Proposing paradigm peace: Mixed methods in feminist tourism research

Bente Heimtun
Finnmark University College, Norway

Nigel Morgan
Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK

Abstract
This article attempts to engage and advance tourism’s epistemological and methodological discussions. It explores how the transformative paradigm offers an opportunity to feminist tourism researchers to broaden their methods base and obtain nuanced understandings of systematic and localised oppression without compromising research principles, such as positionality and reflexivity. To illustrate the value of this approach, we combine a qualitative study of midlife (35–55 years) single women’s holiday experiences with a follow-up quantitative study of young (18–30 years) single women’s experiences. We argue that merging these studies creates new understandings of intersecting power relations related to gender, age and singlehood and that in a broader sense working within the transformative paradigm has the potential to promote paradigm peace in feminist tourism research.

Keywords
age, gender, methodologies, power, singlehood, transformative paradigm

Introduction
Throughout tourism’s development as a field of study, there have been long-standing calls for its researchers to engage with competing philosophical perspectives and particularly for them to explore the potentialities of combining qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g. Davies, 2003; Echtner and Jamal, 1997; Pansiri, 2005, 2006; Thomas,
Traditionally, where the mixing of methods has been applied in tourism, it has been described as triangulation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). More recently, however, mixed-method social scientific enquiry has moved beyond the conventional view of triangulation as enhancing validity and credibility of inference. Mixed methods are instead now described as offering the potential to present social science researchers with a richer understanding of the phenomena under study through complementarity, insight and expansion of the study scope (Greene, 2007).

The philosophical underpinnings of much mixed-method approaches are rooted in pragmatism, an approach that suggests that researchers should focus more on ‘what works’ in a specific study and less on epistemological considerations and philosophical perspectives (Maxcy, 2003: 85). Pragmatism thus proposes that both positivism and interpretivism are useful perspectives for understanding a complex world (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Together, they enable scientific knowledge to be relational, temporal and contextual and allow pragmatists to learn about or resolve social problems or felt difficulties (Greene, 2007). Pragmatic mixed-method approaches have, however, been particularly problematic for feminist researchers as while pragmatism advocates mixing opposing philosophical perspectives, it rejects emancipatory programmes and hence the principles on which feminist enquiry is founded (Pansiri, 2005). As a result, critical tourism thinkers, such as feminists, have remained method purists or have had to look elsewhere for a philosophical rationale for mixing methods. In this article, we put forward the transformative paradigm as a solution to this epistemological impasse. Contrary to pragmatism, the transformative paradigm embraces the emancipatory imperative of research and places importance on marginalised groups, asymmetric power relations and social change – all of which are central tenets of feminism (Mertens, 2003).

Although mixed methods have been applied in mainstream tourism enquiry (e.g. Ray and Ryder, 2003; Scott, 1997) and in a few feminist tourism studies (e.g. Aitchison, 2000; Aitchison et al., 1999; Phillimore, 1998, 2002; Sánchez Taylor, 2000, 2001), these researchers have largely kept sight of their respective quantitative or qualitative research paradigms. Yet the application of mixed-method approaches within the transformative paradigm could make a significant philosophical contribution to tourism studies. Certainly, without such philosophical advancement, the tourism field will continue to fall behind social science theoretical development, relying instead on the comforts and certainties provided by continuity and incremental change (Pearce and Butler, 2010; Pritchard et al., 2012). Indeed, such epistemological and methodological debate is essential if tourism is to seriously engage with competing positivist, post-positivist/critical realist, constructionist and critical theory/historical realist claims about how we know the social world (Hollinshead, 2012).

This article attempts to engage and advance tourism’s epistemological and methodological discussions by exploring how the transformative paradigm offers an opportunity to feminist tourism researchers to broaden their methods base and obtain nuanced understandings of systematic and localised oppression. Methodology is defined as the intellectual process guiding reflections on how we know (epistemology) and how we understand the world (ontology) and our ethics, methods and research process (Ackerly et al., 1996). As adherents of feminist and transformative tourism, we emphasise the need to overcome disciplinary boundaries when addressing complex social
phenomenon such as tourism (Coles et al., 2009). Thus here we demonstrate how a transformative-grounded quantitative study taken in combination with a qualitative exploration of single women’s holiday experiences strengthens analysis of gender power relations within tourism.

**Feminist tourism research and methodologies**

Most feminist tourism researchers, in contrast to a growing number of researchers in the broader social sciences (including some feminists, for example, Hesse-Biber, 2010; Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2007; Vikström, 2012) have yet to transform paradigm conflict into ‘paradigm peace’ (Bryman, 2006). This conflict reflects over a century of division within social science between mono-method/purist positivists and mono-method/purist interpretivist (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005), which still challenges feminists’ views on knowledge production (Brooks and Hesse-Biber, 2007). Feminist tourism researchers draw upon different methodologies and epistemologies in producing knowledge, which aims to improve women’s experiences and conditions as tourists and tourism workers – namely, feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and post-structural feminism (Aitchison, 2005a, 2006). They engage in these positions in order to confront the White, male, Eurocentric philosophical tradition (which they often term ‘phallocentric’ and ‘malestream research’) underpinned by positivism and its adherence to physical science, universal laws and objectivity (Stanley and Wise, 1990; Wearing, 1998; Williams, 2012).

Feminists’ critique of positivism has developed through three waves of thinking (Harding, 1986). The first wave of feminism (feminist empiricism/liberal feminism) started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emerging out of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics; the goal of this wave of feminism was to open up opportunities for women, with a particular focus on suffrage (Wrye, 2009). Feminist tourism researchers engaging in feminist empiricism today map barriers to tourist participation, employment patterns and management structures in order to draw attention to and address gender inequality (Aitchison et al., 1999; Jordan, 1997; Wilson, 2004). Feminist empiricists are critical of gender bias in positivism and embrace research that more carefully studies gender as a variable although within a critical realist framework and often by applying quantitative methods (Aitchison, 2005b; Campbell and Wasco, 2000; Rosser, 2001).

Feminist empiricists critique positivism for not giving voice to women’s experiences and for making them invisible and underrepresented (Brooks and Hesse-Biber, 2007). Crucially, they argue that objectivity can be restored or attained when women are treated equally with men as both researchers and research participants (Rosser, 2001). Their methodology seeks awareness of sexism in every step of the research process, and for them, gender bias is overcome when the researcher becomes aware of this and conducts research accordingly (Eichler, 1988). Feminist empiricism, however, is critiqued for not embracing the principles of feminist enquiry by failing to challenge the underlying structures and cultures permeating phallocentrism and positivism (Aitchison, 2003). Indeed, feminist empiricism has been characterised as an approach where researchers simply ‘add women and stir’. Thus, while such researchers may well be actively reforming
positivism by conducting quantitative research ‘more rigorously and carefully’; they are unable to focus on knowledge, which fully accommodates women’s experiences (Harding, 1993, 1995).

The second wave of feminism – standpoint feminism – has its origins in the 1960s. This Marxist-inspired wave unfolded in the context of anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world (Wrye, 2009). For these feminists, their research of gender power relations within tourism, for example, requires them to take different social ‘standpoints’, such as class (Marxist feminism), class and sexuality (socialist feminism), sexuality (radical feminism) or race (Black feminism; see, for example, Aitchison, 2005a, 2005b, 2006). Standpoint feminism critiques quantification and hence positivism for not valorising women’s ways of knowing or making their voices heard and lives visible (Maynard, 1994; Ramazoglu and Holland, 2002). Accordingly, this stance calls for qualitative methods and a methodology that is political, ethical and reflexive and that aims at including marginalised people and reducing power relations in the research process (Morris et al., 1998). In direct contrast to feminist empiricists who critique quantitative research for being insensitive to the possibilities and consequences of sex and gender bias, standpoint feminists argue that quantification is itself ‘a smokescreen for male privilege’ (Hughes and Cohen, 2012: 2). As a result, they argue that scientific knowledge of women’s lived experiences only is attainable through qualitative investigation.

Standpoint feminism thus challenges the underpinning foundations of positivist scientific knowledge, questioning assumptions of objectivity and value neutrality in quantitative research and the belief that women and men do research in the same ways (Rosser, 2001). Interestingly, epistemologically standpoint feminism does not reject the concept of objectivity but claims that it has to be more rigorously and reflexively applied (Harding, 1993). Moreover, objective knowledge is not regarded as superior to subjective knowledge, and concepts, such as the validity of data, are improved through reflexivity on power relations in the research process, not through objectively gathered data (Williams, 2012). Standpoint feminism thus offers a new logic to doing research, one which ‘starts thought from marginalized lives and takes everyday life as problematic’ (Harding, 1993: 50). It not only situates the knower but also privileges the way of knowing by naming it. It is based on the idea of the ‘epistemic privilege’ of the subjects on the margin over those at the centre (Bar On, 1993: 85). In doing so, it gives voice to suppressed and marginal people, such as women, Blacks or lesbians, who are then able to powerfully critique society and introduce new discourses.

The third wave of feminism – post-structural feminism – developed in the mid-1990s and is informed by post-colonialism and post-modernism (Wrye, 2009). For instance, influenced by Foucault, post-structural feminism does not place patriarchal power relations in the social structures of class, sexuality and race but focuses on how cultural discourses ‘construct, legitimate and reproduce’ them (Aitchison, 2003: 30). Feminist tourism researchers, for instance, deconstruct the phallic-logos, which permeate the language of tourism and tourism research practices and identify the cultural workings of gender power relations (e.g. Fullagar, 2002; Heimtun, 2007; Johnston, 2001; Jokinen and Veijola, 1997; Jordan and Aitchison, 2008; Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Veijola and Jokinen, 1994, 2008).
Post-structural feminists argue that scientific knowledge is relative and multiple and that it only exists within a language of knowing. Critically, it is therefore not possible to regard such knowledge as objective, subjective and valid, but only as the ‘effects of power’ and as ‘partial and located’ cultural praxis (Lather, 1991: 105). Post-structural feminism is thus critical of the totalising grand theory found in traditional mainstream science and of the logics imbued in the language of phallocentric knowledge (Weedon, 1987). Accordingly, knowledge is achieved through deconstructions of the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. This means that subjects are not stable and fixed concepts but ‘performative constructs’ shaped by political, ideological and cultural systems (Butler, 1993). Some argue that there is also an emergent fourth wave of feminist research as feminists become increasingly concerned for the future of the planet, prioritising concepts of collaboration and support rather than conquest and competition (Wrye, 2009). In this wave, the starting point for social change is the construction of coherent narratives of gender, which include both positive and negative experiences (Diamond, 2009). It proposes female equality and empowerment on four axes: political, personal, cultural and spiritual. As yet, feminist tourism researchers have yet to seriously engage this fourth wave of feminism.

On the surface, the methodological underpinnings of feminist tourism research, which draw on feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, post-structural feminism and the emergent fourth wave feminism, appear to be located in the discrete ontological camps of critical realism, historical realism and relativism (Campbell and Wasco, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Most post-structural feminists, however, reject the absolute relativism that marks mainstream constructivism as it makes the fight for women’s rights pointless. These feminists, therefore, follow a different path and introduce a ‘both/and logic’ (Lather, 1991: 104), which seeks to build a bridge between relativism and realism. With this alternative ontological positioning, post-structural feminism locates both ‘systemic’ power relations, such as gender; class; race and sexuality and ‘localized, contextualized and pluralized’ gender power relations permeating language and praxis (Aitchison, 2005a: 220; see also, Fraser, 2000; McNay, 2000). However, despite this attempt to overcome social and cultural division, post-structural feminism has yet to deconstruct the unproductive dichotomous relationship between qualitative and quantitative research methods, ‘between hard/soft, emotional/rational, worthy/worthless’ (Hughes and Cohen, 2012: 2).

The transformative paradigm

Although feminist tourism research has remained in most cases firmly mono-method – trapped in the gendered paradigm debate, whereby ‘male’ or mainstream positivistic research equates to quantification and feminism equates to qualitative insight (Letherby, 2004; Oakley, 2000) – feminist tenets have also influenced mixed-method thinking, in particular the transformative paradigm. Transformative theory has been described as an umbrella term for an approach that has its scholarly roots in feminism, disability theory and critical theory and that connects with critical race theory, queer theory and post-colonial and indigenous theory (Mertens, 1999, 2003, 2008). These theories on society and knowledge production share a specific concern for social justice, and they address
issues of power throughout the research process (Mertens, 2007). Moreover, they also argue that knowledge reflects power and relationships within society and that the aim of research is to advocate social justices and emancipation. Contrary to most feminists, advocates of the ‘transformative–emancipatory paradigm’ or the ‘transformative paradigm’ consider the method discussion secondary; more important is the involvement of the people being studied, as a result mixing qualitative and quantitative methods is not seen as problematic (Mertens, 2007).

Ontologically, the transformative paradigm draws upon a mix of relativism and historic realism, arguing that ‘There are multiple realities that are socially constructed, but it is necessary to be explicit about the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial, gender, age, and disability values that define realities’ (Mertens, 2007: 216). The transformative paradigm thus acknowledges that situated social constructed realities are based upon social and cultural values (Mertens et al., 2008). This enables researchers to investigate different realities and intersecting social positions that are also central to standpoint feminism and post-structural feminism (Crenshaw, 1995). Moreover, epistemologically, this paradigm emphasises that scientific knowledge rests on respectful interactions between a reflexive and ethical researcher and his or her research participants (Mertens, 2007). Furthermore, the concept of objectivity is not linked to a neutral researcher but to the powers of all those involved or affected by the research. Mertens (1999) writes: ‘objectivity is valued in the sense of providing a balanced and complete view of the program processes and effects such that bias is not injected because of a lack of understanding of key viewpoints’ (p. 5). Such views of knowledge production concur with the key feminist epistemological principles of inclusion, reduction of power relations and reflexive and ethical research processes (Cancian, 1992; Cook and Fonow, 1986; DeVault, 1996; Morris et al., 1998).

Such notions allow those who espouse the transformative paradigm to treat epistemology and methodology somewhat interchangeably (Letherby, 2003). As a result, their methodological assumptions do not rest on how to conduct different types of inquiry but on how to produce knowledge for social action (Mertens, 2007, 2008). These scholars promote interactive ways of collecting data, which capture culturally and socially complex human experiences and which reveal power relations leading to discrimination and oppression. This entails involving the research participants in all phases of the research and choosing the most appropriate method(s) on a case-by-case basis. The transformative paradigm thus encourages the researcher to really reflect upon the advantages and disadvantages of the method(s) to be used and to be combined (Mertens, 2008). It fully acknowledges that quantitative research is useful for locating systemic gender power relations and that qualitative research elaborates on their many local facets (Hodgkin, 2008). Such arguments are also found among feminists who contest the notion of gendered paradigms (Kelly et al., 1994; Letherby, 2004; Maynard, 1994; Sprague and Zimmerman, 1989). These feminists also acknowledge that the nature of the research question should be the basis for choosing the right method, not the epistemological positioning.

Significantly, the transformative paradigm enables feminist tourism researchers to embrace non-positivistic ways of dealing with quantification. For instance, the focus on low-incidence groups or unique populations challenges positivistic notions of sampling,
generalisability of findings and rigorous data analysis (Mertens, 2007). Consequently, the samples are often small and non-random, the ranges are restricted or highly variable and valid data are also highly linked to the researcher’s ability to build trust. Moreover, the transformative paradigm promotes context-specific diversity in the participants, and it seeks to overcome barriers to participation, such as language, disabilities and access to transport and child care (Mertens, 2003). For its researchers, it is thus not only important to consider how the research process and findings will benefit those being studied but also to consider whether they will find the results credible. Finally, as research is about personal involvement and engagement, it is to be expected that both the researcher and his or her participants will be transformed in some way as a result of their interactions.

The transformative paradigm is beginning to impact on tourism enquiry, for example, the emergent hopeful tourism perspective attempts to offer broader philosophical understanding of how we know our multiple, entwined worlds and to produce specific, attainable transformative acts through education and activism (Pritchard et al., 2012). Hopeful tourism is an unfolding transformative tourism perspective that strives for the transformation of ways of seeing, being, doing and relating in tourism worlds and for the creation of a more equal, sustainable planet through action-oriented, participant-driven learnings and acts. Echoing transformative learning requires reflection on our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our interactions with others and with the natural world; our appreciation of relations of power entwined in structures of gender, race and class; our embodiments; our worldviews and our visions for social justices and personal fulfilment (O’Sullivan, 2002). Central to hopeful tourism is the transformation of researcher/researched relationships so that the latter are no longer subjects or even participants in projects but wherever possible, collaborators in tourism storying (Richards et al., 2010; Sedgley et al., 2011). This places significant emotional and ethical responsibilities on researchers and also demands alternative discourses of research credibility.

**Mixed methods and single women’s holiday experiences**

Drawing upon the transformative paradigm, we seek to explore here how the use of mixed methods in feminist tourism research can provide nuanced insights into the power relations shaping single women’s holidays. Mertens (2003) argues that the transformative paradigm is appropriate when studying people such as single travellers, who can experience discrimination (see Gordon, 1994; Statistics Norway, 2001, 2004; Trimberger, 2005). Here, the chosen design is explanatory as the survey follows up qualitative findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The qualitative findings are based on two sets of focus group interviews conducted before and after the summer of 2005 and solicited diaries kept during summer holidays, while the quantitative non-representative survey data are from late 2008/early 2009. Thirty single women aged 35–55 years participated in the qualitative study and 190 single female students aged 18–30 years responded to the request to complete a questionnaire for the quantitative study.

As is appropriate for transformative enquiry, the research process was reflexive and aimed to include many voices, and efforts were made to reduce the power relations between the research participants and the researcher; as such, the study tried to involve
the research participants as co-researchers, conducting the research with them, not on
them (Heron and Reason, 2006). In the qualitative study, participants/co-researchers
with diverse educations, ages and marital statuses (never married, divorced and wid-
owed) were recruited, and prior to collecting the data, a pilot study was conducted and
evaluated by them and the lead researcher. In the main phase of the research, all partici-
pants/co-researchers were informed about the purpose of the research, and at the outset,
they signed a consent form. After each interview, they were emailed transcripts for
inspection and comment, and the original copies of the diaries were returned to them. At
the end of the second focus group interviews, the participants/co-researchers evaluated
the methods and procedures; each selected a pseudonym and received an electronic ver-

ciation of the completed research in their native language.

This co-researched qualitative research project provided the framework for the quan-
titative phase. There are obviously practical and logistical difficulties in attempting to
undertake a co-researched quantitative study. However, this phase did reflect transforma-
tive principles, thus the survey questions were grounded in the single women’s experi-
ences and were based on feedback from a pilot among single students.

Single female students (also with diverse marital statuses) were recruited at five dif-
ferent universities/university colleges in three towns in Norway. The women were asked
both about their last holiday and about their general views on holiday-taking. In the
recruitment process, each woman was personally asked to participate, and the researcher
answered any questions they had about the research; this phase also tried to include as
many voices as possible by taking into account age and ethical variations.

The qualitative research

The initial qualitative research suggests that midlife single women assume (at one time
or another) three social identities on holiday: the friend, the loner and the independent
traveller. Most of the women in this age group prefer holidaying with friends, thereby
moving beyond or forgetting their singlehood, age and gender. This social identity is a
way of negotiating marginal subject positions in holiday spaces marked by heterosexual
families and couples. Such friendships transcend the commercial aspect of tourism and
turn it into a space for bonding; in particular, eating out together is used for this purpose.
Reflecting on the ease of travelling with friends, Daisy describes a trip to London with a
group of female friends and reflects on the joy of doing things together and exploring the
city. In the first focus group meeting, she talks about her expectations (1) and in the sec-
don (2) she revisits this holiday:

1) I leave for London tomorrow; we are eight friends travelling together. I look forward to
spending time with my girlfriends ... to be together and experience, not to party and stuff, just
to do something else and shop, and ... just to be together ... meet in the evening and talk about
the experiences during the day. To create joint memories. That is good ... to be with good
friends, people you know have similar interests.

2) After we met last time I went to London ... we saw Mama Mia ... shopped and went
sightseeing. Together it went very well; it was always somebody to hang out with. ... I dislike
travelling alone.
In solo holidays, singlehood is the subject position most central to the midlife women; they identify either positively or negatively with being single. Many of them equate solo holidays with the social identity of the loner and resist this by hardly ever travelling alone. This social identity is surrounded by distinct and uncomfortable spatial, cultural and material power relations, especially in eating places. In such spaces, the women feel oppressed by the discourses and practices of surveillance; they keenly feel the observing and inspecting gazes of other people, and they dislike being visibly alone. A few of the women do contest, challenge and negotiate the power relations embedded in solo holidays, particularly in relation to eating places. Indeed, these midlife women have learned to deal with loneliness and marginalisation by turning negative emotions into a positive sense of freedom and independence. They take control over what to do, when and where to eat out and how to deal with public solitude.

The contradictions and antagonisms of solo holidays are evidenced in the following focus group exchange:

Ella – my best holiday memory is a trip to London where I was completely alone ... to decide when to eat, to shop to you drop, or just sit in a pub and write ...

Liz – do you never feel unsafe, afraid when you are alone in a big city? Day or night, are you never afraid?

Ella – No

Sara – I have to say, I would never travel to a big city alone

Liz – no

Sara – I only travelled to Syden (Scandinavian term for Mediterranean and Canary Island). It is unthinkable for me to travel to a big city alone

Clare – I think Syden – family package holidays, they really like disgust me in a way ... I am not comfortable in that setting. But in a big city I feel like everybody else. Then I am no different from the others ...

Interviewer – is like practice makes perfect, making it easier to visit a restaurant alone?

Sara – at least for me

Clare – I think so

Interviewer – what do you learn?

Clare – it is about security, I think

Liz – I don’t know if it is that you are self-sufficient. If you are self-sufficient, engaged in the things you do, having a nice time, enjoying the atmosphere, then you are safe, they you feel good. But if you sit there and are a bit anxious, I think I am squeamish ... God, they are staring at me. Because they see that I am her alone ... then I get a bit like ... you who are cool and laid back, who sit there and are safe ... Next time I bring a book ... a pencil. I can also sit there and write.

While this study suggests that singlehood is not a desired female state on holiday, some midlife women have learnt coping and empowering strategies as they deal with being single in a ‘hostile’ world. Perhaps the reason why most of the women fear public
solitude is that tourism symbolically and materially is about interactions with significant others (Trauer and Ryan, 2005). In this study, such relationships were partly constructed, legitimated and reproduced through the tourist gaze and through habitus. The absence of significant others, whether symbolically or materially, marks the women as out of place in the eyes of others and themselves. The tourist gaze refers to how normalised tourist behaviour continues to be produced and reproduced in the ways that the midlife single women gaze at other people and places, and how they, in turn, are gazed upon (Cheong and Miller, 2000, 2004). Such gazes are sometimes sexualised and gendered (Jordan and Aitchison, 2008). Habitus, on the other hand, is the women’s unconscious embodied tastes and preferences, which regulate and guide how they act, interact, talk and dress in holiday spaces (Bourdieu, 1990). Feminine-, age- and singlehood-related behaviours, for instance, are ingrained in the women’s bodies and often function without their awareness. When combined, the powerful focus on both the tourist gaze and habitus makes most of the midlife single women prefer holidays with friends and marks their reluctance to take solo holidays.

**The quantitative research**

Based on the findings from the qualitative phase, a questionnaire was designed, which attempts to map the social aspects of holidaying and how younger women value company and solitude. Analysis of the responses to these questions indicates that companionship with significant others is also very important to younger single women on holiday. More than 90% of the women, for instance, agree with the general statements that a holiday was about being with and bonding with friends and family (Table 1). Consequently, only 15 women travelled alone and only 27% reported that they spent more than 4 hours alone on their last holiday. The young single women were also asked to evaluate which aspects of companionship are important when they holiday with others (Table 2). To virtually all (91%), it was generally important to spend time together and more specifically to share the experience (90%), to talk (82%), to eat out together (75%) and to have somebody to go out with in the evening (75%). To 65% of the women, this also meant they were able to feel safe in the evenings. Eating out together was less important to the young single women who were visiting friends and family or who were attending a festival; similarly, company when going out in the evening was less important to the women visiting family or who were holidaying at a family second home.

The questionnaire also maps the young women’s opinions and experiences of solo holidays (Table 3). When asked to respond to three statements, 82% agreed that ‘you

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**Table 1.** Single women’s (18–30 years) agreement (a great deal and very much) with the following statements (4-point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holiday travel is about spending time with friends</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.615</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday travel is about spending time with family</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.682</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD: standard deviation.
meet new people on solo holidays’, 56% that ‘solo holidays are about freedom’ and 51% that they are ‘frightening’. Among the women who feared solo holidays, 65% agreed that it was not about freedom. Among the women who agreed that solo holidays were about freedom, 66% did not find it frightening. Some of the young single women thus acknowledged that solo holidays were both about freedom and about fear.

The women were also asked which types of solo holidays would attract them in the future (Table 4). Most of the women (between 86% and 99%) were hardly interested in solo beach, cycling, skiing, camping or festival holidays. Three forms of solo holidays, however, were more desirable: 44% of the women would enjoy visiting the family’s summer house alone, 35% would like to do a city break alone and 32% would do a backpacker trip alone. Nonetheless, only 15 of the young single women reported that their last holiday was a solo trip; 7 of these women holidayed alone in the city, 3 in second homes, 2 as backpackers, 1 went on a beach holiday and 1 went to a festival.

Table 2. Single women’s (18–30 years) rating of the importance (a great deal and very much) of social gatherings during a holiday travel (4-point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing the experience</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out together</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.021</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out with company in the evening</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.018</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having somebody to talk with</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.857</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping me safe during the day</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping me safe during the evening</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.036</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD: standard deviation.

Table 3. Single women’s (18–30 years) agreement (a great deal and very much) with the following statements (4-point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo holidays are scary</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.015</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo holidays are freedom</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.969</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On solo holidays you meet new people</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD: standard deviation.

Conclusions

As we have seen, as tourism enquiry has matured, so its researchers have begun to engage with competing philosophical perspectives. However, the vast majority of tourism research is still rooted in positivist, post-positivist/realist and pragmatic frames of reference, and mixed methods are traditionally thought of as a form of triangulation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). This article has challenged researchers who embrace critical and emancipatory approaches to explore the application of mixed methods within
the transformative paradigm. In particular, it has sought to demonstrate how such an approach has the potential to provide feminist tourism researchers with nuanced insights into systemic and localised oppressions without compromising key research principles, such as positionality and reflexivity. It thereby offers the potential to promote some kind of paradigm peace in feminist tourism research.

In the two studies presented here to exemplify this approach, we can see just how nuanced knowledge can be produced through mixed methods and how the transformative paradigm can contribute to a better understanding of single women’s holidays. For example, both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate how bonding with friends during a holiday is important to both younger and midlife single women. Regardless of age, single women enjoy being together and sharing experiences. This strengthens the notion that assuming the social identity of a friend is a popular way of negotiating singlehood in holiday spaces. The survey also suggests that cities are seen to be more suitable as solo holiday destinations by single women regardless of age. In addition, the mixed-method approach also sheds new light on single women’s holiday experiences over the life course. The survey, for instance, shows that younger women place less value on eating out together than women in midlife. At the same time, it confirms that single women regardless of age have conflicting views of solo holidays – seeing them as embracing loneliness, fear, independence and freedom – but it also suggests that younger women perceive such holidays as positive and in particular as an opportunity to meet new people.

The young single women also seek more ‘adventurous’ holidays (such as backpacking) than those in midlife, endorsing other studies of midlife solo women travellers, which suggests that they face a variety of constraining factors that potentially limit their freedom and independence (Gibson and Yiannakis, 2002; Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Wilson and Little, 2005). These findings would not have emerged if we had relied solely on the qualitative study. While the survey suggests that younger women associate solo holidays with fears and freedom, this is less the case with midlife women, most of whom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Single women’s (18–30 years) view (to a lesser degree, to some degree) on potential types of solo holidays (4-point scale)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package beach holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beach and boogie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tent/camping holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ski holiday</td>
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<td>Cycling holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Festival holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain hiking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised group holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Backpacking</td>
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<tr>
<td>City break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visiting family second home</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SD: standard deviation.
enjoy holidaying with friends. At the same time, the younger women are not that keen to actually go on future solo holidays. The quantitative data thus suggests a gap between perceptions and actions, which is not evident in the qualitative research. This could be that habitus is influencing the younger single women’s actions more than their thinking, while the midlife single women’s thoughts and actions are more consistent: if they are negative towards a solo holiday, they will not embark on one.

These two studies, taken together thus illustrate, albeit briefly, how a transformative-grounded quantitative study together with a qualitative exploration of single women’s holiday experiences can strengthen analysis of gender power relations within tourism. Firmly located within the transformative–emancipatory paradigm, such mixed-method social scientific enquiry should not be confused with conventional triangulation used to enhance validity and reliability. Such mixed methods should rather be seen as presenting opportunities for complementarity, insight and greater study scope (Greene, 2007). We suggest that the transformative paradigm enables researchers to step beyond the boundaries of positivist, post-positivist/realist frames and to focus on power issues in the research process as well as in the data analysis and interpretation. Here, the combination of methods has made it possible to study the power relations permeating single women’s holiday experiences in both breadth and depth. Thus, merging these studies has created new understandings of intersecting power relations related to gender, age and singlehood, which perhaps in a broader sense shows that working within the transformative paradigm may have the potential to promote paradigm peace in feminist tourism research.

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**References**


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**Bente Heimtun** is an Associate Professor at Finnmark University College. Her research coheres around the sociology of tourism, gender, power and intersecting social identities; her current interests are in the interface between the philosophies of feminist social sciences and the practices of tourism research.

**Nigel Morgan** is Professor of Tourism Studies in the Welsh Centre for Tourism Research. His research interests are: destination reputation management; hopeful tourism and transformative enquiry; tourism, citizenship and social justice.