attention. Such knowledge is not found by deducing social or cultural structures, but by analysing social positions as spatial positions of a field. Only when experiences are based on reality do they give valid knowledge about material and cultural structures. Scientific knowledge is then about analysing people’s real lives and experiences, not in a universalistic way but placed in contexts such as work, family, leisure, sport, holiday and arts and so on. It is about situating the subject in the experience. This allows for contesting knowledge about the subject as experiences are different; the power relations of the holiday do not operate the same way as those of work and so on. Scientific knowledge needs to trace the links between ‘phenomenal immediacy of experience and abstract systems of power’ (McNay 2004b:184). In this section I explore McNay’s thinking in more detail.

McNay (2004a) is rather critical of the ‘systemic reductionism’ of standpoint feminism and the ‘reduction upwards’ in poststructural feminism and how both epistemologies have informed knowledge about the subject in monological and sometimes negative ways. Her ‘reconfigured subject’ seeks to overcome the dualism between stasis and change or determinism and relativism found in feminist thinking following Foucault (McNay 1999b:315, 2000:10). The Foucauldian paradigm sees the subject primarily as one-dimensional and the focus is the ‘docile’ body (McNay 1992:82) produced by different forms of institutionalised disciplines (Benson 1997). Foucault introduces later the notion ‘technologies of self’, which implies an active creation of self-identify, but it does not satisfy McNay (1999a:109). Technologies of self revolve around stylization of identity or the idea of the subject as a reflexive, mental process. Reflexivity, however,
partly exists on a pre-reflexive level. It therefore needs to be situated in the social world and in the body (Adkins 2004a; Lash 1994). Reflexivity is then not a cognitive process but part of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1999) it is incorporated and unconscious, and could be the reason women still feel emotionally responsible for others although they are supposed to be contemporary independent individuals (Adkins 2004a:198); ‘Out-of-the-world’ processes of identification do not therefore explain the complex dialectic of freedom and constraints embedded in subjectification. They do not distinguish ‘precisely between practices of the self that are imposed on individuals through cultural sanctions and those that are more freely adopted’ (McNay 2000:9). Contrary to negative understandings of subject formation McNay (2000) outlines a more generative theoretical framework, one which emphasises creative aspects to agency. This theory embraces people’s ability ‘to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behaviour’ (McNay 2000:22).

A generative paradigm requires insights from both material and cultural feminism. As the two often act like binaries, McNay draws on mainstream theories and mediating concepts to overcome the dualism. She (McNay 2000) intervenes with Bourdieu’s social and cultural theory, Ricour’s theory of narrative structures and Castoriadis’s concepts of radical and social imagination. In this chapter I limit the discussion to how McNay (2000, 2004a, b) draws on Bourdieu and the notion of ‘lived social relations’. It is important to note that McNay (2004b) acknowledges that Bourdieu does not fully see the possibility for agency as only *habitus* adapts to the demands of the field, not the opposite – he sees reflexivity only as a sociological attribute. McNay (2000) also notes that Bourdieu does not use field and *habitus* to understand masculine and feminine subjects in the field, just class relations.

McNay (2004 a, b) suggests ‘intersubjectivity’, ‘field’, ‘*habitus*’ and ‘agency’ as mediating concepts for knowing. The concepts make it possible to situate the subject without turning it into an essence, and to see it as multiple without treating it in a relativistic way. Gender is a category that ‘at once *masquerades as* and *is* an essence’ (Moi 1991:1036, emphasis in original). Intersubjectivity means that the subject is placed within social relations, not the discourse or the material structures. Social relations, though, are always triads (Østerberg 1975) consisting of me, you and the cultural norm. The cultural norm, the moral or the group of reference is used by the dyad, me-you, for
comparison or reference and it often appears as material structures and is made to facilitate the interactions between the two. It then appears as material and as cultural structures. The notion of intersubjectivity or social relations therefore connects experience to both kinds of power structures without reducing it to either (McNay 2004a). The subject is constituted through material objects and the discourse, as well as social interactions.

Field means ‘structured spaces of positions’ (Bourdieu 1993:72) and a network of objective social positions functioning in specific ways (McNay 2000). Gender is one such social position, but it functions as ‘general social fields’ rather than a ‘home’ field (Adkins 2004b:6). It is therefore ‘chameleonlike’ (Moi 1991:1034). The value and importance of gender depends upon social context and how it intersects with other social categories, such as class, race, age and sex (Adkins 2004b; Skeggs 1997). Fields are arts, economic, science, the holiday, the family and so on; structured spaces with specific properties, stakes and interests, its skilled people and struggles. The boundary that informs and limits the practice of the field has its own logic (Adkins 2004a). It is shaped by the relationship between the positions and the distribution of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. The relationship between gender and social capital also values the capital and shapes how it is organized as well as women’s ability to capitalize upon it (Skeggs 1997), in this sense gender is more a hidden form of cultural capital than a field (Skeggs 2004).

The field is a relational concept. Its existence depends upon the involved actors; no actors no field, no capital no power. Various forms of capital are valued differently within each field. However, there are always tensions between interests of different groups who struggle for control by using the capitals (Bourdieu 1986). It is full of social positions and spatial distances, of immediate experiences and invisible structures (McNay 2004b). The notion of field therefore expresses complex power relations without reducing them to either material or cultural structures, or fixed social positions (McNay 2004a). It contains material forces and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995:157). It allows contradictory explanations for subjectification and complex understandings of how such power relations work. In the field the subject is intersubjectively situated and located.
The field is closely linked to ‘habitus’ as the knowledge about how to ‘play the game’ and ‘feel the game’ of the field (Bourdieu 1993:72). Habitus is ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu 1990:53). It is the conscious and unconscious embodiment of social norms and power relations which regulates and guides how a person acts, talks, dresses and so on in the field. It indicates how power relations are implanted in people’s bodies and behavioural patterns. It is the inscription of social positions and distances upon the body (McNay 2004b). Habitus makes and forms actions and is the non-unitary embodiment of the field (Adkins 2004a). Tourists learn a feel for the game of the holiday and they struggle over the symbolic capital hereby shaping habitus and forming the field.

Three aspects of habitus are important to McNay (1999a); the temporal dimension, pre-reflexivity and agency. First, habitus is a temporal dimension in the sense that it involves ‘a ‘practical reference to the future’ – and thereby opens up the act of reproduction to indeterminacy and the potential for change’ (McNay 1999a:102). The subject is then not a static reiteration or reproduction of the sex-gender system, it is historically located. The temporal aspects embedded in habitus are protentive as well as retentive, in the sense that they both express and anticipate actions and behavioural patterns (McNay 2000). Retention is the primary memory of what just happened whereas protention is primary expectation of what is about to be. All actions have a time and historical dimension and primary expectations are not always fulfilled. The subject is therefore not deterministically shaped. It is not possible to predict actions as they are always relational and dependent upon the resources and capitals available at the time.

Secondly, habitus operates on a pre-reflexive level (McNay 2000). The dispositions are part of the unconscious, thus partly escape processes of reflexive self-monitoring: Masculine and feminine behaviour is therefore inscribed upon the body and function without the subjects’ awareness. Furthermore, although the subject alters as a result of structural changes in work, family and leisure, there are still deep-seated images of masculinity and femininity which remain (McNay 1999a). The fear of travelling solo, for instance, is entrenched in the feminine (Enloe 1989; Wilson 2004). Such gender related notions are the result of primary processes of socialisation. The subject does not
rise out of a voluntary process of self-stylization, but is the outcome of embodied
gendered tastes and preferences.

Thirdly, *habitus* offers an understanding of the subject that captures the dialectic of
freedom and constraints (McNay 1999a). Embodying the field and its power relations
partly determines the subject and partly gives it possibilities to change itself and the
situation. It gives agency. Agency means ‘an act of temporalization where the subject
transcends the present through actions that have an inherently anticipatory structure’
(McNay 1999a:104). McNay (2004a) links the possibility for social transformations to
*habitus* as pre-reflexive. The link between field and *habitus* is not a hierarchical
relationship but an ‘affective transaction’ as ‘there is a tendency for hope to increase
proportionally with social power’ (McNay 2004a:182). This allows for changing the
existing order or conforming to it. Very often social change is the result of a ‘lack of fit
between gendered *habitus* and field’ (McNay 2000:53). This means that reflexivity
awakens when women enter new fields and is provoked by the conflicts and tensions
arising there. However, all women do not bring about the same changes or change in
similar ways. They act differently in the same circumstances (McNay 2004b); some
women are constrained by public places, others are not. Each woman has a different
capacity for agency.

*Habitus* and agency then work on an unconscious level (McNay 2004b). Agency is
embedded in *habitus* and conditioned by the field. It is not the property of the discourse.
This opens up possibilities for ‘regulated liberties’ (Bourdieu 1991:102), and a way of
describing the relationship between the dominant and the submissive as more than
hierarchical oppositions. The feminine subject is produced through ‘regulatory
phallocentric symbolic systems’ as well as being able to subvert to these norms (McNay
2000:58).

Adkins (2004a:199) is critical of McNay’s reduction of *habitus* to the pre-reflexive
level and social transformation to the ‘lack of fit between gendered *habitus* and field’.
Norms are not always pre-reflexively occupied and it is impossible to distinguish
between reflexive and pre-reflexive actions in modernity. Reflexivity on gender in
modernity is conscious in nature. Agency and social transformation is then more
‘habitual forms of actions’ than the entering of new fields. It is therefore rather
‘mimesis’ that creates social transformations and women’s ability to transform practice. Mimesis means that norms are incorporated but also resisted through practice (Adkins 2004a:207). Skeggs (2004) also argues that *habitus* operates on a conscious level and has to be understood in tactical and reflexive ways. *Habitus* as ‘tactic’ means that people are reflexive in gaining a sense of control of a situation (Certeau 1984:49, 59). Tactics are also determined by the absence of power, it is the ways people reflexively manipulate events and turn them into ‘opportunities’; it is how they manoeuvre the pitfalls of social life (Certeau 1984:xix). Social transformations are therefore also reflexive.

An understanding of gender/singlehood/midlife identities as ‘social relations as lived’ is central in this research; the holiday experience is intersubjectively situated as a field of social positions such as families, couples, singles, tourists, men, women, children, employees, locals, working class people and middle class people, and spatial distances, immediate experiences and invisible structures and struggles are evident. It is shaped by practices and signs (Crouch 2000). Practices or experiences are tourists’ actions, interactions and negotiations, but also the ways that women ‘make sense’ of the world and how they encounter the holiday. The game of the field is part of the women’s *habitus* on reflexive and pre-reflexive levels. They embody and enact the tourist role. When entering the field they use capital to gain symbolic and material power.

Signs are abstract and concrete semiotic processes which inscribe the holiday experience and constitute parts of the field; brochures and guidebooks represent the holiday experience and signify practice to the women. The practices and signs then influence them in the tourist role (Crouch 2002; Swain 2004). Such descriptions are never the same, do not influence all women in similar ways and provide different levels of ability and possibility for agency. Like Adkins (2004a) I then view agency as a partly reflexive state. The spatiality of the holiday experience (Sheller and Urry 2004b) is mediated through different body practices and women’s experiences may thus differ in time and place.

By mapping such complex relations it is possible to explore the interrelationships between holiday experiences and gender/singlehood/midlife identities that situate the experience intersubjectively without limiting it to one explanation or one kind of
women. It also allows for complex analysis of power relations, based on material and cultural structures.

Social relations as lived resembles the notion of tourism as ‘mobile’ and ‘in play’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006). Urry’s (see for instance 2006) response to Veijola and Jokinen’s (1994; see section 2.3.3) critique of the tourist gaze is perhaps the ‘new mobility paradigm’. This paradigm builds upon tourism as ‘contingent mobility’ and entails complex relationships between the subject and the object, between material structures and discourses. Knowledge about tourism is ‘material, embodied, contingent, networked, and performed’ (Urry 2006:viii). Urry then no longer reduces the tourist experience to the gaze, but takes the body seriously. He also emphasises that tourism is made up of ‘fragile constructions’ based on objects, mobilities and proximities, yet requiring stabilizing and regulating tools and infrastructures. Knowing tourism means investigating fluidity and change as tourism practice are like sandcastles, soon washed away by the tide (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). Simultaneously it is ‘sedimentated’ in the infrastructure and economic, political and cultural structures which make it appear somewhat fixed and given. Scientific tourism knowledge is therefore only possible through analysis of the ‘in play’ or the lived experiences of tourists, locals and employees. ‘Places only emerge as ‘tourist places’ when they are appropriated, used, and made part of the memories, narratives, and images of people engaged in embodied social practices’ (Urry 2006:ix).

In this research I then partly build on a feminist poststructuralist perspective and partly on feminist standpoint theory, or what McNay (2004b) terms a ‘phenomenology of social space’ which is comparable to Urry’s ‘new mobilities paradigm’. It is also similar to the intersection between critical theory and constructivism in mainstream research (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Scientific knowledge about the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is then intersubjectively situated in the field. It is in actual holiday situations that gendered *habitus* and the experiences intersect and that a critical reflexivity towards gender relations is possible and enabling of social transformations (Adkins 2004a).
2.5 Doing in feminist research

In the previous section I have discussed feminist ways of knowing by exploring issues of objectivity, subjectivity and power relations in research. These are in many ways methodological concerns as they are about theorizing research practice (DeVault 1996), but they are also epistemological concerns as each perspective has different understandings. In particular, ‘objectivity’ is disputed. As a consequence of seeing the midlife single woman’s holiday as lived social relations, objectivity, subjectivity and power are intersubjectively situated and linked to the field. Objectivity, subjectivity and power relations are then neither fixed nor fluid, but placed in the women’s holidays.

Despite different feminist epistemological positions, feminist research shares common goals (Cancian 1992; Cook and Fonow 1986; DeVault 1996; Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998). It is very often ‘on’, ‘by’ and ‘for’ women (Maynard 1994:16) and about social transformations (Adkins 2004b; McNay 2004a, b; Skeggs 1997). Cook and Fonow (1986), and Cancian (1992) identify five principles in feminist research, Morris, Woodward and Peters (1998) name four principles, whereas DeVault (1996) discusses three common goals. There are common characteristics in these ideas which I have developed into four goals.

The first goal is to include women in the research process. It is important for identifying oppression, diversity and ideological mechanisms that affect women’s lives or make the ‘invisible visible’, as Morris, Woodward and Peters (1998:220) see it. It is also a step towards challenging phallocentrism in ‘malestream’ science. The second principle is an explicit political research agenda. Feminists intend to change women’s lives by challenging existing theories, research practices and agendas. This is the result of epistemologies that are explicitly political; ‘our desire to do, and goal in doing, research is to create useful knowledge, knowledge which can be used by ourselves and others to ‘make a difference’ (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994:28).

This research values the importance of including women’s voices and the political agenda. Following feminist leisure research (Deem 1996; Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990; Henderson 1996) over the last two decades gender and women’s experiences have become more important in tourism studies and have produced new
gender aware concepts and insights into the lives of tourists, locals and employees (see for instance Anderson and Littrell 1995; Hall, Swain and Kinnaird 2003; Kinnaird and Hall 1994; Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Sánchez Taylor 2001; Sinclair 1997; Swain and Momsen 2002). In the last few years studies of differences within gender have been undertaken leading to more nuanced concepts and understanding of the tourist role and women’s different holiday experiences (Jordan and Gibson 2005; Simmons 2003; Small 2002, 2005; Wilson and Little 2005), such as those of midlife single women.

Midlife single women are a marginalized category in familial societies such as Norway, something which needs to be recognised by the government and the tourism industry; several public benefits support families with young children but no benefits help singles despite higher general costs of living and housing, and lower total income than families and couples (Statistics Norway 2001b, 2004). The available sum for holiday-making is therefore generally lower than that of couples and families. The tourism industry, furthermore, disregards the needs of solo travellers generally by financially penalising them in the form of single supplements (Jordan 2003) and midlife single women in particular by not knowing their preferences (Stone and Nichol 1999). This research intends therefore to challenge existing structures in society and the tourism industry by pointing out constraints and advantages of midlife single women’s holidays.

2.5.1 The relationship between the researcher and the research participant

The third common goal in feminist research is to reduce power relations in the research process; to strive for equality in the relationships between the researcher and the participants (Stanley 1990). This is implemented in this research by inclusive research procedures and a focus on hierarchies of power and control in research relations (Cancian 1992; Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998). The fourth goal is to devise a reflexive and ethical research process. The positivistic ideal of a strict separation between researcher and research participants is rejected by feminists. Such research is founded upon a notion that the two parties hold different positions of power (Code 1993; Maynard 1994; Stanley and Wise 1993) and that the researcher is the more powerful in the relationship. The researcher’s objectivity automatically secures validity whereas the research participants must be reflexive about his and her actions and thoughts to achieve the same (Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002). But, the researcher is not
unbiased or objective and feminism therefore proposes a new ideal or a non-hierarchical relationship between the two (see for instance Crawford et al. 1992; Harding 1993; Haug 1987).

Maynard (1994) argues that feminists have expressed reflexivity in two ways: a critical examination of the research process and an implementation of the researcher’s autobiography. The former is about clarifying power relations and making power relations in the research process more explicit (Ramazonğlu and Holland 2002). Cook and Fonow (1986) argue that the researcher must anticipate every consequence the research has for the participants to reduce negative impacts. Research is a powerful process which raises many ethical concerns; one way of protecting the participants is to ask for consent and to fully inform them about the purpose of the study (Berg 2007; Ramazonğlu and Holland 2002). Another is to clarify the research process and the researcher’s position in it. This requires the researcher to reflect upon the research practice and to be self-critical (Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002). Reflexive researchers constantly write notes during the research and explicitly share thoughts about how the process has affected the study (Letherby 2004). Such researchers also tell their story enabling the reader to judge the researchers’ influence upon it (Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002). Jordan (2003) critically examines her role as a researcher by making personal and academic rationales explicit. She also considers ethical dimensions by informing the participants about the topics before the interviews and obtaining signed consent forms. Reflexive researchers are not only self-reflexive but also open to new insights. They sometimes ask the research participants to interpret the research and the research process (Haug 1987). Small (1999) is a ‘co-researcher’ in one of the memory-working groups exploring the nature of good and bad holiday experiences. She lets the participants ‘in’ on the theorising.

Accountability for producing knowledge and the identification of power relations in the research process are then two sides of a reflexive research process. It necessitates the researcher’s perspective on power and ethical implications (Ramazonğlu and Holland 2002). It is a feminist ideal and, as with many ideals, may never be fully obtainable. Rose (1997:311) labels this kind of reflexivity ‘transparent reflexivity’ and argues that it is an illusion, that it is impossible to know fully ‘both self and context’. It is founded upon a notion that power relations are visible and that the researcher and the research
participants are both positioned in the same landscape of power. But, they are not in the same situation, and power is not always visible, Rose (1997) claims. Although the researcher is open about her position, she still has the power to ask questions, to interpret and to conclude, and although the participant is willing to express thoughts and feelings, the researcher can never fully understand him or her. The researcher ‘is not entering the lives of her interviewees in the long term and again there can be little question of developing collective knowledge’ (Glucksmann 1994:154).

Instead of situating the research process in transparent reflexivity, power relations are often out of the researcher’s control as ‘how a research project is understood is not entirely a consequence of the relation between researchers and researched’ (Rose 1997:319). Holland and Ramazonoğlu make similar observations ‘The point is not that we know the ways in which particular stances may systematically affect research, but that we do not know’ (Holland and Ramazonoğlu 1994:131, emphasis in original). The researcher therefore must accept having little control over the research participants and the research process. It is a complex process full of uncertainties and incompleteness and there are many absences and fallibilities that are out of the researcher’s hand (Maynard 1994; Rose 1997).

Thus it should be recognised that research participants also sometimes exercise power in the research. Skeggs (1994) revisits a study with 16 year old female participants and how she, as a part-time teacher, has the power to access their lives as most of them find it difficult to say no. At the same time the young women are not powerless and take advantage of the situation by asking for free cigarettes, coffee and visits to the university in return. By taking an interest in the women Skeggs, on the one hand, controls the situation but, on the other hand, her interest increases their self-awareness and self-value. Some of the young women have personal problems and Skeggs sometimes counsels instead of interviews. These research participants thereby change the schedule. The researcher and the participants then both exercise power and negotiate terms.

The reason for participating in a research project is not always altruistic and neither is participation always a positive experience. Letherby (2003:140) reports different motivations for being involved in the PhD research; some participants want to help
themselves, others want to ‘set the record straight’ or to educate others. Glucksmann (1994) revisits experiences with being a research participant and how insecure the experience makes her:

I certainly did not come away feeling good on the occasion when I was on the other side of the microphone being interviewed about my involvement in the student movement of the late 1960s. In fact I felt awful afterwards. I had dredged my memory for what the interviewer wanted to know: what I had thought then about various political arguments and strategies and why. All sorts of memories were churned up and then left up in the air without being resolved. Also I found it very hard to refrain from saying what I now thought in hindsight about what had happened then and only talk as if it were still in the present. And of course I did not know whether the researcher thought it was a good interview.

(Glucksmann 1994:165, emphasis in original)

Reflexivity does then mean having to consider inequality in the relationship between the researcher and the research participants and how this affects the research process. In Chapter Three I outline how this is managed in this research. Reflexivity also requires consideration of the consequences of close relationships between the two parties and the effect such closeness has. It is accepted that feminist research has an agenda and that the personal is also political. Feminists then often explore subjects of personal interests.

The closer our subject area is to our own lives and experiences, the more we can expect our own beliefs about the world to shape our work, the questions we ask, the interpretations we generate from our findings and, indeed, every aspect of the research process.

(Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998:222)

In particular, the closeness between research participants and the researcher is important in this research. As a midlife single woman I share the lifestyles of the participants and similar challenges related to the holiday. This is evident in section 1.2.3 where I clarify my personal rationale for the study and in Chapter Seven when I discuss the findings. We share comparable experiences. I deal with such closeness in every step of the research and I am aware of the potential influence my voice has upon the study. I
outline how I do this in section 3.2. Furthermore, I appreciate Rose’s (1997) thoughts on transparent reflexivity and that scientists are unable to control every aspect of the environment; research participants are just as nervous and insecure about talking about personal issues as researchers are about intervening in their lives. Participants also have different reasons for, and willingness to, reveal personal experiences. They are first and foremost not powerless. Although reflexivity is an ideal, it is difficult to attain as the research process is influenced by many external factors. It is still important to acknowledge that power-relations exist and to explicitly take them into consideration.

2.6 Quantitative and qualitative paradigms

In social science there is a clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods, but the difference between quantitative and qualitative methodologies is more blurred. In feminist research the two methods are often associated with different methodologies, what Oakley (2000) terms the ‘quantitative paradigm’ and the ‘qualitative paradigm’ and Letherby (2004:176) the ‘gendered paradigms’. Although most feminists now reject epistemological dualism some view quantitative and qualitative research methods as oppositions (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989; Eichler 1997). Methodology and methods are therefore gendered (Oakley 1998). In this section I explore such notions.

The anti-quantitative methodological position in feminism is the result of standpoint feminism questioning the male biases of objectivity and truth in spontaneous feminist empiricism (Eichler 1997; Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Maynard 1994; Oakley 1998). Feminist empiricists mainly use quantitative techniques to visualise female oppression but without acquiring its positivist paradigm (Aitchison 2003; Eichler 1988; Harding 1993). They believe that phallocentrism is avoided by more rigorous research processes. Standpoint feminism, on the other hand, criticizes quantification because it does not valorise women’s ways of knowing (Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi 1995:431) and calls for a feminist ‘standpoint’ and ‘strong objectivity’. It idealizes women’s voices heard through in-depth investigations and, hence, the use of qualitative techniques (Harding 1993). Standpoint feminism makes many researchers reject quantitative methods (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Oakley 1998).
The close link between methodology and method is also found in poststructural feminism which rejects the notion of one feminist voice and traditional methods as such (Aitchison 2000a; Eichler 1997; Stanley and Wise 1990). It challenges the notion of homogenous gender as an analytical category and thereby the possibility to count at all (Lawson 1995). As subversion is embedded in language, deconstruction is seen as the appropriate method (Butler 1999; Braidotti 1993; Keller and Grontkowski 1983; Lloyd 1984; Ramazonoğlu and Holland 2002). Recently, feminists have started to rethink the relationship between discourse and materiality (Aitchison 2000a, 2005; McNay 2000, 2004a, b), suggesting a less rigid relationship between paradigm and method (Lawson 1995). This development provides new grounds for discussing the link between methodology, method and research questions.

The link between research techniques and ways of knowing has then appeared to be clear-cut for many feminists (Stanley and Wise 1993). According to Oakley (1998, 2000) the rejection of quantitative methods is mainly due to feminists’ lack of separation between quantitative and qualitative methodologies or paradigms and quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative methodology is understood as based on a one-dimensional epistemology where reality is described through objectively obtained sets of facts or truths collected through surveys and questionnaires. It is the ‘malestream’ positivism. The qualitative, paradigm is seen as multidimensional, complex and dense in that it views reality as constructed through social meanings attainable through in depth examinations such as interviews (Oakley 2000). It is feminism.

The epistemological distinctions make many feminists focus more on discussing and keeping disciplinary identities than debating the fruitfulness of different kinds of methods (Oakley 2000). They have to some degree challenged the notion that qualitative, feminist methodology must exclude quantitative methods. They have also come to accept that the nature of the research question should be the basis for choosing the ‘right’ method (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Letherby 2004; Oakley 2000). Previously, feminist have neglected to explore the relationship between process and product, or ‘how what we do affects what we get (in both qualitative and quantitative work)’ (Letherby 2004:176).
Oakley (2000) challenges feminists to consider quantitative methods as equal to qualitative ones as both are appropriate for addressing women’s exclusion. Both are suitable ways of knowing, and both may reveal more about the researcher than the research participants:

> The language of paradigms beguiles us into thinking that the alliance between ‘qualitative’ enquiry and the world of the social will somehow guarantee that such research is both ethically and scientifically ‘better’ at representing people’s interests. But in-depth interviewing and ethnographic observations may only bring us nearer to the truths that flourish inside researchers’ heads. The laudable goal of feminist research, to do away with the traditional ‘objectification’ of research participants, may itself be a contradiction in terms; however one looks at it, from within whichever paradigm, researchers are the ones with ‘the power to define’.

(Oakley 2000:72)

That quantitative methods can benefit feminism is acknowledged by some feminist researchers (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Letherby 2004). They argue that whatever method, the intention is to apply a technique that is committed to identifying women’s concerns and including them in research in a non universalized way (DeVault 1996). Surveys can therefore be used in the deconstruction of women’s different degrees of oppression. Sprague and Zimmerman (1989) suggest that explicit considerations of four factors make quantitative methods more suitable for feminist research: the predictability of bias, the objectification of the researched, the relationship between the researcher and participants, and the power relations in research. It is then necessary to apply feminist values or goals when conducting surveys (Oakley 1998). Within a critical perspective both quantitative and qualitative methods are useful (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989; Maynard 1994), as feminism is not a method but a perspective (Reinharz 1992).

In the same way that some feminist research is criticised for being one-sided when it comes to consideration of the relationship between paradigm and method, the same criticism may be levelled at tourism studies for having traditionally had a reliance on positivism (Botterill 2001; Dann and Phillips 2001; Phillimore and Goodson 2004;
Walle 1997) and, hence, often being about quantification. This trend is now changing as reputable journals accept and ask for more qualitative research (Dann and Phillips 2001).

In the next chapter I continue such discussion by outlining my choice of method for this research. In line with the discussion in this chapter, I do not see it as pre-determined, but to be chosen and developed in relation to the research questions, my epistemological position and methodological goals. The method must therefore explore social relations as lived and it must permit women’s many voices to be heard on their terms. Several methods can accomplish this: questionnaires, diaries and/or interviews. I do not preclude the option of any methods, just the ‘objectivist, value-neutral epistemological positions’ (Lawson 1995:452).

2.7 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have explored ways of knowing and doing feminist tourism research and I have outlined a position for understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. Feminist epistemologies and methodologies criticise positivism, which still marks research and knowledge production in tourism. In various ways feminists point to how positivism is imbued with phallocentrism and phallogocentrism, and how it is linked to objective, value free knowledge produced by the intellect. Feminist epistemologies dispute such notions and claim that knowing is situated in the body and that research is embedded with power relations. This means that I, as the researcher, have positionality and the ability to influence the research process and the research participants. I must therefore consider how power relations affect the outcome and strive for the inclusion of different voices.

As a consequence of the critique, feminist epistemologies outline other ways of knowing and doing research. Standpoint feminism turns the notion of objective knowledge into ‘strong objectivity’, and claims that it has to be placed within the epistemic privilege. It is only those who know both suppression and the suppresser who are able to ‘tell the truth’. Only they can really experience the inequalities in society. Women very often inhabit this position and are therefore both the subjects and objects for knowing. In-depth examinations of women’s lives produce knowledge that can
transform the subordinate position and change existing systemic power structures at work, at home or in leisure. Poststructural feminism is sceptical about naming the epistemic privilege. Subject positions are only constructs with unstable meanings. The outset for knowing is therefore the discourse and how it shapes the conditions for being, not how suppression is actually experienced in real life. Deconstructions of discourses therefore reveal how women are subordinated and lead to changes to it. Knowing that tourism is embedded in a ‘power-tourism-sexuality-triplex’ (Jordan 2003:231), for instance, makes it is possible to shape a tourism industry more welcoming for women.

The outset for knowing and doing in this research draws on both standpoint feminism and poststructural feminism. It places women’s subordination in material and cultural structures, but without reducing it to either. It considers ‘social relations as lived’ (McNay 2004b). The midlife single women’s holiday experiences and social identities are thereby intersubjectively situated in the field. Knowing is to put the women’s worldviews at the centre of attention and to examine them intersubjectively. In social relations interactions with others, cultural norms and material structures merge and work together. They can therefore only be understood as triads. The midlife, single women’s identities, for instance, are constituted through material objects of the holiday experience and its discourse, as well as their interactions with other people in the field, such as friends, family, locals and employers. Understanding the women’s holiday experiences means exploring how the field works and is constituted through its representations and infrastructures. It also means to examine its social positions and how people struggle for control of it by investing different forms of capital. People’s ability to struggle and invest is closely linked to habitus; their knowledge about and feelings for the game. It therefore also requires understanding of embodied dispositions which appear at a pre-reflexive level as well as in a routine or habit. Habitus then carries the possibility for agency and, hence, social transformation.

The four concepts of field, habitus, agency and intersubjectivity are therefore suitable for understanding how midlife single women are produced through the ‘regulatory phallocentric symbolic systems’ of the holiday as well as how they subvert these norms (McNay 2000:58). It is when they tactically subvert the norms that social transformation is possible (Adkins 2004a). Agency is habitual in character. It is reflexive actions on gender behaviour (Adkins 2004a). The perspective implies that the interrelationships
between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is neither
given nor fluid, but embedded in the field/habitus; when the field/habitus change so
also do the interrelationships between the two. The perspective, however, does not
imply a specific method, but allows for both qualitative and quantitative techniques. I
continue this discussion in the next chapter.
3 Studying the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities

3.1 Introduction

The methods or techniques used to produce scientific knowledge are closely linked to the nature of the research question and the epistemological position (Holland and Ramazoglu 1994; Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Oakley 2000; Wilkinson 1999a). In Chapter One I outlined my research questions which simply put are about the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. Chapter One sought combine understandings of identity formation and the holiday experience. In Chapter Two I explored feminist epistemologies and mapped the research as a 'phenomenology of social space' and chose to understand ‘social relations as lived’ (McNay 2000, 2004a, b). This research places subject formation in the field which has implications for the research methods employed.

A number of tourism studies have investigated similar issues to this research; the summer holiday or the holiday experience (see for instance Beedie 2003; Jacobsen 2001; Wong and Lau 2001), tourism motivation (see for instance Brown 2005; Fodness 1994; Haukeland 1990; McGeehe, Loker-Murphy and Uysal 1996; Ryan 1997), and the links between the holiday experience and identity (see for instance Desforges 2000; Elsrud 2004, Neumann 1992; Wearing and Wearing 2001). Many of them, however, either explore the actual experience or its planning. Data from the former studies are often collected through surveys or personal interviews at specific destinations or tourism attractions (see for instance McCabe 2003; Otto and Ritchie 1996; Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005), or perhaps if budget or time is limited, data are collected after the fact (see for instance Davidson 1996; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Lepp and Gibson 2003; Small 2002). The earlier studies often use one technique and have a positivistic paradigm. Recent
studies often combine methods and are within critical and constructivist paradigms. This brief review indicates that both qualitative and quantitative techniques illuminate the holiday experience, travel planning and the link to identity formation.

The holiday is a multifaceted entity and I have narrowed it down to the summer holiday. In Norway employees have the statutory right of three weeks of continuous holiday in the period of June 1st and September 30th meaning that most of the midlife single women will holiday in this period. Following Clawson and Knetsch (1966) the holiday experience consists of three distinct phases: planning, actual holiday and memories. The research method chosen must therefore explore the different phases and the holiday as a process. In fact, in order to fully investigate all of these aspects the use of several methods may be considered. Although it can be convenient to study holiday planning through personal interviews it is perhaps not always financially possible to conduct such interviews during the holiday.

Limited research is based on a phenomenology of social space and aimed at understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and social identities as lived social relations. Although phenomenology is often connected to qualitative methods (Rudestam and Newton 2001), neither Bourdieu nor McNay (2004a) link it to the paradigm discussion. Bourdieu (1984, 1993b) deconstructs fields through content analysis and surveys and McNay (2004a) seems open to qualitative and quantitative methods as power structures are ‘systematic but not necessarily predictable’. The outline of the theoretical perspective is not founded on an empirical study, just on empirical examples (McNay 2000). Understanding the women’s experiences and identities does not then assume a certain method.

The phenomenology of social space does, however, have implications for the method as gender/singlehood/midlife identities are intersubjectively situated in the field; the holiday experience is a set of social positions in the planning, doing and remembering, affecting the social identities available. The method therefore needs to identify the social positions of each phase and the field as a process. As intersubjectively situated, the field is embedded in people’s *habitus*, and in its material and cultural structures. *Habitus*, as the incorporated ways of playing the game, sets how the tourist role is acted out. It is partly affected by material structures such as buildings, ways of
communicating, chairs, tables, books, money, streets, signs and weapons (Crouch 2000) which situate the holiday experience. It is also partly affected by the cultural structures of the holiday experience such as symbolic or metaphorical construction of tourism spaces created through the images and semiotics of tourism practice (Crouch 2002). Travel guidebooks, tourism brochures and holiday mementos situate the discursive characteristics of the holiday experience. The method must identify how lived social relations are incorporated and embedded in material and cultural structures.

The epistemology and research questions then do not denote a specific method; just that it must consider lived social relations in a holistic way. This does not mean that I am negligent of the importance of feminist research goals (see section 2.5). I believe that any method must accommodate reflexive relationships between the researcher and participants and have the ability to reduce hierarchical positions.

In this chapter I explore methods for this research and map out how it is undertaken. For investigating the pre- and post-phases of the holiday I first explore qualitative methods such as the individual and the focus group interview, and I discuss the survey method and the solicited diary as ways of collecting data during the holiday. I end the section by discussing the combination of the focus group interview and solicited diary with the feminist method of memory-work. Secondly, I examine how the research is planned, implemented and analysed. I explore how the pilot study forms the basis for implementing the focus group interview and the solicited diary and I examine how the participants are recruited and grouped. I also review the analysis process and critique the process of producing data.

### 3.2 Choosing method

Phenomenology is about understanding the meaning of human experiences (Rudestam and Newton 2001). Very often such knowledge is produced through qualitative methods which make it possible to describe and elucidate social phenomena in profound ways. But, it is not always so. Bourdieu (1984) uses the survey method for in-depth studies of the logic of taste in France. However, identity matters are often ‘uncountable’ (Lawson 1995:454) and midlife single women are an under-researched category. The research questions are therefore inductive in nature and oriented toward qualitative methods.
I therefore primarily consider qualitative methods in this research. Most qualitative methods, though, involve face-to-face interactions. They are therefore potentially expensive methods for studying the actual holiday experience as the researcher has to travel to the participants’ destinations. A survey is cheaper in this respect and I consider it as one way of collecting data during the holiday. In the next two subsections I therefore explore the choosing of methods twice; first, qualitative methods in the pre- and post-phases of the holiday when it is financially possible to meet with the research participants and, secondly, qualitative and quantitative techniques during the holiday when this is less feasible.

### 3.2.1 How to study the pre- and post phases of the holiday?

The individual interview and collective approaches, such as the focus group interview, are both suitable for in-depth conversations about the pre- and post-phases of the research questions and they accommodate feminist research goals (see section 2.5). Both methods intend to find out ‘what is in and on someone else’s mind’ (Patton 1990:278) and gain access to the research participants’ lived lives in non hierarchical ways. The personal interview provides the space for in-depth explorations of personal feelings and experiences (Michell 1999). Montell (1999) argues that taken for granted attributes such as gender are difficult to study in the personal interview and become more apparent when discussed with other people, hence, the focus group interview may be more suitable: ‘The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’ (Morgan 1998:12, emphasis in original). The focus group interview then enables access to ‘hidden’ types of data such as that related to gender identity.

The focus group interview means that several research participants come together to discuss an issue. In the individual interview only the participant and the researcher meet. The former then means a group of people who share thoughts and ideas whereas the latter means interaction between two people. The focus group interview reduces the researcher’s influence upon the conversation, but it also hinders access to data if the participants dislike sharing experiences with many strangers (Green and Hart 1999; Kitzinger and Barbour 1999; Michell 1999), or if they refuse to take part in the discussions. In such cases the personal interview is more suitable as the researcher can focus on making each participant comfortable with sharing ideas. But, as focus groups
are good at eliciting participants’ own meanings (Madriz 2000) the group setting encourages both assertive and shy people to share personal experiences (Wilkinson 1998b). On the other hand, both the focus group interview and the individual interview sometimes lead to overdisclosure; some participants may reveal too much or be too personal.

Overdisclosure is more an ethical concern in the focus group interview than in the individual interview (Smith 1995). The group interactions sometimes make participants talk too much and some are not able to keep the information within the group. The latter is seldom the case in the personal interview as the researcher is trained to treat the information anonymously and confidentially. But, then the personal interview does not always secure fruitful conversations and meaningful data. Not all participants are assertive and open. As people’s notions of what constitutes sensitive topics are subjective and relative (Farquhar and Dias 1999), I do not consider overdisclosure to be a big problem in this research. The holiday experience is for most people part of everyday conversations and generally not a sensitive topic. I believe the benefit of accessing identity issues by facilitating group discussions about the holiday experience is more important than the possibility of overdisclosure or mute people in the groups. I therefore believe that the field is accessible through group discussions. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) note that focus group conversations are ideal for exploring people’s experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns around specific topics. When and if sensitive issues do arise, they can be handled with respect.

The interactive quality of the focus group interview is not only an advantage related to accessing the data, but also to securing participations in all three phases of the research. Recruiting research participants is always a challenge, and in this research they commit to participating before, during and after the summer holiday. This is demanding and time-consuming and the participants need incentives to complete the task. In the focus groups they meet other midlife single women with similar interests and lifestyles, not only the researcher. They share thoughts and ideas; they network and build relationships which may create a sense of community and commitment. Based on such factors I find the focus group interview more suitable than the personal interview in collecting data on the pre- and post-phases of the holiday experience.
The focus group interview is used in studies based on several philosophical perspectives and in many different settings. According to Krueger and Casey (2000) the first focus group interview was undertaken by social scientists in the late 1930s in order to make the research participants more active. The method was not embraced by other scientists at the time. In the 1950s the more pragmatic community of marketing research saw its potential as a cost-effective way of producing market information. Today research firms in all major cities employ the method. In the 1980s it was rediscovered by social scientists including feminist researchers.

The focus group interview does not postulate equity between the researcher and the participants, but it is often characterized as an empowering method (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999). Montell (1999) and Wilkinson (1999b) claim that many feminists still have not yet fully realised the importance of the focus group interview, despite the fact that it satisfies feminist research goals (DeVault 1996). Its interactive character is very fruitful for feminists (Kitzinger 1994; Catterall and Maclaran 1997). The group setting allows for discussions and negotiations among the research participants. It is a reflexive method (Kitzinger and Farquhar 1999). The focus group interview also reduces power relations in the data production (Wilkinson 1998a). The group discussions give the participants the possibility to set the research agenda as they outnumber the researcher (Montell 1999; Wilkinson 1999b). The discussions are based on a set of questions, but the interview guide is changed constantly based on the many directions that a conversation may take (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). The participants can steer the topics of conversation, ask each other new question and challenge each others’ views. ‘It is precisely in the work of explaining and justifying statements … that interesting data about the way in which young women construct their … identities and ideologies can emerge’ (Wilkinson 1998a:118). The group setting ensures the importance of the participants’ language, concepts and frameworks for understanding the world (Kitzinger 1994). By giving the participants control over the data production the researcher obtains high quality, interactive data (Wilkinson 1998a). The focus group interview is then a fruitful method for studying the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities in the pre- and post-phases of the holiday.

3.2.2 How to study the actual holiday?
The interactive character of the focus group interview enables the participants to
discuss, confront and negotiate meanings of social identities in the pre- and post-phases of the holiday experience (Morgan 1998). When it comes to studying the nature of actual holiday experiences, the focus group interview is not the most suitable method. The costs for gathering the same groups of mid-life single women while on vacation are potentially enormous and presume that they holiday at the same time and in the same areas. If the intention were to apply the same method, it would be cheaper and easier to arrange new focus groups of women holidaying at the same destination at the same time. Such groups could be organized by contacting tour operators selling holidays to midlife single women. The drawback of this approach is that just this category of midlife single women would be recruited. One intention of the research is to encompass as many voices as possible, such as women visiting friends and family, travelling solo and staying at home. Furthermore, another intention is to explore the holiday experience as a process. This requires the same participants in all three phases of data collection. The focus group interview is therefore not an appropriate method for collecting data during the holiday. Two other methods, however, are: the survey method and the diary. The survey method means questionnaires whereas the diary refers to written accounts.

The diary is not always a scientific method. Allport (1942) argues that the diary takes three forms: the intimate journal, the memoir and the log. The memoir is written for a public audience and is retrospective in nature. The other two are private documents. The intimate journal is a reflexive document and the log is an impersonal record and listing of things (Bagnoli 2004). Bell (1998:72) distinguishes between the solicited diary and the personal private diary; the solicited diary is ‘an account produced specifically at the researcher’s request, by an informant or informants’. The personal private diary builds upon people’s writings of everyday life. Contrary to the personal private diary, the solicited diary is written with the full knowledge that others will use it in research (Meth 2003). It is not a memoir or a private personal diary. It is explicitly written for research purposes. This does not mean that the latter is not used in research.

The memoir is an important document in auto/biographical research. The (auto)biography is all kinds of ‘life-narratives’ whether reflective or dialogic (Griffiths 1995) which are told through many different sources such as diaries, oral history, life history, logs, letters, journals, archival records, photographs, films, and personal possessions (Plummer 2001). Any document of life which is a potential window onto
people’s lives is used as a source in (auto)biographical research. It is sometimes
difficult to distinguish between autobiography and biography as the boundaries of the
self and other people is vague (Griffiths 1995).

The solicited diary has mainly developed as a method within health service research and
leisure research (see for instance Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Trew et al. 1999), and to
some extent tourism research (see for instance Dann, Nash and Pearce 1988:25; Pearce
1988). In health service research and leisure research the diary is an applied method. It
is mostly used in quantitative studies where the participants are asked to keep logs of
their actions (Elliot 1997). Such logs are also called ‘structured diaries’ and are booklets
of self-reported questionnaires (DeLongis, Hemphill and Lehman 1992:83). The
intention of the booklets is to collect information on topics that cannot be scientifically
observed. The log within tourism studies fits mostly into this tradition (Breen, Bull and
Walo 2001; Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Dann, Nash and Pearce 1988; Irwin, Wang and
Sutton 1996; Markwell and Basche 1998; Pearce 1988; Thornton, Shaw and Williams
1997), but there are also examples of the solicited diary in qualitative studies (Carr
2002a; Fullagar 2002; Markwell and Basche 1998). Then, the intention is to collect
detailed written accounts of experiences and actions related to holiday contexts.

In section 2.6 I argue that both quantitative and qualitative methods are suitable in
feminist research and that many feminist researchers have come to terms with the
critique of the ‘gendered paradigms’ (Cook and Fonow 1986; Jayaratne 1983; Jayaratne
and Stewart 1991; Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Letherby 2004; Maynard 1994;
Oakley 2000; Sprague and Zimmerman 1989). I briefly continue this discussion here.

After the development of standpoint feminism, the survey method was disregarded by
many feminists (see section 2.6). Letherby (2004) openly admits that she used to
celebrate qualitative methods as the best way of knowing. But, after doing research she
became aware of that these techniques could be just as exploitative as surveys (Letherby
2003). Some women dislike sharing personal information in a face-to-face situation but
like filling out a well-designed questionnaire (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994).
Sometimes the measurable elements of women’s subordination are the best way to
reveal how oppression operates (Lawson 1995) and the survey provides opportunities
for public critique and action (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989). Maynard (1994) sees the
survey method as a suitable political tool and believes that politicians are often more
influenced by numbers than individual stories. Furthermore, many quantitative
researchers do not consider themselves ‘neutral researchers producing objective and
value-free ‘facts’’ (Maynard 1994:13). They discuss power relations, inclusion,
reflexivity and politics in the research. Rocheleau, for instance, considers the questions;
‘Who counts? … Why and when should we count? … How can we fully integrate the
gendered insights of stories and pictures with the rigour and comparative value of
quantitative method?’ (Rocheleau 1995:460). The survey method does then not mean
inequality but the possibility to include many voices in reflexive ways.

This does not mean that the survey method is suitable in every study. According to
Lawson (1995:454) counting is more important when the intention is to understand
‘certain substantive questions’ such as domestic labour divisions. As identity is
‘uncountable’ it excludes the survey method (Lawson 1995:454). I partly agree with this
statement and believe it is possible to test out aspects of identity in a survey if profound
in-depth knowledge exists; if combined with the focus group interview that delivers in-
depth knowledge about the issue. This research mixes methods to explore different
phases of the holiday. Mixing methods is considered favourably by feminist researchers
(Jayaratne and Stewart 1991; Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994; Kitzinger and Barbour
1999; Letherby 2003; Maynard 1994; Oakley 2000; Reinharz 1992). As part of this
process focus group interviews are sometimes conducted for the researcher to design
questions for a bigger survey (Krueger and Casey 2000).

To mix the focus group interview with the survey method would not be ideal in this
research. The survey method could ‘take over’ the focus group conversation, at least in
the pre-phase of the holiday. It would be guided by the need to produce information for
the questionnaire. The focus group interview would then lose its value as providing
explicit interactive data on lived social relations (Wilkinson 1999a). The focus group
interview in the pre-holiday phase revolves around planning and motivation, not the
actual holiday. It may only deliver knowledge about the actual holiday experience that
could be tested in a survey. The survey method, furthermore, rests on predetermined
questions and obtains only descriptive information. Issues not raised in the
questionnaire are then not studied. The survey method is also about counting. It seems a
bit absurd to spend time and energy in developing a questionnaire for the maximum of 40 participants likely to take part in the research.

Not only do I worry that the survey method might negatively influence the production of interactive data in the focus group interview, I also believe it is preferable to keep the whole study in-depth. Although the holiday experience is well investigated, few studies have explored its relationships to gender/singlehood/midlife identities. Few studies also simultaneously look at all three phases of the holiday experience. I therefore consider the solicited diary to be potentially better suited to studying the actual holiday.

The solicited diary is a qualitative method that enables the study of the holiday experience without the researcher being present. It is consistent with feminist goals (Bell 1998; Meth 2003). It is, however, not given much attention in feminist research (Elliot 1997) outside autobiographical research (Fullagar 2002; Griffiths 1995; Lensink 1987; Stanley 1992). Unlike the solicited diary, the autobiographical diary builds upon people’s writings of everyday life. The writings are not related to a specific research topic. It is therefore not a method, but a behaviour undertaken in the course of everyday life. The solicited diary, though, is a method of collecting data. It reduces the power relations between the researcher and the research participants and lets the researched be heard on her/his own terms related to a specific topic (Bell 1998). Although the researcher selects the topic, each participant interprets the questions and is free to express personal experiences or not. The solicited diary is personally challenging and it makes the diarist reflect upon certain issues. It often changes the participants’ views (Bagnoli 2004; Elliot 1997). The solicited diary is also an inclusive method and can be completed by almost anybody at almost any time and over different periods of time (Meth 2003). Even illiterate people can participate. Voice diaries can provide as much insight as written ones.

Contrary to the survey method, I consider the solicited diary to be an empowering method for investigating the midlife single women’s actual holiday experience (Bagnoli 2004). It is also a suitable method for producing data when the researcher is unable to be present (Zimmerman and Wieder 1977). It is a simple way of monitoring the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities and the women can explore the issues several times. Usually research on the
holiday experience is undertaken at one point of time as many tourists are transient (Squire 1994). The solicited diary makes it possible to follow the tourists in spite of changes in time and space. It gives serial and spatial reflections on social relations as lived. The method offers flexibility and variations of stories (Meth 2003). Contrary to one-off events such as the survey method, the solicited diary yields longitudinal data (Bagnoli 2004). The opportunity to write about holiday experiences gives insight into complex topics such as gender/singlehood/midlife identities (Fullagar 2002). Daily written reports on how, what, when, who and why are important for understanding the multifacetedness of social identities in relation to others, places and spaces. The main obstacle of the method is participants who refuse to keep a diary. The method is time consuming and requires participants willing and able to share their stories.

### 3.2.3 Mixing the focus group interview and the solicited diary – an applied form of memory-work?

A possible weakness of the solicited diary in feminist research is that it is decontextualised and individualistic. The participants keep the solicited diary in isolation from each other and the researcher (Meth 2003). The degree of decontextualisation does of course depend upon how the participants manage the research process and how well the researcher highlights the social nature of the research. In order to make the research more contextual and less individualistic Meth (2003) suggests the combination of the solicited diary and the focus group interview. The two methods complement each other. The solicited diary gives room for intimate and personal experiences whereas the focus group conversations provide interactive discussions. The combination of methods is also valuable for the researcher as Meth explains:

> Using diaries as part of a multiple method approach within a social project is strongly recommended. It provides the subjects of research substantial scope for reflection and self-determined knowledge presentation, it provides the researcher with extensive amounts of intensive material and it reinforces analyses of data gleaned from other methodological sources.  

(Meth 2003:203)

The combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary is similar to the
feminist method ‘memory-work’. Both centre on a combination of collective and individual data. Memory-work is explicitly developed by Haug and her colleagues (1987) to expose gender relations in society and it builds upon Marxist feminism and standpoint theory (Stephenson 2001). As a scientific method it considers knowledge production as a collective and individual endeavour. The intention of memory-work is to make women aware of shared systemic suppression and act against it (Haug 1987), but it is also used by poststructural feminists to investigate difference (Stephenson 2001).

Memory work is carried out through at least three phases (Crawford et al. 1992; Haug 1987). The first phase is individual. Each participant writes memories on a specific topic according to a set of rules or principles. The memories are connected to actual situations not the writer and the descriptions are concrete and detailed, not evaluations, emotions, clichés or analysis (Widerberg 1995, 1998). The memories are written in the third person to keep the distance (Haug 1987) and cover a period of at least a week (Crawford et al. 1992). The woman describes the relations in the situation that made the experience, not what she feels or thinks. The second phase is collective. The group meets to read and analyse the memories together (Haug 1987). Taken-for-granted assumptions are exposed and new insights appear as the memories are commented on in the group. Similarities and differences, and clichés and contradictions are located and theorised before the memory is rewritten (Crawford et al. 1992). The group interactions secure interactive data and common understandings. This process can last for years (Widerberg 1998). The third phase is a collective reappraisal of the memories in the context of analysis and theories. Here new understandings are formulated and new meanings reached.

Despite numerous guides on how to conduct the focus group interview neither the focus group interview nor the solicited diary come with a strict procedure (see for instance Krueger and Casey 2000). It is up to the researcher to find a way. When choosing the methods I was very attracted to memory-work as, in many ways, it fulfils feminist research goals of inclusion, reduction of power relations, a political agenda and a reflexive praxis (see section 2.5). Now I believe that the combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary can achieve similar aims, but in an easier way. Furthermore, the solicited diary means that the midlife single women keep track of their
experiences while they happen, they do not have to recall them after the fact. This means that the nuances in their stories are probably finer grained than the written memories in memory-work. This is a major strength of the solicited diary compared to the written phase of memory-work. Furthermore, the focus group interview and the memory-work both produce data through interactions and negations, and the solicited diary is individual data similar to the written memories. In both approaches the women reflect on things that happen and why. But, contrary to memory-work, the methods in this research first produce collective then individual data. The first focus group interview is not triggered by a prewritten memory. This does not mean that the participants do not talk about previous incidents and revisit previous holiday experiences. They are just not prepared in advance to do it. In the second focus group interview this is the case. The prepared memories or the solicited diaries are important parts of the discussions.

Memory-work rests on memories or experiences as a source of knowledge, as do the combined methods and the epistemology in this research (see section 2.4). Haug (1987) claims that cultural and social boundaries are not discovered through rational discussions of a concept, but by investigating women’s experiences of it in a specific situation. Such experiences describe what is subjectively significant for women and the memories signify what is important, problematic or in need of review (Crawford et al. 1992). The emphasis on experiences is also a focal point in the focus group interview. The interactive nature of focus group interviews triggers the participants to share experiences and to challenge perceptions of a topic. Although the focus group interview is not ruled by certain principles, the nature of the conversations bring about similarities and differences. It makes it possible to identify clichés, generalisations, contradictions and metaphors, just as memory-work does. The solicited diary also delivers memories.

B. Johnston (2001) distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary memories. Ordinary memories are layered memories, in that many experiences merge into one. Extraordinary memories, on the other hand, are about a singular incident. Both kinds of memory, however, are likely to emerge in the focus group interview and the solicited diary. Although, the midlife single women are supposed to relate to a specific summer holiday, most memories are layered as well as extraordinary (B. Johnston 2001). The field is after all not a one-time set of social positions. The midlife single women will
most likely have holidayed before.

The value of the solicited diary in tourism research is its proximity to the present (Elliot 1997). It is close in time between the actual experience and the record of it. Still, such diaries also produce ‘historical’ data as previous experiences are often mixed up with present ones (Meth 2003:198). This limits the distinction between the personal and the solicited diary and makes it difficult to record unlayered memories (B. Johnston 2001). Fullagar (2002) also points to the complexity of the diary, and links it to intertextuality and feminine subjectivity. The solicited diary is then a mediator of identities. The content is personal stories and descriptions on specific events, and it mediates history and subjectivity in ways which are similar to the discussions in memory-work.

The combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary, as well as memory-work, gives profound insights into the interrelationships between the holiday experiences and identities. It enables the midlife single women to reflect privately and with others. Such active methods make social transformations possible as the participants are forced to deal with the meaning and effects of the holiday experience orally and in text. Contrary to memory-work, the mix of methods does not rest on the participants as co-researchers. Only the researcher is in charge of the analysis. On the other hand, the notion of co-researcher in memory-work is, in many ways, based on transparent reflexivity (Rose 1997). I believe that such reflexivity is often unlikely. The participants and the researcher are seldom positioned within the same landscape of power. Small’s (1999, 2002, 2004:259) PhD-study on women’s tourism experiences, for instance, is unable to include the participants as co-researchers and make them ‘take ownership over the method and findings’. The memory-workers do then not take part in the theorisation of the analysis in the third phase (Small 2002, 2003). Joint theorising is therefore sometimes excluded in memory-work (Koutroulis 2001; Ingleton 2001). It is, however, partly working in Crawford et al.’s (1992) study where the memory-working academic women are co-researchers. On the other hand, the women in the other groups are not.

This suggests that being a co-researcher requires training in doing research and academic labour. Koutroulis (2001) revisits the second phase of memory-work. The quote shows how demanding the role as co-researcher is as the participants face
complex theoretical issues (Ingleton 2001). The participants therefore need the skills to deconstruct language into ideology and metaphors.

We had much to say about Ruby, Rosa’s emotion, and ‘etiquette’ of menstruation, especially concerning men to which Laws (1990) refers. Within the intimacy of the group and our sense of collective, we traced the origins of the emotion, the etiquette, comparing this memory with the other memories. Here, in this space with its barely visible hierarchy, we discussed the gaps, the silences, the contradictions, and the inconsistencies in the memory. In this collective critical reading of the memory text we examined the language – ideology, clichés, metaphors – and our complicity in our oppression, not that we considered this complicity necessarily deliberate, as we worked toward making sense of and construct meaning from our memories and the disjunctions between past and present.

(Koutroulis 2001:58)

That successful memory-work rests on the ‘right’ participants jeopardizes the possibility of including different voices and reduces its power as a feminist method. The combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary, on the other hand, does not. The mix makes it possible to recruit women from different social classes and levels of education. Although, the combined methods are demanding in regards of time, commitment and literate participants, the participants do not have to be analytical.

Memory-work is also a complicated method in PhD research as the researcher is responsible for the outcome and needs to control the process more than, for instance, Haug (1987) and her co-workers do. The PhD student must take ownership of the research. This is possible with the focus group interview and the solicited diary, and is perhaps one reason Small (2004) adapts the third phase of the memory work. She presents the theorisation to the memory-workers and gets their consensus on the identified themes instead of involving them. Such feedback from the research participants does, however, not rest on a specific method as all qualitative research can present the analysis to the participants.

The many challenges of the co-researchers in memory-work are perhaps also one reason
Haug (1987) argues for a certain kind of people; those aware of and suffering from subordination. It is the feminists. The position as co-researchers seems to require a relationship of sameness (Rose 1997). If the notion of co-researcher fails, memory work is similar to the mix of the focus group interview and the solicited diary, or the mix is perhaps a different, but more applied form of memory work? It keeps the strengths of memory-work by combining individual and collective data, but without resting on very strict procedures and on making the participants co-researchers.

In summary, in line with feminist principles the combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary is chosen in this research. The combination resembles memory-work; both provide collective and individual data. Contrary to the strict procedures of memory-work the mix is not limited by the notion of co-researcher which in some cases reduces the relevance of the data from memory-work, and makes the research participants reluctant to take part. Similar to memory-work, the blend of methods secures an active involvement from the participants and stirs up memories and experiences that are essential to understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and identity formation. I have now started to discuss practical aspects of the data collection. The main challenges remain; how to conduct the focus group interviews and implement the solicited diary, how to locate and recruit the participants, and how to analyse and present the data.

3.3 Producing the data

This research intends to understand the interrelationships between the holiday experience and social identities. This means studying the field as intersubjectively situated and collecting data about the women’s holidays. In the next six subsections I explore how the data collection is planned, tested and implemented. I also introduce the women participating in the research and discuss how they are recruited. The findings are the result of the interpretation of the data and I investigate the process of analysing focus group interviews and solicited diaries. I also outline weaknesses of the data collection and analysis.

3.3.1 The pilot study

The pilot study is a test of the instruments used in doing the research (Rudestam and Newton 2001). A pilot reduces insecurity and misunderstandings within the techniques.
It tests the procedures, and practices the role as a facilitator of the focus group interviews. It also helps to specify questions and the procedures of the solicited diary (DeLongis, Hemphill and Lehman 1992). I conducted a pilot study a few months before the actual study.

The pilot study was related to the Christmas holiday and consisted of three phases; the focus group interview before and after the holiday and the solicited diary in it. With the assistance of an acquaintance, a midlife single woman, I recruited three of her friends that, to a certain extent, knew each other. One of the midlife single women was 50 + and a divorcée, the others were in their late 30s, early 40s and never married. None of them had children and they lived in Oslo. Such purposive sampling is often preferred in the focus group interview (Krueger 1993) and groups with family members, friends, and work colleagues often make the conversations more natural (Wilkinson 1999a). Kitzinger notes ‘flatmates, colleagues, family and friends – these are precisely the people with whom one might ‘naturally’ discuss such topics – and these are major sites of ‘collective remembering’’ (Kitzinger 1994:105). As some of the women knew each other they could relate to each other’s comments and were able to challenge contradictions. This gave a sense of security. A drawback of composing groups with people who knew each other was that they sometimes communicated without words and did not need to explore personal issues (Montell 1999). This limited the researcher’s insight into the participants’ lives and made it very important to follow up on the topics.

The pilot study was designed to be as accurate as possible. The focus group interviews took place in my apartment and I served food and beverages. The first interview lasted 90 minutes and the second 3 hours. Both were taped and the second was transcribed. The midlife women were emailed the transcript for inspection and censoring.

Frey and Fontana (1993) distinguish between active and passive non-directive moderators. The active moderator facilitates the conversation by strictly steering the discussions in one of many directions (Myers and Macnaghten 1999). This is done by actively asking questions. The passive moderator also steers the conversation by asking, but is more an active listener and observer. The passive moderator lets the participants control the conversations (Madriz 2000). Sometimes the passive moderator even lets the group gather without the researcher (Morgan 1998). Pini (2002) finds the totally passive
approach unrealistic. It is impossible for the researcher to never take a position and she suggests a middle position. In the first focus group interview I was a passive moderator and in the second focus group interview an active moderator.

Influenced by memory-work (Haug 1987) and the notion of co-researchers I informed the participants about the project and the focus group method in the first meeting. I remained a passive non-directive moderator and left the discussions to the women. I did not ask questions besides ‘how do you anticipate the Christmas holiday?’ and I introduced a set of topics. This went partly well as the women explored the issues and I only intervened once as the discussions went astray. The women talked about planning, expectations, feelings and alternative ways to spend the holiday. They all introduced new topics. I registered the conversation (Appendix Two); who was talking, the kind of information they revealed, non verbal communications and so on. It was easy to register verbal conversations but not all the non-verbal forms; laughter was easy to detect, but gestures and gazes were almost impossible. It was difficult to register the time each woman talked. The form I used to record non-verbal communication lacked a column for this topic.

The participants were partly friends, and all of them knew at least one woman in common. This woman took extra charge over the conversation and acted as a kind of moderator in my absence. The main disadvantage of being a passive monitor was the lack of ability to probe and to intensify the conversations. The discussions were rather brief.

After the evaluation of the first focus group interview the women filled out a form (Appendix Three). The form gave background information useful in the analysis and in making groups. The pilot study indicated that the form should not entail sensitive questions. I provided guidance about completion of the diary. It was important that the diary format was small enough to carry around (DeLongis, Hemphill and Lehman 1992). Each woman was therefore given an A6-booklet with instructions taped on the first pages (Appendix Four).

In the second focus group interview I tested the role as a more active moderator (Appendix Five). I guided the conversations, but without exercising considerable
control (Frey and Fontana 1993). The conversation was based on a questioning route or a list of topics (Krueger and Casey 2000). The interactive character of the focus group interview (Wilkinson 1998a) meant that the conversations took many directions. A strict set of questions was therefore not suitable. As a moderately active moderator I steered the conversations by introducing topics and probing. I also used question rounds. This meant that each woman prepared the answer on paper before answering. It was difficult to register the conversation when actively monitoring, and I quickly stopped doing it. I actively used the diaries in the conversations. The group discussions therefore became more analytical and this worked well. The conversations were interactive and lasted longer. We addressed issues such as the nature of singlehood and how to deal with Christmas, being with relatives and so on. They also dealt with sensitive topics.

I returned the diaries and informed them about further handling of the data. The women evaluated the pilot study. They found it easier to discuss the topic in the group than in the diary. However, the two methods supplemented each other, and it made them more reflective. They disagreed upon the value of a passive or active moderator. Some liked to feel their way into the topics while others were more concerned about not keeping to the subject. They were sometimes uncomfortable with questions that stirred up emotions and feelings, but pointed to the ability to withdraw. They liked the moderator’s ability to be ‘neutral’, to take control and steer the conversation. They liked knowing each other and sharing thoughts on the subject. The women welcomed the transcript of the second focus group interview, but some of them disliked reading it. They did not want to face their own opinions and ways of talking.

They enjoyed the solicited diary to some extent. They did not write every day, but in chunks. They disliked doing it on holiday, but if joining in a study they would do it. Some of the women wanted a bigger and stricter format. One woman did not read the instructions. Two women did not know how to fill out the small questionnaire. They also needed clearer instructions on how much to write and how to focus on emotions and thoughts. The first two questions were difficult to distinguish. Experiences were often embedded in thoughts, and what makes one meaningful? They did not reflect much on life. They had short moments of reflection, and did not consider them meaningful.
Based on the pilot study I decided to be a moderately active moderator by probing and using question rounds. It meant that I would steer the conversation in a mild way. I do not register the conversations. I revisited the instructions for and the form and content of the diaries. I also needed a strategy for motivating the women to keep diaries. As the focus group interview revolved around a different holiday I also needed new question guides. I did not avoid friends when composing the groups and I used the general information form as a guide. I returned the copied diaries to the participants and emailed transcripts from the focus group interviews for inspection and potential feedback.

### 3.3.2 Planning and implementing the data production

The PhD research is based in Lillehammer University College, a small inland rural town in Eastern Norway. I was born in Tønsberg, a coastal/rural town in Eastern Norway and currently live in the capital Oslo where most of the work for this research is done. This is the practical basis for selecting locations for the focus group interviews and recruiting participants for the study. It gives access to facilities for conducting the focus group interviews and a social network from which to start recruiting women. There is also a statistical rationale as 60 per cent of Norwegian mid-life single women live in this rural and urban area (Appendix One; Statistics Norway 2001a).

The focus group interview commonly consists of six to ten people and 12 at the most (Krueger and Casey 2000), sometimes only three to four people take part (Pini 2002; Twinn 1998). According to Krueger and Casey (2000) mini-focus groups are more comfortable for the researcher and the participants. It is easier to recruit and host four to six participants as each is more comfortable and has more time to speak. Mini-focus groups are also ideal for gaining in-depth insights into people’s experiences. The pilot study was a mini-focus group and worked well for discussing the holiday experience. The focus groups in the main research method therefore consists of four to six people. The rule of thumb is to have three or four groups with one type of participant (Krueger and Casey 2000). I use the area of living as a criterion for selecting two types of participants; those who live in urban and those in more rural areas. I therefore recruit seven groups; three in Oslo, two in Tønsberg and two in Lillehammer. Altogether, this results in the recruitment of about 40 midlife single women distributed across the three locations.
The setting of the focus group interview is either informal or formal (Green and Hart 1999). Informal settings are private homes and formal settings are an office or a schoolroom. The setting affects the conversations, although, neither gives a ‘truer’ story (Green and Hart 1999:29). Inviting people to a home sends out signals of hospitality and friendliness whereas an office building indicates business and efficiency. The setting for the focus group interview is selected for practical reasons. In Tønsberg and Oslo it takes place in my parent’s house and my apartment respectively, which I also used in the pilot study. In Lillehammer it is a meeting room at the University College. The setting affects the participants as the mental distance between the researcher and the participants can be reduced in the more informal settings (Green and Hart 1999). The atmospheres differ in the sense of furniture and lighting. The private homes have nicer furniture and a cosier atmosphere than the meeting room, and the former may make the participants more relaxed. I therefore attempt to make both settings as similar as possible. I seat the women around tables; I set the tables with napkins, cups, glasses, food and beverage, as well as pens, paper and a microphone. Food and beverages are effective symbolic incentives (Krueger and Casey 2000) and the pen and paper is used for preparing the answers. I organise the tables as quasi-formal, suggesting both comfort and work. I use proper lights.

As a moderately active moderator I steer the conversations in the focus group interview by introducing topics, probing and using question rounds. The first focus group interview is held before May 1st and the second after September 1st 2005. I develop two sets of questions list (Appendices Six and Seven) and two sets of instructions (Appendices Eight and Nine) to cover different aspects of the research questions. Following the pilot study, the second list of topics is based on issues from the diaries and, hence, more analytical questions. The first list is related to the planning of the holiday.

Based on the pilot study, I tape the interview but do not register non-verbal behaviour. I do not disregard the value of gestures, smiles, irony and laughter as they clarify or emphasise the meanings in a dialogue (Waterton and Wynne 1999) or the usefulness of videotaping the sessions (Baker and Hinton 1999). Waterton and Wynne (1999) state that participants joke to show self-awareness and status. I do, however, not have the equipment or skills to videotape and not the time for registering body language. Irony
and laughter are also detectable on mini-discs and the focus group interviews are recorded and transcribed.

Pini (2002) uses photos to remember the participants. I therefore ask each group for permission to take a picture and potentially use it in the final report. The time spent in the focus group interview must be used wisely (Krueger and Casey 2000) and I want access to as much information as possible. One way of accessing socio-demographic information is to hand out a register form (Appendix Ten) and let each participant complete it after the meeting. I therefore develop a form which partly builds upon the recruitment form from the pilot study (Appendix Three) and on other socio-demographic questions. Overdisclosure is an ethical dilemma in the focus group interview and the solicited diary (Montell 1999; Smith 1995). I deal with it by fully informing the participants about the study and the methods and their right to withdraw from the project at any time (see Appendix Eleven). I also ask them to fill out a consent form (Appendix Twelve) (Berg 2007).

Following the pilot study I revisit the form and content of the solicited diary (Appendix Eleven). As the women wanted a more structured format I developed it into a more ‘structured diary’ (DeLongis, Hemphill and Lehman 1992:83) where they partly filled out small ‘questionnaires’ and partly answer open-ended questions. The first part is the registering of the holiday, where they go, with whom and how long, and so on. The law in Norway secures for employees a three week summer holiday. Some people divide it and I let the women fill in up to three periods of holidays. If they stay at home they state day trips. The second part is the daily entries. Each day the women describe one optional activity or experience; positive and negative thoughts and feelings, and they relate it to being a midlife single woman. They also state time of day, duration, company and so on. Based on the pilot study the format of the diary is optional A6 or A5 and each daily entry is marked in the book.

At the outset I intended to recruit at least 40 women divided between the three locations and comprising seven groups. These women had to consent to take part in one focus group interview, that lasts for about 2 hours (Fern 2001), before and one after the summer holiday. They also had to agree to keep a diary for 14 days during the holiday. 14 days is chosen as this gives the women time to cover different kinds of
activities/experiences and address a few days on several holidays if this is the case. It is a demanding process and requires fully informed and motivated participants. In particular, the solicited diary is a challenge. If the women neglect the assignment there is not much I can do. I can offer financial rewards, but it does not always mean higher response rates (Bagnoli 2004; Meth 2003). As I do not have the means, I simply use every opportunity to commit the participants to the research.

### 3.3.3 Recruiting the participants

The data collection is demanding. It needs midlife single women interested in the research questions who, at the same time, are willing to invest time and energy in the research. The recruitment process is therefore guided by detailed information about the project (Appendix Twelve and Fourteen), the work, the hours and other basic information (Hoinville and Jowell 1978). Midlife single women are also difficult to locate. It is not possible to identify them on the street. They are not listed or mapped out in any way, although, some are members of single’s organisations. One way of recruiting hard to locate populations is ‘snowball sampling’ (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Penrod et al. 2003; Salganik and Heckathorn 2004). Snowball sampling or chain referral sampling is a technique for finding research participants in qualitative research (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981:141). Penrod et al. (2003:102) differ between snowball sampling and chain referral sampling; the former is recruitment through one social network whereas the latter involves multiple networks. Snowball sampling is also labelled link-tracing sampling, random-walk sampling and respondent-driven sampling (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004:5). The main idea behind all forms of snowball sampling is to recruit research participants by identifying ‘one member of the population and speak to him or her, then ask that person to identify others in the population and speak to them, then ask them to identify others, and so on’ (Schutt 1999:131).

In the research I used three snowballs. First, I asked close friends to locate midlife single women, secondly I emailed other friends and co-workers and asked them to forward the request to relatives, friends and acquaintances (Appendix Twelve). In the email I asked potential female participants to respond with contact information age, place of residence, marital status and so on. Secondly, I contacted the local newspaper in Lillehammer which published a generic article on the University College and a
specific article on my research. In the article I gave details about the project and invited midlife single women to contact me for more information. The journalist also forwarded the article to the local paper in Tønsberg (Appendix Fifteen). I contacted all the midlife single women whose details were forwarded to me.

3.3.4 Presenting the participants, the holidays and the groups
Within two months 47 midlife single women are located and 32 who fit the profile are recruited. These midlife single women are then, on the phone, fully informed about the research. I particularly ask for commitment to the two focus group interviews and the solicited diary. I also collect information about the participants (Appendix Three). Some of the women dislike keeping a diary in the holiday but all agree to complete one for the sake of the project.

The research recruits 14 women in Oslo, 11 in Tønsberg and 8 in Lillehammer. For a list of the participants see Appendix Sixteen. In order to guarantee anonymity the women are presented with self-elected pseudonyms. As the thesis partly draws on Bourdieu’s social theory I present socio-demographic characteristics, but to keep the anonymity I do not reveal information related to place of residence or birth, occupations and various family relations. Still, the lists give fruitful information about the midlife single women. I comment upon and summarise some of it in this subsection.

The women’s single status has different origins: divorcees, widows and the never married (Gordon 1994a; Stein 1981; Trimberger 2005). Table 3.1 shows that the midlife single women are of various marital statuses as well as ages. Still, half the women are 40 years or younger. Most of them have never married. The other half are divorced and the women are mainly over 46. Just one of these women is a widow and 11 of the divorcees and the widow have grown up children (Appendix One).
Table 3.1  The midlife single women, distributed after marital status and age. Absolute numbers and N.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>35-40 years</th>
<th>41-45 years</th>
<th>46-50 years</th>
<th>51-55 years</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced /widow</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bourdieu (1984) uses economic and cultural capital to investigate class distinctions. Economic capital is often linked to income and cultural capital to education. Cultural capital also expresses itself in hobbies, cultural activities and taste in music. When looking at income and education most of the midlife single women belong to the middle class (Appendix Eighteen). Just five women have no higher education and often the lowest annual incomes, and are, hence, working class.

In many ways the working class and the middle class women have similar hobbies; many enjoy reading, cooking, dancing, walks and movies. Still, the middle class women’s taste in hobbies seems a bit more refined or requires a higher cultural capital. They enjoy art, taking photos, food and wine, cultural activities, interior design, travel, music and singing. With the exception of one of the working class women, they prefer pop or rock music. The middle class women have a diversified taste in music; some like jazz, R&B and pop, others soul, classical or reggae. With the exception of two of the working class women, the working class women’s preferred cultural activity is concerts. The middle class women enjoy many different cultural activities such as theatre, exhibitions, movies, ballet as well as concerts. The two classes are more similar when it comes to preferred outdoor activity, exercising and holidays undertaken in 2004 and 2005. Most of the women enjoy walking and biking and they vary in the amount of weekly exercise as well as the number of holidays taken in Norway and/or overseas. Still, it is the middle class women who like to climb, ski or sail in the leisure time.

There does not seem to be a strong link between the holiday budget and class belonging. As the budget is self-reported and from 2004 it only indicates patterns. The margins of errors are big. Still, some middle class and some of the working class women holiday economically whereas others are more extravagant. The biggest spenders are still the middle class women. Only seven of the women have very limited holiday budgets, the
other women spend £500 or more (table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Self-reported holiday budget 2004 in £. Absolute numbers and N. £≈NOK 12.50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>0-499</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>1000-1499</th>
<th>1500-1999</th>
<th>2000-2499</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are then traces of class distinction among the midlife single women. However, as the middle class women are in the majority, it is probably less detectable in the data than if half of them were of each class. Many of the women also share similar lifestyle variables regardless of class. Identifying class distinctions is not the intention of the research, still it is important to keep it in mind when analysing the data. It will, however, mostly give an insight into the lives of the middle class.

The 32 midlife single women are divided into seven focus groups; three in Oslo, two in Lillehammer and two in Tønsberg (Appendix Seventeen). To keep the anonymity of the research participants I do not link the groups to locations. The groups are composed with the greatest possible variety of women regarding age, marital status and information provided by the registration form (Appendix Three), but sometimes simple things such as other appointments make it impossible to include a woman in a group. Many of the midlife single women in Oslo are never married and between 36 and 43, but I try to include at least one divorcee or older woman in each group. Six of the midlife single women are friends. As Wilkinson (1999a) and Kitzinger (1994) note this is not necessarily a drawback in focus group research. In composing the groups I ask each woman what she wants; two of the friends prefer separate groups, two others want the same group and the third set of friends do not care. In the end two of the groups include friends. The groups are therefore partly consciously composed and partly the result of various circumstances.

3.3.5 Analyzing the focus group interview and the diary

Following the focus group interviews and the return of the solicited diaries, I transcribe the mini-discs and copy the diaries to the computer. Wibeck (2002) describes three levels of transcripts of the focus group interview. The first level is very detailed and marks every nuance of the conversations and language line by line. The second level is also detailed but uses regular spelling. The third level follows written language and new meanings are indicated with capital letters. It states the main content of the
conversations without being verbatim. The transcripts of the focus group interviews are a mix of level two and three. I register the conversations verbatim, I note laughter and supportive noises and I indicate new meanings with capital letters. The transcripts are then forwarded to each member of the group for comments and control. Each woman then has the possibility to censor her own contributions. I thereby deal with sensitive issues and overdisclosure (Farquhar and Dias 1999; Smith 1995). None of the women choose to censor any information.

In the analysis I am informed by a grounded theory approach allowing flexible interpretations of data and theory (Dey 1999). Traditional grounded theory means ‘the discovery of theory from data’ (Glaser and Strauss 1977:2), which implies that theory suits the research and does not rest on a priori assumptions. I approach the data from a feminist epistemological position and from previous theoretical knowledge about the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. I therefore accommodate the guidelines offered by grounded theory to analyse the research (Strauss and Corbin 1998) but not the epistemological underpinnings. I use the logic of grounded theory not in a traditional positivistic way, but to locate empirical realities similar to the constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2005; Jennings and Junek 2007). I acknowledge prior knowledge, contexts and relationships and see the method not as pure indications but as a way of interpreting interactive data.

Informed by a constructivist approach I still draw on ‘constant comparison’ of data (Glaser and Strauss 1977:105). Themes from earlier focus group interviews are incorporated into later group interviews and the content of the diaries forms the conversations of the second focus group interview. Constant comparison also means approaching the data in four stages. The first stage is the coding of data and the emergence of as many categories as possible. This is the open coding as categories are discovered and named in an ongoing process (Dey 1999; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The categories are also constantly compared with similar incidents. I label over 750 codes; both the supportive and the contradictory. The second stage is integrating the categories. This is the axial coding and the making of connections between categories (Strauss and Corbin 1990). During the analysis I examine possible patterns and identify more than 30 core categories. The intention is to reach ‘theoretical saturation’ in that the data are coded and analysed until no new categories related to the research questions emerge.
(Strauss 1987:21). I also discuss the process with my PhD supervisor. The third stage is
demarcating the theory that emerges from the data and the fourth stage is writing the
theory.

In the open and axial coding I use the computer program Atlas/ti (Mehmetoglu and
Dann 2003). The computer program is designed to support the researcher in interpreting
texts and it has the capacity to deal with enormous amounts of data. I use it for
structuring 16 focus group interviews and 29 solicited diaries. The Atlas/ti has general
functions such as coding, memoing and data linking (Mehmetoglu and Dann 2003) and
it is an efficient way of handling the data. It is possible to merge and recode categories
quickly, as well as linking memos to codes and themes. Critics of computer assisted
approaches claim that it is over mechanical and does not give the feel of the data
(Mehmetoglu and Dann 2003). Contrary to Catterall and Macaran (1997) I cannot see
that time consuming manual coding and clumsy access to the focus group data gives a
greater awareness of the serendipity. To me the computer program is a time saving tool
which simplifies the coding and analysing process. It gives more time to reflect upon
the data and does not require intricate systems of keeping a sense of control over it.
Whenever I need to recode or revisit the data I have easy access. This makes the
analysis cyclical (Rudestam and Newton 2001).

The data are from focus group interviews and solicited diaries. This means two sets of
data and different approaches to the analysis. The focus group interview is about mutual
reflections whereas the diary is a personal record. The data in the former are the result
of a process and the group members discussing and exploring issues and the latter is
about content as the diarist describes personal experiences. In analysing the focus group
interview it is therefore possible to ‘to move beyond content to draw attention to
interactional features’ (Wilkinson 1998a:113, emphasis in original). Each focus group
interview represents one case and the main goal is to identify commonalities between
several cases (Frankland and Bloor 1999). It is a collective voice (Smithson 2000). The
interactive character of the focus group interview is, however, not always acknowledged
by researchers (Wilkinson 1999b).

Myers and Macnaghten suggest analysing the focus group interview as talk not text:
‘Content analysis can tell us what they talked about, but conversation analysis can tell
us how they talked about it, what it was linked to’ (Myers and Macnaghten 1999:185). It allows the researcher to investigate participants’ interactions and how the opinions are contextually and processually constructed. It captures the situatedness of the focus group discussions by referring to location and situation. In analysing the focus group interviews I therefore keep the interactive character and I acknowledge that the data are situated and relational. The data in the solicited diary are comparable text elements (Frankland and Bloor 1999) and I focus on the contents.

### 3.3.6 Presenting the qualitative data

Feminist research does not take place in a social vacuum (Morris, Woodward and Peters 1998, see section 2.5). This notion has two ramifications for this research. First, my personal values and beliefs affect the process and secondly, there is closeness between the research participants and myself; we are all midlife single women. I acknowledge this by sharing the research process and my own position in section 1.2.3. I do not believe the result to be unbiased but I intend to tell the story of the midlife single women participating, not my own. Sometimes this still means telling mine (Trimberger 2005).

The research gives voices to the midlife single women. This is mainly through the analysis chapters, but also in the focus group interviews. In the analysis chapters the women’s voices are visible through the quotes and the issues I explore. I cannot give voice to every woman and all issues but have to interpret data in a selective way (Wolcott 1994). This does not mean that I cannot be aware of the voices I use or do not use. I attempt to quote each woman at least once in the findings chapters.

In the data collection, and especially in the focus group interview, the challenge is dominant voices (Smithson 2000). Sometimes one or a few women dominate the discussions. Although I use question rounds for involving all of the women and I keep the groups in a mini-format, sometimes the dominant voices steer the conversations. The transcripts show the number of times each woman talks and I encourage the passive to be more active and vice versa in the second focus group interview. Dominant voices are also a challenge in the solicited diary. Some women are very literate and comfortable with telling their story, others are not. There is not much I can do about this.
Temple and Edwards (2002) argue that the translator in cross-language research has to be included in the debate on reflexivity. This is relevant to the analysis of the data in this research. The quotes are translated from Norwegian to English. Although the two languages have similar grammatical structures it is sometimes difficult to find appropriate English words or phrasing to capture the meaning in Norwegian (Twinn 1998). Furthermore, the translators in qualitative research are interpreters (Temple and Edwards 2002). They then add meaning to the quotes by choosing one translation over the other. In quantitative research the instruments are sometimes used in several languages (Hyrkäs, Appelqvist-Schmidlechner and Paunonen-Ilmonen 2003). Such translations commonly rest on translation and back-translation. This means that the questionnaire first is translated into the target language and then translated back to the original language by a bilingual person. Then the two versions are compared.

In this research the quotes are translated to English by a female colleague born in England but living in Norway for decades. She is fluent in both languages and has proof-read and translated scientific papers for years, in addition to being a librarian. This does not mean that I disregard her as an interpreter of the quotes. In order to minimize her affect on the data I compare each Norwegian quote with the English translation and make sure the meanings are similar. The main language problem with this PhD, though, is rather that it is written in a second language and in Norway. I am not familiar with all English phrases and meanings.

3.4 Concluding thoughts – how well did it work?

I conclude this chapter by reflecting upon the research methods and the data production. I first explore some of my retrospective thoughts and then the midlife single women’s evaluation of the two methods.

The snowball sampling provided 32 midlife single women. In particular, the emails to friends and co-workers worked well and recruited 21 women. The personal request to close friends provided 6 participants and the two newspaper articles recruited four participants in Tønsberg and one in Lillehammer. The strategies for committing the midlife single women to the project were a success; 25 of the 32 women completed the
three phases (Appendix Seventeen). The remaining seven women did not lose interest but had adequate reasons for not attending. One woman met a partner before the holiday and some others were sick at the time of the second focus group interview. Four of the women found it impossible to reschedule previous engagements and I created two new groups. Instead of 14 focus group interviews I therefore conducted 16. The mix of formal and informal settings worked fine. None of the women commented upon the transcripts from the focus group interviews. One of them met a new partner during the holiday and I disregarded her diary and contribution in the second focus group interview. Two of the women’s diaries were very personal and I disregarded them in the analysis. These women did perhaps not recognise the fine lines between a solicited and a personal diary. Despite the fact that these women openly wrote about their holiday experiences and willingly contributed to the research I felt ethically responsible not to disclose some of the very personal information revealed in these diaries. The analysis is therefore based on 30 women’s oral and written stories.

In April 2005 the first round of seven focus group interviews was arranged. Each meeting lasted for about 2 hours and the women more or less discussed the topics from Appendix Six. The group dynamics were different each time. Most of the women did not know each other and it took some time to create a relaxed atmosphere in each group and for the women to open up. The data were therefore not always interactive. One of the groups was very serious and the women did not laugh much. Two of the groups had one dominant voice and in three groups there was one quiet woman. The question rounds partly dealt with this. I was sometimes a passive and sometimes an active moderator. The different group dynamics sometimes stressed me out and I sometimes had a problem in keeping to the schedule.

The Achilles’ heel of the data production was the solicited diary and the women’s willingness to carry out the assignment. With the exception of one woman, who forgot the diary on the holiday, 29 women returned a solicited diary (Appendix Seventeen). This does not mean that all diaries were equally well filled out. One woman hardly wrote anything and some women kept the diary just for a week. Some days the open-ended questions were answered in detail, other times just with keywords. The third open-ended question did not work well. Many of the women hardly reflected on the experience/activity in relation to being a midlife single woman. The small
questionnaires worked fine. Most of the women selected the A6 format.

The second set of nine focus group interviews was held between September 5th and October 15th 2005. All the groups, with the exception of one, were missing one or two of the women. This meant that three groups consisted of only two people. It was not desirable, but it still worked. I steered the conversation more in these groups. The interviews in the bigger groups lasted about two hours and a bit less in the smaller ones. The groups discussed between four and seven of the topics based on Appendix Seven. I tried to make the conversations more analytical by linking them to the diaries, but it was still difficult to discuss identity related issues. Differences between the women were sometimes more obvious as they knew each other better and perhaps were more open. There were fewer dominant and silent voices.

Most of the midlife single women enjoyed participating in the study. They found it exciting and cosy. The women enjoyed meeting others in similar situations and to discuss the issues. It was inspirational. One of the women even embarked on her first solo holiday after being empowered by the group members’ experiences. Just a few women were not willing to participate in it again. Most of the midlife single women found it hard to discuss gender, singlehood and midlife but relatively easy to talk about the holiday. Many of them looked forward to meeting the others and missed the ones not present the second time. Others enjoyed a smaller group as this gave more time to speak. Several of the women acknowledged the amount of time they spoke from the transcript from the first focus group interview and tried to adjust. Some of the women really disliked reading the transcripts.

The midlife single women were more divided in their views on the diary. Many of them acknowledged its value as a tool for reflections, although found it difficult to reflect on being a midlife single woman. Some women thought it was hard to link a holiday experience or activity to something negative. To others it was difficult to know if the entries were too personal. Two women saw it as a personal diary. The women spent different amounts of time on the diary; one woman used 10 minutes on all entries, another wrote for 30 minutes a day. Just a few women wrote every day, the rest wrote in chunks and a few after the holiday. Some of these women made drafts during the holiday. One of the women felt she had to ‘make up’ things, the others enjoyed the time
to process their thoughts and reflect.

In the next chapter I shift the focus back to theoretical perspectives by exploring sociological and touristic concepts for analysing and understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities.
4 Understanding the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to embed the thesis within the state-of-the-art literature and theoretical approaches to the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. I introduce and explain social and cultural theories that offer contested and sometimes overlapping perspectives. The chapter then expands on the rationales, aims and objectives outlined in Chapter One and it continues to explore theories on subject formation introduced in Chapter Two. The theories and perspectives of this chapter will inform the analysis in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

The review is mainly grounded in sociological theories, gender studies and tourism studies and, as a consequence of the multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of the thesis, I acknowledge that the review is not exhaustive. Gender identity and the holiday experience form part of a rich range of discourses and debates in social science, and within the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field of tourism, and draw on the disciplines of sociology (see for instance MacCannell 1992; Urry 1990, 2000) anthropology (see for instance Smith 1989) and geography (see for instance Pritchard and Morgan 2000) and the interdisciplinary field of gender studies (see for instance Aitchison 2003; McNay 2000). Singlehood and midlife, on the other hand, are more specialized concepts explored by sociologists and psychologists (see for instance Barrett 2005; Gordon 1994a; Hockey and James 2003; Moen and Wethington 1999; Stein 1981; Reynolds and Wetherell 2003). Nevertheless, female midlife has formed the central focus of a number of recent tourism dissertations (Jordan 2003; Simmons 2003; Small 1999, 2002, 2003; Wilson 2004) and the two categories are also explored in research on travel behaviour (Bojanic 1992; Collins and Tisdell 2002a, 2002b; Hill, McDonald and Uysal 1990; Lawson 1991) and the life course (Gibson 2002; Gibson and Yiannakis
‘Identity’ is a highly contested term, no longer only understood as a noun but also as a verb (Aitchison 2003). Gender/singlehood/midlife identities are therefore not seen as an essence but the result of aesthetic reflections (Bauman 2004; Beck 2001; Giddens 1991), performativity (Butler 1999) or subjectification (McNay 2000). As already outlined in Chapter Two, it is McNay’s perspective on identity formation that informs this thesis; social identities are the result of lived social relations. This perspective gives a creative dimension to identity formation without turning it into a free floating notion. It places the concept in the social-cultural nexus (Aitchison 2003). In this chapter I briefly contrast this perspective with other theories on identity formation and I introduce the distinction between social identity and self-identity.

The holiday experience or tourism is also a contested term which is not just understood as a noun, but also as something people ‘do’ differently (Crouch 2002). Recent studies of destinations or tourist places do, thus, not describe them as fixed unities but as ‘sandcastles’ made of objects, mobilities and proximities (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:2). It is the result of the moment, the people and artefacts present. The new tourism mobilities theories deal with poststructural notions of fluidity. I contrast these new understandings with previous, partly power embedded, theories of the holiday experience emphasising the pilgrim (MacCannell 1976), the escapist (Boorstin 1962) or the flâneur or gazer (Urry 1990).

The new mobile understandings often only partly or indirectly deal with issues that hinder tourists’ movements or experiences. This is sometimes done by introducing concepts imbued with power relations. A study on social networks, for instance, introduces the importance of social capital (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006). The amount of social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam 2001) makes tourist places and tourists experiences more or less controllable. The concept introduces structural constraints and contributes to marking the understanding of the holiday experience as being produced within the social-cultural nexus (Aitchison 2003). Social capital is often divided into bonding and bridging social capital, and people’s needs for exclusive or inclusive identities. This distinction then points to a desire for sameness and/or difference on holiday, and makes it possible to connect bonding and bridging social
capital to Bauman’s (2003) concepts of mixophobia and mixophilia. These two concepts also capture the opposite and ambivalent ways people inhabit and occupy public spaces; whether they seek sameness, similarity and safety or variety, difference and risks. But, contrary to the concepts of social capital they also point to ways in which public spaces are organised differently and, hence, accommodate specific forms of social capital.

This chapter consists of three parts. First, I explore the many meanings of identity from a range of social science perspectives thus highlighting the conceptual complexity of individual (self) and collective (social) identities. To feminists, understandings of social identities are often linked to the epistemological position adopted (see also section 2.4). Gender/midlife/singlehood identities are also explored in other studies and I examine the ambivalences and marginalities of such social identities. Studies of the holiday experience also engage with identity formation. In the review I link such research to theories of consumerism and I explore approaches relating to how the holiday experience provides a space for defining oneself. I note that specific types of travel such as backpacking take precedence within the research and that not all studies take gender power relations into consideration. Secondly, I examine the holiday experience. The concept has evolved from modern oppositions of home, everyday life and work with those of away, holiday and leisure to postmodern notions of tourism mobilities and ‘sandcastles’ where the boundaries are less clear. As they become more fluid social relations have, through the work of social theorists such as Bauman, come to be seen as equally important to the relations of place as defined by earlier social and cultural geographers. As feminists and critical tourism thinkers add to this recent literature power relations also become more apparent. Finally, I explore social capital. I introduce how the theoretical approaches take two directions; people use the social connections for personal gain and to mark distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and social relations integrate people (Putnam 2001). I investigate how the latter understanding points to different forms of social capital. One main distinction is between bonding and bridging social capital, and between exclusive and inclusive identities. I finally briefly discuss the value of such capital in the holiday and contrast it with Bauman’s (2003) concepts of mixophobia and mixophilia. Mixophobia and mixophilia also point to the desire for sameness or difference, not only in relation to people but also in public spaces.
4.2 Identity

In this subsection I examine theories on ‘identity’. As the concept has many meanings (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), the brief review refers to broad understandings in social sciences. To feminists there is a strong link between epistemology and gender identity (see for instance Braidotti 1993; Butler 1993, 1999; Hekman 2000; McNay 2000). This subsection therefore also expands on the issues explored in section 2.4.

Identity is a multifaceted concept in social sciences and humanities (see for instance Bauman 2004; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Butler 1999; Côté and Schwartz 2002; Giddens 1991; Jenkins 1996; McNay 2000). It is used by sociologists, psychologists and social psychologists. At the risk of oversimplifying our conceptual understanding, sociologists explore individualisation in society and social formation, psychologists investigate processes of individuation within and from society, and social psychologists combine the two (Côté and Schwartz 2002:572); individualization refers to people’s cultural necessity to take control over their lives, to determine directions and to make choices related to ‘who I am’ or ‘who we are’. Sociologists see insights in people’s self- and social identities as necessary for understanding social life (Jenkins 1996).

Individuation is the basic process of developing a sense of self (Côté and Schwartz 2002:573) and the focus of attention of psychologists such as Erikson (1994) and Lacan (Woodward 1997). Lacan explains how children develop a ‘self’ or an ‘I’ through different phases; the first unconscious and then symbolic processes enable them to become an entity, to take on gendered identity and to recognize sexual difference (Woodward 1997:46). Many psychologists use such insights to treat mental disorders and problems. In this thesis I mainly explore individualization.

There are many and parallel meanings between ‘identity’ and ‘self’, between processes of individualization and individuation. Giddens (1991) uses ‘self-identity’ in the sociological analysis of late modernity. The concept of ‘identity’ is from Latin *identitas* and means sameness or identical to and distinctive from (Jenkins 1996:3). The concept of ‘self’ has German roots and refer to four meanings; uniformity or self-same, an essence, reflexivity and autonomous agency (Jenkins 1996:29). Identity then refers to similarity and difference, whereas self means similarity, difference, reflexivity and process.
In this subsection I introduce and contrast theories of individualization or identity formation which take one of three directions. First, some theories link identity formation to coherence, universalism and biological determinism. Such theories enable one stable gender/singlehood/midlife identity. This approach has more or less been refuted by feminists and the debate on biological sex and cultural gender (see for instance Beauvoir 1994; Butler 1999). Secondly, the concept is part of post-structural theories on endless self-creation or aesthetic reflexivity which is often placed in the realm of consumption (Bauman 2004; Giddens 1991; Urry 1995). In this perspective midlife single women construct self-images through shopping and other leisure activities and, hence, none of them need to be the same. Thirdly, other theories connect identity formation to both sameness and difference, and to freedom and constraints (Braidotti 1993; McNay 2000; Mason 2004). To McNay (2000, 2004a, b) this means that gender/singlehood/midlife identities are neither fixed nor fluid, but intersubjectively situated. Identity is placed in the field and controlled by *habitus*, but as *habitus* is a generative structure it opens up for agency and social transformation, hence, new and different social identities. To McNay such social transformations happen when women enter a new field and *habitus* and become reflexive. To Adkins (2004a:20), such reflexivity is also a habit of modernity; identity transformation is therefore also possible within existing fields as ‘norms are never fully occupied’.

The studies on gender/singlehood/midlife identities are mainly based within the latter approaches. Studies show that being a midlife single woman is not a unitary identity but often about freedom and constraints, and autonomy and dependence (Baumbusch 2004; Byrne 2000, 2003; Gordon 1994a; Trimberger 2005). These studies also show that gender/singlehood/midlife identities are marginal and troublesome in ‘familist’ societies. To some extents midlife single women are then free to create themselves, but at the same time constrained by cultural norms and material structures. Studies on the holiday experience and identity formation are often within the second perspectives. They focus on how tourists freely create themselves through holiday consumption (see for instance Noy 2004). But, some are also within the latter perspective as critical and feminist thinkers engage with constraints (see for instance Wilson 2004).

In the next three subsections I, first, outline identity as an analytical concept in social
sciences. Then I review literature on gender/singlehood/midlife identities and, finally, I explore the links between identity formation and the holiday experience.

4.2.1 An analytical concept
Modern understandings of identity trace back to the philosophers Locke, Hegel and Nietzsche and their thinking on coherence, mutual recognition and reflexivity. By way of a rather crude summary, Locke (1996), for instance, relates identity to both continuity and coherence and states that it is closely linked to the personal (Taylor 1989). If a person remembers two different stories at separate times, s/he then has two identities. To Hegel identity is linked to recognition not memory, but it is also coherent and about continuity (Taylor 1994). This means that it is relational and depends upon the identifier. To Nietzsche (1998) identity is constructed and fragmented. As actions are both reflexive and pre-reflexive, identity is sometimes shaped without the person’s knowledge. It is then not transparent or fixed.

The distinction between coherent and constructed identity is very important to feminist thinking on gender (see also section 2.4). A coherent or essentialist view means that women and men in all times are understood in stable and permanent terms (Butler 1999), as ‘sameness’ and ‘stasis’ (McNay 1999b:320). It is gender identity as universalism and biological determinism (Beauvoir 1994), and the outset for the distinction between biological sex and cultural gender (Butler 1999). A constructed or non-essentialist view, on the other hand, focuses on difference and gender identity as in flux (Weedon 1997). As total relativism makes it impossible to talk about commonalities among subjects at all, the constructivist approaches vary in the degree they acknowledge the effect of individual reflexivity and/or societal factors such as gender (Braidotti 1993; Prieur 2002, see also section 2.3.4).

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) sketch three clusters of non-essentialist understandings. First, identity is the person’s self-understanding and social location (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). It is then the sense of self and one’s actions that can take many forms. It is subjective, affective and cognitive and does not capture others’ understandings. Secondly, identity is about commonality, connectedness and groupness such as ‘race’, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. It is the belonging to a group. Thirdly, identity is about identification and categorisation. Identification means to identify oneself and to
be identified by other people or authoritative institutions. Such identifications are relational towards another person and categorical when related to class, ‘race’ and gender. Identification requires specific agents who identify themselves, but it is does not specify the ‘identifier’. Categorical identities, for instance, are often embedded in the discourse (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). The epistemological underpinnings in this research (see section 2.4) are connected to identity as identification and groupness. When McNay (2000, 2004a, b) draws on Bourdieu’s social relations as lived, the gender identity is entrenched in identification and connectedness between women.

To Craib (1986) post-modern notions of identity take two theoretical directions. First, identity is understood as a process of endless self-creation in the Nietzsche tradition (see for instance Bauman 2004; Beck 2001; Giddens 1991; Gregen 1991; Urry 1995). Beck (2001) discusses how, in the 1970s labour market in Germany, the individual becomes more important than the collective. Belonging to a specific labour-based class is no longer meaningful and the individual is left to create his/her life and circumstances. The processes of self-creation take place in the private sphere of leisure and cultural activities not the work place (Beck 2001). Bauman (2000:83) also links identity to consumer culture and sees it as seemingly ‘liquid’, volatile and unfixed. People shop around for identities in their endless desire to be different and unique. To Giddens (1991) self-identity in late modernity also becomes a reflexive project closely linked to lifestyle choices. People are detached from social institutions such as generations, places, kinship and rituals, and decisions related to actions, clothing and food must be decided daily. The self-identity is therefore based on each person’s ability to ‘keep a particular narrative going’ (Giddens 1991:54, emphasis in original) and ability to give discursive interpretations of their own actions. Urry (1995) links the importance of reflexive self-creation to forms of society and forms of travel. In pre-capitalist societies travel is organised exploration whilst in disorganised capitalism it is a means towards purchasing images and expressing oneself. The cultural impact of tourism affects ‘the very forms of social identity available in the modern world’ (Urry 1995:164). This shift towards consumerism and ‘consumer citizenship’ as a social identity means diversified preferences and product options, which people use to organise everyday life styles (Urry 1995).

Secondly, identity is controlled by the discourse and a Hegelian tradition combining
mutual recognition and structural constraints (see for instance Braidotti 1993; Butler 1993; du Gay 1996; Hall 1996; McNay 2000). Identity formation as a pure aesthetic reflexive process is criticized by Mason (2004), Warde (1994) and McNay (1999a, see also section 2.4). Mason (2004) points to the relational aspects of identity formation, whereas Warde (1994) argues that consumer behaviour is a key element in social integration and not an act of exercising free choice. McNay (1999a, 2000) claims that it is embodied and dependent on power relations imposed on the individual. Self-creation must therefore acknowledge constraints. Butler (1993) suggests that gender identity is about ‘performativity’. This means that women and men reiterate a ‘set of norms’ or a ‘heterosexual matrix’ that constitutes society’s understandings of being male or female (Butler 1993:42). Such reiterative norms give the sex a naturalized effect, but it also allows for productive changes. As structural power is imprinted in men and women, individual agency is limited (Butler 1993, 1999). Braidotti’s (1994:158) ‘feminist nomadism’ also captures different forms of gender identity without becoming relativistic; there are many ways of ‘doing woman’, but being one is always a fact. Each and every woman is therefore responsible for defining her gender but within structures and processes that, to draw from Marx, may not be of her own making.

Identity is not only collective and shared but also unique (Jenkins 1996). Building on Cooley and Mead, Jenkins considers the ‘self’ as a dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definitions, what he terms the ‘internal-external dialectic of identification’ (Jenkins 1996:20, emphasis in original). On the one hand, individual identity is developed side by side with the process of primary socialisation and establishes a sense of selfhood, human-ness and gender, which become deeply rooted in the individual’s unique perception of self. On the other hand, social identity is multilateral in that it has to be validated and acknowledged by others. It is then both an understanding of oneself and of others, and others’ understanding of themselves and others. Significant others such as friends and relatives, for instance, are our interpreters (Pahl 2000; Wearing 1992). They are part of ‘the social condition under which the self arises as an object’ (Mead 1967:152). Social identity is then intersubjectively situated (McNay 2004a).

Craib (1998) is critical of the priority of social identity over self-identity as the latter can come and go without the person usually losing their sense of self. Changes in
marital status do therefore not result in non-identity, just a transformation. The social and personal are equally significant. Byrne (2003) finds that women’s self-identities are fruitful for feminism. She develops a model for investigating midlife single women’s social and self identities, and claims that it is possible to distinguish the two. The women’s self-identities are evident in experiences of interaction, self-knowledge, care and practices of the self, capacity to narrate the self and routine reflexive activities. Their social identities are apparent in dominant ideologies of ‘familism’, primary identification of gender and class etcetera, secondary identification of kin, nationality, and occupation and so on, socially valued identities and socially stigmatized identities. Familism means that the family is the basic unit, despite ideologies of individualism and equity in the Western World (Gordon 1994a). In Byrne’s study it is the single women’s self-identities that contest dominant conceptions of womanhood as mothers and wives, and which propose new and more independent identities, not the social identity.

Jenkins (1996:25), on the other hand, sees social identity as a process where structural and individual factors interplay. The concept then builds bridges between theories of action and of structure, similar to Bourdieu’s social theory. Bourdieu (1990:53), though, uses *habitus* as an analytical concept for describing social identity and subject formation (Prieur 2002). *Habitus* is first and foremost a pre-reflexive concept, whereas identity is also often connected with reflexivity and choice. To Bourdieu gender identity is therefore a lived set of embodied potentialities in the field, it exist on the pre-reflexive level (McNay 2000). As I discussed in section 2.4 feminists also introduce a sense of cognitive reflexivity to Bourdieu’s thinking by introducing the concepts of ‘tactics’ (Certeau 1984; Skeggs 1997) and ‘mimesis’ (Adkins 2004a). Tactics and mimesis acknowledge that ‘norms are never fully occupied’ (Adkins 2004a:207), enabling transformations of gendered *habitus* through liberating practices. This suggests that *habitus* is also a habit or routine (Adkins 2004a).

In summary, I acknowledge that identity is both a collective and individual construct, it is about the social and the self. But, following Jenkins (1996) and Bourdieu (2000) identity is first and foremost social and relational. Gender/singlehood/midlife identities are then shared and emerge in interactions with other people, for instance, when on holiday. Such identities are not part of cognitive reflexive processes; still midlife single women do not always follow the norm for how to act on holiday. The
gendered/singlehood/midlife *habitus* is then not a determined state of mind. Furthermore, social identities are not the result of aesthetic reflections but are often imbued with incorporated constraints.

### 4.2.2 Gender/singlehood/midlife - marginal identities?

In this subsection I review literature on gender/singlehood/midlife identities. There is a growing body of research on the meaning of this phenomenon in contemporary Western societies (see for instance Baumbusch 2004; Byrne 2000, 2003; Gordon 1994a; Stein 1981; Trimberger 2005). The research often challenges ‘familism’ and norms of heterosexuality, marriage and reproduction which lead to stigmatisation of midlife singlehood as a social identity for women. It disputes that women staying single beyond ‘a certain age’ denotes a threat and a failure (Sandfield and Percey 2003:485). I start the subsection by exploring the concepts of ‘midlife’ and ‘single’. Then I outline previous research on midlife single women.

Midlife is a complex concept, often embedded in life course theory (see for instance Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003; Freysinger 1991). The ‘sociology of life course’ is traced back to the mid 1920’s when life history data were recorded for the first time (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003; Heinz and Krüger 2001). The real outset, though, is in the 1960’s when social scientists recognized the importance of understanding life pathways. Life course theory is part of the psychology and sociology of age, but it is also an interdisciplinary theory (Allen and Pickett 1987; Hunt 2005). Traditionally psychologists refer to the ‘lifeline’ or the ‘life cycle’ (Erikson 1980; Levinson 1996; Rossi 1980) and sociologists to the ‘life span’ or ‘life course’ (Allen and Pickett 1987; Hunt 2005). Without going into details, life span, lifeline and life cycle are today used interchangeably but not synonymously (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003; Settersten 2003). The life course, on the other hand, has evolved into a distinguish theoretical domain and is informed by the sociology of age.

The sociology of age sees age as something more than chronology (Hunt 2005; Kaufman and Elder 2002; Laz 1998; Sherman 1994). One reason that people’s perceptions of midlife and old age have changed during the last decades is that age identity consists of four dimensions; subjectively felt age, age perceived by others, desired age and desired longevity (Kaufman and Elder 2002). Age identity is then more
Life course theory then explores ‘age-graded patterns that are embedded in social institutions and history’ (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003:4). It offers flexible ways of understanding age and acknowledges normative structures such as class and gender (Crockett 2002; Hockey and James 2003). It distinguishes chronological age (life time) from social time/cultural age (Gee 1990; Settersten and Hagestad 1996). Social time or cultural age refers to age-linked life events and social roles such as getting married, having the first child and becoming a grandmother. It is the normative ‘social timetables’ which define the occurrence of important life events or role transitions (Gee 1990:280), and which are sometimes influenced by independent timetables (Hunt 2005; Settersten and Hagestad 1996). It is perhaps these norms that make midlife singlehood a marginal position for women (see for instance Gordon 1994a).

Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe (2003) point to five general principles generated from life course research (see also Hunt 2005; Moen 2001; Moen and Wethington 1999). First, aging is a lifelong process and, hence, personal development does not end at a specific age. Life course research then investigates the shaping of biographies as a process of turning points and transitions (Heinz and Krüger 2001). It reveals changes over time. Secondly, individuals construct their life course within social-historical conditions; they are not determined by them. Thirdly, time and place of birth influence people’s experiences over the lifetime. Fourthly, the timing of a life event may affect individuals differently and, finally, all lives are linked both on a micro and macro level.

Contrary to a notion of fixed life cycle or life stages (Moen and Wethington 1999), life course theory then puts people’s lives in contexts and acknowledges social-historical conditions (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003; Hunt 2005; Moen 2001; Moen and Wethington 1999) and cohorts (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe 2003; Freysinger 1991). Cohort is ‘a category of people with common characteristics, usually their age’ (Hunt 2005:22). Gee (1990) shows how the outset of marginality is related to cohort; the younger women consider the mean age for getting married, having the first child and becoming a grandmother as higher than the older cohorts. Singlehood for women is therefore acceptable up until different ages at different times. A cohort effect is perhaps
also evident when motherhood and marriage keep older Australian women from international holidays until they are in midlife (Wilson 2004) and a cultural effect is noted by Gibson and Jordan (1998) when US midlife women travelling solo are more confident and independent than the UK women.

The outset of midlife or the cohorts in this research is then not clear cut. In previous studies on women it has spanned from 30-70 (Jordan 2003; Moen and Wethington 1999; Ogle and Damhorst 2005; Rossi 1980; Segraves 2004; Simmons 2003; Thompson, Grand and Dharmalingham 2002). Levinson (1996), for instance, places it between 40 and 60. Moen and Wethington (1999) advise against fixed starting points and suggest focusing on lifestyle and level of responsibility with midlife coinciding with successful management of family life, occupation and parenthood and new perspectives on life and one self. In this research midlife is limited to the age span 35 to 55. Featherstone and Hepworth (1991a:384) differentiate between ‘midlife’ and ‘middle age’. As midlife has positive associations of youthfulness, personal and social change (Featherstone and Hepworth 1991a:384) and middle age negative connotations of crisis, aging and a routines (Featherstone and Hepworth 1991b:201) I use the term midlife in this thesis.

A life course approach on the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities means that it is situated in time and space. This research is therefore concerned with the cohorts ‘Norwegian Baby Boomers’ (the women born 1950 to1964) (Adams and Blieszner 1998:71) and those of early ‘Generation X’ (the women born 1965-1970) (Pennington-Gray, Fridgen and Stynes 2003:344). The two cohorts are then marked by specific historical moments such as the post-war housewife period, the women’s liberation movement and, finally, consumerism. As preferred timing of life events such as average age for marriage and motherhood are changing (Allen and Pickett 1987; Gee 1990), and more and more adult women live alone, the concept of life course to such research may be less relevant in the years to come. On the other hand, it may also be just as important. The fights for women’s equal opportunities and rights, and the changes in women’s situations over the last decades, and the not always consequent changes in systemic suppressions and gender identities, indicate that gender power relations are hard lived. Such social-historical-cultural factors may then also reduce the effects of cohort and life course. In
summary, this research was not placed in life course theory, but drew indirectly on it.

‘Single’ is also a complex concept. The demarcations of singlehood are not clear cut and involve a multitude of ways to live (Trimberger 2005). It does not mean never married or childless nor is it a stable and voluntary position (Stein 1981). Divorces, widows, and never married women are singles (Gordon 1994a; Trimberger 2005). It neither means living alone, as single women sometimes live with parents or friends (Chambers-Schiller 1984; Trimberger 2005) and single parents often consider themselves singles (Gordon 1994a), nor does it mean not having a sexual/love relationship (Trimberger 2005). Single is then a contested category, based on stable and/or temporary positions and can be voluntarily and/or involuntarily chosen (Stein 1981:11). In this research singlehood is defined as women who do not live with anyone, whether children or any other persons.

Singles was an under-researched category before 1970 (Stein 1975, 1976). As more adults live alone the interest is increasing and Lewis and Moon (1997) locate more than 300 scientific publications that either focus entirely on singlehood or treat it as a variable. In 2001 even a website (http://medusanet.ca/singlewomen/) for research on single women was established. Some of the research on midlife single women is therefore about therapy needs and health issues (see for instance Dalton 1992; Gigy 1980; Lewis 1994; Lewis and Moon 1997; Newtson and Keith 1997; Schwartzberg, Berliner and Jacob 1995; Segraves 2004), and some compares the lives of married and single women (see for instance Adams 1976; Chandler 1991; Gigy 1980).

Western culture is embedded with normative imperatives to marry and stigmatized perceptions of the outsiders which can be ascribed to gender (Byrne 2000; Foucault 1988; Thornton 1989). The research therefore also focuses on stereotypical perceptions of singles (Stein 1976); singles are outgoing, young, successful slim, healthy, sexually attractive and pretty, or the mummy's boy/girl, lonely, depressive and suicidal loser. Gordon (1994a:1) describes two dominant stereotypes of the single woman; the ‘old maid’ unable to get a man and the ‘modern city single’ who does not want one. Such stereotypes, though, seldom match the women’s sense of self (Anderson and Stewart 1994; Baumbusch 2004; Gigy 1980)
Research shows that before the 1960s the ‘old maid’ or ‘spinster’ was the prevailing category. The old maid or the spinster is attributed with characteristics such as unattractive and unfeminine, ‘a fate worse than death’ to some women back then (Chambers-Schiller 1984:10). In Norway towards the end of the nineteenth century the old maid category is anomalous as she does not fit the rigid gender categories of the Victorian Age (Hellesund 2002). But, she is also considered a collective problem and the result of demographic imbalance, women’s liberation and conditions in modern society. Such views change in the 1940s as she is more and more characterized as asexual. She becomes an individual, psychosexual problem. Historical and culturally embedded understandings of singlehood are also noticed by Allen and Pickett (1987); single women in the US during the Great Depression are not considered deviant but as forced to take care of the family of orientation not the family of procreation.

Today female singlehood is often voluntary (Gordon 2002) making the city single the most prevalent stereotype, particularly in the media. Research shows that single women first and foremost are represented as independent individuals, living fun lives. Dubrofsky (2002:268) shows that single women in television series have changed from being able to manage a ‘man’s job’, via a ‘masculinized woman’, into a symbiosis of the traditional ‘real’ women and a career woman. An analysis of the character Ally McBeal in the television series with the same name labels her a postfeminist icon; Ally McBeal is feminine and sexy, and a successful lawyer. However, the endeavour to combine work and family does not always work as Ally McBeal sacrifices work for motherhood and potential marital bliss in the final season (Dubrofsky 2002). The imperative of marriage lurks. Singlehood is then treated as a temporal phase and is normative and linked to age. It is the late twenty- to thirty-something women (Philips 2000).

However, research not only point to singlehood as a partly dubious category. Aging and midlife are also imbued with negative features in western societies, particularly for women (Erikson 1994 Hunt 2005; Levinson 1996; Neugarten 1968; Rossi 1980; Whitbourne and Connolly 1999). Research show that at 40 a woman is considered old whereas a man is in his prime (Gergen 1990) and that midlife as such is associated with ‘boredom, exhaustion or frantic energy, self-questioning, irritability to unexpected anger … related to various excesses including alcohol, food, or other compulsions’ (Hunt

In spite of negative cultural representations of aging and midlife, the research also indicates that most midlife women come to terms with their body images. They challenge and transform dominant societal ideals of beauty and not only their individual own bodies (Ogle and Damhorst 2005). They no longer focus on external definitions of self but become more reflective and critical of the opinions of others. Rather, they value internal definitions of personal character and soul. People in midlife are less concerned with the opinions of others, they look more inside for interpretation of themselves (Sherman 1994) and they search for the meaning of life (Levinson 1996). It is a time of re-evaluation, introspection and prioritization (Apter 1995; Reid and Willis 1999; Whitbourne and Connolly 1999). Being a midlife single woman then means doubts, anxieties, self-recriminations and self-corrections, but also strength, eagerness and self-confidence (Apter 1995).

Research on age, singlehood and women also focuses on identity formation and issues of marginalisation. As midlife singlehood for women in the contemporary, sexually liberated Western World is often a choice its marginal position is questionable to Gordon (1994a, 2002). The welfare state and the equal opportunity ideology give women a great degree of economic and sexual independence (Gordon 1994a). Still, it is imprinted by familism. This is the starting point of Single Women: on the margins? an investigation of the social identities of US and European midlife single women (Gordon 1994a). The study shows that midlife singlehood is an ambivalent state of living (see also Dalton 1992; Lewis and Moon 1997; Stein 1976). The women are ambivalent about the reasons for being single, and they are both content and unhappy with it (Gordon 1994a). They have economic autonomy, are their own care-giver, have control over their lives, have mental and emotional independence and the ability to be alone (Gordon 2002). They also often value the independence that singlehood represents.

Contrary to married women, who can be seen as oppressed inside the family, the midlife singles are free to negotiate their lives and identities (Gordon 1994a). At the same time they deal with pressures of not having children/family and being marginalised in ‘familist’ societies. Single women then are oppressed outside families as they are
excluded from the ideological representations of the family and the state’s practices (Gordon 1994a). Despite single women’s ability to challenge the marginal identity and develop ‘outsider-within’ positions, it is still a marginal position (Gordon 1994a:198, 2002:59). The degree of marginality, though, is multi-faceted as single women are a heterogeneous group. Material, social, cultural and subjective positions affect the women’s lives differently and makes several identities available (Gordon 2002).

Similar notions of midlife singlehood are also found by Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) who claim that women experience ideological dilemmas. The polarized discursive climate around midlife singlehood makes it a troubled category for women. This climate emerges in the intertwining of living and narrating singlehood. As a socially constructed discursive category it is embedded with complex regulatory meanings and practices, and it is based on the women’s personal narratives and subject positions. On the one hand singlehood represents denigration embedded with notions of personal deficit and social exclusion (Reynolds and Wetherell 2003). Single women are discursively described as lonely, alone and without a boyfriend. On the other hand, it is idealized through perceptions of independence and choice, and of self-actualization and achievement. Some midlife single women therefore deliberately construct themselves as atypical singles. Other women, who desire commitment with a partner, are troubled by and apologize for their singlehood (Reynolds and Wetherell 2003).

On the one hand they can choose to construct singleness very positively through the repertoires of choice and independence and self-development and achievement and then it becomes difficult to talk about any move out of the category. On the other hand, women can talk unashamedly about their desire for a relationship and risk being constructed as deficient and ‘desperate’, and marked by their failure to already have a man.

(Reynolds and Wetherell 2003:507)

Byrne (2000) explores the cultural stigma of being a midlife single woman in familial Ireland. The women’s self-identities are, in many ways, embedded with positive notions of midlife singlehood. They resist the dominant social identity as heterosexual, married and mothers and propose new ways of defining womanhood (Byrne 2003). An awareness of an outsider position increases the women’s self-awareness and makes
them more self-caring and reflexive. The women also engage in stigma management strategies to reduce and avoid stigmatisation: ‘Women use whichever explanation is most appropriate to the context, audience and own preference for truth telling’ (Byrne 2000:22). Such strategies involve distancing one self from, and refuting, the given social identity and then changing stereotypical representations and composing new self identities. They deal with a stigmatised social identity by covering up their marital status and by developing several stories when asked about it. Such stories revolve around emotional independence, the importance of work, and negative experiences of broken romances, inability to form long-term relationships and traumatic family experiences.

Trimberger (2005) also examines the cultural stigmas attached to being a US midlife single woman. *The New Single Woman* does not explicitly state an identity focus, but the entire book is about voicing positive senses of self. As polarized positions are not fruitful it is does not contrast single and married women (Trimberger 2005). The book presents 27 ‘life’ stories of contested self perceptions and conflicts related to being a midlife single woman and suggests six pillars for building positive identities (Trimberger 2005): the midlife single woman needs a home of her own, economic autonomy, sexual satisfaction whether in a traditional or more sensuous sense (see page 46 for example), close ties to the next generation, intimacy through networks of friends and/or family and community through friendship networks. The analysis shows that the women ‘living’ the most of these pillars are the most content with their midlife singlehood and are able to create alternative but fulfilling ways of life.

**4.2.3 The holiday experience – a space for identity formation**

The holiday experience is in many ways about consumption and the Western World is marked by consumerism (Hall 1997; Urry 1995). In the production or ‘circuit of culture’ (du Gay *et al.* 1997:3) consumption is closely linked to identity formation (Hall 1997; Woodward 1997). Based on the argument that meaning is produced by how people, objects and events are represented through expressions, thoughts and feelings, the values that are placed on them, and how they are classified and conceptualized, the holiday experience is an important and powerful activity in identity formation. In this perspective any tourist activity is the carrier of meaning and operates as symbols or signs. It functions as signifying practices (Crouch 2002). Such practices are closely
linked to social and self-identities, who we are and where we belong. Meaning and belonging are then produced when people consume and narrate cultural ‘things’, such as museums, shows and people. Consumption offers different subject-positions within which we can position ourselves. It creates the possibilities and constraints of our being and becoming (Woodward 1997).

The idea of consumption as a symbolic marker or a way of communicating ‘who you are’ is not a contemporary phenomenon. Veblen’s (1994) analysis of the social identity of the leisure class in the late 19th century, for instance, marks luxury consumption as the master; the best quality and high priced food, drink, narcotics, shelter, ornaments, and amusements point to reputability, nobility and manner.

Research within contemporary tourism studies also sees self-identity as reflexive. Noy (2004:599) claims that the holiday experience supports the tourist’s sense of self and that the traveller is engaged in ‘self-reflexive projects’. McCabe (2002) states that tourists do not escape everyday life, but bring it with him or her. It is one important way to express self-identity. Tourist destinations are therefore places and spaces where tourists work towards self-realization and meaning, and their reflections are embedded with visions of self (Neumann 1992). For example, McCabe and Stokoe (2004) demonstrate that when tourists talk about the UK Peak District National Park they reveal self-identities.

Tourism studies on social identity often focus on the traveller/backpacker not the tourist (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 1998; Dann 1999; Desforges 2000; Noy 2004). The traveller is associated with adventure and risk taking, whereas the tourist is attributed with a lack of independence (Elsrud 2001, 2006; Galani-Moutafi 2000). The distinction is embedded with a notion that the former is exciting and the latter is boring; package holidays in the Mediterranean produce family-oriented identities whereas backpacking in Thailand make adventure-related identities (Elsrud 2001). Elsrud’s (2004) interpretation of backpacking also indicates complex relationships. Backpackers have little interest in high priced luxury products which may attract other types of tourists; the consumption is symbolically marked. On the other hand, they are just as much engaged in positive and negative aspects of transportation, interactions and nature based experiences and destination specific products as any other types of tourists. The social
identities are then not that different.

The distinction between tourist and traveller today is merely based on signifying practices, not real actions. Homogenization, commercialization and institutionalization make it difficult to travel outside the tourism industry (Noy 2004). Even backpackers rely on guidebooks and pre-arrangements; they are part of modern mass tourism (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002). Still, many tourists dislike being identified as tourists (McCabe 2002) and develop strategies of resistance against producing this social identity. They refuse to follow the advice of the tourism industry, they do not make any travel arrangements in advance, they try not to act as tourists, and they distinguish themselves from other tourists (Neumann 1992). They cling to the social identity embedded in the traveller or backpacker.

Bruner (1991) is critical of the idea of self development through tourism, at least on behalf of the tourist. It is the native self-identities that undergo the transformation. Wearing and Neil (2000) see the holiday experience as a multitude of self-identities, but agree that the tourist is not valued over the other. Wearing (2002) also criticizes previous thinking for not recognising the destination as an interactive space when investigating self-identity; it is not the result of aesthetic reflection. Rather, the holiday experience and identity formation are embodied and relational. This is the outset for understanding the identities of volunteer tourists. Such tourists pay for helping, restoring and conserving third world destinations (Wearing 2002). They interact with people and spaces, and are thereby influenced by them (Wearing and Neil 2000). As the volunteer tourists learn about other ways of living their values and self-identities are affected (Wearing 2002).

Feminist tourism studies also indicate that identity formation is relational. Women’s social identities are constrained by the tourist gaze and gendered habitus. Gender identity is then not the result of aesthetic reflections but constraining practices. Deem (1996) acknowledges that tourism is about consuming identities, but questions its gendered nature. Women consume places differently from men; men are gazers, flâneurs, strollers, players and vagabonds whereas women are babysitters, au pairs and chorasters (Bauman 1996; Deem 1996; Jokinen and Veijola 1997; Wearing and Wearing 1996). The social identity connected to motherhood follows women on family
holidays; married women in their 40s do not resist traditional gender roles but feel responsible for making the holiday experience a success for partner and children (Small 2002). Simmons (2003) argues that midlife female tourists’ social identities are affected by a masculine, a feminine and a feminist narrative. The masculine narrative is the elite and independent explorer, the feminine narrative is embedded with passivity and dependency, and the feminist narrative is the empowered and independent woman. Women working in the tourism industry construct two almost opposite social identities of midlife female tourists (Simmons 2003); the women entering singlehood in midlife are insecure and afraid as tourists whereas the coupled midlife women are active tourists engaging in travel with all senses. Women as such are then not free to create themselves through consumption.

Wilson (2004) shows that couplism and ageism result in negative social and self-identities for midlife women travelling solo. The women are physically harassed by younger men who see them as potential sexual partners. Some women therefore invent a husband or partner when asked about marital status (Wilson 2004). As solo travelling is often associated with the more youthful back packing culture, age constrains women negatively (Wilson 2004), although some are empowered by the idea of entering this scene in midlife (Simmons 2003). Ageism not only affects the midlife women’s social identities at the destination, but also the encounters with tourism providers. Stone and Nichole’s (1999) and Jordan’s (2003) investigations of UK tourism providers suggest that midlife women are only present in family holidays and the social identities of motherhood and wives. These studies then partly see identity formation within the social-cultural nexus and indicate that midlife single women are not entirely free to create themselves on holiday.

4.3 The holiday experience

In this research I use the term ‘the holiday experience’ not ‘the tourist experience’ and the holiday rather than tourism to include home-based holidays as well as commercial forms (Leiper 1979). This perhaps places the thesis in the realm of both leisure and tourism studies. Home-based holidays may fit better with leisure studies as the area of investigation than tourism studies. One important distinction between leisure and tourism studies is the environment in which the free time is taking place; at home or at a
destination (Carr 2002a; Ryan 1994), although not all leisure research is related to home-based environments. The dividing line between the two is therefore not clear cut. Even if reflected in some spatial differences, there are also commonalities between the study of tourism and the study of leisure (Carr 2002a; 2002b; Hamilton-Smith 1987; Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987; Ryan and Glendon 1998; Smith and Godbey 1991). According to Ryan (1994) the distinctions are blurring as daytrips are just as likely part of everyday life as of holidays away from home. Furthermore, dissimilar kinds of tourism imply different degrees of familiarity; visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and second home holidays often involve well-known destinations and more home-based activities.

Carr (2002b) holds a similar position in his model of the tourism-leisure continuum. The model shows that the tourist and residual culture influences behaviour to varying degrees, depending upon if the activity takes place at home or away. However, some aspects of the residual culture, such as personal safety, often influence tourism behaviour, and ‘commonalities between the home and holiday environment act as cues to estimate the residual culture, but differences trigger the tourist culture’ (Carr 2002b:977). Not only does the home environment influence the tourists, McCabe (2002) argues that an insight into tourists’ experiences and actions also sheds light on everyday life. Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw (2000) are not concerned with the difference between leisure and tourism, but rather with different ways of representing and seeing landscapes of leisure and tourism. They are more concerned with the power relations imbued in how different groups and individuals construct, consume and interpret leisure and tourism landscapes. Tourism studies are after all a sub-field of leisure studies (Aitchison 2006). Aitchison (2006), however, also notes that leisure studies are marked by ‘the critical turn’ before embracing ‘the cultural turn’ whereas cultural theory has developed alongside critical theory within tourism studies. This development has resulted in revitalisation of tourism studies and a maturing of leisure studies.

The revitalisation of tourism studies is perhaps one reason it embraces and is embraced by the ‘new mobility turn’ in social sciences (Sheller and Urry 2004b; Urry 2000, 2006). The turn is Urry’s (2000:1) attempt to rewrite sociology from being about ‘individual societies’ and manifest structures to ‘global networks and flows’ and spatial metaphorical thinking. In tourism studies the turn means a rejection of disciplinary
boundaries and the opposition of home/away (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2004a). According to Gale (2007) the mobility turn is marked by five principles. First, it focuses on the mobilities of individuals not tourists, thereby introducing complex views on activities and movements within both leisure and tourism. Secondly, it incorporates both material and immaterial structures of tourism mobilities. Thirdly, it deals with immobilities and the people who do not or cannot move or take part in leisure or tourism thus including issues of difference and power. Fourthly, it acknowledges virtual and imaginative forms of tourism mobility such as video-conferences and virtual tours taken from the office or the home. Fifthly, it is concerned with environmental and global consequences of mobile lives. Leisure and tourism studies then in many ways merge in this new approach and make it possible to abolish the focus on disciplinary boundaries.

The mobility paradigm is the result of the cultural and spatial turn in social sciences and the recent focus on body, performance and objects in tourism studies (Urry 2006). It does not mean a new approach to the holiday experience, but one that acknowledges complex and power-embedded relationships. In the next six subsections I briefly explore the debate on the holiday experience which starts in structural approaches of tourism theories of ‘solid mobility’ and goes on to examine postmodern and poststructural perspectives of ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman 2000; Franklin 2003:206).

**4.3.1 Escape and pilgrimage**

An academic interest in the holiday experience commenced before tourism became a field of studies in the late 1960’s (Tribe 1997). Boorstin’s (1962) historical analysis outlines the holiday experience as superficial and devoid of any intrinsic significance (Cohen 1985). The traditional traveller transformed into the tourist as new technologies made exotic places and experiences available at reasonable prices and insurance and travel agencies minimised the financial and social risks of travel. Leisure travel is then no longer an activity but a commodity. As a commodity it is represented through travel brochures and guidebooks; it is not meetings with real life and people. Experiencing the idea of the destination is then more important than its real life or local culture. Contrary to the traveller who works hard for the experiences, the tourist is passive (Boorstin 1962:79); his/her holiday experiences are consequently ‘diluted, contrived, prefabricated’, mere ‘pseudo-events’ or ways of escape.
In the 1970's Boorstin's view was considered 'humorously critical' (Cohen 1979a:19) and a way of deriding tourists (MacCannell 1976). In particular MacCannell (1976), a sociologist, disputes Boorstin's notions and claims that the holiday experience is about finding meaning with life. Modern people are alienated and therefore interested in the authentic, real lives of other people. They feel a weakened sense of reality, they long for intimacy and closeness with others as structural tendencies exclude them from experiencing real life at home. In the back regions of the destinations they meet real, relaxed and genuine people (MacCannell 1976). Contrary to Boorstin's contrived holiday experience which reduces local populations and places to a spectacle, MacCannell argues that tourists seek authenticity in other places and times, and that they, in fact, are modern pilgrims and that tourism is a modern substitute for religion (Cohen 1979b; Pretes 1995). Despite this rather pompous notion MacCannell (1976) acknowledges that it is a lost battle; tourists will never get access to the real lives of others. The back stage is, after all, a buffer from the surrounding world and linked to the performance not a space (Goffman 1969). Tourists’ access to back regions therefore always transforms it; it cannot be sustained as a static back stage but, rather, becomes a dynamic performance.

Cohen (1972, 1979a, 1985), another sociologist, disputes Boorstin’s and MacCannell’s monological ideas and claims that they refer to distinct types of tourists; the traditional traveller is not a free adventurer but forced to leave the habitat by extreme circumstances and the tourist does not seek authentic experiences, but different cultures (Cohen 1972). To Cohen (1972) modern tourists are willing to leave home and they are attracted to familiar and/or new experiences. The degree of strangeness and novelty, though, is linked to individual tastes and preferences; some tourists seek familiarity, others adventures. Cohen (1972:167–168) therefore outlines four tourist roles: ‘The organized’ and ‘the individual’ mass tourist seek familiar experiences; the individual mass tourist is also open for some new experiences. ‘The explorer’ wants a combination of familiarity and comforts and novel experiences whereas ‘the drifter’ only seeks new experiences. The former two only give an illusion of adventure whereas the latter two give real ones. The model then neither reduces the holiday experience to pilgrimage nor to pure escape. It is ‘recreational’, ‘diversionary’, ‘experiential’, ‘experimental’ and ‘existential’ (Cohen 1979a:183-193).
A similar model is developed by Plog (1974), a psychologist, who classifies tourists on a spectrum from ‘allocentric’ to ‘psychocentric’; allocentric tourists look for the exotic and for adventures whereas psychocentric tourists prefer safety and the familiar (Smith 1990:40). Cohen’s link between the holiday experience and the tourist role still affects tourism studies on behaviour and segmentation (see for instance Gibson and Yiannakis 2002; Lengkeek 2001; Lepp and Gibson 2003; Mehmetoglu 2004; Yiannakis and Gibson 1992).

### 4.3.2 Liminality and constraints

The connection between the holiday experience and the pilgrimage is not only acknowledged by MacCannell, but also by anthropologists who label it a *rite de passage* (Graburn 1989; White and White 2004). A *rite de passage* consists of three phases: separation, ‘limen’ or margin and aggregation (Turner and Turner 1978:2). Related to the holiday experience the first phase is detachment from the home environment. It is then not used to explain home based holidays. The second phase is the being at the destination, where the tourist is ‘betwixt and between all familiar lines of classification’ (Turner and Turner 1978:2). Everyday norms are therefore suspended, the past and future do not exist and excessive behaviour is allowed or at least tolerated (Selänniemi 2002; Thomas 2005; White and White 2004). The margin is not only normless, but also about ‘what may be’; it triggers self-change and identity formation (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 1998:200). The third phase is reintegration into the social and cultural structures of everyday life.

In tourism studies the margin is sometimes labelled ‘liminoid’ or ‘quasi-liminal’ pointing to the voluntary character of the transition (Turner and Turner 1978:253). In Thomas’ (2005) study it explains women’s casual sexual relationships. Curtis and Pajaczkowska (1998:199) find that on holiday, when time ‘stands still’, the regular rhythms of everyday life cease to exist and the holiday becomes a space of freedom and abundance. White and White (2004) claim that long-term holiday experiences transform the traveller’s self permanently. Neumann (1993:215) concludes that the US Green Tortoise buses are a move into ‘Tortoise Time’. It releases the passengers from the ordinary and mundane structures of everyday life into new and evolving relations. It encourages bonding and the forming of group identity across social boundaries. In
tourism studies the phase is also often associated with play and playfulness (Graburn 1989; Lett 1983).

The holiday experience as play or freedom is criticised by feminists who draw on constraint theory (see for instance Crawford and Godbey 1987; Crawford, Jackson and Godbey 1991; Little 2000, 2002). All tourists do not experience the transition in the same way (Jordan 2003). Solo travelling women, for instance, are both constrained and empowered (Jordan 2003; Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Wilson 2004; Wilson and Little 2005). The opportunity to escape everyday routines does not necessarily apply to women with children, who easily slip into a nurturing role (Neumann 1993). Davidson (1996) reports that domestic duties are an accepted and even valued part of many married women’s holidays. Simmons (2003) finds that only the ontological secure midlife female tourists are able to embrace the liminal aspects of travel.

The liminal character of the holiday experience is also challenged by tourism mobility theories which disputes the binary of home and away (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2004a). White and White (2005), for instance, show how tourists use network capital to keep in touch with friends and family members at home, suggesting that ‘tourists were both home and away’ at the same time. The notion that tourists are free from everyday life is therefore too simplistic.

4.3.3 Surveillance, body and power
In The Tourist Gaze Urry (1990) continues to tease out the meaning of the holiday experience as he draws broader attention to the importance of holidaymaking as a social phenomenon. The search for authenticity and the rite de passage which are the basis of MacCannell’s (1976) and Turner and Turner’s (1978) analysis are not the answers. The basis is rather ‘the difference between one’s normal place of residence/work and the object of the tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990:11). Tourists travel to gaze upon non-ordinary landscapes and townscapes regardless of their authentic or liminoid qualities. As the objects of the tourist gaze differ, Urry (1990:135) sees at least two forms: the ‘romantic’ and the ‘collective’. The romantic tourist gaze is undisturbed experiences of nature, whereas the collective gaze is shared experiences such as cities, seaside resorts, museums and so on.
Urry (1990) draws on Foucault’s deconstruction of the medical gaze when outlining the tourist gaze. The ‘gaze’ or ‘surveillance’ is a key feature of Foucault’s (1977:200) thinking on social control (Jordan and Aitchison 2008). The notion of the ‘docile body’ (Foucault 1977:201) does not rest upon physical force, but social surveillance and self-surveillance. Normalized behaviour, such as the standards for social interactions in a given situation, is produced and reproduced through gazing at other people and being gazed upon (Cheong and Miller 2000, 2004; Jordan and Aitchison 2008).

Following Foucault, Urry (1990:1) sees the gaze as ‘constructed through difference’. This means that it is always shaped by the ‘non-tourist experiences’ in a society (Urry 1990:2). The holiday experience is therefore always marked by the non-ordinary and as opposition. Contrary to Foucault, who sees strong links between the gaze and omnipresent power relations (Cheong and Miller 2000), Urry (1990:1) only acknowledges that professionals ‘help to construct and develop’ the tourist gaze. He is more concerned with understanding the pleasure of holidaying and the importance of looking at the non-ordinary. According to Cheong and Miller (2000) this makes Urry place the tourist gaze and the gaze of the experts in the same landscapes of power and he fails to acknowledge how ‘practitioners define, constrain, and elicit a normalized behaviour’ for tourists. Tourists are not powerful agents, but the target of the tourism industry and the locals at the destination (Cheong and Miller 2000). The objects of the tourist gaze are often pointed out and organized by the brokers of the industry. It is the travel agents that recommend destinations, airlines, hotels and so on. Furthermore, as tourists often look and dress differently from locals they are visibly more vulnerable when it comes to sexualised gazes, violence and crime (see for instance Jordan and Aitchison 2008). The holiday experiences and the tourist gaze are therefore positively and negatively interlinked.

Edensor (2000) acknowledges the relationship between surveillance and power when he suggests that the holiday experience is a range of performances and that holiday spaces are stages. The tourist gaze and the normalized holiday behaviour are linked to the performances of the enclave and the heterogeneous tourism space. In the enclaves the performance and the gaze are highly regulated, conformed and centralized. It is the ‘purified’ tourism spaces of the resorts (Sibley 1988:412) where the encounters are
formal and strictly organised (Oppermann 1993). On the other hand, the performances and the gazes of the heterogeneous tourism space are more informal and ‘weakly classified’; there are looser boundaries between the tourists and the locals in urban tourism. As two sets of stages the holiday experience is thus about performing and contesting different social roles, indicating aspects of ‘cultural power which define and inscribe naturalness’ (Edensor 2000:341).

Jordan and Aitchison (2008) argue that when Urry overlooks the importance of gender-power relations in the tourist gaze, he fails to recognise that the holiday experience is gendered and sexualised. Men and women do not experience and enact it in the same ways. Jordan (2003:231), for instance, finds that women’s solo holidays are surrounded by a ‘power-tourism-sexuality-triplex’. The triplex means that solo travelling women are often marginalized by the tourism industry; they are aware of sexualised gazes and that this often affects their interactions with tourism providers, local people and other tourists. The nature and extent of the sexualised tourist gaze, however, is not given but varies according to spatial characteristics of the surveillance. Heterogeneous holiday spaces are especially sexualised and lead to self-surveillance and control (Jordan and Aitchison 2008).

The tourist gaze (Urry 1990) is not only criticised for lacking a notion of power when describing the holiday experience, but also for reducing it to visual consumption and the tourist to ‘itinerant gazer’ (Wearing and Wearing 1996:230-233) using only one sense (Dann and Jacobsen 2002; Seaton 2002; Veijola and Jokinen 1994, see also section 2.3.3). The tourist gaze and the consequent notion of the tourist as a flâneur are also masculine in origin (Jokinen and Veijola 1997; Wearing 1998) and do not take into account that the holiday experience is embodied and gendered (see for instance Aitchison 2003; L. Johnston 2001; Jordan 2003; Swain 2002; Wearing and Neil 2000; Wearing and Wearing 1996). Wearing and Wearing (1996:235, see section 2.3.3 for definition) therefore link the experience to ‘chora’ and the tourists to ‘chorasters’. Instead of limiting the holiday experience to observational actions, they embed it in agency, subjective meanings, subjectivities and the self. This is the outset for Wearing and Neil’s (2000:349) understanding of the ‘volunteer tourist’; s/he interacts with people and spaces, and is influenced by them. It is also partly the outset for Haldrup and Larsen (2003) who point to the importance of the family gaze. Contrary to the tourist
gaze directed towards the non-ordinary, the family gaze is about interactions, relationships and embodiment; holiday photographs stage the intimate social life of the family away from home. Sights are not depicted as such, but are rather used as frames for family stories.

4.3.4 Mobilities and sandcastles
The previous understandings of the holiday experience are embedded in binary oppositions of ‘home/away; everyday life/holiday; real/fake; work/leisure which make them adequate conceptualisations in relation to ‘solid modernity’ (Franklin 2003:206) but not in relation to ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman 2000, 2003). Liquid modernity means that the social order is mobile and flexible awaiting peoples’ way of constructing it (Franklin 2003). It addresses the notion of the holiday experience as part of the ‘new mobility turn’ (Urry 2006:vii) and the ‘end of tourism’ (Urry 1995:147). Urry (1995) links the end of tourism to changes from organised to disorganised capitalism. The former is marked by production and the latter by consumption of signs and images. The end of tourism assumes that mobility is a necessary ability for contemporary humans to know and be reflexive in relation to both self and places (Urry 2006). Visual purchases are not always confined to tourist practices as people are ‘tourists most of the time’ whether mobile or not (Urry 1995:148). The end of tourism therefore means that the holiday experience is ‘no longer special’; (Gale 2007, emphasis in original) it penetrates every sphere of everyday life and vice versa. The ‘new’ tourism is therefore contested mobilities of people, objects, airplanes, plants, images and data systems and so on (Sheller and Urry 2004a), making tourism studies post-disciplinary or no longer in need of disciplinary boundaries (Coles, Hall and Duval 2006).

The mobility turn brings new ideas on the holiday experience. It embeds it in the stage/performance perspective and it engages with the materialities of place (Edensor 2000). It is about ‘networking material, social and cultural elements’ (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:31, emphasis in original). Sheller and Urry (2004a) therefore link it to the orchestrating, organizing and performing of play. It is situated in the ‘happening’ of the performance of hosts and guests. It is transient and timeless like a sandcastle (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:2). The concept of the sandcastle revolves around the ‘emblematic tourist place’ and is a way of transforming tourism theory from being about specific destinations or images to focusing on the tourists’ corporal and social
performances that make the place ‘touristic’. It is a somewhat pompous metaphor for
the creation of transient and mobile holiday experiences, places and identities.

Like sandcastles, tourist places are tangible yet fragile constructions, hybrids of
mind and matter, imagination and presence. The castle only comes into existence
by drawing together particular objects, mobilities and proximities. The fine
grains of sand with its alternating wet and dry textures, seemingly dead objects
for decoration and stabilisation such as mussels, dead fish, stones and sticks, are
drawn together by eager children’s hands and helpful parents fetching buckets of
sea water for the moat. Only then the pride of the family in the form of a castle
of sand comes to life, towering over the beach.

(Bærenholdt et al. 2004:2)

The ‘places to play and the places in play’ as the sandcastles are therefore never
distinguished but entangled in and produced by practice (Sheller and Urry 2004a:1).
Furthermore, although such play is not always fun, the performance always rests upon
the right equipment and upon sociality. Tourists need bodily equipment and the place
needs a material structure adapted to the rules of the play. Such materialities also reduce
the fluidity of the play or sandcastle (Bærenholdt et al. 2004).

Tourists’ experiences can therefore not be distinguished from hosts’ or the technology
used to produce it. The play is, furthermore, spatially embedded as tourists and hosts
‘move through different dwelling-places’ such as hotels, restaurants and attractions
(Sheller and Urry 2004a:7). It is also made up of multiple activities, spatially performed
and sensed; tourists climb, dance, surf, eat, drink and talk whereas hosts guide, clean,
serve and smile (Edensor 2006). The play or sandcastle is therefore the consumption of
physical place (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). It is embodied space related to the mode of
tavel in new and different ways (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006), but it is also about
place as sociality. It is the people present that play or build the sandcastle. The
materiality and sociality surrounding the holiday experience are therefore both contexts
and content (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). The nature of the social interaction therefore
contributes to producing the sandcastle in positive and negative ways.

The physical environment itself is then not a tourist place before it is used by tourists. It
rests on systems of ‘host-guests-time-space-cultures’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a:6) which have economic, political and cultural consequences for the people, capital, objects, signs and information involved. The holiday experience is therefore about located and situated relationships of temporal and spatial natures embedded with power relations related to gender, race and class (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006). Such relationships live on as places in tourists’ memories and are created as place image by the industry (Bærenholdt et al. 2004).

There is an unspoken link between the idea of tourism mobilities, sandcastles and identity formation (Haug 2007). The holiday experience is created in the intersection between tourist and place (Sheller and Urry 2004a). Holiday travel then means that tourists discover, create and communicate meanings about self in social interactions or when experiencing attractions. Such meanings or identities also depend upon the kind of mobility technologies that are used and how each place is performed or each sandcastle is built (Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007), however, there is also an implicit possibility of freedom, choice and voluntarism imbued in the perspective (Haug 2007). The making of a sandcastle is therefore embedded with the possibility of cognitive and mental changes in the tourist. Such notions perhaps also explain the unspoken or lack of emphasis on power relations in actual tourism mobilities studies (see for instance Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006; Sheller and Urry 2004a), although the theory as such acknowledges inequalities and negative effects of materiality and social capital.

### 4.4 Social capital and friendship

Place as sociality is one important part of the mobility turn (Bærenholdt et al. 2004) which points to the importance of friendship and family relations in the holiday experience. Social capital is a key concept in social sciences which, simply put, is about reciprocity and generalised trust among people (Johnston and Percy-Smith 2003:324); people’s behaviour is guided by mutual expectations of certain norms and values, and that actions at some point are reciprocated. Social capital is then obtained through membership in social networks such as family, friendship, and other formal and informal networks, and it is used to secure benefits (Portes 1998). By forming social ties people access a wider source of resources which they can use for actions (Glover, Parry
The theoretical approach to social capital takes two directions; a collective good or an individual interest (Warde, Tampubolon, and Savage 2005); people use the social connections for personal gain and to mark distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and social relations also integrate people (Putnam 2001). According to Portes (1998) the former perspective has its roots in Marxist class theory and the latter in Durkheim’s (2002) theory of social integration, and, hence, they go to the core of sociology.

To Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1990) social capital is closely linked to other forms of capital as well as his concepts of field and *habitus* (see section 2.4 for details). Economic capital is the distribution of money, mercantile exchanges and profit maximization (Bourdieu 1986:242). It is perhaps the most studied form of capital in tourism studies (see for instance Johnson and Thomas 1992). Cultural capital is the disposition to ‘play the game’ of society which is learned through the family and the school (Bourdieu 1984:54). It is based on social class, society and period (Bourdieu 1986). Cultural capital takes three forms. First, the *embodied* state is long-lasting dispositions of mind and body. It is about cultivation and education which become incorporated in the agent at a partly unconscious level. It is symbolically very powerful and closely linked to *habitus*. Each individual is then consciously and non-consciously the visible bearer of social positions. Secondly, the *objectified* state is the possession of cultural objects such as writings, paintings, buildings and so on which are defined in relationship to their embodied form. Thirdly, the *institutionalized* state is the objectification of cultural capital through qualifications. This disembodies the capital as it exists independently of the bearer and makes it possible to compare and exchange capital. Tourism researchers investigate cultural capital when exploring the meaning of holiday consumption (see for instance Rojek and Urry 1997), the effects of destination image (Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez 2001; Chen 2001; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000) and the dynamics of the group package tour (Bruner 1995; Yarnal 2004).

Social capital, on the other hand, is based on practical exchange of material or symbolic services and goods and in social structures such as class, family, friends, school and so on (Bourdieu 1986). Its distribution is uneven and affects the agents’ ability to construct the social spaces they occupy (Bourdieu 1984). To Bourdieu (1986) people are partly strategic as the networks are ‘at once necessary and elective’. But, the networks also
build upon obligations, trust and friendship, and develop institutionally through the exchange of gifts, mutual knowledge and recognition.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word.

(Bourdieu 1986:248-249)

Social capital is therefore an asset in the struggles in the field (Bourdieu 1986) and sometimes the only reason for the group’s existence. In most cases, however, social capital is about being with friends and family. In either case it means both profits and work. The profits are material and symbolic in the form of services accrued from the relationship and associations with the group. It gives credit in social interactions and settings. The work is necessary to maintain and reproduce it. Members of the group, for instance, are therefore willing to spend time and energy in keeping the assets and in making them available to the others. To Bourdieu (1986) sociality is a solid capital, but still linked to economic capital as the time, attention and concern for each other sometimes is better invested elsewhere. Like other forms of capital it can also be convertible into money or property rights.

Swain (2003) criticises Bourdieu for treating social capital as a residual or subordinated category. It is brought into play when economic and cultural capital seem inadequate and it is a bourgeoisie capital. It is then impossible to dislocate social capital from the overall forms and to treat it as an individual property available for everybody. Friends and family members with the wrong economic or cultural capital are then not considered social capital. According to Swain (2003) it is possible to ignore this limitation. The concept then has potential to explain power relations within any specific social context such as working-class women’s experiences (Skeggs 1997).

To Putnam (2001; Swain 2003) social capital also has an economic value, but first and foremost it is a ‘civic virtue’ or a collective good affecting society’s productivity. In a
study of civic engagement in the US two interconnected forms of social capital are identified; bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to exclusive identities and the strong ties to family and friends (Putnam 2001:22). It is also neighbourhood participation, activities and commitment. It is the people ‘like me’ which reinforce social stratification. Bonding social capital is marked by reciprocity and it mobilizes solidarity between people with the same ideology and origin. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, refers to weak ties to distant acquaintances based on inclusive identities (Johnston and Percy-Smith 2003:324); it is found in civil right movements, youth groups and religious organizations and so on, and it is the connection to people ‘unlike me’. Bridging social capital connects people to external assets, new information and moves them in new directions. The distinction is primarily related to the extent people share the same circumstances (Putnam 2001). If they have similar experiences or socio demographic backgrounds they bond, if not they bridge.

Putnam’s (2001) main intention is to explore the effects of groups’ bonding and bridging, but he also acknowledges the individual level. In this perspective social capital means the interconnectedness between (groups of) individuals, based on norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam 2001). People are driven by a mutual trust in each other and by reciprocity of action (Johnston and Percy-Smith 2003). The norm secures efficient societies and trustful people. Integrated individuals are productive and invest in volunteer organisations which benefit bystanders and provide arenas for expanded relationships. As social capital comes in many shapes and sizes the norm takes different forms and interpretations (Putnam 2001). Depending upon the nature of work and residence, some societies therefore encourage strong and others weak ties (Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 2003).

Contrary to Putnam’s (2001), Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of capital is linked to individualistic interests and strategic positioning. Although Bourdieu acknowledges that social capital exists for different reasons he does not, as Putnam, distinguish between different forms. Bourdieu’s concept rather deals with formal and informal networks in general and the value they give in social settings. As social capital is also about work and commitment it often results in social integration and senses of belonging. This therefore links Bourdieu’s and Putnam’s approaches (2001; Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 2003).
The qualities of Putnam’s bonding social capital are closely related to the concept of ‘friendship’. A notion of equality and mutuality is basic to Aristotle’s concept of friendship (Mulgan 2000). We choose our friends based on a mutual recognition of one another’s virtue. Giddens (1991:89, 1992:58) characterizes friendships as a ‘pure relationship’ as they are entered and maintained for their own sake. A pure relationship has seven features (Giddens 1991). First, it is free-floating, not fixed in external conditions or regulations. It is a kind of institutionalized noninstitution (Bell 1981). Secondly, friendship is ‘pure’ in that it exists only for its own sake. This does not mean that friendship cannot survive duress, but all problems potentially threaten it. Thirdly, the pure relationship is reflexively organised, hereby constantly questioning itself. Fourthly, friendship is about commitment; people openly become involved with others knowing it may not last, and that its rewards are only found in the relationship (Vries 1996). A high degree of reciprocity is then a premise for pure relationships. Fifthly, intimacy is an important element for friendship. Intimacy is about self-disclosure, wanting to be together and seeking loyalty (Brehm et al. 2002). Sixthly, pure relationships depend upon mutual trust, a trust which is won, not given as in kinship relationships (Weber and Carter 2003). Trust is about taking one friend’s perspective into account and taking the moral standards of the friendship into consideration when making a decision (Weber and Carter 2003). It is because friends trust each other that intimacy is possible, and it is through intimacy that trust is built (Giddens 1991). A pure relationship is then in many ways about mattering; a basic human need for close relationships (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981), social support (Pahl 2000) and bonding. Finally, in pure relationships one’s self-identity is verified; shared experiences or histories contribute to the process of self-exploration and intimacy with others. Midlife single women therefore often form friendships with other women in the same situation (Seagraves 2004) and mattering is sometimes more apparent among singles than married people (Dalton 1992; Lewis 1994; Schwartzberg, Berliner and Jacob 1995).

4.4.1 Sociality and the holiday experience
In section 4.3 I demonstrated that the holiday experience has multiple meanings: escape, pilgrimage, gaze and bodily performances, as well as being sandcastles. One common idea is that tourism is about place (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). This often means the neglect of sociality with ‘significant others’ and Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2007)
therefore suggest that tourism or the holiday experience is instead more about (re)producing social relations. The ‘social turn’ (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007:246) is based on the statistical significance of visiting friends and relatives, and the importance of holidaying with them, not the instrumental relationships between hosts and guests (see for instance Jacobsen 2000; Nash 1989; Sánchez Taylor 2000, 2001, 2006; Thomas 2000). Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2007) explore the meaning of VFR in relation to networking and the mobility turn. They do not refer to bonding social capital as such but to family and friendship relations pre-existing the holiday experience. The networking involves ‘embodied work’; in planning the visits with friends and family; in using tools such as emails, phones and planes; and in reproducing social relations. It points to the importance of ‘network capital’ such as emails and cell phones (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006:4) in producing social capital and facilitating social interactions. The study draws on Putnam’s understanding of social capital and is more about exploring the premises for social integration than understanding power relations.

The social turn ‘de-exoticises’ tourism theory and places family and friendship relations at the centre (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2007:246); it claims that the holiday experience is about ‘social life conducted at-a-distance’. It is about connections with social relations of everyday life. It is about copresence, fulfilling social obligations and performing rituals. The importance of ‘putting the social into travel’ is, though, also acknowledged by other tourism researchers (see for instance Bruner 1995; Haldrup and Larsen 2003; Kyle and Chick 2004; Redfoot 1984; Ross 2005; Ryan 1997; Small 2002; Stokowski 1992; Trauer and Ryan 2005; Urry 2003; Wang 1999, 2000).

Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2007) claim that tourism studies explores the weak ties of hosts and guests, but seldom the strong ties between tourists and their friends and relatives. In their opinion the latter is embedded with greater meanings of the holiday experience and social life. I do not dispute this notion, but point to the importance of acknowledging both bonding and bridging social capital and to be aware of the power relations embedded in both concepts; the holiday experience means possibilities to bond with family and friends, but also to bridge with people unlike one self and to bond with new people. The people of the destination may bring about new insights in other ways of living, thinking and acting. Although such weak ties not always survive the holiday
they are important for mutual understandings (see for instance Wearing and Neil 2000). New strong ties do not always last either; people who bond on group package tours seldom keep in touch, although they may live close by each other (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005). Bonding and bridging are, furthermore, not ‘either-or’ categories; bridges can turn into bonds when people get to know each other and realise they have common interests and backgrounds (Putnam 2001:23). This sometimes happens on holiday (see for instance Bruner 1995; Sánchez Taylor 2001; Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005).

Furthermore, bonding social capital is not only a means towards social integration and networking, it is also a valuable and powerful asset. The holiday experience is shaped by people’s social positions and the distribution of economic, social and cultural capital, used in the struggle over it. Friends are especially an important asset in midlife single women’s lives and holidays (Trimberger 2005). But, as tourists’ positions and assets are unequally distributed, the same action is not equally available to all midlife single women (Bourdieu 1986). Some single women turn to friends/family or group package tours for company or visits, making this kind of bonding social capital important for understanding their holiday experience. Other single women travel solo and are often disempowered by the solitude (Jordan 2003), making lack of social capital an interesting issue. It perhaps resembles what Swain (2003:201) terms the ‘dark side’ of social capital; it is a lack of power in specific situations.

Although, Wilson (2004) and Jordan (2003) do not refer to social capital it is reasonable to believe that lack of access to or limitations on it, in combination with gender, disempower the solo female travellers in given situations (Skeggs 1997). Social capital then helps to explain these women’s holiday experience. This, on the other hand, is not possible without linking it to the field and to the women’s habitus. The holiday as a field is a network of objective relations between positions or social spaces (Bourdieu 1993). Each tourist, local or employee is therefore situated in it based on age, income, race, class, gender, marital status, and so on (Bourdieu 1984). Gender is also part of tourists’ habitus and regulates and guides, partly consciously and unconsciously, tourists’ and locals’ acts, interactions, appearance and so on (Bourdieu 1990). Gender specific behaviour is then entrenched in peoples’ bodies and influences how they respond to a situation by being afraid, bold, visible, recognised, proud, self conscious
and so on, however, without being fixed in rules of masculinity or femininity. The value of social capital is therefore embedded in interrelationships between the holiday experience and the gendered *habitus*.

As the holiday experience in many ways is about ‘performative pleasures’ in public spaces (Finkelstein 1998:202) there is a struggle for the ‘right to recognition’ and hence, what should be visible or not (Fraser 2000:109). In a disco at night, for instance, it is the young and beautiful crowds and at the pool by day it is the nuclear families and their activities who rule the scene. Perhaps, except in a few backpacking contexts, not many tourism spaces are controlled by the solo, women tourist. To Bourdieu (1999) the physical space of the field is intertwined with the agent’s social position. This means that the material structures of the holiday experience affects tourists’ interactions, and that they transform and occupy the holiday according to social positions (Skeggs 1997). Tourists, locals and employees are therefore imprinted by and imprint upon the holiday experience. This makes bonding social capital an important asset for many tourists.

**4.4.2 Mixophobia and mixophilia**

To Bauman (Franklin, 2003) ‘the tourist syndrome’ is a metaphor of contemporary social life in ‘liquid modernity’. Liquid modern societies have no static or stable hierarchical social orders governing people’s lives, but each person has to deal with ‘transformations and states of becoming’ (Franklin 2003:206). Liquid modernity, building on earlier Frankfurt School conceptualisations is then about individualization and aesthetic reflection. According to Bauman (2000), one consequence of liquid modernity is disintegration and the lack of effective social networks. This means that people have become nomads and, hence, that dense social bonds are seen as an obstacle to get rid of.

The tourist syndrome has three characteristics: its looseness, its grazing behaviour and its frailty (Franklin 2003). The first characteristic refers to tourists not being from the places they visit. Tourists differ physically, geographically and socially from locals. Tourism is a temporal action and tourists do not commit to the places they visit or the people they meet. Tourists do therefore not strive for ways of living together. Like people on fixed-termed projects, tourists know that they will leave and have little need for durable rules and regulations. The tourist syndrome is therefore a substitute for the
genuine needs of real communities and humanities. Tourists have no moral commitments to the place or the locals and they are not controlled by it; they are ‘in but not of the place’ (Franklin 2003:208, emphasis in original). This notion coheres with other theories on liminality (see section 4.3.2).

The second of Bauman’s (Franklin 2003) traits compares tourists with the grazing behaviour of a flock of sheep. The tourists move on when the place has been sufficiently experienced and consumed. When the place no longer has new experiences to offer, the tourists’ interest fades away and they are attracted by new sights and places. Thirdly, tourists’ relationships are frail. Tourism consumption is first and foremost about consumption of new experiences and tourists do not waste energy on getting involved with other people. Tourists believe that new relationships will not last and do therefore not encounter new people. The tourist syndrome is therefore about ‘living from one moment to another, living for the moment’ (Franklin 2003:209). The tourist is only a seeker of new experiences, exclusively structured by aesthetic criteria and the right not to be bothered (Bauman 1996). In this sense the tourist syndrome is deprived of all deeper meaning (Boorstin 1962).

Bauman does not totally devalue the tourist and the tourism industry; he acknowledges people’s demand for tourism and to live with dignity. On the other hand, he also fears its consequences as tourism offers only ‘fraudulent substitutes for the absent real thing’ (Franklin 2003:214). The tourist syndrome is then not only a critique of man in liquid modernity but also of consumption culture as such. In line with such thoughts tourism consumption is characterised as a ‘peg’ community. A peg community is temporarily formed around shared rituals to tackle individual problems in superficial and transient ways (Bauman 2001:71). Peg communities are filled with people who never meet again; it is the ‘cloakroom’ communities with transient and short-lived bonds. It is when people temporarily come together to share a ‘problem’, but without negotiating shared solutions. Peg-communities therefore do not create ethical responsibilities or long-term commitments, but ‘carnival bonds’ (Bauman 2001:72). Tourists as such want real communities, but as these are not made available by the industry they often settle for the second best. The peg communities offered by the tourism industry are not permanent communities but transitory, mobile and tending to last for limited time beyond the actual holiday itself.
Bauman (Franklin 2003) also acknowledges that to some people travel is a way of life. There are people who really desire other places and real communities. But he claims that most tourists act on a wish or impulse. Such wishes are the result of branding campaigns and marketing and, hence, the development of tourism as a peg-community. Most people are then seduced by the tourism industry’s attempts to create new wishes. They enjoy and are attracted by a familiar brand or logo. Such standardisation also leads to ‘reassuring sameness amidst variety’, not globalisation and humanity (Franklin 2003:212). This means that the industry accommodates the tourist to travel within the ‘tourist bobble’ or the enclave (Cohen 1972) and to be satisfied with the substitute. The ‘otherness’ presented or given is only often pretended and part of the game. It is staged authenticity (MacCannell 1976). The tourist bubble then makes tourists immune to the local and unique, and is a barrier to travel being about real learning and understanding. At the same time the tourism industry is organised in ways that enable superficial or financial encounters between tourists and locals. In this way it creates a sense of balance between familiarity and novelty which satisfies tourists.

But if the industry had not ‘messed’ it up, ideally tourism could be ethical and about humanity (Franklin 2003). People have a genuine attraction to the strange as well as fearing it. Ideally tourism would not be a peg-community but offering a combination of ‘mixophobia’ and ‘mixophilia’, thereby fulfilling people’s attraction to otherness in secure, not superficial ways. Mixophobia means ‘the drive towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference’ (Bauman 2003:110). It is the search for community, we-feelings and togetherness which are deeply embedded in human beings. People long for a warm and cosy society where everybody trusts, helps and understands each other, where they can relax from the dangers out there (Bauman 2001). According to Bauman (2003) too strong a drive towards mixophobia results in territorially isolated environments and paranoia. Holidays with family and friends in the enclave do therefore still not offer positive social ramifications. Mixophilia, on the other hand, does. Mixophilia means ‘the never-ending and constant dazzling spectacle’, the many attractions, strangers, opportunities, ambivalences, skills and tastes (Bauman 2003:112). It is the urge for freedom and individualism which is also part of the human condition. Mixophilia opens up for and invites otherness. It is perhaps not available on holiday away from home, but only in the big cities of everyday life. Still, ideally,
tourists in search of mixophilia would rather mix with locals, are fascinated with otherness and want to see, learn and know the other.

Despite the quite harsh critique of the tourist syndrome, Bauman (Franklin 2003) sees it as embedded with potentialities for mixophilia and inhibiting superficial forms of mixophobia. In order to solve the problem with mixophilia, tourists and the tourist industry can recognise otherness and shared humanities if they are curious about other forms of life; they can combat the peg community if they are willing to relearn to ‘negotiate shared meanings’ and live with real difference (Bauman 2003:111). The holiday experience can then become a real space. But, as the tourists’ desires in many ways are formed by the wills of the tourist industry they just often end up drinking domestic beers next to neighbours.

But it keeps being used up, diverted, channelled away squandered by the commercialised pseudo-multiculturalism which boils down to the waiter’s different skin colour and different spices in the food – in lieu of genuine conversations or a real attempt to get an insight into the other’s life and thought. (Franklin 2003:215).

Bauman’s intention is not first and foremost to criticize tourists as such but to use them as a spatial metaphor for ‘liquidity modernity’ (Bauman 2000, 2003; Franklin 2003). One dilemma in liquid modernity and times of ‘liquid love’ is the balance and coexistence of mixophobia and mixophilia (Bauman 2003:112). People and places of contemporary societies are in particular need of mixophilia. This is, however, a global problem with ‘no local solution’ (Bauman 2003:115, emphasis in original). It cannot be solved by urban planners or the tourism industry, but with an existential reform. As Bauman is more concerned with solving the problems of mixophilia in contemporary societies than exploring the value of mixophobia and mixophilia in tourism, he does not acknowledge all possible nuances, such as the importance of bonding with family and friends in the holiday. He does not explore aspects that contradict tourism as a peg community, aspects which make the tourist a less suitable metaphor for liquid modernity.

According to Jokinen and Veijola (1997) Bauman (1996) portrays the tourist as a banal
figuration which only captures the male experience. The concept does not acknowledge the symbolic and social order embedded in the discourse; Bauman’s tourist is always alone, never with family or friends, and never meeting or travelling with other tourists who have babies or disabilities. His notion of the tourist therefore seems to be a ‘borderline personality’ who loves only himself (Jokinen and Veijola 1997:34). Jokinen and Veijola (1997) also find it contradictory that a cultural critic like Bauman is satisfied with the individualistic tourist as a model of liquid modernity. In their opinion this does not shed light on other forms of collective behaviour or new social bonds; ‘It is not only home that is left behind – but also the relationships between people who make the home’ (Jokinen and Veijola 1997:36). Jokinen and Veijola (1997) therefore suggest other metaphors such as the less powerful ‘babysitter’ or the ‘au-pair’. Contrary to the au-pair the babysitter does not leave the home environment. The two metaphors still both unite and separate. The au-pair and the babysitter are in charge of a strange baby and do not know what to expect and how to act. Still they have to engage with the baby. They therefore have to be willing and profound around the baby. They do not know the home of the baby and have a confused and temporal status. The feminist notion of the tourist as an au-pair or babysitter contrasts with Bauman’s somewhat disembodied and passive metaphor and questions whether the tourist syndrome is a substitute for or embedded with notions of caring, interactive people seeking true mixophobia and mixophilia.

4.5 Concluding thoughts

This chapter highlights the plurality of approaches to define and explain the interrelationships between the holiday experience and identity formation. I have explored how gender/singlehood/midlife identities matters and are linked to the holiday experience and other fields of interests. It is possible to consider identity formation as an aesthetic reflexive project undertaken during the holiday. This is not done in this research. Identity formation is instead informed by a feminist epistemology that sees it as entrenched in field, permeated in habitus and the result of habits (Adkins 2004a; McNay 2004a, b). But, as such cultural norms are never fully occupied gender/singlehood/midlife identities are also marked by tactical and liberating actions, enabling social transformations and several social identities.
The chapter has also demonstrated that gender/singlehood/midlife identities are marginal and troublesome. Notwithstanding this, some midlife single women have positive social identities related to independence and choice. I believe that aspects of such polarized social identities are also to be expected in this study.

I have, furthermore, investigated theories on the holiday experience that provide partly overlapping and partly competing approaches; pilgrimage, escape, gazing, building sandcastles and sociality. Not all these approaches are perhaps equally fruitful in this research. In particular, previous studies on women’s solo holidays indicate that the tourist gaze often constrains but also sometimes empowers the women on holiday. I believe that the power relations imbued in the tourist gaze are also important in this research. Previous studies also indicate that not all holiday spaces are equally marked negatively by the tourist gaze. This perhaps points to the importance of including tourism mobilities theories. If the holiday experience and social identities are made in the moment by people, objects and mobilities, the effects of the tourist gaze are perhaps mobile and affect the women’s identities differently.

Furthermore, the power of the tourist gaze in previous studies is first and foremost linked to public solitude. The lack of focus on the tourist gaze in studies on shared holidays suggests that such powers perhaps are also mobile. It is first and foremost central for understanding solo holiday experiences. Previous research indicates that most women travel with family and friends, not alone. If this is the case, social capital, and bonding social capital in particular, is a valuable asset. This research then investigates the power relations imbued in social capital, rather than those inherent in the tourist gaze. Still, some of the midlife single women may holiday alone and feel the effects of the tourist gaze. An understanding of the interrelationships between the holiday experience and identity formations then perhaps must acknowledge the mobile values of social capital and the tourist gaze. This may give new and fruitful insights into the nature of the holiday experience and whether it is about mixophobia or mixophilia, or if it is just a peg community.

In the next two chapters I draw on these theories and concepts to understand the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities.
5 The shared holiday experience

5.1 Introduction

The focus of the next two chapters is the analysis of the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities present in the midlife single women’s oral or written accounts. This is the point where I draw upon the theoretical perspectives and concepts outlined in Chapter Two and Chapter Four to address the research questions of Chapter One through analysis and discussion of the empirical data collected via the focus group interviews and solicited diaries.

In this research social identities such as gender/singlehood/midlife are approached as lived social relations. This rests upon the concepts of ‘field’, ‘habitus’, ‘agency’ and ‘experience’ (McNay 2000, 2004a, b, see also section 2.4). The holiday experience constitutes the field or the space. It is the network of objective social positions (McNay 2000:52) and the ‘structured spaces of positions’ which function in specific ways (Bourdieu 1993:72). The positions are the tourists, the locals and the employees; people of different classes, races, gender, ages, and marital status and so on. The various positions have access to economic, cultural and social capital which they use in the struggle for controlling the field. The interrelationships are thereby controlled by the distribution of capital. One capital often gives ultimate power and is the symbolic capital of the field. The field is then affected by material and cultural structures as well as the people struggling for controlling it. The field is also part of people’s habitus. People are therefore not always aware of the effects of social identities and how material structures and/or the heterosexual matrix positively and negatively affect actions available on holiday. But, habitus is also reflexive and a habit (Adkins 2004a) leading to agency and social transformations.

There are no simple ways to outline the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. Destinations differ in standard and
development, the degree to which they attract multiple markets, and the extent that locals and tourists, and tourists and tourists encounter each other and interact, and in how tourists differ in respect of socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age and marital status. The example below therefore illustrates lived social relations and the inherent conflicts of the field. First, tourists invest economic capital (Bourdieu 1986); they eat and drink out, visit attractions, stay at hotels, shop and so on. Locals often accrue economic capital as a consequence of holiday spending. Here tourists are often more powerful than locals as they decide where to go and how much to spend. Secondly, tourists invest cultural capital (and, hence, economic capital) by choosing where to eat, which attractions to visit, how to act and dress at the destination as so on. This often also means that more cultural capital is accrued. Tourists sometimes struggle between themselves with regard to having the finest taste or the highest cultural capital; access to economic capital is often crucial to the ability to exercise such power. Thirdly, tourists accrue bonding and bridging social capital by getting to know new people during the holiday (Putnam, 2001, see also section 4.4), but this capital is perhaps more maintained than accrued as most tourists spend time with family and friends. Still, tourists use social networks for controlling the field. Tourists’ ability to have such control depends, furthermore, on economic and cultural capital; the amount of money they invest in sociality, the spaces in which they choose to exhibit or accrue social capital and the ways they act and look when socialising.

Lived social relations are triads (McNay 2004b, see also section 2.4). In the example above only the actors are described. Lived social relations are also surrounded by cultural norms and material structures, embedded in the tourists, locals and employees when they interact and invest the capitals; tourists’ experiences are marked by discursive practices and material structures. They are part of their *habitus* and, hence, identities. The tourism industry, for instance, is important in the creation of the cultural norm, in that the discourse, metaphor or *doxa* partly is the result of marketing activities. Gartner (1993), for instance, distinguishes between different sources of information used by the tourism industry in destination image formation; overt and covert induced sources of information such as traditional forms of advertising and spokespersons promoting places affect people’s meaning of the holiday experience and what to expect of it and themselves. Furthermore, the ‘discourse of surveillance’ (Morgan and Pritchard 2005, see also section 4.3.3) affects how tourists plan and act on the holiday,
and how locals and employees encounter tourists and each other. Jordan (2003), for instance, finds that midlife women travelling solo are marginalised by sexualised gazes in heterogeneous tourism spaces and performative gazes in the enclave. The metaphors of the holiday experience, its sign value and the tourist gaze are therefore crucial for understanding the symbolic capital and the powerful actors of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995; Cheong and Miller 2000; Crouch 2002; Haldrup and Larsen 2006). The tourism industry also affects the materiality of the holiday experience. Destinations are often shaped and built by the tourism industry, local governments, and local and global investors. These actors create the surfaces on which the holiday takes place; accommodation, restaurants, museums, shops, beaches, pubs, roads, lightning, and parks and so on. Such surfaces are again inscribed in tourists’, locals’ and employees’ bodies through the cultural norm or the doxa (Crouch 2002).

The social relations of the field are not deterministic, but intersubjectively situated (McNay 2004a, see also section 2.4). Despite habitus, controlling discourses and material structures, the tourists, locals and employees have agency and the ability to transform the holiday experience and the social identities available. According to McNay (1999a) agency and social change often happen when there is a ‘lack of fit between … habitus and field’, but in this research it is perhaps more habitual in nature and linked to tactical responses in the situation (Adkins 2004a:204). Agency is then a consequence of gendered conflicts and tensions in the holiday, rather than of women entering this field for the first time. Tactical responses do, however, not automatically lead to social transformations as the ability to transform lived social relations is often linked to strategic power. Sometimes it is just a way of positively dealing with a difficult situation, to get a sense of control. Agency is then tactical in nature (Certeau 1984). Unlike strategic power, tactical power does not aim at social transformation but more at manoeuvring the pitfalls of social life; it creates opportunities within constrained systems. It then induces gradual changes from within and, hence, potential, future transformation of the field. According to Skeggs (1997) women more often have tactical than strategic power; they learn to deal with subordinate positions in positive ways.

In this chapter I explore how the holiday experience is marked by bonding social capital; how the company of friends shapes the midlife single women’s experience as
well as their social identities. I seek to map out holiday contexts in which such capital renders female singlehood visible or invisible and how the midlife single women are empowered or disempowered as tourists. First, I focus on the holiday experience as a space for ‘doing friendship’ and I map out the meaning of such shared holiday experiences. I examine how the holiday experience produces the social identity of a friend and I explore the holiday meal as a space for investing in this identity. I then investigate the group package tour as a potential space for developing bonding social capital. I also study how the investment in bonding social capital and the doing of friendship affects the midlife single women in everyday life. Secondly, I investigate the negative consequences of doing friendship such as the need for privacy and freedom. I explore how the desire for bonding social capital makes most of the midlife single women endure negative consequences but develop ways to negotiate the social identity of a friend before and during the actual holiday.

5.2 The shared holiday experience – reproducing bonding social capital

This analysis is based on the oral and written holiday experiences of 30 Norwegian midlife single women. These women’s stories reveal lived social relations; their identities and holiday experiences are affected by characteristics of the field such as the hierarchy of the people involved, its materiality and doxa, and the characteristics of the women’s habitus and agency. In the process of collecting and analysing the data one important aspect of the midlife single women’s stories captures my attention; the significance of, and the women’s willingness to share the holiday experience with friends. This notion is so strong that it guides and shapes the entire analysis. Before I explore the qualitative elements of such interactions I map out the importance of holidays with friends in a statistical manner. This gives a rough insight into the holiday patterns of the midlife single women which is central for understanding the importance of different ways of spending the holiday; jointly or alone.

In their solicited diaries the midlife single women kept records of up to three periods of holiday in the summer of 2005 (Appendix Eleven). The women’s holiday patterns are complex regarding companionship and destinations; one holiday period is often divided in shorter ‘holidays’ spent with different people at various destinations. Table 5.1 shows
that all the women holidayed at least once. This first holiday period is mainly overseas or in Norway, sometimes combined with a few days at home (Appendix Nineteen). Just one woman spends the entire first period of holiday at home. 21 women have two periods of holiday. The second period of holiday is more often spent in Norway; at home and/or away. Half of the women also travel overseas. Just one woman spends the entire second period of holiday at home. Ten of the women have a third period of holiday which they spend overseas or in Norway. Table 5.1 also shows that in all three periods the women prefer to holiday with friends (51 holidays). The women also spend holiday periods with family (20 holidays) or alone (25 holidays). The family is especially important in holiday periods one and two, whereas just a few of the women are alone in all three periods (for details see section 6.2). It is interesting to note that the midlife single women’s holiday companions are mostly women; in just two holidays one male friend is the sole companion for one of the women and just a few of the other women spend the holiday with male friends.

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These facts suggest that the midlife single women embrace the comfort of sameness and strong ties in the holiday (Bauman 2001; Franklin 2003; Putnam 2001). Such desires are, furthermore, mainly directed towards same-sex relationships, suggesting that the holiday experience is a space for performing femininity (Hey 1997) and that the company is a protector from feelings of marginality (Gordon 1994a). This then suggests that the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is marked by mixophobia (Bauman 2003, see also section 4.4.2), making the reproduction of bonding social capital a valuable asset in the field.

This does, on the other hand, not mean that all of the midlife single women tourists accommodate this *doxa*. It is, though, difficult to trace such differences back to specific characteristics. The frames of references still do not apply to all the participants; one woman is a loner and has very limited capacity to be with people; another woman’s
duties towards elderly and sick parents, combined with a low salary, prevents her from travelling with friends; a third woman’s constrained financial situation and family orientation make her often holiday at home with grown up children or travel to her parents; and a fourth woman’s female friends only holiday with her if it accommodates their children’s needs.

In the next four subsections, I further tease out the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia by investigating the importance of doing of friendship and the value of bonding social capital. I focus on the importance of bonding social capital in the restaurant meal experience. As not all the midlife single women have friends available in the holiday I also analyse how group package tours tactically secure social capital when friends are unavailable. The importance of sameness and bonding is perhaps not exclusively linked to the holiday experience, but to leisure experiences as such. I therefore explore how the doing of friendship in the holiday tactically is part of social integration in everyday life.

5.2.1 *The shared holiday experience – a space for doing friendship*

Bonding social capital is found among close friends and/or family members travelling together and builds upon strong in-group loyalty (Putnam 2001). In this thesis I am only concerned with relationships that are considered friendships and that fit the dimensions of such relationships; the affective, the communal and the social (Vries 1996, see also section 4.4.1). The affective component is about self-disclosure, emotional support and similar behaviour which build trust, loyalty and commitment. The communal aspect is the sharing of activities and interests, and helping each other, whereas the sociality dimension is the undertaking of fun and recreational things together. More distant family relations such as siblings and cousins are therefore considered friendships, but immediate family relations to parents and/or children are not.

The importance of sharing and being with friends is evident among most of the midlife single women, regardless of destination (mostly Europe) or socio-demographic status. The few women who focus a bit less on this are the few experienced solo travellers and the few loners. The midlife single women in general are concerned with the importance of sharing the holiday experience where they emphasise being with, talking to, doing and sharing activities and experiences with friends. They also have very specific
descriptions of such pleasures; Grace, a 50-year old divorcee, on several occasions in her diary describes the delightful feelings of hiking in Norway with her female friend. The emotional connection and mutual support that Grace and her friend share are also essential in order to maintain the relationship after the holiday. The time allocated for each other makes Grace feel recognised as a tourist and a person; it is part of her *habitus* as illustrated in this quote:

> We are pleased about the feeling of togetherness. Sharing thoughts, lives, work and knowledge. It’s easy, conversations and silence in turn. …We stroll together, help each other develop and enjoy freedom and life together. I’m happy now. … Eating together, having someone to talk to, to share the day’s events with in the evening with good food and drink. It gives us so much. I let it sink in. … It’s so great when you can stroll quietly together. Talk about experiences together. I’m so glad we’re a pair.

(Grace)

The women’s preference for holidays with friends is a way of tactically playing the game of the field; to enact it as a sociable space of mixophobia (Bauman 2003). But, it is also about mutual support and sharing resources with each other to strengthen and reproduce the relationship and group loyalty (Bourdieu 1986). Grace and her friend invest and reproduce the bonding social capital through spending time and energy together. In this process they also invest economic and cultural capital as most holiday activities cost money and require interpretative skills.

Grace links the value of maintaining bonding social capital to the sharing of ‘ordinary’ experiences; the profit of being with the friend is not based on touristic highlights, but in things that are dear and in feelings of happiness. This finding supports a critique of destination image research for being more occupied with the functional and measurable than psychological characteristics (Jenkins 1999; Trauer and Ryan 2005). It suggests that the holiday is more than experiencing attractions and sights, that it is also a space for maintaining and accruing bonding social capital (see also section 5.2.4). In this perspective the primary function of the holiday experience is then not to be a ‘stage’ for entertainments, education and activities, but to be a ‘setting’ which supplies the props and scenery for the tourists’ interactions away-from-home or ‘at-a-distance’ (Doorne
The holiday experience is thereby used more in the process of creating belonging and a sense of mattering, than in giving a direct experience of it. This coincides with Trauer and Ryan’s (2005:490) assumption that the holiday is not the purchase of a place but of ‘time for togetherness with significant others’.

The tourism industry not only promotes touristic highlights, but is also imbued with a notion of a sociable space of mixophobia; it is often represented as a field for sameness and the reproduction of bonding social capital. The midlife single women are therefore controlled by ‘inspecting’ gazes based on the ‘normalizing discourse’ of what is acceptable or not in the field (Cheong and Miller 2000). Tourism promotions such as tourism brochures and travel guide books mediate such power-embedded ideologies; Jordan (2003:122-132) shows how UK High Street travel agencies communicate the holiday as ‘family fun’ in texts, pictures and knowledge. The majority of the brochures analysed in her study target female midlife tourists holidaying with friends/family and few of the tour operators consider solo travellers in the pricing strategies. A comparable finding is that of Dann (1996) whose analysis revealed that most pictures in UK holiday brochures show tourists interacting with other tourists, very few show tourists encountering locals, and in such cases the locals are servants, entertainers or vendors. Half of the pictures depict two or more tourists being together and only seven per cent are of solo tourists. The pictures of tourists, either alone or together with family and friends are located in the ‘tourist ghetto’ of beaches, hotels and sport arenas. Of these three spaces the latter is the least sociable and where the percentage of photos of solo tourists is the highest. The degree of mixophobia and the value of maintaining bonding social capital then vary according to when and where the holiday experience takes place.

Jenkins (2003) and Pritchard (2001) also demonstrate that the sign value or doxa of the holiday experience differs according to target markets as backpacker and mainstream brochures depict tourists differently (Jenkins 2003). Mixophobia and the reproduction of bonding social capital is often the norm within the mainstream tourism brochures which portray romantic couples holding hands and the holiday experience as a space for enhancing heterosexual relationships. The backpacker brochures are dominated by photographs of ‘group fun’ and signify the holiday as a space for group memberships,
camaraderie, friendship and social intimacy. The pictures in long haul and short haul brochures target, respectively, families and couples (Pritchard 2001).

The principles of the holiday experience in such brochures are, furthermore, represented as sexualised and gendered. Pritchard (2001), for instance, shows how women are portrayed as sexually attractive in brochures selling short haul, long haul, or senior or couples/singles holidays. The sociality of female tourists is then linked to the reproduction of heterosexual relationships and interactions. Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000) demonstrate gender role performances within and outside family interactions in the photos of US tourism brochures. Men interact with sons and women with daughters, the male relationships are often depicted as problematic whereas the female relationships are peaceful. The US brochures stereotypically represent women as subordinate, submissive and dependent on men. Spending the holiday with a partner or the family is then communicated as part of being a tourist; it is the cultural norm. This brief examination of the discursive practices suggests that the reproduction of bonding social capital and mixophobia has symbolic value. The symbolic value is, however, more imbued with heterosexuality and coupled relationships than friendships. The discourse then influences midlife single women with regard to what to do on holiday, with whom to travel with, where to go, how to remember the holiday and so on (Simmons 2003); it does not empower women to seek solo holiday experiences (Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter 2001; Small 2002). In this sense the midlife single women’s emphasis on friendships is a tactic; it is a way of reproducing bonding social capital in a heterosexualised and coupled space. This power embedded ideology has a material side as well. Most hotel rooms have double/twin standard which is reflected in the pricing structure and restaurant tables are made for two or more people.

Certeau (1984:xix) differentiates between strategies and tactics. Certeau criticises Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* for throwing a blanket over the tactics people engage in to gain a sense of control in a situation and Foucault for just studying power in a panoptic way. According to Certeau, they only deal with power relations that operate on a strategic level. Such power relations are the recognised authority or the dominant order (Certeau 1984); in the touristic context this could be deemed to include manifested facets of the tourism industry such as buildings, rituals and literature which represent heavy investments in time and space, making it a durable institution of
‘proper’ power. It is the power that makes social capital a valuable asset. The power of ‘strategy’, on the other hand, does not take into consideration the power of ‘ways of using’ (Certeau 1984:xiii). To midlife women the proper social capital is perhaps partner and/or children, not friends. Although none of the midlife single women exactly discussed this they are aware of conflicts and tensions in family holidays and the marginalisation of gender/singlehood/midlife identities (see section 6.2.2).

Holidays with friends are then partly tactical in character; they have no resources, institutional localization or base to capitalize on. Shared holidays depend on time or the right chance to manipulate events into opportunities. Such holidays infiltrate holiday spaces such as hotels, restaurants, parks and attractions and make them ‘habitable, like a rented apartment’ (Certeau 1984:xxi). Certeau (1984) uses the housewife’s shopping for food as an example of ‘tactic’ power. What she buys is not the result of the discourse and habitus but of an intellectual synthesis of the food in the refrigerator, the best buy, and the family’s tastes, appetites and moods. There are many ways of carrying out a grocery shop, just as there are many ways of doing the holiday (Crouch 2002). Tactics are therefore diffuse; embedded within strategy yet simultaneously rejecting of its influence. Herein lies their power. It is ‘an art of manipulating and enjoying’ (Certeau 1984:xxii). The midlife single women’s holiday with friends in this study is therefore perhaps one way of tactically ‘doing the holiday’. Instead of being concerned with experiencing touristic highlights many of the midlife single women are more occupied with using the holiday for reproducing bonding social capital (see also section 5.2.4). The emphasis on interpersonal relationships in tourism promotion, furthermore, is often marked by heterosexuality and familism. The midlife single women’s holidays with friends are then also perhaps one way of dealing with this ideology.

Grace’s praise of investing in reproducing bonding social capital is also linked to a desire for mattering deeply embedded in midlife single women. Mattering is about the basic human need for being important to other people and them to us (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981), which may be more prominent among singles than married people (Dalton 1992; Lewis 1994; Schwartzberg, Berliner and Jacob 1995; Segraves 2004). By sharing meaningful time with friends through the acts of listening, talking, doing and being, Grace realizes that she matters; it gives her a favourable sense of self and feelings of happiness. This is also the case for other women in the study. Clara, a 40-year old
divorsee’s silent holiday time with her brother and nephew gives a valuable sense of belonging. In the quote below there is a strong link to her childhood home in Northern Norway and the nature-based activity of fishing; both of which indicate feelings of belonging.

CLARA – it can be anything, from the smallest thing to the biggest. For example, that experience you had at that café must have been fantastic.

EMILY – yes, it was actually really fantastic.

CLARA – it must have been lovely. And for me to be able to be home and go fishing with the boys and we just stand there. We don’t speak to each other. We stand there for hours, then suddenly a five kilo sea trout leaps up and we land it. Then we’re pretty happy without saying much. But just sharing the experience is as great as a lot of other things really. It doesn’t have to be the big things, but it’s perhaps the small things that make you think about it a lot, and feel happy inside.

(Clara and Emily)

The latter two stories describe the joy of companionship and a need for mattering among the midlife single women on holiday. Other women in the study experienced comparable feelings when being with friends, at foreign destinations, and by doing other kinds of activities. It then suggests that the holiday experience is suitable for developing intimacy. Intimacy exists in four forms: as actual contact, as communication, as shared values and beliefs and as shared reflections or knowledge (Trauer and Ryan 2005:482). Furthermore, it occurs in two holiday settings; intimacy is created by interactions between the tourist and the host population and it emerges from the interactions between those who visit the place together, the latter is central here (see also Small 2002). In the latter setting intimacy is developed through spending long hours together with friends; it is the reproduction of bonding social capital. To many of the midlife single women such intimacies are an important part of doing friendship and gender (Coates 1996; Kehily et al. 2002). Talking with her friend while hiking is, for instance, one of the activities Grace enjoys the most.

That friendship talks are part of women’s habitus or identity and ways of doing friendship is a known ‘fact’ (Fehr 1996:124), but that it also has important cultural meanings and functions is often less acknowledged. They give emotional and moral support and create mutual understanding of womanhood (Green 1998; Gullestad 1984:329). Hey (1997) states that the core activities of girls’ friendship are talking,
gossiping, bitching and note-writing. Coates (1996) argues that women construct and maintain mental health, friendship and gender identity through story-telling. Gullestad (1984:220, 256) identifies the talk among young working-class mothers and their female friends as a moral discourse of right and wrong related to their roles as mothers, wives, daughters and daughters-in-law; the talk makes them maintain the family identity as ‘decent ordinary folk’. Kehily et al. (2002) show how young girls challenge gender identities in discussions with each other. Hey (2002:235) points to the difficulties of ‘doing girl’ in friendship and claims that the result is both a move towards and away from social change, dependent upon the women’s sense of group membership or identification with each other.

Friendship talks are also an important ingredient of the holiday experience (Crang 1997). This is emphasised in the midlife single women’s diaries in which many of the women describe situations where talking with their friends is the primary activity. The topics are seldom revealed, probably as trust and confidence are part of the rules of friendship (Brehm et al. 2002) and a way of safeguarding the boundaries of the relationship. Nevertheless, some of the women do retell actual conversations which revolve around their own challenges related to work, lack of partner/problems with evasive partners and personal issues. In her diary Eve, a-38-year old never married woman, describes an evening gathering in Norway with two single women friends where they discuss issues revolving around their identities as singles. The women meet after Eve spends two weeks in the family summer house in Norway with her siblings and their families. The evening is used for maintaining the bonding social capital and the conversations revolve around common experiences as singles, midlife and women. Eve’s married siblings are not as important as her single friends when it comes to openness and intimacy around such issues.

Nice to have a visit from friends who live a long way away and who you haven’t seen for a long time. Great to sit and blather for hours over supper about things important to us. Nice to talk to people with the same interests and who I’ve got things in common with, for instance marital status. … Notice that subjects of conversation are completely different than with married friends (or those with partners), especially those with children.

(Eve)
The reproduction of bonding social capital affects Eve’s sense of self, in particular through the act of talking and being with female, single friends. The doing of friendship is here then about sociality happening among equals without ulterior motives and ends over and above being together; it is not a means of positioning the group in the field. The investment in maintaining the bonding social capital mainly functions as an integrative force (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam 2001).

In their diaries, the midlife single women are asked each day to reflect on one freely chosen activity and how it affects them as a single woman. The written accounts indicate that such experiences happen in places of solitude and in cities, and that they are about activities such as shopping, travelling, dancing, and decorating and so on. Furthermore, on several occasions the women write that it is the company which is more significant than the female singlehood per se. To many women the company is explicitly other midlife single women friends; to others men friends or even new contacts have the same effect. In Victoria’s diary, a 47-year old divorcee on holiday in Stockholm with a friend, marital status is unimportant. The two single women are having too much fun to notice that they are singles.

Being a single woman, on holiday with Vera (also single) … isn’t difficult. We’re in good humour; we have fun, lots of fooling about and laughter at the same time. It’s not important that we’re single. I am and I’m not.

(Victoria)

When the midlife single women explore the joy of sharing, talking and being together, the materiality of the holiday experience or destination is mostly relegated to the setting or background for such intimacies. Neither its materiality nor the tourist gaze has much effect upon the women’s experiences. The doxa and material conditions of the holiday enable a positive gender/singlehood/midlife identity; that of a friend. Shared holiday experience then often enhances the midlife single women’s sense of well-being.

The importance of doing friendship then points to more than the value of reproducing bonding social capital in a space of sameness; it also erases and reduces the feelings of marginality often considered to be part of female singlehood (Gordon 1994a). The
identity of a friend makes the identity of a midlife single woman less obvious or even unimportant. Comparable effects are also found in other studies; Limb (1989:47) describes being with women friends as a ‘refuge from tiresome femaleness’. In the company of girl friends Limb feels that it is possible to contest and explore gender norms, thereby feeling more like a person than a female person. Similarly, Jerrome (1984) claims that female friends give each other space for contesting the feminine role.

A similar discovery is identified in this study when it comes to how the midlife single women perceive risky situations. The presence of bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend not only produces comfortable holiday experiences; it also reduces the significance of gender, singlehood and midlife in interactions with unfamiliar men. In such encounters, when the midlife single women sense the power relations of the field, bonding social capital is an empowering asset. As a consequence many of the midlife single women feel less exposed to sexual harassment and male violence when holidaying with female friends. Bess, a 45-year old never married woman, with little travel experience, relates this to overseas travels, as this means encounters with men with different cultural backgrounds and other views of women than in Norway.

BENTE – but if you’d gone off overseas with somebody then?
BESS – yes, you could have. But never alone.
BENTE – does that mean that we are safe in a way if we are two?
BESS – yes, it would, I would feel much safer if we were two.

(Bess)

The company of friends in the holiday then gives Bess a feeling of relative invulnerability which can be linked to Giddens’ (1991:40) concept of the ‘protective cocoon’. The concept of the protective cocoon applies to the protective barriers we carry with us in order to guard ourselves from the overwhelming risks and anxieties of everyday life. We block off negative possibilities and are basically trusting. In a risky holiday situation the cocoon is easily set aside when alone and reinforced when together. The bonding social capital then positively functions as a protector for women together on holiday. Tina, a 47-year old never married woman, and her friends are capitalized by the social identity of a friend which enables them to ignore the intense attention of local Turkish men and to take control over a potentially difficult situation.
TINA – there were five of us who went off together, and we had such a great time that.

JANE – yes?

TINA – went off on our motorbikes and it was marvellous. But it’s like you say, a whole group, we’re quite strong.

BENTE – you ganged up on the locals?

TINA – we had real fun, you know, we met somebody who took us way up into the mountains. Real loads of fun.

BENTE – no trouble?

TINA – no, but we kept together most of the time anyway. We noticed it of course, but therefore we kept together, and so had plenty of fun and laughter. We managed to fool about with them all (laughter) as you say. There weren’t any problems at all.

(Tina and Jane)

That bonding social capital reduces the effect of the sexualised gaze, identified in other work on solo female travellers (Jordan and Gibson 2005), is also evident in two holiday memories from Turkey, recounted by Jane, a 37-year old divorcee. In the first holiday (1) she travels solo and in the second (2) with a friend. In both cases the tourist gaze develops into the men approaching her/them, but it is only as a friend that she really feels empowered.

(1) JANE – so it’s hard work keeping them away. A week alone in Turkey for example was awful (laughter) because of that. Day and night.

BENTE – what was it like?

JANE – well, it never stopped and I was there for seven days with seven books.

BENTE – kept touching?

JANE – yes, yes.

BENTE – whistling?

JANE – lots of chatting-up. You more or less needed a flyswatter (laughter) to keep people off.

(2) JANE – I’ve been in Turkey with a girl friend and it was the same. But in a way it was us who set the standard. We had fun sending people in all directions, and made fun of them.

(Jane)
Jane and her friend’s collectively-owned cultural capital, and hence habitus, as well educated Norwegian women, and the economic capital they hold as Western tourists, capitalize them to fight back and take control over the situation with the local Turkish men. These experiences are comparable to those of Tina and her friends in the example above. In a different culture, such as the Scandinavian one, this may not have been the case, as the circumstances are different and the culture more familiar. This is perhaps one reason Victoria is unaware of sexualised gazes when travelling in Stockholm. The identity of a friend and the bonding social capital is therefore perhaps not equally valuable in all destinations.

The two last examples also indicate that bonding social capital enables the women to encounter strangers regardless of the sexualised gaze. Together the women have enough trust to relate to local men, to play with them and to feel safe. Yamagishi (2001) discusses trust as a form of social intelligence, claiming that high ‘trusters’ are more sensitive in judging the trustworthiness of others than distrusters. Although the women realise that contact with foreign men is potentially dangerous they still trust some men to be nice and manageable, in particular when with women friends. The identity of a friend then can serve to make midlife single women high trusters. For women to be totally high trusters in encounters with unfamiliar men is, though, not always wise (Valentine 1989). Most women know that the protective cocoon of two or more does not always work; at some destinations local men exploit female tourists sexually and financially (Herold, Garcia and DeMoya 2001; Pruitt and LaFont 2004); and female tourists have to deal with risky situations (Elrod 2001; Lepp and Gibson 2003).

Some of the midlife single women talk about incidents where bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend does not reduce the geography of their fear when encountering unfamiliar men (Valentine 1989) and does not protect against unwanted male attention. Particularly in violent situations men are too strong and frightening and the midlife single women have to be distrusters. Clara, a 40-year old divorcee, recounts how bonding social capital does not protect her and a female friend from being attacked by local Dutch men who try to make contact in an awkward, violent way. These Western European men do not approach them ‘charmingly’ as the Turks in the examples above.
CLARA – we walked home, when we were in Amsterdam recently, there were four of us together. Two of us were ahead of the others and I thought it was a bit creepy going through the Red Light district ... But when we were walking through one of the alleys, there are lots of those there, we met four blokes. But my friend is pretty tall, 1.82, and I’m behind her, a bit smaller, but, er, we just said – we just keep walking. We didn’t look at them, we just kept walking as though we knew where we were going. And they shouted to us and we didn’t reply and then they threw a Cola can which hit me on the head, that was a bit frightening. But I just said to her, she is called Kristin – just keep walking.

PARIS – was it full?
CLARA – yes.
PARIS – so it hurt you?
CLARA – yes, it hit me on the back of my head. But it was, they didn’t get any response and thought it was a bit stupid so couldn’t be bothered any more. …

BENTE – but you were a bit frightened?
CLARA – when the Cola can hit me on the head I just thought – we’ve got to just get out of here. And then three metres on and we were back on a street with lights. So it would have been stupid of them to start some trouble because I was … we took a short cut to get to the hotel, and it was dark.

BENTE – and there they were?
CLARA – yes, four of them standing there.
PARIS – that was very aggressive.
CLARA – yes, it was really.

(Claras and Paris)

In this situation knowing how to play the game of the field is not enough and as such the bonding social capital is not a sufficiently valuable asset to prevent the incident from occurring.

So far I have discussed the holiday experience as a space for doing friendship and how it positively affects the social identity as a friend. The social identity of a friend is embedded in their habitus and most of the women choose such holidays and acknowledge the value of doing friendship and the importance of bonding social capital during the holiday. The effects are two-fold. First, the social identity or habitus reduces the holiday experience to a field for doing friendship and developing intimacies, thereby supporting the notion of the holiday experience as a sociable field of mixophobia and the value of reproducing bonding social capital within it. Secondly, the bonding social
capital empowers the midlife single women. The social identity of a friend makes many of them less aware of their marginal positions as women, midlife and single. It also affords relative protection against male, sexualised attention. It reduces the need for focusing on heterosexuality, or sexuality at all. Such holidays are then partly tactical in nature, transforming them temporarily from midlife single women into friends. In this sense the women have agency (McNay 2004b).

5.2.2 The shared holiday meal experience – the space for reproducing bonding social capital

When the midlife single women are asked to be specific about the value of friendship, they point to various holiday times and spaces for social encounters and gatherings and, when doing so, are unanimous when discussing the joy of sharing a holiday meal, regardless of destination. The diaries and the focus group discussions are filled with data supporting the value of the shared holiday meal experience. In particular sharing the evening meal in a restaurant has significant meanings which go beyond the sharing of the food. Emma, a 38-year old never married woman, argues that the social dimension of the meal is extremely important, not just in terms of that experience, but also in terms of the entire holiday:

EMMA – think its part of the social side of things as well. Having somebody to share the holiday with. I wouldn’t feel the same about having a good meal and good wine if I was alone. So for me that’s a big part of it. And having time as well, you know.

VICTORIA – yes, someone to do it with.

EMMA – yes, somebody to do it with, but I don’t have to have a three-course meal, that’s not what’s important. But having somebody to eat with together.

(Emma and Victoria)

The social aspects of the meal are about socialising with travel companions, talking about the experiences of the day, creating a friendly atmosphere around the table, and feeling comfortable in the restaurant. The company of friends gives additional spice to the meal (Anderson 1980). This is much more important than the food and drinks served. Laura, a 54-year old divorcee, also points to the role of the evening meal as a means of coming together to share common experiences, which is more important than the substance of the meal itself. The opportunity for reproducing bonding social capital
is more essential than the need to satisfy basic requirements for nourishments:

LAURA – er, um, I feel that, mm, in a way going out to eat is such an important part of the day, especially dinner … it’s actually the best part of the day for me. Really.

BENTE – why?

LAURA – because you use, well, firstly there’s the food and drink, and then you sum up the day and what you’ve done, just like you do on holiday in the mountains. And it’s really a great meeting time.

BENTE – so partly the social side and partly the meal?

LAURA – for me the part of being a group is even more important.

BENTE – even more important.

LAURA – yes.

BENTE – more important than what you eat and drink?

LAURA – yes.

The holiday meal experience embraces a generalised sociality as it includes a wider network of people. It is a fact that most tourists spend a significant amount of money and time on eating out with their families and friends (Nield, Kozak and LeGrys 2000; Richards 2002). Singles are often included in eating out activities and this enables access to public participation as a unit, not as a separate individual. The meal is, furthermore, discursively closely related to nuclear family ties (DeVault 1991) from which midlife single women are excluded in most Western societies. The need to socialise, though, is also part of a profound human notion of symbolic and emotional belonging (Simmel [1910] 1971), which becomes especially evident when faced with eating out alone (Jordan and Gibson 2005). Eating out with friends gives social gratification and makes the entire experience a joint creation. The participants co-create the mood and the atmosphere, and their conversations, skills and humour set the stage. The people around the table are ‘active co-agents whose presence demands mutual adaptation, or negotiation, or recognition’ (Warde and Martens 2000:208). The social relationship of the holiday meal experience then provides a source for pleasure and happiness which can not be brought about by the individual alone. We need the company of other people to feel happy as there is a reciprocity involved which surpasses the individual. Clara, a 40-year old divorcee’s, diary describes how she and a few girl
friends celebrated a 40th birthday with a champagne lunch at an upmarket restaurant in London. They co-create a special atmosphere for this event with their high spirits and delight in each others’ company, creating an experience which reaffirms the friendships in years to come and which secures bonding social capital in future holidays:

My friend’s 40th birthday! What else than champagne can make the day perfect. Long lunch at an exclusive restaurant with marvellous food and plenty of champagne. That’s really great and gives a feeling of luxury I wouldn’t be without. The good life in every way. Good friends and lovely surroundings. … Four girls dressed to kill in great spirits round a table at one of the best restaurants – all the same age and single – of course we feel terrific and eye all the blokes.

(Clara)

The last quotes evidence the notion that society’s cultural practice is embedded in its eating out habits. Bourdieu (1984:6) distinguishes between the substance and the form of a meal; the substance is about the quality and intake of the nourishment whereas the form is the way the food is presented and consumed. Both substance and form are embedded in the materiality and discourse of the holiday meal experience. The structuring of the sociality around the meal is a way of presenting one’s manner. The serving of the guests, the seating plan and the governing of posture and gesture are all part of the experience. Furthermore, as pointed out by Anderson (1980), the taste of the food is situational and interpersonal. The taste of a specific dish and wine changes according to the social situation, the company, who is cooking, time of day, the setting for the meal and so on.

The holiday meal experience, served in a restaurant or a café, is then made up of institutional settings and structuring strategies guiding the interactions between tourists, and between tourists and employees (Crang 1997). The restaurant is organised materially and discursively around three consuming tourism practices; gazing, sociality/sensory pleasures and talking (Crang 1997:150). Tables in restaurants are set in ways that enable people to gaze at each other, at the staff, and sometimes at the people moving outside the facility. Chambre separee is not common in most restaurants. Being seen and seeing others are essential parts of the attraction (Finkelstein
Furthermore, the appropriate body in the restaurant is linked to sociality and sensory pleasures. This is made possible by the menus and the interior design. People visit restaurants to be with others and to eat and drink well. The sizes and comfort of the tables and chairs encourage people to enjoy themselves and the food, sometimes in large groups and at other times as couples. The ideal restaurant table for one person is yet to be invented, if one does not include counters at bars or windows.

Talking among guests in restaurants is often more about bonding than bridging. Tables are not always placed close enough for parties of guests to interact and most parties of guests protect a sense of privacy. The only persons who encounter new people are often the waiters. Most guests sit where they are during the entire meal, talking to the other people around the table, not to the other parties of guests. Such material and discursive structures are constantly produced and discursively performed by staff and guests, thereby maintaining the restaurant as a sociable and public, but still private, space. The restaurant is made for the reproduction of bonding social capital; it plays the game of the field to the fullest. As noted by Fields (2002) the role of the restaurant is to bring joy and pleasure into the shared meal. Most people do not have the time to eat together on a regular basis and holiday meals therefore function as a way of maintaining authentic inter-personal relationships (Wang 2000). This is evident among the midlife single women in that they use the restaurant as a space for developing and maintaining friendships and intimacies.

In their diaries some of the women, describing actual eating experiences, capture the essence of such friendships and intimacies but they also point to how the bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend give credit in the situation. Ella, a 38-year old divorcee, on several occasions illustrates the pure joy of eating out in London in the company of two close girl friends. In the diary Ella writes:

We’d decided ages ago to eat Lebanese, and Edgware Road is the perfect place for that. We looked in all the restaurants we saw, and chose the one where there were the most women. And what a reception we got. The head waiter/owner welcomed us to his small (huge) relaxing (gaudy) café. Two waiters brought us everything we wished. The Cola came in cans with Arabic writing. We ordered five dishes between us three. The food was marvellous. Cecilie, who’s semi-
anorexic, kept eating for more than twenty minutes after we others had finished. The waiters treated us like royalty. The atmosphere in the restaurant was sky-high. Beautiful Arabic ladies with children, and other tables with incredibly handsome men … After the meal we ordered a hookah with apple tobacco. I don’t even smoke, but it tasted heavenly. We must return to Edgware Road.

(Ella)

When Ella shares one of these memories in the focus group she admits that it is not something she would have done alone. Ella points to the ethnicity of the restaurant which makes it unsuitable for the lone woman.

Cecilie and Vibeke and I went to a place called Edgware Road. An entire road with only Arabic restaurants. I wouldn’t have done it alone. I know London well and have been in Edgware Road many times, but I never would have entered an Egyptian restaurant alone.

(Ella)

Ella’s bonding social capital and identity as a friend then perhaps reduces the stigma of being women, single and in midlife in this restaurant. As the example indicates the value of bonding social capital is perhaps also culturally dependent. Cultures such as the Arabic, where the women’s rights movement and liberation have not developed a general understanding of ‘equality’ between men and women (Pruitt and LaFont 2004:320, see also section 5.2.1), place more value on women’s bonding social capital than Western or Nordic countries.

When discussing the importance of sharing the holiday meal, some of the midlife single women link the need for sociality to their singlehood. Emily, a 40-year old never married woman, for instance, points to singles’ need to connect with other people and suggests that the holiday meal is an excellent space for this:

EMILY – what I think is especially boring when I’m alone is eating dinner. I think that part of the enjoyment when I’m on holiday is to.

CLARA – mm.

EMILY – yes, either make dinner together or.
Eating out alone can be associated with social isolation and marginalisation (Jordan 2003). This, however, does not mean that the midlife single women always feel included when dining with people. Diana, a 36-year old never married woman, partly shares her holiday in Spain with her sister and her family (partly Spanish) and she is partly alone. This combination of solitude and company (and the participation in the project) makes her often reflect upon her singlehood. On two occasions in her diary she describes an evening meal positively (1), negatively (2) related to her female singlehood (3). In the first example (A) she visits a pizza restaurant alone and in the second (B) she shares a meal with her extended Spanish family. Her solo meal experience lasts for one hour and the family gathering for three. The narrative of the solo meal experience is a reflection on a constrained personal situation (Wilson 2004) mostly due to temporal lack of bonding social capital. In the second example, although Diana really enjoys the company of the extended Spanish family, the situation is also constrained as her singlehood does not fully meet the criteria for membership in the group and she is unable to redefine its boundaries. Her membership of the group is also temporary and her cultural capital differs from that of the main Spanish members. As her sister and family are full members of the group, Diana’s outsider position is eased a bit:

A (1) I was hungry – and got enough to eat. That was the positive thing about that experience. …

(2) Eating out alone is really boring. Even with a good book. I feel as if I must do something all the time, so I smoke more than usual and bury my nose in my book till the food arrives. Then I eat as quickly as possible, pay and leave. That’s why I often choose to eat at home if I haven’t got company. I just don’t like it.

(3) It’s probably just me who feels like this but I feel lonely when I eat out by myself. It looks as though everybody round me is having a good time (they’re probably not), and all rational thoughts disappear. It feels as if everybody’s looking at me with sympathy and I don’t like it (poor thing – has to eat alone and
is lonely etc.). An experience I try to avoid as much as possible.

B (1) A Spanish barbecue is an experience! Full house – loads of people – great atmosphere. It was good to be a part of that crowd that evening and sit on the roof – drink wine and natter about this and that. Dance with the children while the sun set and sit with nieces and nephews on your lap and make up stories about the sea and waves and count the stars. Have a glass of wine ‘too many’ after the kids have gone to bed and wander home – slightly drunk and thinking that life’s OK.

(2) Family life is important to the Spanish – and the question of why I haven’t got a boyfriend and/or family is unavoidable. Everybody thinks that I should be looking for someone and when the question was raised for the third time that evening my niece on my lap had had enough – ‘she doesn’t want anybody – can’t you understand’ she answered on my behalf. Well – I would like to have someone, but not just to satisfy everybody else’s need to be a pair.

(3) There were single boys there that evening as well – they didn’t get asked that question. It was just stated that it was time for them to settle down and have a family. There shouldn’t be such a difference between young men and women in 2005, even in Spain. …

(Diana)

Daisy, a 38-year old never married woman’s comment: ‘Food is much more than eating’ suggests that the holiday meal experience offers ‘a total consumption package’ in that food and drinks are just some of the elements that constitute the experience (Bell and Valentine 1997:125). The food is both ‘the primary need and pleasure’ (Bourdieu 1984:196). The way food is handled in a society is closely linked to social relations and social values (Sahlins 1965). The sharing of a meal functions as a mean for inviting, maintaining and destroying people’s social capital. It symbolises common interests and a friendly relation, or when rejected or not offered it expresses bad relations. According to Andersson (1980) hunger is a collective desire which has the ability to join people from small groups of two to larger groups, and it is the only bodily desire which still has an open sociality. In particular, the time female friends spend together is often accompanied by eating and drinking (Green 1998), and the holiday is often about socialising and talking (Crang 1997).
To the midlife single women joint holiday meal experiences are excellent for sharing thoughts, emotions and meaningful time with friends. The meal constitutes an intense space suitable for the reproduction of bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend. It is a space from which the midlife single women can gaze at others without being rendered visible and do female friendships through talking and enjoying good food and drink. The employees of the restaurant are there to serve in this endeavour and the other guests are more or less invisible; they function more as part of the scene than controlling gazers. The power structures and sexualised gazes linked to the meal experience identified among midlife women travelling solo (Jordan 2003; Jordan and Gibson 2005) are hardly acknowledged by the midlife single women in this study when travelling with friends. To some extent they notice men’s sexualised gazes and the observing gazes of others, but such gazes hardly affect the experiences. The restaurant is then seldom a contested space, but one that the midlife single women use for constructing and evaluating positive holiday experiences and the social identity of a friend. The holiday meal is first and foremost used for investing in maintaining bonding social capital and is less a space for making the relationship recognised by others or used in the struggle for controlling it. The energy is aimed at the other group members, the ‘non-members’ are more or less ignored. This finding suggests that the tourist gaze is not always negative or noticeable as most of the other guests seem too occupied with themselves and their party to bother with the actions of the midlife single women. This perhaps also suggests the power of the tourist gaze identified by women travelling solo is also inner-directed. It is part of the women’s habitus.

5.2.3 The group package tour – tactically accruing social capital

I have demonstrated that most of the midlife single women identify the holiday experience as a space for reproducing bonding social capital and they point to the restaurant as the holiday space for investing in the social identity of the friend. These findings lead me to the assumption that the holiday experience is a sociable space of mixophobia and that bonding social capital is a valuable asset. It makes the midlife single women tactically adjust to the social identity of a friend. In this sense it gives them agency. Solo holidays are therefore not accommodating. Midlife single women lacking friends to holiday with, however, do not have to travel alone but can tactically adjust to the norm by joining group package tours. In this subsection I investigate the group package tour as a holiday space tactically used by the midlife single women to
develop a sense of affiliation and an ability to conform to the norm of mixophobia when friends are unavailable. It is a different way of achieving agency, and it is perhaps a stronger tactic than holidays with friends.

With group package tours I refer to all-inclusive guided group holidays retailed through sales agents (Wang, Hsieh and Huan 2000; Wong and Lau 2001; Yale1995), not packages sold directly to pre-arranged groups. The latter implies a level of personal knowledge among the participants before the tour. The holiday experience is then no longer viewed as the setting but more as the stage for accruing bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend.

Sociality and sameness are important parts of the holiday experience, and, hence, the midlife single women have learned to play this game. Still, friends are not always available or suitable companions. This is a challenge to the women. Furthermore, social capital is not only accommodated in restaurants, but also by other actors of the tourism industry such as tour operators and hotels. Unlike restaurants, though, tour operators organise for tourists to interact and to accrue social capital. Group package tours enables tourists to develop a sense of reciprocity and trustworthiness with new people (Putnam 2001; Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 2003). But, not all group package tours develop bonding social capital. It depends upon if the tourists focus upon shared interests or not. It is people seeking people with similar experiences or socio demographic who bond, people seeking other people bridge. It is then up to the group package tourists what kind of social capital to develop within the group. The assortment of tourists in the group then influences the extent to which it becomes an exclusive or inclusive unit. Different group dynamics can also develop within the group as some tourists are more interested in bonding and others in bridging. Whether group package tourists bond or bridge is perhaps not remarkable as such, the different values of social capital are often not noticed by those outside the group. The group is often treated as a unit of sameness by outsiders. To the participants, on the other hand, the difference between bonding and bridging social capital is important as it affects the holiday experience and the social identities available.

The data in this subsection are based on the holiday experiences of 11 midlife single women who have been on such holidays once or several times during or before the
project. These women do not differ much from the others regarding travel experience, education, income or holiday budget, but they are not the ones with the lowest incomes or holiday budgets. This is probably due to the pricing of many such holidays; the accruing of social capital assumes economic capital. A brief investigation of Kuoni’s (2006) round trips offered in Norway indicates that all-inclusive group package tours are expensive. Although, some of the tours only last for seven days, the mean cost of each day is about £ 144\(^1\). This probably constrains some of the women from participating. The 11 women also look more favourably upon group package tours than the 19 women who have never participated in such holidays. I return to these women’s thoughts in section 6.4.2.

Dining out alone is one problematic part of the holiday for women travelling solo (Jordan 2003). To the midlife single women in this study, the main advantage of group package tours is the opportunity to share holiday experiences, meals and conversations. Joining a group package tour then is a tactic for accruing social capital. In such holidays the midlife single women find companions for visits to attractions and, especially, for the meals. The diary of Annie, a 36-year old never married woman, on a group package tour to China, often briefly describes the joy of sharing meals with the other group members. One day she writes: ‘We called the day off with a delicious shared dinner (all 13)’. June, a 50-year old divorcee, when discussing the difference between solo holidays and group package tours, emphasises how the other group members give the meal experience an additional value. This is one of the reasons she again consider holidaying with a group:

> But it’s probably something to do with expectations, because you already define that part before you leave. … When I think about that dream of Tuscany, the holiday there, I realise that those evening mealtimes are an important part of it, mm, because you’re part of a group.

(June)

Holidays with friends and group package tours then serve comparable purposes in securing successful holiday meal experiences in a space marked by sociality and

\(^1\) £ 1 = 12,5 NOK
sameness (Bruner 1995). This is perhaps a common tactic; singles often find the group package tour a safe way of dining with unfamiliar people as ‘solo’ (Crompton 1981; Ross and Iso-Ahola 1991; Schuchat 1983) or as ‘group’ tourists. The latter is perhaps more often the case, as 90 per cent of Latin American coach tourists in Europe (Quiroga 1990) and 96 per cent of Chinese tourists on a group package tour (Wong and Lau 2001) join with friends and/or family members. The two midlife single women who bought such holidays in the summer of the project also did it with family/friends. The company of ‘old’ friends then reduces the tactical aspect of the group package tour; the midlife single women do not necessarily have to accrue social capital but can interact with familiar people.

On the other hand this is seldom the case among the midlife single women; they consider the opportunity to meet new people as one of the main advantages of group package tours. When Laura, a 54-year old divorcée, talks about her experiences she emphasises the group dynamic and the development of new relationships which she finds an exciting and positive aspect of the group package tour. The summer of the project she joined a hiking trip exploring the Norwegian mountains. In the diary she reflects upon the group composition and the possibility of making new friends:

Er, I was very pleased with the group of 10 plus the guide, organized by the Trekking Association. As usual there were very different types of people thrown together for a short time. And it’s amazing how you notice how at first you just look around a bit, but by the end of the 4-5 days tour you’ve talked to everybody. Quite a lot and about different things to different people, but I think it’s really positive. And the age difference, the youngest was the guide, 27, and the oldest was a German in his seventies. So it was very varied in every way and we knew a lot of different things, I think it’s exciting.

(Laura)

During the 5-day long hike, Laura accrues bonding social capital and the identity of a friend. The group members meet as strangers and depart as friends. This evolution is also traceable in the diary where, in the beginning, the other group members are socio-demographic actors and in the end they are friends that she cares and wants the best for. She feels at ease with the group concept (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005). The strong ties
develop within only five days. As the quote indicates, bonding, not bridging, social capital is to be expected as several of the participants share comparable backgrounds such as gender, age and material status, in addition to an interest in nature based activities:

Day 1) The start of a 5-day trip together. Marvellous weather, the people seem nice, the right distance, easy walking … Lots of single women (9 women, 2 men including guide). The women from 30-57 (?). My thoughts that there are plenty of interesting things to do when single were confirmed. Would have been nice with more men in the group – where are they all?

Day 3) Think we have a better time than those who go as couples. In this environment civil status is not important, and therefore it’s not important to me either!

Day 4) The group remained around the table and talked all night. Three languages: Norwegian, German and English. Literature, films, occupations, history. The host told the history of the place. I mostly listen, I’m happy! … I feel a rare sense of belonging, which in this case is very short-lived (the trip ends tomorrow). It’s the kind of belonging I seek in a potential relationship.

Day 5) We’ve walked, eaten and slept together for 5 days … We’ve become a good group, have developed our own particular frames of reference and humour. Everybody has found a place in spite of different age, background, language … I’m the one who knows about flowers, everybody asks me about the flowers we see … It’s sad to say goodbye to people I’ve gradually got to know better. One of the participants is pregnant. Hope the birth goes OK etc. The German man (74) literally walked his shoes off. Impressively fit and what staying power. Was the experience what he expected?

(Laura)

This finding suggests that, in group package tours, the midlife single women who are willing to invest in new friendships or relationships accrue bonding social capital (Putnam 2001) and develop the social identity of the friend. This is also stated by group
package cruise ship tourists; ‘Feeling states revolving around ‘we’ and ‘us’, like belonging, friendship, and familiarity, fostered relationships with others and are contagious sources of communitas and ‘emotional community’’ (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005:375). Quiroga (1990) finds that most group package tourists look forward to bonding with strangers, and to sharing activities and free time with them. Tucker (2005) states that sociality is more important than the toured place, at least to young group package tourists. Gorman (1979) describes how a collective of strangers turns into bonding social capital within a coach tour of seven days. First, outgroup hostility creates feelings of ‘us against them’ which unifies the group members. The group then starts building ties and supports each other. Secondly, people have general social needs which result in a desire for interaction with a heterogeneity of people found among the group package tour’s members. Thirdly, the members of the group approach each other tentatively and ambiguously, and they form smaller temporal cliques. Fourthly, the group interactions during the tour equalise class hierarchies (see also Foster 1986), just the driver and guide sustain status roles. The tourists’ roles are then diffuse and shifting and bridges turn into bonds. Fifthly, the group members share the same experiences, food and hotels, and they constantly adapt to new environments as the tour proceeds. Such experiences are relevant and the basis for group interactions. Furthermore, the group’s division of labour shifts according to who is controlling the crucial resources at that moment as some are good at speaking French and others German. Fifthly, the physical arrangement of group package tours forces random mixtures of people to interact at meals, in buses and at the accommodation, creating shared experiences and collective stories. Sixthly, by the fourth day, group awareness comparable to bonding social capital arises as the group members treat each other as friends.

The social identity of the friend and the accrual of bonding social capital in group package tours is then perhaps a consequence of the doxa. Tourists need other tourists, especially friends and family, or just new friends, in order to play the game of the holiday experience successfully. Unlike holiday experiences with old friends, such experiences in a group of strangers require efforts and most group package tourists have to prepare themselves mentally to be sociable. The investment in accruing social capital costs time, effort and energy. As a result, playfulness often develops. Members of group package tours are often convivial and outgoing; they aim to be friendly and be perceived as friendly; and they encourage openness and connection with each other (Yarnal
They make jokes about each other and tell each other funny stories. They also exchange ‘horror stories’ which function as a way of building the cohesion of the group. In particular, the female members develop friendships (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005:374). They are supportive and sympathetic about each others’ personal issues, and they relive intimate details which turn into emotional bonds. The temporal-spatial characteristics of the group package tour make the women willing to share intimacies they probably would not have done at home (Yarnal 2004). The social identity of the friend is therefore somewhat temporal, spatial and artificial.

The temporal-spatial characteristics of group package tours then enable the formation of new friendships in a short period of time. One reason this happens so quickly is partly the remoteness of the outside world created by the tour concept. The physical proximity of a tour bus or a cruise ship secures spaces for social interaction among group members (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005). In particular, on coach tours where tourists spend long hours in the bus (Gorman 1979; Quiroga 1990) a special atmosphere of camaraderie and solidarity are created (Crompton 1979). This is also the case in Laura’s hiker holiday described above. Being on such a tour means interacting with the other hikers all day and evening, sleeping in close quarters and needing to stick together for safety reason. This finding is also evident in other midlife single women’s hiker holidays. Victoria, a 47-year old divorcee, recalls an organised hiking and climbing trip in Northern Norway and how some of the Norwegian women arrange living together. A flexible attitude and willingness to adjust to each other’s needs makes the sleeping arrangements work well. The women do not know each other before the trip, but develop the social identity of the friend after being on this tour together.

Terrific. And we met all the others for dinner in the evenings, and breakfast, we were four girls sharing a room. And there might have been a lot of fuss. But there was one of us who made a check – how long do you like to sleep, would you rather get up first or last? Actually I’m normally an early bird but I was the last up. And it worked perfectly, though we didn’t know each other. We’ve kept in touch since as well.

(Victoria)

The social identity of the friend is often limited to the period of the group package tour,
but to repeaters it sometimes last for years (Foster 1986; Morais, Kerstetter and Yarnal 2006). The bonding social capital that is developed in Laura’s hiker group is probably not strong enough for the type of future friendships Victoria talks about. In Laura’s case, despite comparable interests and socio-demographic characteristics, the participants are perhaps still too different or they live too far away from each other. Other midlife single women also accrue lasting bonding social capital through participation in group package tours. Tina, a 47-year old never married woman, made friends on a group package cruise ship tour who she still meets up with. A reunion with one of the group members is the best holiday memory of all. On this cruise Tina bonds with a few women, not an entire group as in Laura’s example. Tina does not reveal whether the women share comparable characteristics, but it is reasonable to assume that they do. The women are after all willing to invest time and money in maintaining the relationship after the cruise. Tina is a very sociable and outgoing person expressing a profound interest in bridging and bonding, which makes her more likely to develop lasting relationships than some of the other women in the study:

But the best experience was being invited to Iceland by a woman I met on a cruise. She and her son were travelling together and we got on very well and they invited me together with someone from Oslo I didn’t know and someone from Ukraine. A very exciting foursome and we travelled around and saw a lot of Iceland.

(Tina)

The friendships formed by group package tourists are perhaps based on lack of a home audience. Instead of forcing photos on family and close friends, the participants create a network of people sharing the same interests. The bonding social capital and social identity of a friend then serves a distinct purpose in these people’s lives. This is perhaps one reason group package tourists organise reunions for exchanging photos and memories after the trip (Bruner 1995).

In this subsection I argue that the group package tour accommodates the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. It organises a space for shared experiences which fuels the social identity of the friend and accrues social capital. Joining such a tour is a tactic for midlife single women lacking friends as holiday
companions. That bonding social capital is an important part of the group package tour is also noticed by Doris, a 36-year old never married woman, who recounts a group package tour to China. Unlike the other women in the study, though, Doris is not partial to forced bonding or bridging with strangers, but joins the group to experience China, not the other people in the group. Doris refuses the norm of mixophobia and the demand for sociality embedded in the group concept. She rejects the social identity of a friend. Consequently Doris’s withdrawal from the group’s interactions is sanctioned by the other members. Doris’s rejection of the social identity of the friend is perhaps linked to the fact that she is an experienced solo traveller used to negotiating the meaning of the holiday as more than a sociable space for mixophobia. In the group package tour she therefore prefers the social identity of a loner. Such holidays are still a tactic as the presence of social capital enables Doris to experience a new territory:

DORIS – I wasn’t there to be sociable, I was there to see what I’d paid the holiday to see, in a way. But that’s a choice you make. And I don’t think you should be afraid of withdrawing from a social setting. I don’t think, it’s accepted that you don’t want to smile and talk to other people 24 hours a day. It’s also a bit.

BENTE – how did you perceive, did you feel any vibrations from the group when you took this attitude, a bit on the sideline? You pulled out of the group?
DORIS – yes I did to a certain extent.
BENTE – how did the group react?
DORIS – they probably thought it was very odd. They were very pleasant and as I said I was pleasant when spoken to, but I didn’t invite their company all the time. Except when we were forced to be together on the coach.

(Doris)

A few of the midlife single women participating in group package tours, such as Doris, dislike the norm of sameness and refuse to invest energy in accruing forced social capital. They bond or bridge if they want to, not because it is expected. A few of the other midlife single women are equally independent, but experience the group interactions differently. They sense the marginal position of being a midlife single woman among couples and families. Annie, a 36-year old never married woman, experiences this on a tour to China. When the other members of the group package tour often prioritise doing things with their families Annie is left alone when she wants to hike, eat out or join a boating trip. Nobody adjusts to her needs and instead she adapts to
the needs of the remote relatives she travels with. If the trip had been less strenuous she might have acted outside the group, but as China is in every sense different from Norway Annie does not have the strength to be her independent self. She is then sometimes constrained by the group’s demand for the social identity of the friend and reproduction of bonding social capital. Unlike Doris who withdraws from the group and does her thing under the safety of still belonging to the group, the group package tour is perhaps a more counterproductive tactic in Annie’s case. She sometimes unwillingly adapts to the demands for reproducing bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend:

ANNIE – well, I felt a bit like that in China, because that was a really typical family holiday and there were two Swedish families, real core families, and then us. They’re fairly remote relations of mine, a grandmother with her daughter and granddaughter.

LAURA – yes.

ANNIE – … it reminds you a bit, er, some of the things you see the others doing with their families. There are some things like that which, I wouldn’t say it was like that, I had a slight feeling, but.

BENTE – what are you thinking of?

ANNIE – no, well, they, there were some things you could do on your own. Like taking part in some of the activities, but you never did that by yourself but with your family, then you could choose whether to have a guide or not. Er, there were a few boat trips for example that. Go out for a meal also, which I might have liked to consider, but, yes.

BENTE – which you didn’t do because you.

ANNIE – yes, instead I was with my friends, the ones I travelled with, and we did some shopping …

LAURA – mm.

ANNIE – I got very tired of that as well. But I think that you, those feelings, I feel them more strongly when I’m, like then, when I was very tired. I think so.

(Annie and Laura)

Participating in a group package tour is a tactic which enables agency and makes the social identity of a friend available without travelling with any ‘real’ friends. Such holidays unify a variety of people who share an interest in experiencing the same destination or activity. The physical proximity of a tour bus or a cruise ship secures spaces for social interactions (Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005) which often create bonds or
bridges. But by producing group package tours the tourism industry also emphasises the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia, reducing its tactical character. To the midlife single women joining such holidays alone, it is still a way of manoeuvring the pitfalls of the holiday experience. They make it suit their needs, in particular the need for company at meals. In such groups both the social identity of a friend and that of a loner is possible. Furthermore, the group package tours seldom make the holiday experience a contested space. Most of the women enjoy the social identity of a friend and somebody to share experiences with. Sometimes the participation even result in lasting friendships. A few of the women, on the other hand, dislike the norm of mixophobia and withdraw from group interactions, preferring the social identity of a loner. To both categories of women the group package tour, however, is a tactic and it gives agency. Group affiliation reduces feelings of marginalisation, either the midlife single women bond and/or bridge with other group members or not. The world outside the group package tour hardly notices or minds the difference between the two forms of social capital. It just ascribes social capital to all group package tourists. If economic capital did not constrain many of the midlife single women, the group package tour perhaps would more often, and to more of the women, be a perfect way of spending the holiday.

5.2.4 Shared holiday memories – everyday belonging

The *doxa* make many of the midlife single women adjust to holidays with friends or some join a group package tour. On the other hand, the purpose of such holidays is not only to accommodate the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia, but also to use them for developing lasting memories and relationships. Such memories are then also used for positioning the midlife single women and the bonding social capital in everyday life before and after the holiday. The importance of doing friendship and maintaining bonding social capital through the act of holiday-making is not only evident in the emphasis the women place on sharing holiday experiences, but also on the creation of common holiday memories which is both a way of postponing, and reiterating, the women’s relationships. Such memories are used over and over again, and contribute to the prolonging of the experience as well as reconstituting the relationship and each member’s biography (Harrison 2003; Junemo 2004). In one of the focus groups Annie, Betty and Helena, three never married women all around 40-years-old, discuss how shared holiday experiences have future and added value. However, as
Helena points out, the memories are a resource which can be derived from, but not forced upon, the relationship:

ANNIE – it’s associated with happiness and things like that and talking about things. Like remember when we were there and there, and wasn’t it fun and do you remember? It gives you such a good feeling to talk about holidays.

BETTY – and you can talk about it again and again.

HELENA – and it’s so great to have a plan for the holidays together with somebody. You needn’t talk about it, or ring all the time, though.

(Annie, Betty and Helena)

The creation of shared memories goes to the core of friendship (Vries 1996) and it is an important part of reproducing bonding social capital. All social capital exists only in as far as the social ties among people are real (Glover and Hemingway 2005). In particular, the highly mobile and fleeting friendships in today’s society need repetition of pleasurable memories in order to renew themselves (Bauman 2003; Hutter 2000). Shared memories are about reinforcing the meaning behind mutual interests and the reason why each person uses another as a resource for fun and amusement. In the same way as the memories are somewhat drawn on with caution, not all memories are equally important. Equally, not all women consider shared holiday memories to be the most central ones, especially not some of the women who enjoy solo holidays. Fiona, a 54-year old divorcee, for instance, points to the ability to enjoy holiday memories by herself. Despite such limitations the joy of sharing, reliving, retelling and revisiting is obvious to most of the women in the study. By doing and experiencing things and activities together, the women’s investments in bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend result in a sense of continuity which contributes to feelings of well-being, not only on holiday but also in everyday life (Stevens and Tilburg 2000). Tina, a 47-year old never married woman, describes how sharing holiday memories with travel companions make her happy a long time after the holiday and how it is used to affirm the social identity as friend in everyday life:

TINA - I think it’s simply happiness. That we can reminisce about it. Because you can’t say - do you remember that, if you’ve just sat and looked at photos alone. I think it has something to do with the memory and seeing each other. I think there’s a bit of happiness, perhaps. If it can be that simple. I’m sure there are many ways of looking at it but sometimes you can sit and talk about it afterwards. Because some things are really funny and you can sit and laugh
about them, but it’s not so easy to tell others about.

BENTE - what sort of things, have they got any lasting value then? Or is it just connected to there and then, or straight after it happened? Is it this, the feeling of togetherness, that this experience gives, does it last?

TINA - it can do. Perhaps it depends on what the experience is. Because some things are like, OK, it was great fun there and then and you talk about it a couple of times. But there can be things you can mention again and again. Get out the album in two years and you can have a really good time with the person you were on holiday with. And remember good times. So I think it’s a bit different from time to time, really.

(Tina)

It is impossible to pinpoint the kind of shared experiences that are used to maintain bonding social capital after the holiday without deeper insights into the memories. However, it is possible to get a more profound understanding when analysing the conversation between Betty and Diana. Betty and Diana, two never married women in their late thirties, are friends and travel companions. As it turns out Betty and Diana also point to the ‘insignificance’ of the quality of the memory. They seldom talk about the materiality or highlights of a destination, but they create internal humour and tales in order to affirm their identity as friends. In doing so, they develop verbal codes which make little sense to non-members of their group. Furthermore, the memory’s relational quality does not exceed the relationship. The meanings are closely linked to the actors involved and when the relationship diminishes so does the memory. It is then no longer part of a ‘collectivity-owned capital’ and loses its symbolic and/or material value (Bourdieu 1986:249).

BENTE – what do you talk about then? You who have been on so many holidays, are it about the big things, the big attractions, or about that you sat in a bar and flirted with some guy? Do you remember the small things?

BETTY – lots of the small things, actually.

DIANA – that’s the paradox.

BETTY – it’s the ones only we can share, in a way, while the bigger experiences can.

DIANA – be described to another person so they can relive them. But the small.

BETTY– it’s really more the private things, certain expressions for example, things we say because - nobody else understands them.

DIANA – and not funny either, now I’m grinning because I thought of one (laughter). But it’s a paradox that the big trips, Betty has been in Thailand and
China and now we’ve been in South America, what we sit and laugh about are the fortnights’ trips to Syden etc.

BETTY – yes that’s right. It is.

DIANA – that’s what we sit and giggle about when we, and if you had asked me I think I couldn’t have separated some of the trips from each other. I can’t say accurately who came on which trip, or which year it was. I know which trip, but not the year. But they are to more or less the same places, aren’t they. Not particularly exciting, just that you get an association to the places.

BENTE – but is the value diminished if you don’t have someone to share with?

DIANA – it’s no fun, it’s much more fun, like when Betty and I have been on innumerable trips to Tenerife, and we sit in some bar here at home in the winter and natter. Then we can natter about some idiotic episode, or ‘do you remember that?’ It’s something to do with having a common.

BETTY – you get much more pleasure out of it afterwards when there is somebody who has experienced the same, who you can share it with. Because it’s not the same telling people who haven’t been there.

DIANA – like your trip to China.

BETTY – yes.

DIANA – you’ve been to China, I haven’t. Really great to listen to Betty when she came home and talked about it, but later on, when we’re not really involved, I don’t hear any more about it.

BETTY – that’s right. It’s the same with my Thailand trip as well, which I went on with people I’ve lost contact with now. I notice that the experience fades more quickly. Er, even though I sometimes think it’s fun to bring it up in some connections you don’t get the same response. Because people don’t know what you’re talking about (laughter) I notice that.

BENTE – So it’s about relationships really. Keeping in touch?

BETTY – yes, in all kinds of strange everyday situations things can pop up, and you can mention something or other from one of your holidays. And when there’s nobody with the same references it’s a bit like that. You feel that things fall a bit flat.

So far in this chapter I have demonstrated that there is a close link between doing friendship and investing in reproducing bonding social capital. The social identity of a friend is partly a tactic the midlife single women employ to negotiate the pitfalls of the holiday experience. It gives them agency in a sociable space of mixophobia, but also in everyday life. The friendship group accrues symbolic and material profits during the holiday that are not equally available when travelling solo. The multiplier effects are shared pleasures, nice conversations, good company, reduced fears and power in sexualised spaces which result in positive senses of self. These effects are also resources
for further profits through the development of common memories and a long-term commitment in everyday life. These findings reflect three of the four roles of friends and family in the holiday identified by Crompton (1981); saving money; removing the risk of loneliness; an additional perspective to a holiday experience; and a forum for recalling and reminiscing about vacation experiences.

The field takes precedence over habitus (Bourdieu 1993) in that it is the field that affects habitus, not the other way around. This is also partly the case in the midlife single women’s holidays as many of the women have incorporated the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia in which they highly value the importance of reproducing bonding social capital. The social identity of a friend feels good. When practices are in accordance with the discourse and materiality the space remains more or less uncontested. To Bourdieu (1993:72) this is an ‘immanent law’ of the field in that habitus prepares the midlife single women tourists to engage with holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. That the midlife single women so highly value holidaying with friends, suggests that bonding social capital is the symbolic capital of the field, it is a central part of the doxa (Bourdieu 1993). On the other hand, the social identity is also a tactic which potentially changes the field. The midlife single women, for instance, adjust the holiday experience to their needs; they do friendships and invest in bonding social capital to create everyday belonging rather than mindlessly consuming tourism products. In this sense it gives them agency.

The doxa is in many ways imbued with paranoia concerning that which is ‘strange’. It does not promote bridging with dissimilar people at the destination but feeds upon itself and excludes difference. When the midlife single women holiday with friends or join a group package tour they seldom encounter or interact with unfamiliar people. Especially as group package tourists they have little time or energy to meet people outside their group. Bridging with locals is therefore seldom encouraged and indeed tour operators often discourage tourists from seeking difference, suggesting they stay in the resort (Andrews 2006). The programmes are often compact, group package tourists are constantly on the move. They are often more concerned with the members of their group than with other tourists, locals or employees of the tourism industry. The holiday experience is then more marked by sameness than difference. It is ‘social homogeneity of space, emphasised and fortified by spatial segregation’ (Bauman 2003:113). Such
needs for bonding often contributes to the ‘othering’ of locals (Cheong and Miller 2004) and makes the holiday experience a peg-community (Franklin 2003). It reduces the locals to objects on show to tourists (Berghe 1994). This is also partly the case in this research as most of the women do not encounter people outside the group or friendship context.

The emphasis on sameness, the value of bonding social capital and the identity of a friend then makes the midlife single women withdraw from the otherness outside, from bridging with locals and other tourists. It constitutes a safe and somewhat detached way of approaching a destination comparable to the disembodied tourist gaze. The women seldom emphasise interacting with locals, but treat the destination and its people as a setting for social interactions with significant others away-from-home. It then only partly supports the notion of women tourists as chorasters (Aitchison 2000; Cheong and Miller 2004; Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Wearing and Wearing 1996). The term chorasters describes women’s ways of dealing with people and places as multi-sensual experiences, as bridging and bonding with locals and as identity transformations (Wearing and Wearing 1996). The midlife single women in this study do have multi-sensual holiday experiences in that they talk, taste and look. However, they seldom encounter locals or other tourists, and consequently it is primarily the interactions with friends that affect their identities. This suggests that the concept of the choraster perhaps is utopia, or resonant for the minority of tourists such as the volunteers (Wearing 2001; Wearing and Neil 2000). It also suggests that they are controlled by the field.

Unlike Bauman (2003; Franklin 2003) who see the need for mixophobia as a negative quality of liquid modern society and the holiday experience as a peg community, I suggest that the prospects of bonding and sameness in many ways are very positive for the midlife single women. In tactically playing the game of the field the women also creates feelings of everyday belonging. This makes the holiday experience an important and real space. The women take advantage of the doxa to create meaningful interactions and long term bonds. It gives them agency and is at the same time tactical in nature. The social identity of a friend also create a protective cocoon which often turns the women into trusters when encountering new people and makes them recognised and relaxed as tourists. Such holiday experiences are therefore less contested spaces for most of the women as they silently manoeuvre around the pitfalls of the solo holiday, yet still
Furthermore, as Jordan and Gibson (2005) and Wilson and Little (2005) show, midlife women travelling solo cannot always easily access new places and people as holiday spaces are not equally available to all tourists. ‘The drive towards islands of similarity and sameness’ (Bauman 2003:110) is therefore a tactic to manoeuvre the pitfalls of solo holidays (Certeau 1984). Bauman (2003) argues that such an insurance policy is ineffective and short-sighted in that bonding social capital does not give skills for living with difference. I partly agree with this notion. On the other hand, as midlife, single and female, the women in this study somehow live the difference. Their need for connectedness is perhaps more a way of dealing with such outside positions than avoiding the harsh realities of life beyond the group of peers. The holiday experience is a perfect site and process for this. This perhaps points to a lack of gendered insight in Bauman’s (2003) concepts. He seems profoundly negative towards the nature of sameness, although he admits a need for balance between mixophobia and mixophilia. Most midlife single women tourists in this study, though, are constrained by gendered landscapes and adjust to the doxa instead of staying home alone or travelling solo. In this perspective, holidays with friends are not an ‘allergic, febrile sensitivity to strangers and the strange’ (Bauman 2003:115) but a wise tactic to deal with difference together. This transgresses traditional understandings of the holiday experience in that by using the holiday for reproducing bonding social capital, the midlife single women neutralise the power-relations embedded in the holiday. They therefore experience relatively few problems related to being woman, single or in midlife. In most cases the holiday experience just brings joy and affiliation.

This is of course a very broad picture of the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. If the data had focused on travel to one specific type of destination or just on one kind of holiday-making, more nuances might have been evident. So far I have also mainly concentrated on the positive sides of the shared holiday experience. The reproduction of bonding social capital does not, however, inevitably have positive consequences for the midlife single women and they do not always easily embrace the social identity of a friend. These issues are explored in the following section.
5.3 The shared holiday experience - a latent desire for independence and freedom

Simultaneously, as most of the midlife single women adjust to the *doxa*, they also express a need for being single individuals free to encounter people and places on their own terms. In this sense, they perhaps desire the role as chorasters (Wearing and Wearing 1996) and to approach the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophilia (Bauman 2003). Bauman (2003) is critical of the roots of mixophobia as it is embedded with a fear for strangers and the strange and a need for security. Only insecure people fall into this trap. Secure and independent people, on the other hand, seek spaces filled with mixophilia. In these spaces they search for difference, the new, the surprise and the strange, and, hence relationships that are filled with few routines, more opportunities and tolerance.

Many of the midlife single women are at times constrained by the demands for reproducing bonding social capital and they dislike the social identity of the friend. As singles they are used to being alone. The constant presence of friends clashes with a need for privacy, independence and the freedom to take risks alone. To get a more nuanced insight I therefore investigate the midlife single women’s negative experiences with shared holiday experiences. I study how the social identity of the friend restricts individual freedom and the ability to explore the unknown alone, and I examine how the women partly adjust and negotiate spaces for experiencing difference before and during the holiday experience.

### 5.3.1 Conflicts and restrictions on individual freedom

Tactically playing the game of the field is profitable in specific holiday situations and the identity of a friend mostly empowers the midlife single women. This identity is still somewhat in contrast with the need for independence that often characterises midlife single women (Baumbusch 2004; Byrne 2000; Gordon 1994a; Reynolds and Wetherell 2003) in that they appreciate the autonomy of their ways of living, to decide without consulting anybody and to be able to rely on their own abilities. The desire to invest in maintaining bonding social capital, among the midlife single women in this study is then by, way of precaution, a way of tactically playing the game of the field. It also suits their need for belonging and security as several of the women really dislike, or are
resistant to, the idea of travelling solo and/or in a group of strangers. The social identity of the friends is then both a bad and good choice. It is good in that bonding social capital is a valuable asset in the field, and bad in that it restricts individual freedom and results in potential areas of conflicts.

When talking about shared holiday experiences, many of the midlife single women express a desire for time to themselves. Personal time is sometimes sought to explore places alone, and at other times it is about a need for privacy. To Daisy, a 38-year old never married woman, it is about privacy. After holidaying with a group of women friends for three days she uses the diary to express a longing for solitude:

_started noticing that I’m not used to being with somebody 24 hours a day. Nice to be alone a few hours. Relax and read a bit of this book. It’s OK. … Miss being BY MYSELF a bit, but at the same time know it’s not a holiday I would go on alone._

(Daisy)

The _doxa_ and the constant demands for reproduction of bonding social capital then makes the holiday experience a contested space as the social identity of the friend reduces Daisy’s potential to express individuality and rejects her needs for privacy. Portes (1998) outlines four negative consequences of social capital. First, it means the exclusion of outsiders who do not benefit from membership in the group. Secondly, group membership can be overly demanding on the members; the norm of mutual assistance is stronger than the individual’s needs. This leads, thirdly, to limited individual freedom as it creates a demand for conformity and a strong level of social control. Fourthly, it sometimes means downward levelling norms which can block social mobility. Daisy points to an intersection between the second and the third consequence. The friends are sometimes overly demanding and limit her personal freedom. Such negative qualities of the bonding social capital do not, on the other hand, motivate Daisy to travel solo. She is representative of the single women who perhaps want, but do not dare seek, difference and solitude. In spite the need for privacy and individuality, bonding social capital is still a necessity to Daisy and, hence, solo holidays and individuality are too frightening. Despite being an independent midlife single woman in everyday life, the social identity of a friend is very much part of
Daisy’s *habitus* on holiday.

In addition to a desire for independence and privacy, some of the other women in the study also mention areas of conflicts as the result of travelling together. They report holiday companions with other interests than themselves, different views of how to spend money, different circadian rhythms, disrespect for each other, and a need to control the other. Paris, a 43-year old never married woman, revisits conflicts over domestic chores. When Paris invites friends to her summer house she sometimes feels like the waitress of an inn. Not all the friends understand the necessity of contributing in the cooking and cleaning; they are on holiday. She finds such friends disrespectful and does not reinvite them:

PARIS – if they’re unable to clean one single frying pan and do one single thing within one weekend, and if you have to wait on one or two, then.

EMILY – that’s unbelievable.

BENTE – you’ve told them, but it still didn’t work out?

PARIS – I’m able to speak up. So, that’s it.

ANGEL – I completely agree.

PARIS – these people I rather go out with in Oslo, and then I travel with the sporty ones, the ones able to lift their arms and legs.

(Paris, Emily and Angel)

When recalling a holiday with a good girl friend, Linda, a 48-year old divorcee, reflects that the friendship perhaps is better off if they do not holiday together. During the holiday their individual characteristics are displayed as so different that Linda by the end feels the friend’s criticism as bodily pain.

I think some friendships last longer if you don’t holiday together. Actually. A few years back I had an experience with one, till then good friend. And we really didn’t get along on holiday. It was painful … when I was curious and philosophical and observing people, we were in Barcelona together … then she commented – you are so nosy – like all the time (laughter) and it kind of killed all I … after a while I was deeply hurt.

(Linda)
One reason for Linda’s pain is perhaps that the demands for bonding social capital in everyday life are not comparable to the holiday. Friends seldom spend 24 hours a day together and are consequently mostly strangers to each other’s way of being, daily routines and abnormalities. In a holiday it becomes obvious if the relationship is based on strong or weak ties. Sometimes the ties are too weak and the differences too big. Then the investments in shared holiday memories do not turn into lasting bonding social capital. In contrast, they end the relationship abruptly.

This is not the case with Linda and her friend. Their ties are strong enough. The experience, however, does make her sceptical about travelling with just one close friend. She rather considers holidays with a smaller group of friends to be wiser as individual differences then become less important. On the other hand, conflicts also occur in a group of friends. The summer of the project, Linda and five friends rent an apartment in Italy for two weeks. In her diary it is obvious that they do not get along, at least part of the time. Linda does not tolerate much alcohol and her friends like to party into the night. This is an important activity for the others and Linda becomes an outsider, at least in the evenings. Furthermore, as the activity is time-consuming, it restricts her individual freedom. Despite such constraints, Linda does not take the opportunity to bridge or bond with unfamiliar people or to explore the destination alone. She is a loyal friend:

They went boozing half the night and next day we didn’t go out till late in the day. I think that’s a waste of time. I haven’t paid for this holiday just to hang round waiting. … Got started late. The others had been out late and got up late and took things at their leisure. I think a lot.

(Linda)

The conflicts Linda experiences as a consequence of her *habitus* can perhaps be linked to a constraint classification model in leisure research. Such models mainly focus on three categories of barriers that obstruct people from participating in leisure activities (Crawford and Godbey 1987; Crawford, Jackson and Godbey 1991). First, people are constrained by psychological barriers such as low self-esteem; secondly, by structural barriers such as lack of money and time; and thirdly, by interpersonal relationships such as problems with the company. In Linda’s case it is perhaps not the former two that
prevent a successful holiday. Linda is an experienced solo traveller with enough self-esteem to explore a destination by herself. Rather it is conflicts related to spending long hours with friends and her inability to withdraw and make independent choices that is the issue. Such areas of conflict become even more important in the holiday than in everyday life. If the conflicts are too tough, and the relationship does not survive the holiday the unthinkable happens. Linda would then be unable to play the game of the field. Even to an experienced solo traveller like Linda, this could be fatal. Conflicts with friends then turn the holiday experience into a contested space. In the next subsections I investigate how negotiation strategies often prevent this from happening.

5.3.2 Adjustments – restoring the social identity of the friend

A latent desire for independence and potential conflict do not spoil the holiday experience or relationships for most of the midlife single women. Most of them are very clear about the advantages of reproducing bonding social capital and they enjoy the social identity of a friend. They are therefore often willing to modify individual desires and conform to the group’s demands. Most conflicts have negative consequences and many of the midlife single women discuss ways of accommodating their individual demands with those of the friends’, without totally giving up a sense of individuality and privacy.

Instead of satisfying a need for independence and difference by travelling solo, some of the midlife single women maintain a feeling of control and autonomy by splitting up with the travel companionship for a short period of time. Several of the midlife single women speak positively about the prospect of doing their own things for a few hours and then meeting again. Such temporal separations both secure the possibilities for reproducing bonding social capital and provide opportunities to acquire the social identity of the independent traveller. June, a 50-year old divorcee, has positive experiences with such temporal independence:

Because you can in a way do some things together, but also part company and spread your wings a bit. I’ve found that works well. When I was with a friend last year we decided to have some time by ourselves occasionally. It was very successful.

(June)
Other women report that they discuss the possibility of splitting up with their travel companions before the holiday started, but in the end they stay together. Just the thought of the possibility of control seems to satisfy their need for independence (see Crompton 1981). In particular Tina, a 47-year old never married woman, has a ‘we-orientation’ on holiday: ‘I can’t imagine choosing an evening alone if the others were going somewhere which was OK’ (Tina). On the other hand, she also acknowledges her singlehood and need for independence. She sometimes splits up from her friends during the day. Tina is still a representative of the single women who play down the singlehood identity while on holiday and who really enjoy spending time reproducing bonding social capital and being sociable. A few of the other women such as Doris and Sara are less interested in doing this. Their need for control and independence is stronger and they refuse the norm of sameness.

Adjustments have a price, and to Sara, a 51-year old divorcee, this is one reason she often prefers solo holidays; the costs involved in spending precious holiday time on maintaining bonding social capital are too high. The strong ties may be real, but sometimes the friend’s routines or abnormalities are too constraining and it is not worth investing precious holiday time and economic capital in order to maintain the social capital. Sara does not fear the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. She would rather travel solo than endure and compromise. She prioritises the social identity of the independent traveller over that of the friend. Only this gives her true agency.

SARA – once I went on holiday with a friend and I must say that afterwards I was glad that I usually travel alone because there are so many routines you must follow. And you have to have coffee in bed, you mustn’t stress. But you know I’m wide awake straight away (laughter) so I was considerate to her all the time, I thought. And we couldn’t go there and had to do things just so, because she did it like that at home, so yes, I did things her way, kept quiet and humoured her. And I said to myself – actually it’s great to travel alone.

LIZ – I’ve had a trip like that, with only one friend.

SARA – I also thought it was awful the time she took in the mornings, with her coffee. I drank a lot of coffee as well but I drank it quickly, you know (laughter) – because I wanted to go out. But to go out about (laughter) half past eleven, I thought we’d wasted a lot of time.
Some of the women link the ability to negotiate shared experiences to gender and/or age. In one group there is an interesting discussion about how growing older affects one’s attitude towards negotiation and the willingness to invest in reproducing bonding social capital and the friendship. There are changes in terms of becoming more or less self-aware, which perhaps is related to the women’s different personalities and life histories. Jane, a 37-year old divorcee, has become more indulgent towards other people today and not longer sees the necessity of being in charge. Jane is a representative of the independent single woman. Tina, a 47-year old never married woman, on the other hand, has become more self-confident and thus able to express her opinions and make her own choices regardless of the group’s demands. Tina is also a representative of the independent single women but, in contrast to Jane, this has come with age. Contrary to Jane, Tina has never travelled solo.

TINA – I think I’ve become more like that as a person today. That if I want to do something and the others are going to do something I don’t particularly want to, then I do what I want. I think I’ve become more like that with age. That you don’t go along just to be with the crowd, that you daren’t do something by yourself, you know.

FIONA – you were more easy-going, perhaps, more easy-going at the start?

JANE – I think I’m more easy-going and more considerate about things now.

TINA – really?

JANE – yes, because I think, I can always go back, take another trip another time. It’s not that important. It’s true, and besides I think it’s fun when somebody else takes charge, because I do so much of that in my everyday life, feel that I take the lead. So actually I’m quite happy when somebody takes over.

TINA – yes, that’s right.

JANE – so I’m not so difficult to persuade, less selfish and obstinate on holiday than before, actually.

TINA – what I mean is, is it egoism when I think of myself or is it more about self-confidence? Because this time I certainly would, but if it had happened when I was 20 I wouldn’t have made my mind up myself. Like, OK today I’m going to Montmartre or something, then I would have gone with all the others, anyway, whereas now I’ve perhaps defined more what I want to do, but to be pleasant I can go along, because I enjoy being with others on holiday. I can’t imagine choosing an evening alone if the others were going somewhere OK. But if you think about 20 years ago I don’t think I would dare.
The desire for independence is present in the midlife single women’s accounts of the holiday experience, but mostly in a latent way. Most of the women adjust to the demands of the field. In doing so, they reproduce bonding social capital and adjust to the social identity of the friend. Such accommodations are a way of negotiating constraints (Little 2000, 2002) and partly reproduce and redefine the identity of the group. Little (2002) states that women negotiate participation in adventure recreation through at least three techniques. First, the activity is so important that they prioritise it over other activities. Secondly, the activity is so central that all necessary resources are compromised in order to participate; and thirdly, when unable to participate they would rather anticipate the activity than choose a new one. In particular, compromising characterises the negotiations among the midlife single women and their friends on holiday. The desire for the strange, the different, the new and the surprise is not often strong enough to motivate them to explore places and people alone.

I have argued that the midlife single women desire privacy and difference and, hence, perhaps some the social identity of the independent traveller. Still, most of them do not implement this in the holiday. They therefore control their actions and render latent such desires. Consequently most of the midlife single women compromise their own needs and desires for the benefit of the group and the field. A sense of independence is, though, kept by some of the women through temporal solitude or separation from the group. Such ways of negotiating the field are, on the other hand, also part of the interactive aspects of friendship in that they build on the dialectic of freedom to be independent and the freedom to be dependent (Fehr 1996; Pahl 2000; Rawlins 1992). Friends are supposed to be there in time of need and to give each other space when necessary. This reciprocity is constantly and actively negotiated. Friendship is therefore a perfect form of relationship and preserves important elements of singlehood. It also sometimes enables the midlife single women to temporarily trade in the social identity of the friend with that of the independent traveller. However, the doxa and habitus are still so strong that most of the midlife single women are prevented from over-doing the need for independence and they often quickly and voluntarily return to the safety of the group. It feels the safest. They would rather spend time and energy reducing the negative consequences of reproducing bonding social capital, than experiencing the world alone.
5.3.3 Pre-holiday tactics

In spite of the considerable emphasis in the focus group discussions placed on negotiating constraints and conflicts while holidaying with friends, most of the midlife single women express contentment with their travel companions. They are both able to tactically play the game of the field and to strengthen the bonding social capital. In this subsection I explore how this is accomplished in the planning phase. First, I explore the midlife single women’s criteria for selecting travel companions and, secondly, I investigate the meaning of pre-holiday conversations.

Most midlife single women form friendships with other women in the same situation (Segraves 2004) securing a certain level of comparable interest and mutual affection. Bonding social capital and the social identity of the friend are then also important parts of the women’s everyday life. Still, there are certain criteria potential travel companions have to fulfil. Similarity is of great significance. It is very important that the midlife single women and their friends share the same interests, have the same view of partying, alcohol and smoking, that they know about each other’s good and bad habits, and that they share the same life situation. In this way they secure real, strong ties. Sharing the same interests is more important than being single, at least to Eve and Emma, two never married women in their late thirties:

EMMA – and it’s rather important that you want to do the same things.
EVE – yes.
EMMA – that you.
EVE – that you have some of the same interests because I know I have many friends who are single really, but either they’re people who I can’t imagine going on holiday with because OK, we get on very well together, but I’m not sure how it would be living in close contact with them in a hotel room or something for a fortnight. Or, er, there are other reasons why I don’t want to travel with them. Perhaps we don’t have the same attitude to a holiday. I have my interests, what I like doing on holiday, while others perhaps like doing other things.
BENTE – can you elaborate a bit about this, it’s a bit cryptic.
EVE – OK. Well, I’m not the sort who can lie on the beach every day for a fortnight, I would die of boredom after a week. So I have to have some activity at least once a day. When you’re on holiday with somebody it’s nice to do something together as well. Not just go on a guided tour with a bunch of other tourists. So, um, you decide pretty quickly who to go on holiday with. Because
my friends who enjoy just lying on the beach, well, I don’t go with them. It wouldn’t work.

(Eve and Emma)

To other women their single status is more important, and in many cases the women and the travel companions mirror each other on central characteristics (Cocking and Kennet 1998). The relationship is imprinted by ‘the rule of similarity’ (Fehr 1996:57-58) which states that friends have similar socio-demographic characteristics, attitudes and physical attractiveness. The rule of similarity makes the midlife single woman and her friends feel a strong sense of affiliation. This can reduce potential areas of conflict. As such, some of the midlife single women talk about the importance of having close friends in the same situation and how this offers a sense of community both on holiday and at home. Clara, a 40-year old divorcee, and her friends are aware of the marginalised position of single women in a familial society (Gordon 1994a). They challenge this by creating their protective network of friends, or what is known as the ‘urban tribe’ (Trimberger 2005:247) or the ‘family of choice’ (Pahl 2000:3). To Clara the family of choice functions as a regular travel companion, as she explains:

I’d like to say one thing, and that is that we’ve come to the conclusion that really – I have a special circle of friends and seven are single, of different ages, so we really have a good time together. We’ve found out that we are very lucky. We are privileged in our way of life and can go on holiday together and really enjoy the experience. And you can have a pleasant life without a husband. That’s our conclusion. It’s what they call an urban family, which in many ways is just as important as your real family if you’re single. At any rate for me who hasn’t got my family here. So important that if it was taken away from me I think my life would be very miserable. That’s how important it is.

(Clara)

Talking about how to relate to each other is another tactic for reducing conflicts and negative consequences of travelling together. Thomas (2005:576) terms such talk ‘rules of behaviour’, and in her study it concerns not bringing back memories of excessive behaviour such as casual sex and heavy drinking. Pre-holiday talks prepare for the trip and contribute to minimising problems (Ross 2005). Some of the women in this study
mention discussions of rules for partying but none for sexual conduct. The reason for not talking about rules for sexual relationships could be that the women and their friends never engage in such encounters on holiday. This is, however, not likely (see Sánchez Taylor 2001) as sex-related issues are sometimes present in the diaries and a few times discussed in the groups. Most of the midlife single women, on the other hand, have rules for how to deal with partying. To some women the travel companion’s preferences for partying can mean exclusion. Some other women are more moderate and agree to party some nights, whereas others plan to party every night as normal.

Daisy, a 38-year old never married woman, revisits how important it is to discuss the amount of partying before the holiday. She is not against drinking alcohol but prefers holiday companions that, like her, are moderate drinkers.

About partying at night, that you agree, okay – we can party a bit, but perhaps not every night. This, yes, to find similarities, that is very important.

(Daisy)

In their pre-trip discussions the midlife single women and their friends also talk about other areas of conflict such as dependency, money issues and different interests in how, what, and when to do things. Emily, a 40-year old never married woman, and her friends develop rules about accommodation before they go on bike trips in order to prevent struggles over money:

EMILY – and then we have rules, like we don’t camp in tents if it rains.
BENTE – OK.
EMILY – so, we all agree.
BENTE – you’ve agreed on that in advance?
EMILY – on things like that (laughter). I think it’s silly to go on holiday together when one wants to camp and the other wants to stay at the most expensive hotel. Because then it gets, I’m always particular about things like that, at any rate my friends and I always agree in advance so we don’t have to discuss things.

(Emily)

Other women are less concerned with preparing for the holiday experience, either because they do not want to confront each other or because they already know
everything about each other. In one of the focus group interviews Betty, a 36-year old never married woman, expresses discontent with her travel companion as she is addicted to sun-bathing and Betty is uninterested in spending all day at the beach. When I ask Betty if they discussed this before the holiday she reluctantly admits that the issue is difficult to bring up:

BETTY – but it depends what it’s about. Because in this situation it didn’t matter much to me.
BENTE – but you talked about it a lot.
BETTY – but in connection with the holiday it was the real minus, which made the holiday a bit different. Mostly because it remained a subject under the surface, without being a big deal, I don’t know why.
DIANA – perhaps because it wasn’t taken up?
BETTY – possibly.
DIANA – have no idea.
BETTY – yes, could be.

(Betty and Diana)

This lends support to Coates’ (1996) claim that women’s talk is not characterised by a challenging nature and conflicts are seen as problematic, although still often dealt with.

In this section I have further demonstrated the importance the midlife single women place on the reproduction of bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend. Despite areas of conflict, the need for individuality and privacy, most of the women negotiate and develop ways to deal with the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. One reason the women are willing to accommodate the needs of their friends is the value they place on bonding social capital before and after the holiday. This finding supports the notion of lack of boundaries between home/away in the new mobility turn (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2004a, see also section 4.3.4). Even so, not all midlife single women are equally able to negotiate potential areas of conflict and sometimes have to accept the consequences of being discontent.

5.4 Chapter summary and concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have explored some of the important aspects of the interrelationships
between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities and suggested that the interrelationships are marked by a sociable space of mixophobia. This characteristic permeates the materiality and the doxa of the holiday experience, and the social identities of the people involved. In this space bonding social capital is the symbolic capital and most of the midlife single women accommodate the social identity of a friend. In a Bourdieuan sense, they exercise a ‘practical knowledge of the principle of the game’ (Bourdieu 1993:74) in that the social identity of a friend is used for dealing with the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. Consequently, most of the midlife single women prefer holidays with close friends or a group package tour. Bonding social capital in these situations gives material and symbolic profits in that it is a protector in difficult situations and provides the women with capital when they are confronted with male attention and sexualised gazes. It creates a psychological strength which empowers them.

This chapter then deals indirectly with power relations. When analysing power relations in tourism a Foucauldian perspective is sometimes applied (Cheong and Miller 2000, 2004; Jordan 2003; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Veijola and Jokinen 1994, see also section 4.3.3). According to Cheong and Miller (2000), Foucault sees power as relationships performed and produced through the repressive gaze. It is not tied to individuals but to the collective. It is embedded in the omnipresent discourse, or what Bourdieu (1996:45) terms ‘symbolic power’. All tourists are then subject to the surveillance of the industry, locals and other tourists. They are on unfamiliar grounds, stripped of many cultural and familial ties, exposed to new norms and expectations. They have to accommodate to the local culture and the ways of the tourism industry. In this perspective the power relations are imbued in the discourse or the doxa, leaving the midlife single women potentially little space for agency and social transformation.

This chapter mainly rests on Bourdieu’s notions of power. Contrary to Foucault (1999), Bourdieu (1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995) and, also McNay (2000) suggest that such power relations are primarily embedded in the people involved. It is the investments of tourists and actors of the tourism industry that make bonding social capital dominate the field and give it symbolic power affecting the social identities available. In this perspective power relations permeate the actors on a pre-reflexive level as well as being imbued in the discourse and materiality of the field, leaving the
midlife single women space for agency and potential social transformation. Bonding social capital is part of the women’s *habitus* as tourists. This does not disregard the importance of economic and cultural capital, but see the former as necessary to participate in the field; however, once inside, bonding social capital becomes crucial for how the holiday experience is played out. The latter capital is already embedded in the symbolic capital; *habitus* is an important part of cultural capital and, hence, skilful investments of bonding social capital are partly due to cultural capital. This chapter, for instance, indicates that bonding social capital is the symbolic capital of the holiday experience. The midlife single women have incorporated the norm of sameness and most of them prefer to holiday with friends. Shared holidays therefore make them content and happy tourists.

It is too simplistic to argue that when tactically playing the game of the field the midlife single women only have positive holiday experiences. They also long for privacy and independence, and conflicts between friends arise. Nevertheless, the negative consequences are controlled through the women’s willingness to negotiate, plan and confront such issues before and during the holiday. The desire for freedom and independence therefore exists in parallel with the ability to handle interpersonal relationships over shorter periods of time. Most of the midlife single women are temporarily able to change their singlehood identities for a ‘we-oriented’ identity (Byrne 2000; Gordon 1994a; Reynolds and Wetherell 2003), and they enjoy this transformation. Those of the midlife single women unable or unwilling to do this would rather engage in solo travelling. To them shared holidays are not good options.

Although most of the midlife single women find comfort in the social identity of a friend and really enjoy reproducing bonding social capital, this does not mean that they are totally controlled by the field. They also have tactical power (Certeau 1984; Skeggs 1997) and agency (McNay 2004a, b). Agency is first and foremost noticeable in the ways the women transform the holiday experience from being about experiencing site-specific attractions, highlights and services to doing friendships. The doing of such friendships transcends the holiday experience and is used in everyday life for creating a sense of belonging and mattering. The doing of things, talking and being together are also important aspects of female friendships in everyday life. By spending time together the holiday functions as a space for strengthening and contesting
gender/singlehood/midlife identities as well as the identity of a friend. In particular, the holiday meal experience and the restaurant are used for this purpose. The importance of sharing holiday experiences, furthermore, exceeds its immediate profits as the memories become part of a ‘collectivity-owned capital’ (Bourdieu 1986) which can be tapped from as long as the bonding social capital exists. The holiday experience is then a means of achieving social integration. Agency is also noticeable when the midlife single women join group package tours instead of travelling solo. If friends are unavailable as holiday companions the group package tour accrues social capital or secures visits to inaccessible destinations.

In this chapter I have sometimes explored solo holiday experiences as contrasts to the shared ones. In the next chapter I further explore solo holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities.
6 The solo holiday experience

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I have demonstrated that the holiday experience is a sociable space of mixophobia. It is closely linked to the reproduction of bonding social capital and, hence, the social identity of a friend is accommodated and welcomed. The social identity of a friend mostly reduces the stigma of being female, midlife and single and empowers the women’s holiday experiences. It appears to make the holiday experience an uncontested space.

However, the holiday experience is far from an uncontested space. It has a ‘sign-value’ which is imbued with power relations (Haldrup and Larsen 2006:278). In a Foucauldian sense this refers to performances and productions through ways of seeing such as the repressive gaze (Cheong and Miller 2000), the sexualized gaze(s) of men (Jordan and Aitchison 2008), the protective gaze of local women and the sociable gaze in encounters with new people (Jordan 2003). Such discourses are embedded with power relations which affect solo tourists. In a Bourdieuan (1990) sense this knowledge forms the doxa; the presuppositions of how to play the games of tourism. In addition to possessing a sign-value, the holiday experience also has a ‘use value’ (Haldrup and Larsen 2006:278). Its power-relations are also based within its material structures. Drawing on a feminist approach this often means masculine and/or heterosexual practices that are incorporated in people’s ways of ‘doing’ the holiday, such as rejecting solo holidays (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw 2000; Little 2002; Pritchard and Morgan 2006; Wilson 2004).

Power relations are then always intersubjectively situated in lived social relations (McNay 2004a, b) but, unlike in a Foucauldian perspective, the midlife single women not only adjust to the discourse or doxa; they incorporate it (Bourdieu 1984, 1993). It
becomes part of their *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990) and they engage in the struggle of controlling the field with their various forms of capital. Women therefore bring material resources in the form of money, education, clothes, manners and friends to the space. *Habitus* denotes a notion of power that is generative rather than docile (McNay 2000); the *doxa* is both inculcated upon and lived by the body. Furthermore, the midlife single women know the symbolic power and capital of a field and act to control it. This makes them submissive but it also gives them agency. Little empirical research has been undertaken in order to understand such complex power relations and how they intersect with the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities (Crouch 2002; Haldrup and Larsen 2006).

Nevertheless, some of the midlife single women also embrace solo holiday experiences and most of them find the interactions with friends problematic at times (see section 5.3). Solo holidays then subvert the holiday experience and the lack of bonding social capital enables and enforces other social identities, but also exposes the holiday as a contested space. Solo holidays in this thesis are holidays away from home without prior arrangement to be with people, but also holidays away from home with elements of solitude such as a few days off alone before or after the planned company arrives or departs (Jordan 2003). Studies show that such holiday experiences both constrain and empower female tourists (Jordan 2003; Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Jordan and Gibson 2005; Wilson 2004; Wilson and Little 2005). As its contradiction, solo holidays then partly support the notion of the power imbued in the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. On the other hand, solo travelling does not mean disconnected tourists. They potentially bridge or bond with other tourists, locals or employees of the industry. It does, however, mean tourists playing the holiday experience as single individuals. They book single rooms, eat out alone, explore the destination alone and so on.

One main concept in this thesis is social capital and its two sub-concepts of bonding and bridging social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam 2001). The idea here is that people are part of valuable social networks in one form or the other; through family belonging, friendship, and work and leisure networks. The extent of bonding and bridging social capital in a society depends upon the nature of the community of work and residence, some encourage strong ties and others weak ties (Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 2003).
Furthermore, the connections to some social groupings are valued more highly than others (Bourdieu 1986). In everyday life the midlife single women then have a pool of people to which they bond or bridge on a regular basis. As solo tourists they possess the same connections, but they are simultaneously disconnected from them (Smith 1989). On the other hand, network capital such as the use of mobile phones during the solo holiday signifies ties to geographically dispersed people or non-spatial communities (Larsen, Urry and Axhausen 2006), enabling some forms of profit from social capital. Still, the material and symbolic profits accruing from group belongings are not easily derived when visiting a place away from home alone. Solo holidays therefore often result in a temporal lack of profit from the social capital of everyday life. I term this a ‘temporal lack of social capital’. This concept of temporal lack of social capital is not in opposition to the possibility solo female tourists have to bond and bridge with new people at the destination. But, unlike people travelling together, solo tourists are disconnected individuals, unable to profit from previous group membership at new places.

In this chapter I explore the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities by investigating solo holiday experiences. As a contradiction to shared holiday experiences (Chapter Five), I study how the solo holiday is permeated with power relations. I explore *habitus* to map out how power relations are incorporated in the women’s bodies and social identities, and I also investigate how such power is exercised through the tourist gaze. In order to fully understand such relations I examine temporal and spatial dimensions. *Habitus* and the tourist gaze are structural power concepts which often affect the midlife single women’s solo holidays and social identities negatively. I therefore also look at ‘ways of doing’ the solo holiday to map out and understand the mental and physical tactics the women engage in to gain successful solo holiday experiences and a positive social identity.

### 6.2 Solo holidays – temporal lack of social capital

This analysis is based on the 30 midlife single women’s oral and written solo holiday experiences from the time of the project, but also on recollections of previous experiences or only perceptions thereof; nine of the women have never travelled solo. These women do not differ especially from the other women; although three of the five
women with low education are in this group (see Appendix Eighteen). Solo holidays are then perhaps a middle class phenomenon. In the summer of the project, 18 of the midlife single women reported that they spent parts or the whole holiday alone. Table 6.1 shows that this first and foremost takes place at home in all three periods of holidays and, hence, are not solo holidays as defined within this thesis. Furthermore, at home some of the women are also visited by friends and family. Only seven of the midlife single women then holiday alone. Two of these women travel in Norway and five overseas; one of these latter women has two solo holidays overseas. The women holidaying alone in Norway stay at the summer house or in a mountain resort. The women travelling overseas visit the cities of London, Glasgow, Dublin or Florence or stay at beach resorts in the Canaries or Greece. The latter two solo holidays last a week, the others between two and five days. In three of the shorter holidays the women eventually join friends and family for a longer shared holiday.

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These facts indicate that many of the midlife single women have previously travelled solo, but also that such holidays are not very attractive or that they do not last very long. Women in general are often reluctant to engage in solo travelling (Carr 2001; Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter 2001; Small 2002). This is perhaps connected to the facts that solo travellers are financially penalised by singles accommodation supplements (Jordan 2003) and that restaurants are designed and organised to accommodate the needs of couples or more people (Warde and Martens 2000). Temporal lack of social capital makes the holiday more expensive and female tourists uncomfortable in specific situations and settings. It is a space for inequality and power relations. The midlife single women in this study have a ‘practical knowledge of the principle of the game’ (Bourdieu 1993:74) and are well aware of such inequalities and power relations. As Chapter Five indicates they therefore prefer to holiday with other people. Still, some solo holidays are an option to midlife single women. In this subsection I explore how temporal lack of social capital affects the midlife single women’s holiday experience and social identities negatively and prevents many of them
from travelling solo.

6.2.1 Fears of loneliness

The holiday experience is embedded with a notion that tourists have comparable needs of gazing at and engaging with the landscapes they travel through (Haldrup and Larsen 2006). Such engagements and gazes are supposed to be shared with significant others (Trauer and Ryan 2005; Bærenholdt et al. 2004). In Chapter Five I demonstrated that for the midlife single women the significant others are friends from home and sometimes new friends met on holiday. The new friends, though, are seldom found by chance at the destination but in group package tours. Shared holiday experiences often make the midlife single women content tourists.

When reflecting on and revisiting solo holidays it is especially the visible, temporal lack of social capital that ‘decapitalizes’ the midlife single women and that affects their social identities negatively. In a space where social capital is highly valued, social isolation has strong negative, mental consequences. Laura, a 54-year old divorcee, attaches a general stigma to such solitude which is probably one reason she never travels solo. She fears the loneliness, especially other people’s reactions. She knows the holiday experience is a sociable space of mixophobia and expects to be sanctioned and scrutinized if holidaying alone. She fears the social identity of the loner.

On the other hand it’s the feeling of loneliness I would be afraid of. Especially if I’m among a lot of people … And it’s probably something to do with that I feel I would have to explain to my surroundings. Sort of, poor you travelling alone. You’re on your own. I would feel that a bit, would feel the need to defend myself quite strongly.

(Laura)

Fear of the social identity of the loner is a starting point for understanding the discomfort expressed by many of the midlife single women when talking about solo holidays. It is perhaps a personal constraint often experienced by solo female travellers (Wilson and Little 2005). The loneliness of solo travelling is more about social than emotional isolation (Weiss 1973). Many of the midlife single women fear alienation as a result of the temporal lack of social capital during the holiday. It is not that they do not
have any friends or family at all. Social integration is critical to human development. It enables the possibility to express and validate one’s feelings and opinions, and most people experience the feeling of being ‘left out’ as very painful (Weiss 1973:146). Most people dislike being noticed by others as alone and forced solitude is often defined as a symptom of depression or as punishment (Larson 1990).

Many of the women in this study revisit solo holiday experiences which indicated that they are disciplined by the tourist gaze and habitus negatively. They pinpoint the restaurant as the holiday space where they are the most under surveillance and feel the most uncomfortable and lonely. Sometimes they feel the pitying gaze of others, at other times they just generally feel uncomfortable when observed as alone. Angel, a 50-year old divorcee, and Doris, a 36-year old never married woman, discuss the strong effects pitying gazes have upon the eating experience. It structures actions and, when Doris starts out as a solo traveller, it makes her so lonely and powerless that she sometimes wants to cry.

BENTE – what happens if we’re not comfortable?
ANGEL – it’s not nice to sit in the middle of things and be stared at, then you really are alone, no matter how many books you’ve got with you.
DORIS – then I would have gone up to my hotel room afterwards and cried.
ANGEL – yes.
DORIS – I would have felt that everybody was sitting and laughing at me, or feeling sorry for me and.
ANGEL – look at her.
DORIS – finished my meal as quickly as possible and gone.

(Angel and Doris)

As singles, the women in the study are used to and like to do things by themselves. They embrace the social identity of the loner in everyday life, but when it comes to the holiday there is an extra need and desire for the social identity of the friend (see also Segraves 2004). Laura’s quote, for instance, indicates how the fear of loneliness is both inscribed in cultural norms and in her habitus as a tourist (McNay 2000). A combination of controlling gazes and a controlling body make her desist solo holidays and the social identity of the loner. It does not mean that she always avoids solitude, but it mostly happens in the private sphere of everyday life; leisure time is often shared (Larson...
1990). As most people, she is not used to spending the holiday alone in public spaces. It is not the intention of the thesis to investigate gender differences, but it is reason to believe that men also experience public solitude on solo holidays as unsatisfactory and unpleasant (Weiss 1973). However, there are perhaps gender differences in how solitude in public spaces is perceived (Gardner 1989; Valentine 1989) and a female habitus is often submissive in nature (McNay 2000). This is perhaps one reason solo travelling women are negatively sanctioned by friends and family when announcing holiday plans (Jordan 2003).

‘Aloneness becomes less lonely in adulthood’ (Larson 1990:183). The midlife single women’s solo holiday experiences partly support and partly disprove this notion. Some of the women with grown up children have relearned to be solitary in the holiday. On the other hand, the always-single Daisy, a 38-year old never married woman, although more comfortable in doing things alone now than when she was 20, still finds it difficult to travel solo. She needs the social identity of the friend to enjoy a destination. Ada, and Paris, two never married women in their early forties, recount how they never eat out at night on solo holidays but rather have the main meal of the day in the late afternoon. Paris and Ada then point to temporal dimensions of the holiday restaurant experience, which I discuss in section 6.3. Here I am more concerned with the fact that the solo holiday experience produces fears of loneliness. Paris describes the act of eating out alone at night as ‘cowardly’ and admits that since turning 35 she challenges herself even less when it comes to facing public solitude in the evening. Ada remembers how slim she became after solo tripping for five weeks. This suggests that the social identity of the loner is difficult to face in public.

JUNE – you wouldn’t have eaten much in that case then? (laughter)
ADA – no, I was really thin when I came home (laughter). I ate mostly vegetables and walked around a lot. Fruit and vegetables, and out walking all the time.
JUNE – that was healthy then?
ADA – to take in as much as possible.
JUNE – mm.
ADA – but those terrific jeans, the Levis I bought in San Francisco, didn’t fit me for more than a fortnight.

(June and Ada)
Doris, a 36-year old never married woman, and well experienced solo traveller, who has learned to deal with being alone, points to the gendered nature of women’s fear of public solitude; many women believe that social capital improves the situation and makes them safe.

Well, I think that’s part of being a woman really. Women brought up like us are sort of used to being in flocks and looking after people. So I think it’s got a lot to do with women’s character. I think we create a fear which isn’t there, and we often need acknowledgement from others to be happy. Er, at least that’s what I noticed with a lot of women. That you need to be acknowledged for yourself before you can relax and BE yourself. And you’re afraid of being alone because then the world kind of forces itself on you. You have to think and reflect and you’re forced to behave in a completely different way; that you are sort of naked in front of the world and meet the world as you are. And I think a lot of people find that frightening.

(Doris)

A temporal lack of social capital manifests itself in loss of symbolic profit in the forms of association and recognition (Bourdieu 1986). The midlife single women feel or fear the tourist gaze and partly dislike being visibly alone because they are disconnected from friends and family, they sense the social identity of the loner negatively. Such power structures are also part of their habitus. Just the idea of solo holidays makes some of the women fear how to deal with solitude in various situations.

6.2.2 Fears of marginalisation – eating out

The midlife single women often link the fears of loneliness to eating out alone. In this space such fears are very much about social isolation and marginalisation (Gordon 1994a; Weiss 1973). The holiday meal experience is in many ways about ‘performative pleasures’ (Finkelstein 198:202) and being seen and seeing others are essential parts of the attraction. Public eating and the constant display therefore propose a challenge for most people, particularly when alone (Bell and Valentine 1997). It mirrors the importance of physical appearance, respectability and being validated by others, reflecting old bourgeois values. The holiday meal experience in particular signifies
luxury and pleasurable experiences; shared activities based on hard earned money (Wang 2002). It does not accommodate solitude.

The act of eating out is more than satisfying one’s hunger. It is a way of presenting one’s gender, social class and social identities through the strict forms and manners that shapes it (Bourdieu 1984). The way tables are set with two chairs or more and in ways that make people watch each others’ manners, moves and moods set the stage for togetherness and mark the importance of social capital. The restaurant experience is therefore embedded with power relations which are part of tourists’ *habitus*, often making the solo guest uncomfortable. Diana and Emma discuss such aspects in one of the focus groups. Diana, a 36-year old never married woman, points to the norm of sociality and the value of mutual gratification in the shared restaurant meal experience (Warde and Martens 2000). Emma, a 38-year old never married woman, argues that it is not socially acceptable for her to sit alone in a restaurant after the meal and enjoy a drink or two. The discussion indicates the social construction of space and how women’s access to public places is restricted (Gardner 1989) but it also reflects the internalisation of social norms and how these are part of the women’s *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990). The sociality of sameness embedded in the holiday experience is incorporated in the women’s identities. They cannot enjoy such experiences alone; the solitude make them feel social isolated, out of place and long for company.

BENTE – but what is it about the situation that.
DIANA – yes the situation.
BENTE – makes you so uncomfortable?
DIANA – yes, that’s it, what is it? It’s just that I don’t think it’s pleasant to sit and see lots of other people having a good time while I sit there and have nobody to share things with. Yes, I think perhaps that’s it: that I envy the others who have someone to share it with. Because to say I really enjoy my food – ooh, that looks good, shall we try some – yes, let’s (laughter). That’s not very interesting to say to yourself (laughter).
EMMA – like shall we share a bottle of wine?
VICTORIA – no, but you can say I’m really having such a good time now – I’ll just have a glass of wine (laughter).
EMMA – yes, that’s right. So you sit there and text, don’t you. Yes. I feel sort of that when I’m on holiday the evenings are nice. I don’t have to be out all night, but if you go out to eat, and eat by yourself, then the evenings are very short I think. Because I can’t just sit there at a restaurant and drink alone.
The importance of sharing the holiday meal experience is not directly linked to a gendered *habitus*, but perhaps more to a ‘familialised’ one. Most people dislike eating out alone (Warde and Martens 2000), especially women on holiday (Jordan 2003). According to Warde and Martens (2000) a notion of social commitment is embedded in the meal experience. There is also generally a close link between producing a meal and producing belonging. DeVault (1991) analyses the role of feeding in the family and shows how the mother creates a family identity through her cooking as well as taking each family member’s individuality into consideration. People’s need to socialise is sometimes more important than the meal itself and it is deeply rooted within us. Diana, a 36-year old never married woman, links the holiday meal experience to primary processes of socialisation and internalisation, and the value of such shared experiences to the social identity of the family member. Although, Diana has lived alone for years this identity is deeply entrenched and affects her when travelling solo.

Dinner at home has always been social, we’ve always been together for dinner, at three or five o’clock we have to eat together. It’s something I associate with sitting and chatting to people and enjoying myself. To hear what people are doing and stuff … It’s more common for me, I think it’s just habit. I’ve been brought up to feel that dinner should be sociable and enjoyable. And when it isn’t, because I’m alone, I feel really lonely.

(Diana)

A shared meal experience articulates in many ways the social identity of a family member (Bell and Valentine 1997; DeVault 1991). A notion of a ‘familialised’ *habitus* is further strengthened by the women in the study by linking the solo eating experience to negative perceptions of singlehood; the lonely loser (Reynolds and Wetherell 2003; Stein 1976). A single woman eating out alone symbolises the notion of a family of one, which is hardly termed a family, just a person without a close network of friends or social capital. In one of the focus groups the midlife single women link this to their marginal position as *enslig*. In Norwegian ‘single’ translates into ‘*enslig*’. Although both concepts are used, they are not synonymous; the midlife single women link *enslig* to strong negative connotations and resemblances of *ensom* (lonely) and single to
positive connotations of freedom, modern, youthful, trendy, urban and social
acceptance. A negative link between eating out alone and enslig appears as obvious in
the discussion between Daisy, Ada and June and, hence, between solo holidays and the
social identity of the loner.

DAISY – but dinner alone is the worst I think.
BENTE – why?
DAISY – I don’t know. But you’re lonely.
ADA – alone at a restaurant = ensom.
JUNE – = enslig (laughter).
BENTE – yes, is it because everybody looks at you or?
ADA – left out.
DAISY – while you just sit there eating.

(Daisy, Ada and June)

The midlife single women then fear the social identity of the loner when visiting a
restaurant alone on holiday. Such a disposition towards seeking shared restaurant meal
experiences is perhaps connected to a stigma of ‘familylessness’ (Gordon 1994a) or
‘friendlessness’, or to paraphrase Giddens (1991:3) ‘ontological (in)security’, a lack of
‘ontological comfort of home’ where public solitude for most people is rare (Quan and
Wang 2004). The solo eating out experiences and the gender/singlehood/midlife are
marginal situations as they ‘push us to the borders of our existence’ (Shilling1993:178).
‘Marginality’ refers to people on the sidelines who are powerless and dominated by
others (Gordon 1994a:178), and is often linked to a place (Shields 1992). Based on
Berger’s understanding of the concept, Shilling (1993) argues that marginality is also a
situation. It occurs when we see our own mortality and vulnerability or acknowledge
that we are living in an unstable world where we can only trust what we do. In such
moments the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life is questioned, our sense of
belonging, and hence our identities are at stake. The habitus then becomes a reflexive
knowledge or a conscious state of mind (Bourdieu 1990).

Andereck (1997) discusses how groups claim access to public spaces by territorial
behaviour. In the restaurant there are groups who claim the ‘right to recognition’. The
restaurant is not only produced by a mutual understanding of group territory but also by
what should be visible or not within it (Fraser 2000). ‘Visibility is about empirical recognition of being in or out of place that invariably invokes regimes of placement’ (Skeggs 1999:220). Single restaurant guests are programmed to feel uncomfortable; they have incorporated the tourist gaze and sense that they do not master the game. The women in the study who travel solo seldom talked about how they attempt to claim this territory or change the situation by meeting new people. Most of them bear the feelings of marginality and the social identity of the loner. They accept the exclusion from a community and tolerate the discomfort (Gordon 1994a). This is described by Eve, a 38-year old never married woman, who feels and endures the tourist gaze of the restaurant staff. The waiters have in many ways the right to claim recognition in this space. The quote acknowledges how Eve and the waiters have incorporated the tourist gaze. The knowledge is a living practice for both parties, existing mainly on a pre-reflexive level (McNay 2000). In the situation it becomes reflexive as Eve links her reactions to the social identity of the loner, making her face feelings of powerlessness and marginality.

Yes, but, I kind of noticed it more gradually, as I noticed the reaction of the waiters or the people working there. I felt they reacted a bit when I asked for a table for one. And, that, or if I just said I wanted a table, they showed me one, then they came back a bit later and asked if any more people were coming. It was like they thought it was a bit strange when I said no, there’s just me. And it was then that I started to think about it as well. That I started to feel it sort of, and I looked around and saw that either there were couples or whole families, or friends or something like that. Then I felt that I, that I, not necessarily got attention, I felt very kind of self-conscious about it. That I was sitting there by myself. Er, I must say it wasn’t really very pleasant.

(Eve)

*Habitus* is a personal and collective disposition controlling the midlife single women’s actions as solo tourists (Bourdieu 1990); it generates reasonable behaviours seeking positive sanctions and temporal lack of social capital in this situation does not achieve this. Some midlife single women are therefore entirely disempowered by the thought of eating out alone while others, often the experienced solo travellers, are less constrained. Feelings of being sidelined and powerless when eating out are not only linked to the temporal lack of social capital and tourist gaze of the staff, but also to the tourist gaze of
the other guests in the restaurant. If the temporal lack of social capital and the social identity of the loner is not so evident to the other guests, it does not matter that much. Other guests often have social capital and the social identities of the friend/family member and thereby the right to claim recognition. The experienced solo traveller, Sara, a 51-year old and divorcee, sometimes feels extra lonely while eating out alone, surrounded by other people enjoying themselves with their family and friends. The presence of other guests with social capital makes her realize she does not master the game, her *habitus* is realized negatively (McNay 2000).

SARA – but it can happen sometimes that, when I’m sitting alone, the few times it’s happened, so, I remember especially once in Crete, I really felt sorry for myself. Sitting there eating alone. But it doesn’t happen often, but once I remember it did. And it was really awful.

BENTE – yes, what is it about evenings and dinner and this situation at the restaurant that makes it unpleasant for some of you?

SARA – I think, it seems as though people are enjoying themselves together and so your own loneliness is so more noticeable when you’re by yourself.

(Sara)

Annie, a 38-year old never married woman, and also an experienced solo traveller recalls a comparable situation. She emphasises the strong emotional effects that solo dining sometimes has upon her. Just watching other people maintaining their social capital, by being happy together, makes her feel powerless and hollow.

But I can still get that kind of sensitive feeling when I see other couples, or a group of friends laughing and having fun, enjoying themselves. Right then you can get a kind of hollow feeling, well I do. … A good dinner, that’s something I’d rather share with someone.

(Annie)

Angel, a 50-year old divorcee, is also aware of the marginality of gender/singlehood/midlife and solitude in a restaurant. Emily, a 40-year old never married woman, needs to moderate this deviant position a little bit. The two women then do not perceive an equal degree of marginality in the situation. It is a mobile concept (Gordon 1994a). Furthermore, the quote indicates that *habitus* is a generative structure as it engenders
several possible patterns of behaviour for women in the holiday (McNay 2000). Angel feels like the dregs whereas Emily is just lonely.

ANGEL – you really need to talk about it and feel it, and experience things together while you’re eating. And there are very few people alone, so you feel really alone when you’re the only one by yourself at a restaurant and there are just couples and families round you. That’s when I feel ‘aloneness’

BENTE – so then it’s sad?

ANGEL – I feel like the dregs (laughter).

EMILY – perhaps you’re more lonely?

(Angel and Emily)

Most of the midlife single women do see through the notion that social capital makes tourists content and that the positive aspects of the social identity of the family member/friend are exaggerated; the *habitus* also exists on a reflexive level. The women know that other people are not always happy together, do not always have a fun time together, do not always talk about interesting things and do not always enjoy each others’ company. They acknowledge that togetherness in family holidays is a strenuous practice and hard to realise; parents and children often have conflicting interests (Gram 2005). They are therefore mentally able to challenge the marginal position. Nevertheless, as Diana, a 36-year old never married woman, puts it; ‘all rational thoughts disappear’ because the attention is aimed towards ones’ own vulnerable situation, not the actual lives of others. The social identity of the loner is then an example of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995) and how an insight into the workings of power-relations does not change the marginality of the situation. Particularly in a restaurant people are very visible as alone. They sit still and are in a space accommodating social capital (Warde and Martens 2000). The value of social capital and the negative and marginal aspects of gender/singlehood/midlife identities therefore often merge. This suggests that the temporal lack of social capital produces a fear of misrecognition (Fraser 2000) which is entrenched in the midlife single women’s *habitus* (McNay 2000).

In this subsection I have further demonstrated the value of social capital; the social identity of the loner is negatively permeated in the midlife single women’s *habitus* and in the tourist gaze. Just thinking about eating out alone makes many of the women feel
lonely and marginal. The power relations imbued in the holiday experience are then exercised through the women’s *habitus* (McNay 2000). Such power relations are not only incorporated in the women’s thoughts, feelings and actions, but also controlled by other people through surveillance or the tourist gaze (Cheong and Miller 2000, 2004; Edensor 2000. Jordan 2003); people watch each other’s actions. Recent research reveals how the tourist gaze is surveillant in nature thereby disciplining the tourist body not to be alone (Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Jordan and Gibson 2005) and thus comparable to *habitus*. The effects of the tourist gaze and *habitus* are evident in the midlife single women’s accounts on solo holidays and one important reason for them rejecting the social identity of the loner.

6.3 Mobile fears – mobile powers

The notion of the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia and of solo holidays just offering the social identity of the loner are useful, but simplistic. It does not fully consider that holiday places and situations are mobile and that power relations do always work in the same ways. It is thus only a starting point for understanding the interrelationships between the solo holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. The midlife single women do not always fear equal degrees of loneliness and marginalisation. The social identity of the loner is therefore not always perceived as negative or the only identity available.

Tourism spaces are not objective but mobile sites; they are constructed through interpersonal interactions and practices (Aitchison 1999; Sheller and Urry 2004a; Soja 1985; Stokowski 2002). Tourism ‘mobilities’, and the rapidly emerging discourse of mobilities within social science, refers to the ways in which meanings of holiday spaces are linked to people’s use of them at different times (Urry 1985:30). Mobility is thus based on networks or systems of ‘hosts-guests-time-space-cultures’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a:6). As such, mobility is marked by a notion of the holiday experience more as a non-permanent ‘sandcastle’ than a fixed unity (Bærenholdt *et al.* 2004). It is comparable to Bourdieu’s (1984:343) ‘social space’ in that places have various material and physical manifestations and that people use them differently to position themselves towards each other; tourists enter a restaurant with certain qualities of capitals of different values and legitimacies. The moving in and out of spaces is then undertaken
whilst carrying the value of social, cultural and economic capital. Some categories of people are able to increase the value of their capital by entering a physical space whereas others are not. Working class women, for instance, are able to gain respectability in some spaces but not in others (Skeggs 1997, 1999).

In the next subsection it becomes clearer that the fears of loneliness and marginalisation are not fixed, but spatial and temporally embedded. This suggests that not all holiday experiences are equally marked by a sociable space of mixophobia. I explore the restaurant as a mobile holiday space to map out, first, how spatiality and, secondly, temporality result in different power relations that affect the social identity of the loner both positively and negatively.

### 6.3.1 Spatiality

The fear of loneliness and the social identity of the loner are not equally prominent in all solo holiday spaces. This finding suggests that the holiday experience is not always marked as a sociable space of mixophobia. Few of the women link such thoughts to visiting attractions or to the mode of accommodation. It is especially the holiday meal or restaurant experiences that are closely linked to such notions. On the other hand, some solo meal experiences are also perceived positively. In this subsection I map out how temporal lack of social capital partly affects the midlife single women’s meal experiences negatively and partly positively. I explore how the tourist gaze and *habitus* are spatialised within this context.

Some of the midlife single women link the interrelationships between the negative effects of the tourist gaze and *habitus* to the distinction between the resort and heterogenic spaces and types of restaurants or eating places; suggesting that such power relations are spatial. A destination with a multitude of restaurant offers and categories of customers and staff ease the negative stigma of the loner. The tourist gaze is therefore more accepting in a big city like London where solo female customers feels less observed than in a resort restaurant in Greece or Spain, or the male-dominated culture of a country such as Turkey. In the former destinations she therefore perceives the social identity of the loner more positively. In two of the focus groups, women of various ages and marital status discuss and agree upon this distinction.
PARIS – to say something positive, where there’s more of a café culture, like in Belgium, you can go and have a kind of light meal and sit at a pavement café.

ANGEL – yes, great.

PARIS – and watch people. And I think that some countries are perhaps easier to travel alone in than others. Like travelling in Turkey and sitting as a single woman and eating kebab is maybe not as easy as being in Brussels or London.

(Paris and Angel)

BENTE – you’ve said something about travelling alone and a couple of negative things, eating alone has been mentioned.

KAY – at any rate in a place like that. In the sunny Med.

LAURA – that’s right.

KAY – for me personally at any rate.

LAURA – I agree. Eating alone in London is no problem.

(Kay and Laura)

The quotes indicate spatial attributes of the restaurant experience and the destinations which do not support the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. The tourist gaze differs in how it disciplines the midlife single women travelling solo, hence, affecting their habitus positively and negatively. Edensor (2000) distinguishes between ‘enclavic’ and ‘heterogeneous’ tourism spaces; the enclave is based on ‘purified’ spaces strongly regulated, conformed and centralized, whereas heterogeneous tourism spaces are ‘weakly classified’ in that the boundaries are less strict and allow a wide range of encounters, ways of living and so on (Sibley 1988:412). The enclave is characterized by formal encounters or gazes whereas heterogeneous tourist spaces are more informal (Oppermann 1993). Backpackers spend time in the informal sector and are less controlled by the formal gaze than package tourists in the formal sector. The distinction applies not only to the tourist gaze of the formal and informal tourism spaces at a destination, but also to the difference between categories of destinations. Typical beach resorts in Syden are enclaves whereas cities are heterogeneous tourist spaces. This suggests different degrees of surveillance imbued in the holiday experience.

At first sight restaurants in Syden perhaps seem to positively enhance the social identity of the loner compared to restaurants in the city. Resorts offer all ranges of tourism services at close proximity; they often appear physically safe. The midlife single women are, on the other hand, also aware of the social pressures relating to conformity and
hetero-reality in the enclave. In heterogeneous tourism spaces of cities they do not sense
this as strong because most categories of tourists are unnoticeable and less powerful
among all the other user groups (Bauman 2003; Law 2002). Most of the midlife single
women therefore fear eating out in Syden, whereas bigger cities are seen as less
problematic. The social identity of the loner is less sanctioned by others and self in the
city than in the resort. A few women who are used to holidays in Syden, however, find it
more difficult to eat out alone in a big city. It is more difficult to meet new people in
such places and to transform the social identity of the loner into that of the friend. Ella a
38-year old divorcee, however, points to the hetero-reality of Syden by comparing it to a
bigger city (see also Andrews 2006). She expresses why Syden is a difficult space to be
solo for midlife, single women. It accommodates the needs of the social identity of the
family member. Going out alone here brings about feelings of marginality which are not
evident in a space where heterogeneity is the norm, and where lack of bonding social
capital in the form of partner and/or children is less noticeable and expected by others.
The power embedded in the tourist gaze and her marginal gender/singlehood/midlife
identity is not as strong and, hence, the holiday experience as a sociable space of
mixophobia is not so controlling.

Well, cities are places that attract adults without the commitment of having
children. There are many cities where it’s difficult to live with children, for
example. While nearly all holiday places in the Mediterranean are designed for
families. There are ‘kiddies’ clubs’ and ‘blue jungles’, and because they’re
organised specially for families it’s extra unpleasant. If I sit in a bar in
Copenhagen one evening, all the others there are probably adults and some are
in the same situation as me. It’s a more homogenous group, well, both places are
homogenous groups, but it’s a group I feel at home in. But if I sit in a bar in
Minorca … and all the others are married with 2.7 children. And that makes the
situation more uncomfortable, for me anyway. It’s OK to sit alone at a table in
Copenhagen with a married couple at the next table. That doesn’t bother me. But
it bothers me a lot if I’m in Minorca and all the tables are occupied by families
who are self-sufficient and not interested in getting to know anybody else except
those with children of the same age who can play together the next day.

(Ella)
In identifying the difference between the two tourism spaces, Ella points to how the tourist *habitus* controls her as a solo tourist in different ways. Still, she is disciplined and self-disciplined through the social surveillance of the other guests (Jordan and Gibson 2005). Such gazes are embedded with a disciplinary power (Foucault 1977:177) in that people constantly control each other’s actions; the surveillance is a way of controlling the body by punishing and gratifying it according to the ‘norm of bodily management’. Foucault links power, knowledge and sexuality in a triplex which affects the social surveillance of others and the distribution of power (Jordan and Gibson 2005). In the quote Ella is managed by the norms of mutuality, reciprocity and sharing (Warde and Martens 2000), which is stronger in the enclave than in heterogeneous tourism spaces. Still, in both spaces the norms are about heterosexual praxis and the reproduction of bonding social capital; the familial gaze of other guests influences and shapes the tourist experiences and the social identities approved of.

Jordan (2003:188) sees the dining room as ‘a tourist site of panoptic surveillance’. By this she means that solo female travellers are subjected to the gazes of local people, the employees and tourists in and outside the restaurant. The employees often act according to ‘the geographies of display and forms of performance’ (Crang 1997:154). The hotel dining room is therefore an enclave where heterosexualised roles are played out both by staff and customers (Jordan 2003). To midlife women this often enables the social identities of the mother and the wife, not the loner. Such tourist products are then embedded in institutional settings which guide the interactions and social identities available negatively or positively; with formal or informal scripts guiding restaurant staff’s acts towards the customers. The scripts in the hospitality industry are often closely linked to a normalized discourse of the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia (Andrews 2000).

The distinction between restaurant meal experiences in the enclave and heterogeneous tourism spaces therefore suggests that the power relations permeated in the tourist gaze are mobile. It then perhaps contrasts with the notion that solo female tourists are unable to be in most heterogeneous holiday spaces without experiencing sexualised gazes (Jordan and Aitchison 2008). This study indicates that the social identity of the loner is more difficult in the restaurant of the resort than in that of the city. Heterogeneous spaces are more tolerant towards difference and they are less segregated (Bauman
2003). However, unlike the women in Jordan and Aitchison’s study just some of the women in this study holidayed alone during the summer of the project. This perhaps limits the women’s focus on sexualised gazes and gendered habitus. A comparable distinction, however, is also found in the standard or category of the restaurant or cafe, again identified by Ella, the 38-year old divorcee, when she visits a cafe alone. In this setting she does not identify heteronormative gazes at all. The social identity of the loner is not sanctioned or scrutinized. In her diary she reflects:

I have a good book with me, and sit for hours. They have lovely iced tea, good coffee and the food is marvellous. By the time I leave I’ve managed to have two meals. Ha ha. Another good thing is that the teeming street life is so nice to watch, that my book gets ignored, however good it is. … The guests at ‘Dattera til Hagen’ turned out to be surprisingly varied. Friends, couples, families, students, tourists, young, old … not exactly the place to meet single men but that wasn’t exactly the idea either … I felt very comfortable and very ‘at home’ in that group of guests.

(Ella)

Angel, a 50-year old divorcee, recalls the first time she visited a self-service coffee shop by herself after the divorce and how she feared the social identity of the loner. She does, however, not experience any heteronormative, sexualized or gendered gazes; the other customers are too preoccupied with themselves to bother with her. This turns out to be a liberating and comfortable experience.

The first time I went to a cafe by myself was a real ordeal. I thought that everybody would read LONELY stamped on my forehead, but I was quite wrong. Most people had just themselves for company with their coffee, some of them with a book or newspaper. Going to a cafe is something I really enjoy! I feel safe, one of the crowd, looked after.

(Angel)

One reason Angel feels comfortable in the coffee shop is perhaps linked to its materiality. Most coffee shops in Norway are designed for people on the run, the premises are small, and the possibilities to sit and talk privately are limited. The tables
are often constructed as counters at the walls or windows. The close proximity offers both a sense of privacy from and connection to the other guests and staff. Even a small number of single guests often make a coffee shop crowded, which perhaps make the tourist gaze less effective and the social identity of the loner less problematic.

That the materiality of the restaurant affects the social identity of the loner positively and negatively is also evident in how the midlife single women perceive eating out alone in the airport. Some of the women report that being *en route* and in transit is a perfect part of the holiday for solitude. Amy, a 52-year old divorcee, who really dislikes the thought of spending the holiday alone, appreciates the freedom of travelling solo and she enjoys the social identity of the loner. In her diary she writes on two occasions:

> I like travelling alone … Absolutely OK for me to be on my own in that situation without having to consider anyone else when it comes to tax-free shopping or going to a café and so on.

*(Amy)*

Victoria, a 47-year old divorcee, and experienced solo traveller also sees the airport as suitable for solitude. In the diary she writes:

> To travel again is enjoyable. … bus to the train then to Gardermoen. I am the master of my life. Newspaper and beer in the sun while waiting for the plane. I enjoy being *en route*. The beer is done off the cuff. Holiday, among travellers, it is so easy. Would hardly have had a beer alone at home. More people alone – no other women.

*(Victoria)*

In airports the coffee shops, restaurants and cafes are designed for people on the move, sometimes alone and sometimes with family, friends or co-workers. In the departure hall of one of the main airports in Norway, Gardermoen, several small restaurants or cafes therefore accommodate the social identity of the loner. The tables are often small and several counters provide seating. The seating solutions take people’s different needs into consideration. It is easy to move tables if a bigger group arrives and the counters are constructed for strangers to sit closely without disturbing each other. The space also
serves many needs at the same time; some guests want breakfast, lunch or dinner, others a snack, a beer or a cocktail. It is not unusual to observe some guests breakfasting whereas others are enjoying the first beer, both at seven in the morning. The airport cafes and restaurants are then perhaps also liminal spaces.

Liminality is linked to an understanding of the tourist experience as *rite de passage* (Graburn 1989). A *rite de passage* consists of three phases: separation, ‘limen’ or margin and aggregation (Turner and Turner 1978:2). The first phase signifies the detachment from the home environment, such as going to the airport. The second phase is the state of being on holiday, which is ‘betwixt and between all familiar lines of classification’ (Turner and Turner 1978:2). In the airport tourists are between fixed points of classification, the everyday norms are suspended, the past and future do not exist and ‘excessive’ behaviour such as drinking alcohol early in the morning is tolerated (see also Selänniemi 2002; Thomas 2005; White and White 2004). The third phase is reintegration into the social and cultural structures of everyday life. In a liminal space such as the airport the other guests are perhaps less interested in controlling the others’ behaviour and the guests are less controlled by *habitus*. The liminal qualities of the space then make the airport accept several social identities, including that of the loner.

The social identity of the loner is often positively pronounced when the midlife single women enter and visit a café, a coffee shop or a diner, or all such places in an airport. Such places are often less formal, self-catered and accustomed to customers making quick stops alone or in the company of others, resulting in less sexualized, heterosexualised or gendered gazes. It is easier to be solo in an environment where women are accepted as alone by the employees and other guests. Furthermore, the fact that people constantly move in and out of the less formal eating places or cafes, and that they are more concerned with themselves than the other guests reduces the negative stigma of the loner and makes it a suitable space for midlife single women to be alone. Shapira and Navon (1991) note that the boundaries between alone and together are less strict in the café and that solo customers therefore feel comfortable and protected as well as included in the community offered by it.
6.3.2 Temporality

Another reason Angel is comfortable in the coffee shop and Ella enjoys the café in Oslo so much is perhaps also linked to time; the visits take place during the day. Many people visit coffee shops or cafés alone during the day. The institutional setting in a restaurant or a café around lunch time therefore differs from dinner time at night. People have a limited time to sit down and most people are separated from friends and family; many people are alone en route. At lunchtime customers therefore also seek and are delivered a different restaurant experience than at night; the food is simpler and cheaper, the tables are seldom clothed, and the use of alcoholic beverages is restricted, if consumed at all. This probably changes the tourist gaze positively and reduces the negative aspects of being alone. Shapira and Navon (1991), in their research of an Israeli café, identify temporal zones whereby different categories of guests visit the café at different times of day thus producing different time cycles for different demographic profiles. The atmosphere of the place changes according to the hour of day and visiting guests. In the morning the café is quiet with few people popping in, and in the night it is ‘gay, colourful and effervescent’. This suggests that as the setting is more informal during the day the tourist gaze is probably more accepting than at night when most restaurants become more formal. The social identity of the loner is then more accommodated by the tourist gaze during the day than at night; the space is not equally marked as sociable and similar for all guests thus lessening the value of social capital for some in relation to others.

Many of the midlife single women find it is easier to visit a restaurant at lunchtime than at night. This suggests that the power of habitus is less effective then or perhaps that the space allows several social identities to be present. Diana, a 36-year old never married woman, who partly holidays alone, writes about the surprise of experiencing a solo lunch and a solo dinner so extremely differently. In the second focus group meeting she discusses this with Betty, a 36-year old never married woman, but without being able to pinpoint the exact answers as to why her access to the same restaurant is temporally situated. Thus the knowledge and social identity of the loner rather exists on a pre-reflexive level.

DIANA – but why is there such a difference between breakfast and lunch, and dinner, it shouldn’t make any difference?
BETTY – isn’t it that at breakfast and lunch time, I think, there are more people eating out alone.

DIANA – but I.

BETTY – than there are in the evening, when there are people out in groups?

DIANA – where I was sitting there were only families.

BETTY – yes.

DIANA – at breakfast and lunch, because I was at a typical family place. And we sat at the same table every day. And I think I was the only person sitting alone. There might have been a bloke here and there … but it was really, I sat there by myself, with my book, the same as when I was having dinner, but the experience was completely different.

(Diana and Betty)

Diana points to a temporality in the holiday restaurant experience. She marks social capital as less important at lunchtime than at night and claim that the social identity of the loner becomes less visible during the day. In the contemporary western world most people eat three meals a day in consecutive order, either at home or on holiday; breakfast, lunch and dinner and at different spaces such as at home, at work/school/out and at home/out. The order is also connected to the importance of the meal; the last meal of the day is often the most time-consuming when it comes to cooking, intake and time for sociability. The dinner nowadays takes place in the evening and is part of daily leisure. The lunch, on the other hand, is consumed during the day and is more a break from everyday routines. This is perhaps one reason Helena, a 42-year old never married woman, is more positive towards eating out alone at this hour and claims that; ‘at lunchtime you might be on the way to something exciting’. It does not indicate the social identity of the loner in a negative way, but a busy person who just happens to be alone.

At lunchtime the restaurant/café is then not so much imbued by sameness and sociability as at night and dinner time; social capital is not equally valuable at these different times. This is perhaps also the reason Laura, a 54-year old divorcee, points to the importance of the evening meal as a space for reflections on shared activities, whereas the lunch meal is more a break during the day.

LAURA – er, I feel that, mm, it’s kind of such an important part of the day to go out to eat, especially dinner. Lunch is a bit simpler; a break on the beach if that’s
what you’re doing. But going out to dinner with your friends makes the day for me. It really does.

BENTE – why?

LAURA – because then you, well, first there’s the food and drink and then you talk about the day and what you’ve done, it’s the same when you’re on a hiking trip. And it’s a really good time of day.

(Laura)

Such temporal dimensions are then incorporated in the midlife single women’s behaviour and result in different attitudes toward eating out alone during the day and at night. It suggests the mobility of social capital and that the social identity of the loner is not always construed negatively.

In this subsection I have demonstrated that the value of social capital is mobile. The power of habitus and the tourist gaze are not equally strong in all solo holiday spaces but temporally and spatially embedded. Moreover, interpretation of the data has also demonstrated that the social identity of the loner is sometimes perceived as positive. This is often the case in restaurants in heterogeneous tourism spaces such as cities and at lunch time.

A mobile approach to the holiday meal experience sees it as ‘economically, politically, and culturally produced through the multiple networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs, and information’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a:6). It is partly a postmodern notion, where the experience only exists in as far as it is performed by hosts and guests; thus it is like a ‘sandcastle’ (Bærenholdt et al. 2004). This argument implies little transferable knowledge from one holiday meal experience or one destination to another. Each is unique and does not produce the same experiences. The notion of mobility, however, also implies a notion of immobility and the ‘fixedness’ of space (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006:2); most formal restaurants produce an experience which solo guests find problematic (Crang 1997). Several norms about eating out also limit mobility (Bell and Valentine 1997); with some such norms linked to the consumption of the food, others to sociality. The amount of food, the time it takes to consume it and how to deal with leftovers, as well as presenting a happy, integrated façade are all normatively scripted. Anything which disrupts this structure is subdued to social sanctions and scrutiny. People’s interference with each other’s actions through the
tourist gaze then reduces tourism mobilities. In this sense the importance of social
capital is partly contextual and partly fixed and, as shown in this subsection, it does not
always affect the social identity of the loner negatively.

6.4 Tactical responses to fears of loneliness and
marginalisation

So far I have further demonstrated that the interrelationships between the holiday
experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is marked by a sociable space of
mixophobia which values bonding social capital and mainly accommodates the social
identity of the friend. When the women travel solo they face the social identity of the
loner, an identity which they often fear. This suggests that the midlife single women are
controlled by *habitus* and the tourist gaze. Holidays with friends make them happy and
content and solo holidays make them lonely and marginal. This chapter then so far
supports the notion of the *doxa*. However, by introducing the notion of mobile tourism
spaces I also weaken this notion. Social capital is not equally powerful in all holiday
spaces and times and, hence, the social identity of the loner is sometimes positive.

In particular Doris, a 36-year old never married woman, associates freedom with
planning and holidaying alone, with being in charge of what to do, see, who to talk to
and so on thus embracing the social identity of the independent traveller instead of the
loner. She is not made powerless by the tourist gaze and *habitus*, but is empowered by
her ‘ways of doing’ the solo holiday (Certeau 1984:xiii). She has agency (McNay
2004b). Solo holiday practices are therefore also tactical in character. Tourists use the
time or the right chance to manipulate events into opportunities. They infiltrate the
holiday spaces and makes them ‘habitable, like a rented apartment’ (Certeau 1984:xxi).
Doris does this by seeking out the positive aspects of solo holidays and using them for
her benefit; she turns the social identity of the loner into the independent traveller and
enjoys holidaying alone. This tactic is rather diffuse, imbued within the strategy or
*doxa*, simultaneously rejecting its influence. Herein lies its power. It is ‘an art of
manipulating and enjoying’ (Certeau 1984:xxii).

As in the previous subsection I primarily explore the solo restaurant experience as a
space for various tactics the midlife single women engage in for turning the solo holiday
into enjoyable and positive experiences and social identities. First, I explore mental and physical tactics for turning the solo meal experience into a positive experience. As demonstrated in section 5.2.3 one benefit of group package tours is company at meals. Still, many of the midlife women are reluctant towards joining group package tours. I therefore, secondly, I investigate such holiday experiences as a potential, but rejected tactic.

### 6.4.1 Mental and physical tactics – the restaurant

Some of the midlife single women have learned to overcome the fears of loneliness and marginalisation when eating out alone by employing different tactics. Some of these tactics are mental. The women imagine that they are on a solo business trip in order to handle the situation more gracefully as this does not arouse the same feelings of loneliness or marginalisation. Solitude on business trip meals is quite normal and indicates the independence of the woman. The temporal lack of social capital is therefore acknowledged in a more prosaic way.

Other women, such as Linda, a 48-year old divorcee, and experienced solo traveller, deal with the loneliness of eating out alone by observing the other guests and staff in the restaurant. In the focus group Linda revisits a solo meal after holidaying with friends for a few days. Instead of focusing on her own loneliness, the presence of strangers is used to empower herself; she lets the solitude create positive feelings. Through stimulating her imagination she interacts with people without them knowing, she invents imaginary friends in place of real ones. She, in short, creates an illusory social capital and transforms the social identity of the loner into the social identity of the friend. However, Linda’s practice is easily contested by negligent acquaintances from her home town that she unexpectedly meets. Her obvious lack of ‘real’ social capital weakens the empowered social identity and she suddenly feels uncomfortable. When she is not included by these people she suddenly senses the social identity of the loner instead of the friend.

LINDA – then they left, and I was alone. Um, and then I did not have to talk to any more people, um, and I became the observer.
BENTE – you didn’t have to?
LINDA – I didn’t have to talk to anybody, I so say that as a joke (laughter) – but
I became the observer um … but I’m also a very nosy person, so, … I let my fantasy really take off … then I remember in a restaurant I visited several nights … I went to the bathroom and then a child and woman enters after me and we start to talk, and they’re from my home town, but they don’t invite me to join them.

LILY – no?
LINDA – they knew who I was, I knew who they were.
AMY – did they know you were there alone?
LINDA – yes, because I was, I sat alone.
AMY – yes.
LINDA – and I ate and did everything alone. So, if you [are] open for the feeling of loneliness, then you get it.

(Linda, Amy and Lily)

It is important to distinguish between solitude, loneliness and privacy. According to Larson (1990:157) solitude is the ‘objective condition of being alone’, loneliness is the psychological felt need for the company of others, and privacy is the process whereby a person controls the personal information about oneself available to others. It is then possible to be alone without feeling lonely, as is partly the case with Linda. Larson’s (1990) study shows that adults cope more easily with aloneness than adolescents and children, but also that they seldom see solitude as an end. People’s access to solitude depends also upon their social roles. Married people with children therefore do not have a lot of time to be alone and seldom experience solitude. Most single people, however, are faced with solitude and loneliness on a regular basis (Dalton 1992).

Liz, a 53-year old divorcee, addresses the fact that she can mentally prepare herself for solo eating experiences from a different perspective; positive thinking gives control over the experience and agency. Her mental state reveals if she is a high or a low truster to the other guests and the staff (Yamagishi 2001), enabling the social identity of the independent traveller or not. The ‘high truster’ does not mind the tourist gaze but truly enjoys the experience of eating out alone whereas the ‘low truster’ fears the tourist gaze and needs the protection of social capital. In both cases the tourist gaze is a response to her degree of social intelligence; to her tactical power and agency. As a non-experienced solo traveller she places Ella within the former and herself within the latter category. Contrary to Ella, Liz, on the other hand, is afraid of the tourist gaze and potential violent situations. Later in the group discussion she reveals a keen interest
towards becoming a high truster, just like Ella.

LIZ – I don’t know whether it’s about being self-contained. If you are, you concentrate on what you’re doing, enjoy yourself and your surroundings, you feel comfortable and relaxed. But if you sit there and are a bit anxious, I think I’m a bit sensitive really. So I sit and look around, and there are lots of pleasant people, but I don’t like the look of him over there. And so (laughter), yes, heavens, those people over there are staring at me. Because they can somehow see that I’m alone.

ELLA – yes it’s very easy to look tense.

LIZ – yes I get a bit like that. And I think it shows, you who are cool and laid back, can sit there confidently (laughter). Yes, but on the other hand you do radiate something else, while I, if I’m sitting there and am a bit nervous and uneasy and wonder about where to find a taxi, and where the hotel is, and keep looking at the map, and ...

SARA – mm.

LIZ – I give out completely different signals and so I get treated differently.

(Liz, Ella and Sara)

Mental tactics do not then work for all the women when eating out. Furthermore, such tactics are also linked to temporal-spatial aspects of the restaurant and whether the solitude is perceived as voluntary or not. The effect of the tourist gaze is not felt as strongly if the midlife single woman just waits for somebody in a café or if she has deliberately chosen to eat out alone. In the latter case she is mentally able to relax and forget her temporal lack of social capital. Betty, a 36-year old never married woman, revisits how waiting for a friend gives her reason and enough confidence to deal with the tourist gaze when alone in a café in Barcelona. The absent, but anticipated social capital gives her a plausible reason to relax and enjoy the situation and, briefly, the social identity of the independent traveller.

BETTY – I think there’s a big difference between sitting down at a café alone and having a coffee or something if I’m waiting for somebody. Because then in a way I’ve got a kind of plausible (laughter) reason to sit there.

DIANA – yes, legitimate reason.

BETTY – so it gets, that’s totally stupid, because nobody else sees that.

BENTE – that you’re waiting (laughter)?

BETTY – that’s right. But it is daft, but it’s a feeling that I think is OK. Then I don’t think so much about the fact that I’m on my own, because actually I’m waiting for somebody. But if I don’t do that, I get a different feeling.
BETTY – that’s really very odd.

(Betty and Diana)

Betty identifies a similar sense of mental control when she freely chooses to eat out alone. On another holiday in Spain she expects to experience discomfort and loneliness when visiting a restaurant alone, but it turns out to be a liberating experience. This is something she really wants to do. Furthermore, the fears of doing it are stronger than the fears when doing it. She realises that the decisions regarding where to sit down and what to eat are tougher to make than the actual ordering and being in the restaurant.

Something I remember which I wondered about in regard to being alone, was, I was out eating alone one day, on that holiday. And that’s something that basically I think is awful, er, and I was very surprised over how easy I thought it really was. … It was like, I went around for a long time before I decided where to sit down. Just because I was a bit nervous – heavens, shall I eat here, then I thought – oh, shall I just go into Burger King, you know (laughter). But then I got a bit – for heavens’ sake, I’m not going to do that. I’m going out to eat (laughter) a proper meal. So I ended up in a Chinese restaurant. … And when I sat here I felt that it was really good, actually, I was very surprised. Because basically I’m very like, right, I must have a book or paper with me, or I need something to do so I don’t look lonely. But it was actually OK. There were things to look at.

(Betty)

The tactics embedded in the social identity of the independent traveller are then perhaps linked to temporal-spatial factors as well as to agency. In the first quote Betty waits in a café not a restaurant and it happens during the day not the evening. In the second quote she visits a Chinese restaurant and does not experience sexualised gazes from the staff. The midlife single women mostly place sexualised gazed in Arabic restaurants and cultures, not the Oriental ones (see section 5.2.1 and section 5.2.2). This does not mean that Chinese men are not attracted to Norwegian women but perhaps they flirt in a less aggressive way. Being in a Chinese restaurant probably made it easier for Betty to feel like the independent traveller and not the loner.
In another group, Jane, Tina and Doris link such mental tactics and the social identity of the independent traveller to a discussion about whether the woman sees her female singlehood as a positive way of living filled with opportunities and freedom or constrained by societal norms and in need of bonding social capital. Midlife single women have the opportunity to eat out whenever and wherever they like to, the three women therefore see a link between attitudes towards solo holiday meals and self-perception. If the woman perceives herself as single or enslig then she enjoys eating out alone, whereas an enslig woman is constrained by her singlehood; she feels lonely and marginal. A single woman is perhaps the independent traveller whereas the enslige is the loner. Jane, Tina and Doris are single not enslige women and this tactic clearly expresses agency as they see the opportunity to respond to a marginal position in a creative way (McNay 2000).

JANE – but, again it’s how you look at it, if you go to a restaurant and are lonely, or if you go to a restaurant because you’re fortunate.
TINA – yes.
JANE – that you can actually do it at 2 pm on a Sunday, just sit there.
TINA – yes.
JANE – as long as you feel like and decide when and who.
DORIS – mm.
JANE – so it’s just like.
TINA – self-image and how you look at.
JANE – how you take it, and that kind of thing.
TINA – absolutely.
JANE – it depends on whether you are enslig or single.

(Jane, Tina and Doris)

The women’s mental tactic deals silently with producing positive holiday meals (Certeau 1984) and the social identity of the independent traveller. Although, apparently a simple tactic, agency does not necessarily come easily to the midlife single women as noted by Liz, it has to be learned and practiced. Doris, a 38-year old never married woman and the most experienced solo traveller in the project, revisits how she learns and deals with eating out alone, thereby challenging and changing her habitus and ways of dealing with gender/singlehood/midlife identities and public solitude. It is a tough
process which turns her into a stronger person, in the end enjoying the ability to manage temporal solitude and a solo meal experience. She transforms herself from the loner into the independent traveller.

DORIS – so I started going by myself. And sometimes it’s been awful.
TINA – yes, it has.
DORIS – I’ve cried and thought it’s been gruesome.
TINA – yes that’s right.
DORIS – big hat, dark sunglasses, clothes, fit in (laughter) not a tourist, you know, no trainers (laughter).
TINA – that’s very good.
TINA – yes.
DORIS – you just have to.
TINA – that’s good I must say.

(Doris and Tina)

Later on in the focus group conversation Doris also admits a need for bonding social capital and the social identity of the friend. The tourist gaze and *habitus* are still powerful. Doris is only able to manage the social identity of the independent traveller for up to two weeks. Furthermore, Doris has not only learned to use mental, but also physical tactics to ease the solo holiday experience.

DORIS – but it takes practice, this thing about the evenings. For one thing it’s important for me to look good, that I’m dressed for dinner. Also, the book is of course important.
ANGEL – yes.
DORIS – but I often don’t read much, but it’s there. Another thing is I always ask not to be placed at a table for one, you know, one badly-placed in the middle of the restaurant. I won’t sit there, I don’t like it. Either I get a corner table or one against the wall, or I leave. I’m not going to sit there for everyone’s amusement – oh look, she’s on her own.
ANGEL – yes, no, mm.
DORIS – there are certain, I take precautions (laughter).

(Doris and Angel)
The mental and physical tactics now work well for Doris and she enjoys the social identity of the independent traveller; she has learned to negotiate cultural capital and the female tourist role, thereby challenging the tourist gaze controlling her access to public spaces (Jordan 2003; Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Jordan and Gibson 2005) and her *habitus*. She has learned how to avoid men’s sexualised gazes by leaving early in the evening, (pretending) reading a book and not dressing like a tourist. She has learned to deal with the staff by demanding a preferred table and service. She has agency. On the other hand, despite enjoying the social identity of the independent traveller, Doris also admits that solo holidays are not her first choice. It is lack of ‘appropriate’ travel companions that made her a solo traveller in the first place, not an urge to explore the world alone.

Jordan (2003) argues that many solo female travellers use the book as a barrier from the tourist gaze. In this study other women also admit to this physical tactic. It is the most obvious tactic among the women for turning them into the independent traveller; either it is a book, a newspaper or a magazine. The midlife single women also mention other physical tactics such as writing postcards or other reflections in a book, conversing with the waiters, speaking on the phone, smoking, or neutralizing the entire situation by inviting strangers to join the meal.

Some of the midlife single women are then not so suppressed by the negative aspects of the social identity of the loner that they reject eating out at night on solo holidays. They challenge their marginality (Gordon 1994a) and learn mental and physical tactics to ignore the exclusion of being alone, single, midlife and women. They turn into the independent traveller or the content loner. In this sense they have agency.

Bridging and bonding with strangers is another active and physical way of manoeuvring the pitfalls of eating out alone when travelling solo; one that transforms the social identity of the loner into the social identity of the friend. Some of the women appreciate meeting new people as it eases the meal experience. Fiona, a 54-year old divorcee, travels solo twice during the summer of the project and her diary describes positive encounters with locals and tourists while eating out. Fiona feels excluded by some Norwegian tourists she meets in Spain, but otherwise, she does not experience the
inferiority described by Jordan. Jordan’s (2003) solo travellers’ encounters with other tourists, mostly couples, are sometimes based on the couples wanting to ‘adopt’ them because they see their solitude as a ‘threat’ or because the couple are tired of each other. Fiona’s descriptions of encountering locals and other tourists on a package tour in Spain presents her as an active and creative agent manoeuvring the pitfalls of the tourist gaze and *habitus* by being open towards new people; she has agency. She bridges or bonds with tourists she meets through the package tour program and with the locals she encounters while exploring the destination alone; she is able to switch from the social identity of the independent traveller into that of the friend according to the situation and her desire.

With nine people round the table and our own singing waiter, with a good view to the stage … Enjoyed myself with my Danish and Swedish table companions … At first I had the good company of two Danish ladies and it was fun to see the island from the sea. Had lunch in Puerto de Mogan and got talking to some English tourists and a Spanish family. The children were curious about me and with my bad Spanish and with the help of the English-speaking host it was a very pleasant lunch.

(Fiona)

Grace, a 50-year old divorcee, mainly travels solo in Norway. On such holidays she sometimes invites other solo female guests to join her table. Encountering other women gives the holiday meal a touch of success and a sense of safety, and it temporarily enables the social identity of the friend.

I make contact. When I’m at a café and if I see somebody sitting by alone I invite them to my table. Even if I’ve never seen them before. And it’s often been very successful, it’s always been women though, that I’ve invited. Because it’s the least scary (laughter).

(Grace)

Encountering new people at the destination is perhaps a common physical tactic among female solo travellers (Jordan 2003; Wilson 2004). The social identity of a friend, as noted by Grace, though, has to be sought with caution. Gardner (1989:51) discusses
Goffman’s concept of ‘access’; of being open and available for interactions. She argues that women consciously avoid seeming accessible in public spaces; they are sensitive about giving out information about their full name, workplace, and place of residence and so on, they would rather meet new people through friends than in public and they prefer to choose a small table in a restaurant or a booth. Grace manages her accessibility by interacting only with other lone women. Fiona, on the other hand, is less caution, probably as she is a more extrovert person and a higher ‘truster’ than Grace (Yamagishi 2001). Fiona is more sensitive in judging the trustworthiness of the people she meets regardless of sex or nationality. She also embraces the social identity of the independent traveller and not just that of the friend.

High or low trusters, the two midlife single women are aware of the gendered nature of public places (Gardner 1989) and the ‘geography of women’s fear’ (Valentine 1989, 1992). Gardner (1989) argues that the healthy suspicion of strangers and strange places as noted by Goffman does not reflect the female experience. To women this fear constitutes itself in a ‘normalized distaste’ which is based on learned and accepted notions of fear of crime, of harassment and of sexism in public places. It is part of their habitus and it permeates the tourist gaze. Valentine (1989:389) links women’s fear of male violence to various spaces, but also acknowledges that different spaces occupy different meanings at different times. This fear is known by all women, but perhaps affects the lives of single women more than married ones (Chasteen 1994). The social identity of the independent traveller or the loner is then not always ‘productive’. It does not always give a sense of safety and comfort in public holiday spaces.

In one focus group two of the midlife single women are so subjected to the power relations imbued in the tourist gaze and habitus that they never dare to travel solo. On the other hand, one of them, Nichola, a 37-year old never married woman, is empowered by the solo experiences of some of the other women in the research group and decides to embark on her first solo journey after the first focus group meeting. When we meet again in the autumn, Nichola revisits the tactics she employed when eating out alone. Although, she is very proud of her short solo holiday to Dublin, she does not have the self-confidence that Doris has developed over a number of years. Nichola is unable to reach a ‘laid back mental state’ and she does not have positive eating out experiences. Nichola is unable to embrace the social identity of the
independent traveller and remains the loner. Still, it is evident that she takes some control over the situation and her marginal position in a creative way. She acknowledges that eating out is difficult, the brought book does not work as a tactic but, instead of remaining in this situation, she just eats quickly and spends her time or even eats in the park where her temporal lack of social capital is less obvious and where she feels more comfortable alone. She creates a positive social identity of the loner.

Well, er, one day I thought it would be nice to eat Chinese. So I went into a Chinese restaurant, there I felt a bit lost. When I went in I felt – it’s not OK here. Because there were only Chinese there, I was the only foreigner. So I felt a bit lost, and ate very quickly and left. And really it was the same all the time, I ate and then went to the park, as there I didn’t feel lonely while I was eating. But in the restaurant I was more alone than I was in the park; everybody was there, not doing anything in particular.

(Nichola)

Nichola indirectly introduces a different tactic; she does not limit the holiday meal to the restaurant or the café, but eventually discovers the park benches in Dublin an excellent space to sit down for a quick meal. The park bench is a positive substitute to the restaurant table, enabling the positive aspect of the social identity of the loner. In the park she does not feel lonely or marginal, she does not feel the power of the tourist gaze or habitus, the other park users do not care if she is alone or not and she can easily entertain herself by strolling or gazing at the others without being threatened. The urban park, unlike the restaurant is then not constructed around a sociality and mixophobia. It is a space for many temporally embedded user groups and activities. It is a tourism attraction to tourists (Innovation Norway 2006) and a space for leisure, sport and play to locals (Field 2000).

According to Kemperman and Timmermans (2006) urban parks in the Netherlands are used by most locals and they engage in three categories of activities; strolling/relaxing, family activities and sport. Some of these activities are then done alone, others with family or friends. Tinsley, Tinsley and Croskey’s (2002) study of locals’ use of Lincoln Park in the US states comparable findings and points to how the urban park accommodates a variety of individual preferences. This also proposes a challenge as
parks have limited space and are frequently used. It cannot always accommodate the needs of all the user groups (Gobster 2002). However, like cities, urban parks are heterogeneous tourism spaces making it an easier space for Nichola to be a midlife single woman on a solo holiday, at least during the day.

On solo holidays some of the midlife single women then partly overcome the power relations embedded in the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia; different tactics enable positive social identities of the independent traveller, the friend and the loner. They gain a sense of control over the loneliness often felt when eating out alone. The fact that the women are able to negotiate and manoeuvre the pitfalls of the holiday experience points to generative not deterministic power relations and that agency is ‘a creative or imaginative substrate to action’ (McNay 2000:5). The midlife single women also embrace positive social identities.

6.4.2 Rejected tactics controlling fears of loneliness and marginalisation – the group package tour

In the previous subsections I have outlined mental and physical tactics that the midlife single women engage in when dealing with the stigma of solo holiday experiences. They create positive social identities. There is still one obvious tactic which I have not mentioned: participating in group package tours. In section 5.2.3 I demonstrated that the participants of such tours often develop bonding social capital which enables the social identity of the friend or partly the loner. It is a way of being with other people which keeps a sense of independence. It permits a variety of roles (Schuchat 1983). It mostly reduces feelings of loneliness and, to singles it is an excellent way of spending the holiday (Crompton 1981). It enables agency. In this subsection I explore how this tactic is acknowledged but rejected by several of the midlife single women, most of whom have never joined a group package tour (19 women).

Cohen’s (1972) distinction between organized mass tourism and other more individual forms of tourism is perhaps rather simplistic. A notion of group package tourists as mindless followers, though, is present in the midlife single women’s perceptions. Some of them do not want to be associated with this kind of holidaymaking at all; others have tried it and dislike it. The social identity of the friend does not give tactical power just constraints, and the group package tour does not always allow the social identity of the
independent traveller. The midlife single women dislike being associated with the group mentality and the lack of free time available on such holidays. It is both fear of how fellow group members’ actions may affect them negatively and scepticism towards the tour guide’s skills. It is a fear of the loss of control over what to do when with whom and where. Bruner (1995:237) terms such fears ‘touristic surrender’. Group package tourists in this sense are not lonely, but passive and dependent upon the agency. Such holidays then offer the social identity of the dependent traveller. In one focus group Doris, a 36-year old never married woman, and Jane, a 37-year old divorcee, and in a second group, Helena, a 43-year old never married woman, and Betty, a 36-year old never married woman, discuss fears of being dependent upon the group package tour and following a pre-arranged programme. They feel that such holidays do not encourage freedom or the independence attributes highly valued by these women; group package tourists are dependent upon each other’s willingness to follow group norms such as punctuality, sobriety and the programme. When or as this does not always happen the midlife single women feel disempowered, upset and annoyed or, according to Jane, that their hard earned money is wasted.

BENTE – is there no way out when you’re travelling with a group?
DORIS – no there isn’t. There’s a programme you can’t disappear from, that means trouble. If you’ve booked a tour you can’t suddenly stand there, and say – no, today I’m going to do my own thing. That means a kind of crisis.
JANE – but of course you can?
DORIS – but it’s terribly unpleasant.
JANE – you can just say – that today I’m not coming along? I’d do that if I had to.
DORIS – but no.
JANE – and it was my wasted money.
DORIS – but it’s not accepted, if you’ve booked a package it’s not approved of.

(Doris and Jane)

BETTY – but I don’t know, I’ve really got a strong aversion to that, I get incredibly irritated when I’m on trips like that, because there’s always somebody who isn’t on time. And you stand around waiting.
HELENA – mm.
BETTY – so you have to wait and you arrive half-an-hour late.
HELENA – you should just drive off.
BETTY – yes that’s right … That you say that if you’re not there, we leave without you. Instead of.

HELENA – I’ve experienced that.

BETTY – in China when we had an arrangement like that, there were people who didn’t come and we waited half-an-hour, then an hour.

HELENA – yes and there’s always one who.

BETTY – it’s so irritating, there’s always one like that on the bus.

HELENA – an arguer.

BETTY – and then I get so annoyed (laughter).

HELENA – but I don’t think about it in advance.

BETTY – but I don’t think the guides are tough enough in a way, for goodness sake, we should just leave.

(Betty and Helena)

Group package tours then per se accommodate the social identity of the dependent traveller. The participants are expected to conform to group norms of communitas (Bruner 1995; Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005) and conformity. The ‘game’ of the group package tour is also to bond and bridge, hence, accommodating the social identity of the friend: ‘The ‘successful’ group member is outgoing, effervescent, approachable, and open-minded’ (Yarnal 2004:367). Still, the social identity of the friend is, thus, more constraining than the social identity of the loner or the independent traveller, at least to Jane, Doris, Betty and Helena.

The group package tour experience is of course very much dependent upon the group dynamic. Some group package tour members’ desire interaction and meaningful relationships, but others cross the room in order to avoid involvement with other members (Schuchat 1983). Not all group tour members are then considered approachable and friendly and people do not always share the same interests. The fact that people joining such groups are often unknown to each other makes some of the women in this study fear their ability to make new friends or to be responsible for the other members’ social life. Being alone with feelings of loneliness in a group is a very uncomfortable state, either it is felt by the midlife single women or experienced by other members of the group package tour. June, a 50-year old divorcee, fears the norm of communitas and how this can affect her holiday experiences negatively, if she has to care for other participants’ well being. On holiday she does not want to be responsible
for other people’s happiness. In this sense she rejects the social identity of the friend.

JUNE – and that brings me a bit nearer to what you want to say, which is how you behave towards people you have no relationship with. It’s not comfortable, in a way it’s more trouble than it’s worth.

ADA – well it can be very pleasant, too, though.

JUNE – yes, it can, but at the same time it’s clear that you show consideration for others, and if you see someone who’s alone in the group, you can find yourself in a situation where you spoil your own holiday because you’re considering others, in a way. So there really is a negative side to it, you have to agree.

(June and Ada)

The group package tour, which in some sense is meant to reduce feelings of loneliness, also creates such feelings when one does not fit in or has to take responsibility for other members’ comfort. Furthermore, the social identity of the friend is not always an advantage: group package tours give insights into other people’s normalcy and abnormality ‘For it is indeed an educational experience to realize how deeply people are concerned about their teeth, their bowels, and other routines of daily life’ (Schuchat 1983:473). Travelling with strangers also means territoriality; people tend to claim rights for bus-seats, and space for hand luggage, a picnic area and a hot-tub (Andereck 1997; Quiroga 1990). The bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend are formed in a short amount of time and cause stress among other tourists (Andereck 1997). Angel, a 50-year old divorcee’s, fear of unknown peoples’ meddling and need to establish territories makes group package tours a turn off for her. It reminds her of childhood conflicts and makes her reject the social identity of the friend in this context.

But I feel that those group holidays and their culture, it reminds me so much of my childhood that it puts me right off. There are so many who want to push themselves forward and I’m so laidback, so I can’t be bothered.

(Angel)

Fiona, a 54-year old divorcee, on the other hand, is slightly more positive, still she fears the other people’s abnormalities and sees the need for self-protection. On group package tours a single room is therefore an absolute. It ensures a space for personal freedom, the ability to withdraw from the other group members and to do one’s own things for a
short period of time; to be the loner. Fiona then actively searches spaces for loneliness and solitude as the conformity of the group is too high a demand.

There’s only one thing I would make sure of, and that’s to have a room to myself. Not share, unless I had a friend with me on the holiday. Just to have somewhere to be alone sometimes. Because I’m like that, however much I like people and being sociable and can dance all night, however much sleep I get or not, I still need time to myself, to read for a couple of hours and not see all the others. Have a break, withdraw a bit.

(Fiona)

6.5 Chapter summary and concluding thoughts

This chapter strengthened the notion of the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia, in which social capital is the symbolic capital. Many of the midlife single women are reluctant to take solo holidays. It makes them fear loneliness and marginalisation. Solo holiday experiences are linked to the social identity of the loner, mostly in negative ways. The loneliness and marginalisation are the results of the temporal lack of social capital which manifests itself in a lack of symbolic profits. But, this chapter also demonstrates that the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities is not only positively marked by the social identity of the friend, but also partly by that of the loner and the independent traveller. This latter social identity is also marked by agency.

The first part of the analysis shows that the social identity of the loner is in many ways a mental construct in the midlife single women’s heads. It is part of their *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984). As an incorporated part of their bodies, it partly functions on an unconscious level and most of the women do not realise the value of social capital before they embark on the first solo holiday or eat out alone for the first time. On the other hand, the women’s desires and needs for social capital are also affected by the tourist gaze and the ‘normalized discourse’ or *doxa* of the holiday experience. The midlife single women feel the observing and controlling gazes of other people and dislike being visibly alone in public places. Despite being used to independence and solitude in everyday life, many of the women dislike such qualities when on holiday.
The preference for independence in everyday life is often overshadowed by the fact that the dominant holiday experience is heterosexual, coupled, familialised and sociable. Furthermore, public solitude in unknown territories arouses the women’s well-developed ‘normalized distaste’ and fears. They need the social identity of the friend and reject the social identity of the loner.

The power relations imbued in the solo holiday experiences are permeated in *habitus* and the tourist gaze. However, this chapter demonstrates that *habitus* has more power over the women’s actions than the tourist gaze. Many of the midlife single women are therefore often more concerned with their temporal lack of visible social capital than the observing gazes of others. On the other hand, this also indicates that they have incorporated the tourist gaze. It is also part of their *habitus*. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between the two power relations. They are in many ways one and the same, and they work as both self-discipline and as surveillance of others. This places gender-power relations in the social-cultural nexus of material and symbolic signifiers and constraints (Aitchison 2003) and in lived social relations (McNay 2004a, b).

The chapter has also demonstrated that the social identity of the loner not only disempowering the midlife single women. Holiday spaces are mobile; some destinations are easier to manage alone and not all hours of the day are equally difficult to be solo in. The social identities available are therefore not fixed nor fluid, but relational or intersubjectively situated (McNay 2004a, b). Heterogeneous tourism spaces such as restaurants in cities and temporal aspects such as eating out at lunchtime place less value on social capital, reducing the importance of sociability and sameness. The midlife single women therefore perceive the social identity of the loner as less negative in such spaces. Other spaces, such as the urban park and the airport, are also easier to manage alone. Although, people occupy the urban park and the airport with friends and relatives they are not designed for or marked by the norm of sociality and sameness and, hence, the display of social capital. People are after all in the airport in order to get from A to B and many are alone. The facilities are therefore designed to accommodate a multitude of markets, perhaps making social capital less powerful than at the destination. The airport is occupied by business travellers alone or in groups, families on holiday, people alone or in groups travelling to friends and relatives, and people relocating and so on. There are then so many motives behind being at the airport that the
display of social capital is less effective and valuable. The social identity of the loner is therefore more manageable and acceptable.

To some of the midlife single women the solo holiday partly or completely enables the social identity of the independent traveller. They have learned to deal with loneliness, marginalisation imbued in *habitus* and the tourist gaze and turned the loneliness and marginalisation into a sense of freedom and independence. These women therefore have agency (McNay 2004b). They engage in tactics to gain a sense of control over the solo holiday experience and to turn it into memorable experiences and social identities. They take control over what to do, when and where, and how to deal with public solitude by reading or writing post cards to friends and family. They use network capital such as the mobile phone to gain a sense of belonging. The independent traveller is then not a loner but an individual connected to home while away (White and White 2005). Making new friends is another tactics some of the midlife single women engage in to create pleasant solo holidays and positive senses of self. This tactic temporarily enables the social identity of the friend and is perhaps a weaker tactic than the independent traveller. It accommodates the tourist gaze. On the other hand, meeting new people in public places is always a challenge to women suggesting a willingness to risk rejection and an ability to seek agency.

In many ways this chapter supports Jordan’s (2003) interpretations of solo holidays. Like the British midlife women in Jordan’s study the Norwegian women in this study feel the power of the mobile tourist gaze and that the restaurant is performed as a heterosexual space. Unlike the British women, though, the Norwegian midlife single women seldom described themselves as objects of sexualised gazes. One reason is perhaps the midlife single women’s focus on incorporated power relations. Fears of loneliness and marginalisation thus appear to be far more controlling than men’s actual sexualised gazes or the pitying gaze of other tourists and locals. On the other hand, many of the midlife single women have already incorporated the negative aspects of the tourist gaze and are reluctant to take solo holidays to begin with.
7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

For the last four years I have been puzzled by the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. It has been a long and intriguing journey, impossible without the midlife single women who willingly shared their stories in voice and text. The final thoughts in this chapter are based on their lives and experiences. Some of the participants might not recognise this particular interpretation of or outcome of such personal accounts, but I hope most will nod in recognition when reading their combined stories. If the former is the case I draw attention to the fact that the findings are first and foremost the result of my intellectual development and learning. There are many ways of doing research and interpreting data and, as with all projects of this nature, specific epistemological, methodological and theoretical approaches have clearly underpinned the research design and analysis of findings.

In this chapter I, first, revisit the research questions and reflect on theoretical and methodological approaches. Secondly, I briefly suggest further areas of research. I end the thesis by reflecting on my intellectual journey.

7.2 Revisiting the research questions

The overarching research theme in Chapter One was the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. It was explored by investigating different phases of the holiday experience, power relations, social capital and tourism mobilities. In this chapter I summarise the findings in relation to the importance of social capital and tourism mobilities. In particular, power relations permeate the discussion of social capital and tourism mobilities. The different phases of the holiday experience are addressed when exploring the value of social capital. I draw on the theoretical approaches and concepts outlined in Chapters Two and Chapter Four.
In summary, the broad theoretical framework in this research is grounded in a feminist interpretation of Bourdieu’s phenomenology of social space. The findings therefore are based on the notion of social identities as lived social relations which are intersubjectively situated in the field and *habitus*. Midlife single women struggle to control the field by investing economic, cultural and social capital. The research also partly draws on the new tourism mobilities turn which sees the holiday experience as ‘networks and flows’ (Urry 2000:1). This implies that the holiday experience is temporally-spatially embedded and thus situated in the ‘happening’ of the performance of hosts and guests (Bærenholdt *et al.* 2004).

In this research the holiday experience is viewed as made up of social relations; it consists of social interactions, and discursive and material practices. The field is therefore influenced by its discourse and material structure as well as the people inhabiting it. Tourism brochures often depict and describe tourists sharing experiences, meals and activities, and the material structures of hotels and restaurants endeavour to accommodate the needs of more than one customer. This research suggests that bonding social capital and mixophobia are central for understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. The main social identity for the midlife single women in the holiday is that of a friend which, hence, suggests that bonding social capital is a valuable asset in a field which accommodates sameness. I do not dispute the value of economic, cultural and bridging social capital which are often central to other studies, but they are subordinated; in this study the symbolic capital is bonding social capital. Most of the midlife single women view friends as the most important asset; with them they are free to act and interact at the destination, regardless of how much money or education they have.

Thus tourism is discursively and materially constructed as a space for mixophobia, except perhaps in the backpacker scene where solitude and loneliness are much more accepted and expected experiences. This discursive practice or cultural norm of bonding and sameness is incorporated in most of the people involved. Social interactions with significant others are also a valuable asset; tourists use and invest in them to assist with controlling the social relations of the field. Bonding social capital, either consisting of family or friends, therefore gives the midlife single women a sense of power and
control. Lack of bonding social capital and, hence, the solo holiday, generally does not. It is therefore difficult for many of the women to be alone. Even though, as solo tourists, they have network capital and social capital at home their ability to contact family/friends on holiday only brings temporary relief. Once the text message is sent or the cell phone call finished, the loneliness and marginal position are back.

This research suggests that the predominance of bonding social capital as the symbolic capital makes many of the midlife single women dislike solo holidays. Tourists, employees and locals expect tourist to travel and interact with family or friends. It is part of their *habitus* and exercised through their social interactions and the tourist gaze. Just the thought of it makes many of the midlife single women very concerned about the opinions of others, adds to feelings of being marginalised and emphasises the importance of sharing, talking and being with friends. To these women solo holidays offer the social identity of the loner. They are deprived of somebody to share the holiday experience with. Such holidays therefore make them feel lonelier in, before and after the holiday. The devaluation and fear of solitude, in many ways, mirror negative stereotypes of gender/singlehood/midlife identities; the women feel like the lonely, marginal loser, unable to find a partner. It contradicts positive aspects such as independence and freedom of choice. This finding then also suggests that such positive characteristics of gender/singlehood/midlife identities in everyday life are not easily achievable in the holiday. Most of the women therefore must construct a new platform or social identity. In the holiday this is often the social identity of a friend, not the loner or the independent person.

On the other hand, this research also suggests that the norm of mixophobia is often marked by familism and heterosexualism making and marking friends as an ‘inappropriate’ social capital and social identity to single midlife women. Solo holidays are even less accommodating as this means no social capital or sameness at all. This research demonstrates that the symbolic power embedded in bonding social capital is so strong that most of the midlife single women prefer holidays with friends and do not consider travelling solo or eating out alone at all during the holiday. Just the thought of manoeuvring the field alone is scary, but with friends it is manageable, or even successful.
The distinction between positive everyday social identities and the social identity of the friend in the holiday is not that evident. Friendship is a pure relationship based on a high degree of freedom, voluntarism, equality and mutuality. In contrast to married midlife women whose bonding social capital in the holiday is often linked to partner and/or children and the social identities of wife and mother, the midlife single women’s social capital is largely vested in the friends they travel with. The social identity of the friend rests on free-floating conditions embedded in pure relationships. Contrary to the social identities of the mother and the wife, friendship is not fixed in an institution of rules and obligations. Friendship is rather based in trust, reflexivity and mutuality, and the relationship opens up for some degree of freedom and choice. The relationship is, furthermore, constantly questioned and the midlife single women are free to end it rather quickly. This research therefore suggests that the desire for bonding social capital in the holiday is not counterproductive to midlife single women; the friend is a positive social identity easily adaptable to them.

The strong links between the holiday experience and bonding social capital suggests that the field is marked by mixophobia. The interactions with significant others are not only very important to the midlife single women’s senses of self during the holiday, but also in everyday life when they plan and remember the holiday. This contradicts the peg-community found in Bauman’s thinking of the tourist syndrome. To the midlife single women the interactions and the sharing with friends in, before and after the holiday gives them a sense of belonging and mattering. It is one way of creating an integrated sense of self in familial societies at home and away. In the holiday the women have the time, money and energy to invest in lasting relationships. The holiday experience therefore fuels the relationship long after the fact and is also sometimes used in the planning of new holidays. This research therefore suggests that the bonding social capital is not only important to the women in the holiday, but also in everyday life. Being a friend is central in both temporal and spatial contexts. This supports one of the notions embedded in tourism mobilities: that there are no fixed boundaries between home and away. This is not to say that the midlife single women reject bridging social capital and mixophilia. The data do, however, not reflect enough on encounters with difference to draw any such conclusions. What is clear is that the holiday experience accommodates bonding social capital or mixophobia; friends are a valuable asset in the holidays of the midlife single women in the study. This suggests that the tourist
syndrome is perhaps also a peg community; the midlife single women are not particularly interested in bridging and difference. But it is first and foremost not only a peg community.

So far I have explored the interrelationships between the holiday experience and the social identities available for midlife single women as limited to the friend and the loner, and the power relations primarily as more or less imbued in the field and habitus. This research shows that it in many cases is this so. But as habitus also operates on a reflexive, tactical level the research also demonstrates several ways the midlife single women have agency and the ability to act against and transform the social relations in the field and the social identities available. Agency is noticeable when some of the midlife single women participate in group package tours instead of travelling solo. They then invent and/or create bonding social capital. It is also evident in that the women temporally and spatially seek solitude when holidaying with friends. Many of the midlife single women are able, willing and eager to occasionally spend some hours, even to eat out, during the day alone. They then temporarily seek the social identity of the independent traveller. It is also a tactic when the midlife single women use the symbolic capital as a means of maintaining the friendship in everyday life. Shared holiday experiences and memories are used as glue at home. These are weak tactics that are hardly noticed in the field. They give little institutional power. But, the two latter aspects in particular are very important to the women. They give them the ability to combine everyday and holiday identities, and thus provide a sense of belonging or mattering in familial societies.

Weak tactics do not transform the sociable nature of the holiday experience and do not reduce the value of bonding social capital. By travelling with friends or joining a group package tour the midlife single women do not challenge the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia. Strong tactics potentially do. A few of the midlife single women embrace the social identity of the independent traveller. These women enjoy controlling the holiday experience, what to do, when to do it, where to go, who to talk to and so on in, before and after the holiday. They are not particularly affected by the sociality embedded in the tourist gaze or the material structures of the holiday experience. The social identity of the independent traveller is, furthermore, filled with many of the positive characteristics of gender/singlehood/midlife identities of everyday
life; control over the holiday experience, mental and emotional independence to be alone in public spaces, and a space for self-actualization and achievement. This social identity is also comparable to the social identity of the backpacker. But these tourists are often younger and engage in other modes of travel than the women in this study. The backpacker industry often more easily accommodates solo travelling and difference.

This research suggests that it is first and foremost the independent traveller who has agency. Midlife single women holidaying alone challenge the concept of holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia and make more social identities available to future similar travellers. Such social transformations are, on the other hand, also very demanding and assume the women’s willingness to seek mixophilia and face marginality. The social identity of the independent traveller is therefore not for everybody and only a few of the midlife single women really have learned to appreciate it. Few enjoy eating out alone, and few are able to deal with public solitude and the tourist gaze without feeling subordinate and marginal. Even the women embracing this social identity sometimes feel and notice the temporal lack of bonding social capital, especially when visiting a restaurant alone at night. They then experience the social identity of the loner instead of the independent traveller. They sense that the material structure of the restaurant is not made for the single guest and they feel the gazes of the staff and other customers. The strong links between the holiday experience and bonding social capital are therefore not easily challenged or changed. They are deeply entrenched in the field and the midlife single women’s habitus, in the habitus and, hence, in the tourist gazes of others and in the discursive practices and the material structures of the holiday experience. This research does not suggest that the power of habitus reduces the effects of the tourist gaze or the material and cultural structures of the field. But, it does suggest that the midlife single women’s actions, interactions and reactions are first and foremost incorporated and not the result of actual encounters with the tourist gaze. On the other hand, even the tourist gaze is shaped by habitus.

As social relations are triads, changes in the sociable nature of the holiday experience not only rest on women’s ability to holiday in new ways, but also on the tourism industry’s willingness to accommodate and accept the needs of the loner and the independent traveller. It is the industry that promotes holiday experiences and thereby partly influences the settings within which the tourist gazes take place. It is also the
industry that designs and makes the material conditions of hotels, restaurants and attractions, both of which are often necessary for successful holidays or the perfect ‘sandcastle’ in the Western World. The value of bonding social capital is therefore intersubjectively embedded in and controlled by the social relations of the field.

The social identity of the loner is not always a negative experience. This research therefore also suggests that tourism mobilities are partly central for understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. The success or failure of public solo holiday meals, hence the social identity of the loner and partly the independent traveller, rest on time of day, whether they take place in the enclave or a heterogeneous tourism space, and in a restaurant or a café. It is much easier for most of the midlife single women to eat out alone during the day in a city café than at night and at a restaurant in a resort. In the latter settings the social identity of the loner is very much apparent in the midlife single women’s stories. In the former they are more the independent traveller. In such cases the mix of material structures and the discourses embedded in the tourist gaze temporally and spatially affect the women’s experiences and social identities differently. This suggests that power relations and the value of bonding social capital are mobile.

On the other hand, such tourism mobilities are not evident in the holiday experiences of the midlife single women travelling with friends. Even if the lunch setting often differs from the dinner and the city from the resort, to these women the restaurant experience is always a space for sharing and bonding. These women’s experiences and social identities are not affected by the time of day or type of destination, nor by the material structures or the tourist gaze. I do not dispute the notion that holiday places are like ‘sandcastles’ created in the moment by the actors (Bærenholdt et al. 2004), but this suggests that interactions are often so sedimented that they appear more like a permanent castle; *habitus* then reduces tourism mobilities and tourists’ opportunities for agency when travelling with friends, but also when alone. The findings therefore suggest that tourism mobilities only partly affect interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities.

The non-recognition or misrecognition of the value of bonding social capital and sameness in tourism studies until recently is perhaps linked to the lack of focus on the
holiday experiences of marginal categories such as midlife single women and on alternative ways of spending the holiday such as with friends, alone or at home. It is perhaps also due to a lack of investigations on social relationships not only at-a-distance, but also away-from-home. By recognising these women’s holiday experience the mainstream thinking, some of which is embedded in the new tourism mobilities turn, is challenged and potentially changed. On the other hand, the tourist industry has, in many ways, implemented and accepted friends as bonding social capital for midlife single women, but it still lagging behind in accommodating solo holidays and any temporal lack of bonding social capital.

The empirical and theoretical contributions to understanding the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities in this research rest partly on the methodological approach and the methods chosen. At the outset I was very committed to the inclusion of many voices and to follow the midlife single women through the entire holiday, starting with the planning and ending with reminisce of what actually happened. In contrast to many tourism researchers my intention was not to understand the women’s actual holiday experiences, but the meaning of holiday making as such and how it affected their social identities. This meant not only studying the holiday experiences per se but also exploring what happened before and after it. This approach facilitated a thorough insight into the interrelationships which revealed the meanings of bonding social capital and which marked the holiday experience as a sociable space of mixophobia – aspects seldom investigated by other tourism researchers.

The study of the three phases of the holiday experience affected the methods chosen. At the outset I was attracted to the method of memory-work but rather than simply employing this technique I decided to develop a ‘new’ combination of focus group interviews and solicited diaries. This combination, which drew on elements of memory-work, generated a mixture of individual and collective data, and also strongly encouraged the women to commit to the entire process. The data collection was designed as a social project, giving the midlife single women the opportunity to reflect in public and in private. It offered the possibility of interactions and personal growth. The combination of methods also reduced the researcher’s influence upon the topics raised in the groups and described in the diaries. In the group discussion the women
often took charge of the discussion and in the diaries they were, more or less, free to choose the daily topic. The approach was also very fruitful for the researcher who picked up on central themes and pursued particular data from the solicited diaries in the second focus group interview.

Furthermore, in contrast to most tourism studies that collect data on one-off events in the holiday away from home, the solicited diary potentially enabled insight into each day of the holiday at home and/or away. It did not exclude any of the midlife single women from participating in the focus group interviews. It did not rest upon a specific destination or time for the women’s holidays. The women’s opportunity to respond freely in the diary was also very fruitful. Although, the solicited diary was partly structured, the daily questions enabled multiple answers. Still, in the end, many of the women chose to pass on stories reflecting the importance of bonding social capital; an importance which, in many ways, appears in dialogue with the holiday and not the researcher as is the case with many other methods. In addition, although there is closeness between the researcher and the research participants, I believe that the research methodology and methods in this study contributed to the telling of the research participants’ stories and not mine. This does still not mean that I do not relate to stories told by the midlife single women. When travelling with friends or alone I have had similar experiences.

The empirical and theoretical contributions in this thesis also rest on the theoretical approaches. I have applied McNay’s theories of subjectification and identity formation. I have used the concepts of intersubjectivity, agency, *habitus* and field to understand the research theme. Still, McNay’s implementation of Bourdieu’s social phenomenology in gender theory is primarily theoretical in nature. The outline of the theory does not rest on an empirical study, although she uses empirical examples to illustrate it. In this thesis I have provided empirical evidence to supplement and add a further dimension to these purely theoretical and complex discussions. Through the empirical work I have been able to identify gender/singlehood/midlife identities as intersubjectively embedded in the holiday experience. The midlife single women have incorporated the field and are marked by its material and cultural conditions. Still the women are not completely controlled by the field. They have agency and the ability to transform the social identities available. One of McNay’s (2000:53) starting points for understanding social
transformation is that *habitus* exists on a pre-reflexive level and that social transformations are the result of a ‘lack of fit between gendered *habitus* and the field’. This is not the case in this study. The social transformations that I have found are more linked to Adkins’ (2004a) notion of agency as a reflexive, habituated practice than to entering a new field. Agency is first and foremost linked to the few midlife single women who, over the years, have transformed into independent travellers. These women are, in many ways, freed from the restrictions that govern women’s actions on solo holidays and are able to create enjoyable experiences. The social identity of the independent traveller is then not the result of women entering a new field, but of them tactically manoeuvring its pitfalls. These women have had to learn how to become the independent traveller by doing it. They have had to enter the field over and over again with friends and/or alone in order to change.

One might argue that these latter women’s agency is not about social transformation, at least not yet. Midlife single women are not all able to be the independent traveller as yet and so have not changed the field as yet. This suggests that social transformation is an interactive process, it requires repetitive actions, and more and more women doing different but similar things over time. If this is the case, this research suggests that social transformations are more the result of practice than of entering a new field. It is the repeated tactics that eventually transform the field, *habitus* and the tourist gaze.

In this study I also contribute to theories of tourism mobilities. In some ways I detect systems of ‘host-guests-time-space-cultures’ (Sheller and Urry 2004a:6) and different consequences for the people and capitals involved. On the other hand, I also identify sedimented structures which permeate tourists’, employees’ and locals’ opportunities to play the game of tourism in different ways. If bonding social capital is a premise for successful holiday experiences to many tourists and mixophobia is accommodated by the tourism industry, then they also constitute somewhat fixed premises for places to play and places in play.

In summary, whilst recognising the material constraints of economic capital and other structural factors, the evidence presented within this thesis demonstrates that women do have cultural agency and that it is the women’s repeated acts, within the space we might define as the social-cultural nexus, which have the power to reshape both the material
and symbolic nature of not simply the holiday but of everyday life itself. This transformation of \textit{habitus} is greatly influenced by the development of social capital.

7.3 Future research

In this thesis I have studied the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. I have painted a broad picture of the importance of bonding social capital and the social identity of a friend. If I had studied specific holiday situations or destinations I probably would have been able to discuss how and where the midlife single women are best able to capitalise on the bonding social capital outside the meal context. Then I perhaps would also have been more able to link such power relations to specific struggles between specific categories of actors, based on class, gender, location, marital status and/or other social positions: aspects of the research which I would like to address in future.

In the last subsection I have also touched on other areas for future research and the importance of investigating certain concepts. Like Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2007) I call for a greater awareness of social capital in tourism studies. This research has primarily focused on the importance of bonding social capital as an asset and as social integration away from home. It is equally important to understand bridging social capital, and also how it intersects with bonding social capital. Bonding and bridging social capital will probably have different values during the life course and in different forms of holidays. Bridges to people unlike oneself are perhaps more important than bonds to family and friends in some stages in life, and certain types of tourism such as volunteer tourism accommodate bridging more than package tours. Future research should therefore investigate such distinctions. Such research should also further accommodate the value and power embedded in social capital as well as seeing it as a mean towards social integration.

The theoretical framework in this research rests on a feminist approach to Bourdieu’s phenomenology of social space. Seeing gender/singlehood/midlife identities as lived social relations affected by \textit{habitus} and the tourist gaze and embedded with agency is also applicable to other research projects. It gives a holistic approach to understanding tourism phenomena and reveals the interrelationships between material and cultural
power relations and acts of resistance. I believe that this approach can be used for understanding all forms of holidaymaking and all kinds of tourists, not only the marginal categories. The strength of the approach lies in its ability to embed the experience in material structures and cultural relations in addition to investigating the detail of social interactions and mobile experiences.

The starting point for this research was the holiday experience, not the tourist experience and I also included home-based holidays. Although there is a lack of focus on home-based holidays in the analysis this does not mean they are unimportant in the research. Many of the participants do spend the holiday at home and this is discussed in the focus groups. However, the data are too limited to be explored in the thesis. Future research on women’s holiday experiences should, however, investigate such home-based holidays. Furthermore, the literature on home-based holidays is also scarce which indicates an unexplored context of tourism and one which could offer a focus for future research. Some of the women in this study, for instance, do not see home-based holidays as holidays at all, other women use it for domestic labour and to some women it is a better option than solo holidays. Why holidays away from home are more valuable than the ones at home, is one central question for future tourism research, although, both forms indicate potentialities of exploration, sociality and recreation.

The outcome of this research is, in many ways, a result of the epistemology, methodology and methods chosen. I believe that the feminist position of investigation and inclusion of marginal voices, together with the combination of the focus group interview and the solicited diary, are very important to the final results and my ability to contribute to knowledge in tourism studies. I also believe that approaching the holiday experience as a process and involving the participants in several research phases enriches the outcome. I therefore recommend other researchers to be curious about marginal subjects and to try out the same combinations of methods.

7.4 The intellectual journey

Writing this thesis was inspiring but also a challenging type of study and work. The last four years were filled with many positive and negative experiences which changed me as a researcher and a person. In the beginning the four years seemed like an ocean of
time, in the end it was like a puff of wind. In the final stages I also, in some ways, felt as though I was at the beginning; just starting to understand the interrelationships between the holiday experience and gender/singlehood/midlife identities. I sometimes thought that if only I had known then what I know now, then the research really would make a difference. My supervisor, Cara Aitchison, would call such thoughts separation anxiety and a need for perfection. The submission of the thesis, however, does not mean that I will let it go. I will further develop it by writing articles and hopefully by developing comparable research ideas.

This research has first and foremost turned me into a feminist. It is not to say that I was disinterested in or unaware of women’s liberation issues earlier, but I was academically ignorant of the power relations in tourism and research. At the beginning of the PhD Cara Aitchison asked me to develop an epistemological position. A bit naïve, I drafted tourism theories. Although I have a Masters degree in Sociology and have worked as an applied tourism researcher for several years I was not trained in the philosophy of science, or if I was I had forgotten most of it! Her feedback made me enrol in a bachelor class in feminist epistemologies at the University of Oslo. This great course gave me an introduction to reading feminist theories and to embracing such a perspective. It opened a new world of reflecting on and doing research. The feminist research principles made profound impressions on me. I enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on power relations in the research process, to be located as a researcher and to voice marginal experiences. The liberating principles have hopefully finally freed me from the legacy of positivism.

Writing the dissertation also made me become aware of and accommodate new tourism theories. Contrary to the years when I worked as an applied tourism researcher, I had the time to catch up on some of the new literature. I was trained in the seminal articles of the 1970s and early 1980s, and was fascinated and disturbed by the fact that the legacy is still present in theories of today. At the same time the mobility turn, and the feminist and critical approaches found in recent thinking, make considerable contributions towards developing tourism studies and giving it new legitimacy and directions. At some points in my career I was sceptical towards tourism studies. It was often embedded within positivism or had no clear epistemological position. At the end of the thesis I am much more optimistic and believe in the importance of tourism studies and that, as a tourism researcher, I will contribute to valuable knowledge production in
social sciences. By doing this research I rediscovered many of the reasons I enjoyed the field in the first place.

The only negative aspect of this PhD research was the lonely endeavour. My supervisor lived in England, my colleagues were based in Lillehammer and I wrote the thesis in my apartment in Oslo. I did, of course, each year visit my supervisor two to three times and we talked on the phone four to five times. Still the opportunities to discuss theoretical approaches and interesting findings were limited. Consequently, most of my theoretical development happened in the dialogue with the literature. This is not to say that this was not a fruitful way of learning, but such texts were often written for other purposes and, alone, it was often difficult to decipher and transfer the meanings to this research. I often longed for somebody to discuss the topics with. On occasions, and especially at the outset of the project, I involved friends. Each year I also participated in tourism conferences which were useful spaces for critical reflections and discussions. The ability to speak about ideas or to discuss topics with colleagues and friends helped me clear my mind and gave me other perspectives and directions.

The solo, home-based process was demanding and required lots of self-control. It is easier to slip when nobody checks up on you on a daily or weekly basis. Still I kept to the timetables. My ability to work independently and to progress was the result of several years of remote working. I was already quite used to managing my working day from home. I was able to transfer such good habits. I did regular working days and weeks already from the start. I had steady progress. At the same time I did not let the research consume me completely. Only in the final phase did I work on weekends and in the evening. This enabled me to separate home from work and leisure from work, to resist the forces of mobility. It made me survive the thesis.

In final conclusion, the last four years were first and foremost the best in my career as a student and a researcher. I felt very privileged to have the ability to explore a research topic of academic and personal interest. This golden opportunity made me more independent and confident on a professional, but also on a personal level. It made me aware and excited about new theoretical perspectives and ways of doing research. It made me look forward to my next assignments.
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Appendices
### Appendix One: Socio-demographic, Norwegian midlife single women

Norwegian single women, 35-55 years old, distributed after marital status, given birth, origin, area of residence, residence in major cities, education, employment and net income. Per cent and N.

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<th></th>
<th>35-40 years</th>
<th>41-45 years</th>
<th>46-50 years</th>
<th>51-55 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
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\(^2\) 1 £ = NOK 12.50
Appendix Two: Pilot study first focus group interview

**The focus group**

Introduction and instruction

I am taping the discussions. As a pilot study, I am not going to use it in the analysis, but as a way of practicing the methods and equipment.

The PhD study is on singlehood and holidays. It is about women in their mid-life (35-55) and the summer holiday. I am guided by three research questions:

- anticipations of the holiday
- experiences of the actual holiday
- evaluations of the holiday

I am concerned with issues of identity.

I am using two methods: focus groups and diaries. The focus groups address the first and the last question. The diary studies the actual holiday. The two focus group meetings include the same people, and consist of four to six women.

The collection of data starts in April. At the moment I am doing the pilot study, which is an important way to test the methods. Your participation helps me identify strengths and weaknesses related to monitoring focus groups and using the diary. On this first meeting we work with the first research question – which in the pilot study will be the Christmas holiday.

There are several ways of doing focus group interviews. The researcher can guide the conversations with a list of topics, or she can let the group talk without interrupting. For this first meeting I have decided not to ask any questions. I introduce the topic – expectations of the holiday – and you already know what kind of information I am looking for – related to gender, mid-life and singlehood. I do not intervene unless you start talking about complete different subjects or you are not able to say anything at all for a longer period of time.

This is demanding for you, and presupposes a willingness to share personal experiences without being directly asked. It also gives you the control over the topics and when to talk. Each of you has the responsibility to participate and let the others have time to talk.

As this is a pilot study, I stop the conversation after half an hour. Then you have the opportunity to evaluate the experience.

The next time, I monitor the conversations by introducing topics. This gives a different experience.

After the evaluation I instruct on the diary writing.

It is time to start by asking: How do you anticipate the Christmas holiday?

In case I have to intervene:

Four topics for discussion:

- mid-life and Christmas holiday
- single and Christmas holiday
- women and Christmas holiday
- sense of self and Christmas holiday
I register the conversation.

1. who speaks – register name, duration (short (S), middle (M), long (L))
2. type of information – general information (I), narrative (N), jokes (J), irony (IR)
3. non verbal communication – laughter (L), gestures (G), gaze (E)
4. other comments – degree of bonding (B), degree of involvement (IN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who speaks Name, S, M, L</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The diary

Instruction
You have received one diary. On the hard cover you find the questions. On the first page is my contact information. If you fold the sheet you will see two headings: the diary and general information.

General information: First, you to fill out when you started and ended your Christmas holiday. Second, you specify where you spend the nights. If you went away, please state your relationship (e.g. parents, brother, aunt, best friend, a group of people etc.). Third, I like you to state the main reason for you stay (e.g. my parents visited me, was invited to Christmas dinner etc.).

On the opposite page you find the instruction for the daily. You address two topics each day:

- a meaningful activity
- an activity or experience that made you reflect upon you life

Please, include date, time, duration, company, where it took place, what you did, and your positive and negative experiences, thoughts and feelings.

There is no norm for how detailed, how personal or how long you write. However, I want you to consider the diary an opportunity to reflect upon your holiday, singlehood, femininity or identity, as well as taking part in a research project.

When you have finished the holiday I would like you to mail me your diary in the enclosed envelope. My address and stamps are on it.

I return the diary the next time we meet. I keep a copy.

Any questions?
Appendix Three: Pilot study, form for participants

Pilot study – about the midlife single women
Form for forming groups of participants

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<tr>
<th>Questions:</th>
<th>Answers:</th>
<th>Other comments:</th>
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<td>Email</td>
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<td>Marital status (never married, divorced, widow,</td>
<td>How long divorced/widowed/cohabitation</td>
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<td>cohabitation)</td>
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<td>Boy-/girl friend (duration, character)</td>
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<td>Children (age, number)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s current place of residence</td>
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<td>Own place of residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place of birth/growing up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents’ current place of residence</td>
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<td>Parents’ marital status</td>
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<td>Siblings and order of them</td>
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<td>Siblings’ current place of residence</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Annual income</td>
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<td>Annual holiday budget</td>
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<td>Travel career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of weeks off during the summer 2005 (plans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
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<tr>
<td>View upon diary writing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Four: Pilot study diary

Instructions for the diary

The diary
If possible I would like you to write in your diary every day of your holiday. You are welcome to add drawings, pictures and other ways of expressing your response to the topics.

I would like you to focus upon two topics, in relations to a list of moments.

1. Describe one meaningful activity each day.
   - date
   - time of day
   - duration
   - company
   - where it took place
   - what you did
   - positive experiences, thoughts and feelings
   - negative experiences, thoughts and feelings

2. Describe any activity or experience that made you reflect upon your life.
   - date
   - time of day
   - company
   - where it took place
   - what you did
   - positive experiences, thoughts and feelings
   - negative experiences, thoughts and feelings

General information
Before you start the diary I would like you to answer some general questions.

1. When did your holiday start:
2. When did your holiday end:
   (the period you took off from work)

3. How many nights did you spend overnight:
   - at home
   - at work
   - with relatives
   - with friends
   - others

4. Why did you stay (main reasons)
   - at home
   - with relatives
   - with friends
   - others
Questions for the second focus group meeting

- Write down one positive experience from your Christmas holiday

- Experiences on being single at Christmas/new years eve this year
  - when meeting relatives, friends and acquaintances
  - love and relationship

- Experiences with being with parents/relatives during Christmas
  - atmosphere, interactions, talks, activities

- Write down one negative experience from your Christmas holiday

- Experiences with the transition from being/staying with family for days and then suddenly be alone again
  - good feeling, emptiness etc.

- Experiences of being with friends/meeting friends during the holiday
  - activities, feelings of community

- Experiences of food, sport and other activities during the holiday
  - keeping busy, cosiness, escape

Themes from the diaries:
1. To what extent do the participants evaluate people they meet as potential partners?
2. Does being single alter relationships with parents/family and in what ways?
3. Does humour play a different role in friendships among singles rather than between pairs of partners?
4. Does exercise and physical activity play a particular role in single's lives?
Appendix Six: List of topics, first focus group interview

List of topics the first focus group interview

1. Get to know each other
   - name, age, occupation, marital status, travel experiences

2. Planning the holiday/s – negotiations and strategies
   - starting
   - who initiates the process
   - which issues are discussed
   - travel companion/s
   - economic considerations

3. Expectations of the holiday/s
   - places, spaces, people, activities etc.
   - imagine being there – what do you do, feel, hear, who company etc.

4. Alone travel
   - perceptions
   - destinations (good and bad ones)
   - own experiences (positive and negative)

5. Home holidays
   - perceptions
   - how to make such a holiday meaningful
   - own experiences

6. Group holidays
   - own experiences (strangers and group of friends)
   - perceptions

7. Being single and the importance of having/taking a holiday
   - going away
   - places one must see
   - importance of leisure travel in the social network

8. Last chance to express thoughts and experiences
Appendix Seven: List of topics, second focus group interview

List of topics – second focus group interview
1. About the holiday. One positive, one negative experience, activity etc.

2. Being with other people (friends, family, co-workers, children, boy/girlfriend, new people, locals)
   **Round:** One positive, one negative memory which include being with others during the holiday
   - the value of sharing experiences
   - missing being with people (own children, partner, company)
   - being alone/single versus lonely
   - being alone/single versus freedom
   - duty and being with people (family/friends)
   - being with people, then alone again
     - positive/negative reactions
     - situations, activities, experiences, company
     - as a midlife single woman

3. Experiencing a different place/s (nature, culture)
   **Round:** One positive, one negative experience, activity from your holiday away from home
   - Using body and mind – activities in nature, cultural activities
   - Enjoying food, drinks, shopping, sightseeing, having a good time
   - Risks, challenges, safety, traditions
     - positive/negative reactions
     - situations, activities, experiences, company
     - as a midlife single woman

4. Experiencing home/place of residence
   **Round:** One positive, one negative experience, activity from your holiday at home
   - domestic chores, duties (home, family)
   - doing non-everyday life things (nature, culture, activities)
   - Risks, challenges, safety, traditions
   - Using body and mind – activities in nature/cultural activities
   - Enjoying food, drinks, shopping, sightseeing, having a good time
     - positive/negative reactions
     - as a midlife single woman

5. The relationship leisure time – holiday time
   **Round:** One activity/experience only on holiday, one activity/experience both holiday and leisure time
   - Different choices activities/experiences holiday/leisure time
   - Different food/drinks holiday/leisure time
   - Seeking contact with other people holiday/leisure time
   - Selecting places (destinations, restaurant, pubs etc) holiday/leisure time
     - as a midlife single woman

6. The relationship holidays for singles versus holidays for married, people with children
   - doing different things?
Appendix Eight: Instruction, the first focus group meeting and the solicited diary

Instruction the first focus group interview

Welcome. Nametag.

Presentation of Bente

Schedule:
- taping the conversation
- duration: 2 hours
  - start with presentation; first best/worse holiday memory
  - 90 minutes for discussions
  - 30 minutes instructions diary
  - brief evaluation
- toilet in the hall
- food/beverage

Reminder project
- PhD midlife single women and holiday
  - data collection three phases
    - April
    - holiday
    - August/September

Focus group interview
- 6-7 topic introduced by me
- be active
  - be proactive
  - do not be silent
- ask each other questions
- I do not participate in the discussions, I moderate

Instruction the solicited diary

- 1. May – 31. August
- 14 days
- holiday = not at work
- facts about the holiday
  - if one long holiday, divide between activities, types of holidays, company etc.
  - if several holiday, write a bit from all
  - if home based holidays, describe daytrips and home based activities
- describe one activity or experience each day

Questionnaires:
1. In general
  - state name, age, place of residence
  - state the holiday; where did you stay the night, how many nights and company
  - if several shorter holidays fill in the dates. Up to three holidays.
  - state day trips, where did you go and company

2. The daily topic
  - each day reflect on one activity or experience of choice.
  - state facts; date, time of date, duration, company, place and description
  - state in complete sentences
    - positive and thoughts and feelings
    - negative thoughts and feelings
    - reflections to being a midlife single woman

There are no rules for how personal, detailed or long you can write. I hope you see the opportunity to reflect on you holiday, singlehood, gender and identity. The book is divided in three questions. If you want to write more, please do

After finishing the diary, please return it in the enclosed envelop. You get it back the next time we meet. I keep a copy.

All information is kept anonymous.
Appendix Nine: Instruction, second focus group interview

Welcome.
I am grateful for the diaries. The content frames today’s discussion. Although not everybody has long entries, there are many similarities. The same issues interests more of you. The diaries show a multitude of experiences and ways of spending the holiday. This makes the topics general. It is important that each uses personal experiences.

Plan:
2 hours, 1 1/2 hour for topics, 1/2 hour on evaluation, selecting pseudonym and checking personal socio-demographic. 2 forms.

First form: check that all holidays are included and the information about them. Not only the holidays described in the diary.

Second form: after evaluation.

Breaks for smoking. Food and drinks on the table. Toilet is in the hall.

Part 1
5 topics made from the diaries. I do not want repetition, but that you use the memories more analytical. I am concerned with singlehood, gender and midlife. The more you relate to this, the better.

Part 2
Form 2 – checking socio-demographic facts from the earlier. Need it to supplement the analysis.

Evaluation:
Diary:
- positive/negative experiences
- difficult to related to the topic
- when did you write
- difficult to formulate
- time constraints
- the form
- motivation
- do it again
- other

Focus group interview
- positive/negative experiences
- first contra second meeting
- size of group
- time to talk
- topic
- do it again
- other
Appendix Ten: Socio-demographic information about the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-demographic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
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<td>Years in occupation</td>
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<td>Previous occupations</td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
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<td>Place of residence</td>
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<td>Born</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents place of residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent’s marital status</td>
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<td>Dad’s occupations</td>
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<td>Mum’s occupations</td>
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<td>Siblings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siblings place of residence</td>
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<td>Net annual income</td>
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<td>Holiday budget 2005</td>
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<td>3 hobbies</td>
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<td>Favourite music</td>
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<td>Favourite cultural activity</td>
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<td>Favourite outdoor activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Ca.</td>
<td>week</td>
<td>Ca.</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Holidays 2004</th>
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<th>6</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Destination</td>
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<td>Company</td>
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<td>No. days</td>
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</table>
Appendix Eleven: The solicited diary

Instructions
If possible I would like you to keep a diary during the holiday/s you take in the period 1st Mai and 31st August 2005. Preferably I would like you to keep the diary for a period of 2 weeks.

If you do several things during your holiday – for instance, stay at home, visit friends or relatives, go abroad, go camping etc. I would like you to write in your diary on each kind of holidaymaking. For instance, if your 3 weeks of holiday in July is divided between a few days at home, a stay at the cabin by the sea, and a travel abroad. I would like you to write a few days from each type of holiday.

If you take more than one period off I would like you to write in your diary a few days in each period (I have made room for three periods of holidays). For instance, if you take 2 weeks in Mai and 2 in July, you could write in your diary seven times during your Mai holiday and seven times in July.

If you stay at home I would like you to register the daytrips you make.

Each day I would like you to state some practical information before you address the main questions. Preferably I would like you to write full sentences when you address the topics. You are welcome to add drawings, pictures and other ways of expressing your response to the topics.

When you have finished your holiday, please return the diary in the pre stamped envelope.

Contact information:
Bente Heimtun
bentehe@online.no

General information
I would like you to answer some general questions.

Name: 
Age: 
Place of residence: 

Please register some information about your holiday (if you had several holidays please see questions below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When did your (first) holiday</th>
<th>When did your (first) holiday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>start:</td>
<td>end:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the place you stayed the night. If several places, state each. If you went on a round trip, state the area just once.</th>
<th>No. nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who were you with (more than half a day). State relationship. Relate it to the place you stayed</td>
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If you had several holidays please register:

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<tr>
<th>When did your (second) holiday</th>
<th>When did your (sec.) holiday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>start:</td>
<td>end:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the place you stayed the night. If several places, state each. If you went on a round trip, state the area just once.</th>
<th>No. nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who were you with (more than half a day). State relationship. Relate it to the place you stayed</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When did your (third) holiday start:</th>
<th>When did your (third) holiday end:</th>
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</table>

Name of the place you stayed the night. If several places, state each. If you went on a round trip, state the area just once. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of the place</th>
<th>Who were you with (more than half a day)?</th>
<th>State relationship</th>
<th>Relate it to the place you stayed</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you stayed at home during your holiday, please state any daytrips:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where did you go:</th>
<th>Who were you with (more than half a day)?</th>
<th>State relationship</th>
<th>Relate it to the daytrip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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Day 1

Please describe 1 activity or experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time of day:</th>
<th>Duration:</th>
<th>Company:</th>
<th>Where it took place:</th>
<th>What did you do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please write in more detail about positive thoughts and feelings related to the activity/experience

negative thoughts and feelings related to the activity/experience

reflection you made on your life as a single woman as a result of the activity/experience

Day 2

Please describe 1 meaningful activity or experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time of day:</th>
<th>Duration:</th>
<th>Company:</th>
<th>Where it took place:</th>
<th>What did you do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please write in more detail about positive thoughts and feelings related to the activity/experience

negative thoughts and feelings related to the activity/experience

reflection you made on your life as a single woman as a result of the activity/experience

and so on ....
Appendix Twelve: Information about the project

**Wanted: midlife (35-55 yrs) single women!**

The last year I have been working on a PhD on single women and the holiday experience. This spring I am going to collect data. In this matter I look for participants and hope you will attend.

My aim is to recruit about 40 single women 35-55 years old. To me being single means living alone; divorcee, widows and never-married woman can therefore participate. If you have children, though, they must live by themselves. I am looking for women of various ages, levels of education, occupations and marital statuses. The data collection, however, is fixed and takes place in Lillehammer, Oslo and Tønsberg. You must live close to these cities.

If you are interested or know women who fit the profile, I hope to receive your email or text in which you state: your/her age, education, occupation, marital status (never married, divorcee, widow) and any children’s age and place of residence.

First I map potential participants, and then I ask for commitment. In this way I can recruit women with different socio-demographic background.

I am studying singlehood in relation to the summer holiday as I assume it is a challenging period for midlife single women. I believe that the stories on planning, holidaying and remembering signify singlehood in one way or the other. The data collection is therefore in three phases. First, a focus group interview (4-5 women meet to discuss) about expectations and planning. Second, a diary during the holiday related to activities and experiences (I do not exclude women staying at home, visit the second home or visit friends and relatives). Thirdly, a focus group interview about the holiday experiences. The same women meet in both focus groups.

I cannot pay you or the participants. But I hope you see the benefit of discussing the topic with other women and that it enriches your life in other ways. I have already done a pilot study and the feedbacks are positive. The women give references if necessary.

This is a brief description of the research. If you fit the profile and are interested, please contact me by email or text message with the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place of residence:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation:</td>
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<td>Education:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital status:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No of children:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s age:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thank you!
Appendix Thirteen: Consent form

Research Consent form

**Title of research project:** The holiday experiences of midlife single women

**Researcher:** Bente Heimtun, Research Fellow, Lillehammer University College

**Nature of research:** PhD

**Research method for which consent is required:** Focus group interview and solicited diary

**Name of participant:** …………………………………………….

I consent to participating in the research.

By signing the form I give the researcher (Bente Heimtun) my consent to undertake the research.

I am informed about the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the ways in which the results will be used.

I am informed that the information is handled anonymously and confidentially.

______________________________   ______________________
Signed (participant)       Date
Appendix Fourteen: Instruction for phone call, potential participants

On the phone

Introduce myself:
Master in Sociology, involved in tourism education and research last 7 years. 40 year old midlife single women, no children. Live in Oslo, born in Tønsberg.

PhD in social sciences/sociology. University of West of England, UK Research fellow Lillehammer University College, department for Tourism. Four years.

About the research:
Data collection in 2005

Recruiting women 35-55 yrs living alone to talk about the summer holiday.

Aim: more knowledge about single living for women. It is a personal project. It maybe results in new insights transforming the industry.

The data are used in the thesis and other papers related to it. The participants are anonym.

I recruit women from three locations: Oslo/Akershus, Lillehammer/Oppland and Tønsberg/Vestfold

I need 40 women at the most.

The focus group interviews: 3 groups in Oslo, 2 in Lillehammer and 2 in Tønsberg. All groups 4-6 participants. One meeting in April and one in September.

I want the women to discuss the issues.

The interviews in Oslo take place in my apartment, in Tønsberg at my parent’s house and in Lillehammer at the University College.

I cannot pay for participation.

The diary: describe daily incidents during the holiday. The diary is instructed and distributed on the first focus group meeting. The book is returned in a pre stamped envelop.

Difficult to collect data during the holiday, people do many different things. I want to follow of the participants. This is my only option. Need confirmation of taking the assignment.

The participation is always voluntary.
Appendix Fifteen: Snowballing through newspaper article

Tønsberg Blad 05.02.2005, p. 4.
Appendix Sixteen: Lists of focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
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Appendix Seventeen: List of participation in the data-collection

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3 £ ≈ NOK 12.50
4 Norway
5 Overseas

Bente Heimtun

Mobile identities of gender and tourism
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⁶ Lily, Grace, Eve and Sara do not attend second focus group meeting. Personal reasons
⁷ Kay does only attend first focus group meeting. She meets a new partner before the holiday
⁸ Liz does only attend first focus group meeting. Personal reasons.
Appendix Nineteen: List over summer holidays 2005

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Helena | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X
| Annie | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Clara | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Fiona | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Tina | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Clare | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Ella | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Sara | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Daisy | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Sue | 3 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Laura | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Betty | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Emma | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Victoria | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Diana | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Emily | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Toni | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| June | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Grace | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Lily | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Amy | 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Gerd | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Angel | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Paris | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Nichola | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Doris | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Bess | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Jane | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Ada | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Linda | 1 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Total: 61 holidays

H = home based holiday
A = holiday away from home
* alone on home based holidays