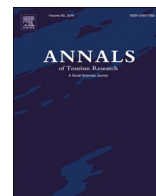


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## Holidays with aging parents: pleasures, duties and constraints

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## ABSTRACT

I explore filial duty in the holidays from a feminist perspective through the lens of the experiences that Norwegian midlife single women have of how this duty shapes intergenerational holidays and singlehood. Data was collected through interviews, diaries and autoethnographical reflections. Filial duty is embedded with the simultaneity of love and respect, and the women's needs and desire for agency and 'me-time'. It is also shaped by parental age, health, personalities and roles, as well as siblings' involvement, which not only direct the family's expectations towards the women, but in turn can affect the women's sense of agency. The women's filial duty during the holidays is imbued with singlism and heteronormativity, yet is also a demonstration of love and care.

## Introduction

While a few studies have explored midlife single women's holidaymaking experiences (Heimtun, 2007, 2010, 2012), there is a still deficient understanding of holidaymaking as intergenerational obligations (Backer, 2012) and as intimate, embodied, relational and social spaces, underpinned by social and cultural power relations (Pritchard, 2014). To fill this void and also gaps in research on singles, which mostly has focused on constructed meanings of singleness (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) and singles' health and well-being in everyday life (DePaulo & Morris, 2005), this study explores midlife single women's (including the author's) holidays with aging parents and the related filial duty.

Western philosophers, social gerontologist and scholars interested in family studies have been intrigued by filial duties, filial responsibilities and filial norms (Keller, 2006; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006). Filial duty refers to adult children's obligations towards their parents (Keller, 2006). Greater longevity means that children have filial responsibilities for a longer period of adulthood (Birditt & Fingerman, 2013). Filial duty typically increases in midlife when children take on new responsibilities due to parents' aging (Staudinger & Bluck, 2001). Much filial research focuses on the negative experiences of parental caregiving in everyday life, in terms of time commitment and stress, often neglecting that it also is an act of love, and that it can give children (new) meaning in life (Funk, Chappell, & Liu, 2013; Wilson, Mandell, & Duffy, 2008). Although, filial duty remains under-researched in tourism, some researchers acknowledge that holidays are imbued with obligations related to visiting family members (Urry, 2002), that visiting family involves care practices (Janta, Cohen, & Williams, 2015) and that family holidays cultivate and strengthen family bonds (Obrador, 2012; Villa, 2011; Wang, 2017). Such holidays also involve parental duties, obligations and work, particularly for mothers (Davidson, 1996; Small, 2005).

The intergenerational holiday is a specific form of family tourism in that it is undertaken by at least "one child and one adult" (Schänzel, Yeoman, & Backer, 2012a, p. 3). With some exceptions of studies of multigenerational holidays (Hebblethwaite, 2015; Villa, 2011), much research has focused on two parents travelling with young(er) children (Carr, 2011; Schänzel, Yeoman, & Backer, 2012b). This heteronormative understanding acknowledges a lack of studies on single parents (Schänzel & Smith, 2014), but not the

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requirement for knowledge of intergenerational holidays involving singles. Although Backer (2012b) recognises older singles as one stage in an extended family life cycle model, research on “family’ defined in the broadest sense” is lacking (Valentine, 2008, p. 2102).

The neglect of older singles in (family) tourism research is no surprise. It is one of the expressions of singlism and the heteronormative life trajectory in familist societies, imbued by ideologies of heterosexuality, marriage and children (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). By midlife, people are expected to have established their own families (Staudinger & Bluck, 2001). Diversification and new family forms are today commonly acknowledged and accepted (Gordon, 1994), but older singles, without a family of procreation, are still often treated as if they “do not have families” (Keith, 2003, p. 54). Singles’ families, however, do exist, and consist of parents, siblings and other relatives; family members who they could holiday with.

In this article, I investigate how Norwegian Caucasian midlife single women think and feel about intergenerational holidays and how they meet what they perceive as parental expectations in relation to filial duty. This duty alters with parents’ increased age and decreased health, thus varies across the family life course (Silverstein et al., 2006). Geographical proximity and distance also affect the types of public and religious holidays taken (Baldock, 2000). In this paper I include travelling together for pleasure, visiting parents and holidays spent at home (Fox, 2009).

## Literature review

Responsibilities towards one’s parents may be most pronounced in the Confucian social order (Lee, 2015) where it is termed “filial piety”. In this world view the family constitutes “one body”, a body which “exists solely because of one’s parents” (Hwang, 1999, p. 169). As one body, it is imperative in this structure that the adult child takes care of aging parents, for instance during holidays (Wu, Hannam, & Xu, 2018). In Christian societies, filial duty, obligation or responsibility are not entrenched in cosmology (Hwang, 1999), but shaped by norms connected to loyalty, respect and love, embedded in the social role of the adult child in relation to its parents (Funk & Kobayashi, 2009; Gans & Silverstein, 2006). These norms are “produced through emotions”, and thus control and influence the child’s feelings, perceptions and actions (Lawson, 2007, p. 4). An adult child who does not perform filial duty is labelled “a ‘bad’ child” and those who do “‘a ‘good’ child” (Theixos, 2013, p. 67). Filial duty can therefore make one feel guilty and/or happy (Baldassar, 2007; Baldock, 2000).

It is argued that filial norms are weakened in modern “liquid” societies marked by choice and freedom (Bauman, 2003). This is in part the case in Nordic welfare states, with their “specific form of state supported individualism” (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2017, p. 400). Through relatively generous welfare regimes, the public sector take responsibility for its aging population. However, despite a well-developed welfare system, filial norms and intergenerational family support are relatively strong, even in Norway (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Contemporary Western cultures, including Norway, still assume that an adult child is morally obligated to support aging parents (Gans & Silverstein, 2006).

Contemporary Western philosophers conceptualise filial duty in terms of debt, reciprocity, gratitude, friendships, beneficence, assumed promises and special goods theory (Dixon, 1995; Keller, 2006; Mills, 2003). The special goods theory implies that filial duty goes beyond issues such as debt, gratitude and friendship (Keller, 2006; Stuifbergen & Van Delden, 2011). Filial duty as special goods entails ongoing care, commitment and unconditional love (Keller, 2006). Special goods go beyond generic goods, such as help with shopping and cooking, services that anybody could provide (Stuifbergen & Van Delden, 2011). Special goods are the unique bonds between, unique understandings of, and unique interests in, each other, and a joint history (Keller, 2006), for instance created and upheld through family holiday photos (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003).

Unlike friendship, which people are free to start and end as they choose (Giddens, 1991), the adult child-parent relationship is characterised by “residual duties” (Dixon, 1995). This unconditional and unchosen relationship on the part of the child (Mills, 2003) is a highly valued lifelong obligation which most parents and adult child are willing to uphold (Stuifbergen & Van Delden, 2011), often regardless of the power relations and inequalities that can permeate such intimate care relations (Lawson, 2007; Valentine, 2008). Most adult child-parent relationships rest upon the reciprocity of receiving goods from each other. Not only does the adult child have obligations towards parents, one part of parental duty “is to take care of the child *forever*” (Mills, 2003, p. 152). Ramdas (2015) argues that single women often appreciate the interdependency of this care relationship.

Women, in particular, usually perform, coordinate and plan parental care, even if they have brothers as helpers or co-providers (Hequembourg & Brallier, 2005). Daughters’ stronger moral commitment towards aiding parents is imbued in an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982), which constrains their sense of entitlement to leisure and tourism (Shaw, 1994). Imbalances in the weight of this responsibility can result in conflicts between siblings (Strawbridge & Wallhagen, 1991). Moreover, many single women spend and are expected to spend more time with parents than do married siblings (Laditka & Laditka, 2001). They also often have a desire to care for aging parents (Ramdas, 2015), causing Byrne (2000, p. 30) to argue that ‘caring identities and single identities are interwoven’. Single women, however, are also mixed in their sense of, and willingness to support aging parents, suggesting diversity in women’s moral commitment (Gordon, 1994).

Funk and Kobayashi (2009) criticise the dichotomy of choice and obligation which underpins theoretical and empirical understandings of filial duty. They call for studies that focus on relational and contextual aspects:

Choice and obligation are not mutually exclusive; affection/love does not necessarily equate with choice ... or with obligation ... having to and wanting to are inextricably intertwined, and a sense of responsibility involves a complex combination of motivations to care for elderly parents

(Funk & Kobayashi, 2009, p. 242)

Discussions of choice and obligation are also about ambivalence, a common trait of intergenerational relations (Luescher &

Pillemer, 1998; Willson, Shuey, Elder, & Wickrama, 2006) and of family holidays (Small, 2002). Individually, ambivalence is about the simultaneity of positive and negative emotions (Fingerman, Pitzer, Lefkowitz, Birditt, & Mroczek, 2008). An adult child can like and dislike being with parents (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). A potential source of conflict during family holidays is how to handle space for ‘me-time’ (Schänzel, 2010), which independent living singles are used to (DePaulo, 2018). Structurally and sociologically, ambivalence is due to contradictory normative expectations of the enactment of filial duty. Sociological ambivalence in multi-generational family leisure, for instance, is about negotiations of norms of obligations and non-interference (Hebblethwaite, 2015). Most adult children feel strong societal pressure regarding co-presence and caring for their parents, thereby upholding family rituals during holiday visits (Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007). This suppresses their desire to engage in non-familial activities, in particular when parents are ill and aging (von Koppenfels, Mulholland, & Ryan, 2015). In particular, single women struggle to balance the norms imbuing filial duty with taking care of themselves (Ramdas, 2015) and to deal with the positive and negative effects of caring during their holidays (Gordon, 1994).

Ambivalence is also part of power shifts between parents and adult child over the family life course (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Phillips, 2011). Holidays with frail parents can involve the child, increasingly, taking physical care of them. Filial maturity occurs when aging parents depend more and more on support from their child (Blenkner, 1965, cited in Gans & Silverstein, 2006, p. 962). It entails changes to an adult child-parent relationship due to role reversals (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). This can be emotionally rewarding but also stressful for both parties. An adult child’s worries about filial duty across the later stages of family life course can result in filial anxiety (Cicirelli, 1988). Filial duty is thus imbued with complex power relations, parental power over adult child and adult child’s power over parents. This can result in subordination, manipulation, resistance and balancing acts which could produce feelings of resentment, anger and guilt (Foucault, 1982; Pyke, 1999).

Parental aging, ailing and dying are stressful turning points in the family life course (Wilson et al., 2008), in particular, for childless midlife single women without the safety net of filial duty on which to rely on for their own future caring needs, and the possibility that they, one day, risk social isolation in everyday life and during holidays (Baumbusch, 2004; Hafford-Letchfield, Lambert, Long, & Brady, 2017). This can increase the adult child’s own age awareness and fear of aging (Sheehan & Donorfio, 1999). Caring for aging parents can also awaken feelings of social, emotional and existential loneliness (Ettema, Derksen, & van Leeuwen, 2010). Socially and emotionally such loneliness can stir reflections on what loss of parents and loss of attachment to parents will entail for future holidays. Bereavement of parents intensifies an existential “awareness of one’s fundamental separateness as a human being” (Ettema et al., 2010, p. 142). Although, being single does not equate with isolation and loneliness (Gordon, 1994), death of parents can make midlife single women feel ‘more alone’ than they have ‘ever been aware of being’ (Segraves, 2004, p. 926).

To sum up, filial duty stands strong even in individualistic western countries (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Most adult children feel morally and emotionally committed to this special, lifelong duty, performed to uphold their unique relationship with, and love for, their parents. Single midlife daughters may be confronted with, and expected to be more willing to take on this duty in the holidays and they might be more affected by the death of a parent. Filial duty comprises a simultaneity of choice and obligation that is best understood across the family life course, relationally and contextually. This duty also gives rise to individual and structural ambivalence imbuing family rituals and family power relations related to gender and singlism. The strength of family ties shapes these aspects of filial duty, in addition to the role of independence that single living entails. Research has not yet addressed the experiences of midlife singles. Family tourism research focuses on obligations, but not filial duty or the holidays of midlife single women. This paper will seek to rectify these gaps.

## Methodology and methods

In this present feminist research I used three types of methods: interviews (focused and individual), solicited diaries and auto-ethnography. My goal was to empower women to voice and share lived experiences (DeVault, 1996) and to reduce the researcher’s influence (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). By also including an autoethnographical approach, I attempted to overcome the binaries of researcher/research participant, objectivity/subjectivity, facts/values, and mind/body (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2012; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As “a knowledge-building practice beyond storytelling” (Geist-Martin et al., 2010, p. 4), autoethnography helped me opened up the “narrative visibility of the researcher’s self” (Anderson & Austin, 2012, p. 134).

Although the “crisis of representation” invites critical self-reflexivity and the researcher’s personal biography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), autoethnography is still not a common methodological approach in tourism studies (Noy, 2008). I found it timely to include my own experiences due to a personal interest in the topic. This personal analytical approach enabled me to undertake deeper analyses, and through situating myself in the knowledge production I “contributed to a richer feminism” (Allen & Piercy, 2005, p. 9). However, it also forced me to reflect on relational ethics (Ellis, 2007): on ethical responsibilities towards the intimate others involved, and the effects these stories may have. There were no fixed principles apart from reflecting on choices and priorities. “Just when I think I have a handle on a guiding principle about research with intimate others, on closer examination, my understanding unfurls into the intricacies, yes-and, uniqueness, and relational and personal responsibilities of the particular case under question” (Ellis, 2007, p. 22). Ellis (2007) asked for consent for a story that involved her mother, and read it to her. Similarly, I have sought to hold “relational concerns high” (Ellis, 2007, p. 25) and thereby excluded too intimate stories. Additionally, and most importantly, I have anonymised the autobiographical data that were incorporated alongside the data from the other participants (Bloom, 2003).

### Study methods

I collected data in 2004, 2005, 2016 and 2017. The study consisted of thirty Caucasian Norwegian single women (myself

included), who were 35–55 years old at the time of the data collection, and recruited through snowball sampling (Schutt, 1999). I asked friends, acquaintances and colleagues to forward invitations to other people they knew. Moreover, in 2004 a newspaper wrote about the project. In the article, midlife single women were encouraged to contact me for participation.

The solicited diaries and focus group interviews were undertaken in 2004 (Christmas holidays) and 2005 (summer holidays). The diaries reported on positive and negative experiences of a selected activity and related reflections on singlehood. The women also mapped their holidays according to destination, duration and company for a selected time period. The first rounds of focus group interviews revolved around holiday experiences; with friends, family, groups or alone, to various destinations, and at home. In the second rounds of group interviews, the conversations revolved on topics identified in the initial analysis of the interviews and the diaries. Until 2016 I did not have time to collect more data on filial duty. I then conducted three more interviews, focusing only on filial duty, and I mapped the women's intergenerational holidays from 2014 to 2016. I also kept diaries during five holiday periods in 2016–2017 and reflected back on, and mapped, intergenerational holidays for the last fourteen years. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In the analysis, I drew upon the logic of grounded theory to locate empirical realities similar to those of constructivist grounded theory. I wanted to understand and interpret the constructed reality of filial duty (Charmaz, 2006). I used “constant comparison” of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1977), first through open, initial coding and the emergence of as many categories as possible. Later by focused coding and the drawing of connections between categories (Charmaz, 2006). I coded the transcripts several times, seeking to make comparisons of statements and incidents. I identified 35 significant codes and developed six categories: duty, role reversals, ambivalence, finding balance, singlehood and doing things together. In the focussed coding, I went back and forth between analysis and the relevant literature. This enabled me to frame the findings within the relevant literature, which added new insights to the several rounds of data analysis. I used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

There are two main weaknesses with this study. First, recruiting participants for the interviews in 2016 was challenging and time consuming. I planned to hold ten interviews expanding the data on filial duty, but the snowball sampling only resulted in three more women willing to share their experiences. Secondly, focus group data differ from individual data. The latter provided a better space for in-depth explorations of feelings and experiences (Michell, 1999). The former hindered access to data if the participants disliked sharing such experiences with strangers. Moreover, there was not enough time in that part of the study to explore filial duty in depth.

## Findings and discussions

### *Contextual aspects of filial duty*

As indicated, filial duty depends on context (Funk & Kobayashi, 2009). Table 1 shows contextual aspects related to demographical variables: gender, age, family structure and marital status. It also includes geographical proximity and distance between the women, siblings and parents, and places where holidays were taken with parents.

Twenty participants had married parents living together, eight had only a mother, one only had a father, and one had divorced parents. Twenty-five of them had sibling(s). The first six listed women lived far away from their parents: over 20 h by car or more than two hours by plane. The next nine lived a five to eight-hour drive or a one-hour flight away from their parents. Women 16 to 20 lived a one and a half to four hour drive from their parents. Remaining participants (21 – 30) lived in close proximity to their parents (less than 25 min' drive). As half of the women thus lived a shorter driving distance from their parents, visiting each other during holidays was easier with respect to accessibility, and day visits were possible. Table 1 also shows siblings' places of residence, indicating the degree to which siblings shared filial duty during holidays. Eleven had sibling(s) who lived far from parents; suggesting that they shared filial duty. Fourteen of the women had sibling(s) living closer to parents, seven of these women also lived in close proximity to their parents. They were therefore unlikely to make overnight visits during holidays.

Twenty women reported twenty-four intergenerational holidays. Twelve holidays were visits to the parental home and lasted between two and fourteen days. Six were day visits to the parental home, five involved travelling with parents and one of the women received one parental visit. The holidays involving mobility lasted between three and thirteen days. Three women had mothers living in nursing homes, two of whom were widowed. Most of the women's parents were thus in reasonably good health. Only two women travelled overseas with their parents. Eight women did not holiday with their parents in the mapped periods and two did not map their holidays.

### *Relational aspects of filial duty*

Relational features such as love, health, gender, sense of duty, conflicts, role reversals, and expectations also shaped filial duty during holidays (Funk & Kobayashi, 2009). I now unpack how the women thought and felt about filial duty. I focus on positive experiences and how they dealt with perceived parental expectations of presence and their own wishes for the holidays. I also examine how filial duty was imbued with the simultaneity of choice and obligation (Funk & Kobayashi, 2009) and ambivalence (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998), and how it shaped their sense of agency (Willson et al., 2006).

### *Love and caring*

Filial duty during the holidays revolved around expressing love and care through engaging in shared enjoyable activities. They enhanced the women's sense of well-being and were acts of love. This type of caregiving was also about reciprocity and “strong expressions of parental love” (Wilson et al., 2008, p. 212). For Sue, filial duty was not ‘a sacrifice’, but something that benefitted both

**Table 1**  
Demographic profile of participants and their families, and intergenerational holidays.

	Name	Age	Place of residence	Parental marital status	Parental place of residence	Siblings' place of residence	Place of holidays with parents
1.	Fiona	54	Tønsberg	Widow	South Africa	Brother: South Africa Sister: South Africa Sister: United Kingdom	No holidays
2.	Victoria	47	Strømmen	Widow	Kirkenes	Sister: Kirkenes Sister: Kirkenes	Kirkenes
3.	Susan	52	Oslo	Widow	Tromsø	Brother: Kongsberg Brother: Oslo Sister: Tromsø	No holidays
4.	Evelyn	43	Oslo	Married	Tromsø	Brother: Oslo	Tromsø
5.	Clara	40	Oslo	Widow	Andøya	Brother: Mo i Rana Sister: Tromsø	Andøya
6.	Sue	44	Oslo	Married	Gildeskål	Brother: Sandnessjøen Brother: Trondheim	Gildeskål
7.	Laura	54	Oslo	Widow	Steinkjer	Sister: Steinkjer	Steinkjer
8.	Jo	35	Oslo	Divorced	Ålesund and Stjørdal	Brother: Oslo	Ålesund
9.	Annette	39	Oslo	Married	Kristiansund	Sister: Trondheim	Oslo
10.	Petra	37	Oslo	Married	Bergen	Brother: Bergen Sister: Oslo	Non reported
11.	Toni	40	Andebu	Widow	Bergen	Brother: Oslo Sister: Bergen	No holidays
12.	Liz	53	Tønsberg	Divorced	Bergen and Drammen		Non reported
13.	Sara	51	Tønsberg	Widower	Stavanger		No holidays
14.	Jane	37	Horten	Married	Sandnes	Brother: Sandnes Brother: Sandnes	No holidays
15.	Sue	48	Lillehammer	Married	Trøndelag	Brother: Oslo Sister: Trøndelag	Trøndelag
16.	Doris	36	Hemsedal	Married	Nøtterøy	Sister: Oslo	Nøtterøy
17.	Paris	40	Oslo	Married	Bø	Sister: Drammen	Bø
18.	Ada	40	Lillehammer	Married	Folldal	Brother: Hamar Sister: Eidsvoll	Lillehammer, Hjerkin
19.	Hazel	40	Oslo	Married	Hov i Land		Hov i Land, Ireland, Palma
20.	Jasmine	53	Oslo	Widow	Tønsberg	Brother: Tønsberg	Tønsberg
21.	Lily	45	Heidal	Married	Kvam		Heidal
22.	Daisy	38	Hamar	Married	Brummundal	Brother: Oslo Brother: Hamar	Hamar
23.	Emma	38	Lørenskog	Married	Skedsmokorset	Brother: Skedsmokorset Brother: Skedsmokorset Sister: Skedsmokorset	Lillesand
24.	Nichola	37	Vear	Married	Andebu		Vear
25.	Tina	47	Vear	Widow	Tønsberg	Brother: Tønsberg Sister: Stokke	No holidays
26.	Helena	43	Oslo	Married	Oslo	Brother: Oslo Sister: Lillehammer	Oslo
27.	Diana	36	Drammen	Married	Drammen	Brother: Drammen Sister: Drammen	Tenerife
28.	Angel	50	Oslo	Married	Oslo	Brother New York	No holidays
29.	Beverly	43	Oslo	Married	Oslo	Brother: Oslo	Oslo
30.	Emily	40	Oslo	Married	Oslo	Brother: Oslo Brother: Bærum	Oslo

parties. The women enjoyed giving parents simple pleasures, just coming home, helping with domestic chores, giving technical support, or taking a widowed mother who lived in a nursing home to a city café. Holidays were also about taking walks with a married father who often did this alone; wanting to host Christmas dinner for the entire family in her home, but celebrating only with the father as he loved the preparations; and giving a mother time off from a moody husband. Other activities were more time and cost demanding: installing a new kitchen so a mother could move back from the nursing home and live with her husband, and travelling to a beach resort with the mother. Clara reflected on the rationale for holidaying with her widowed mother:

Last Christmas, she and I were on holiday in the Canary Islands ... I am not very fond of such vacations, but I did it for her sake. She enjoyed it a lot, and that pleases me. I live so far away and see her very rarely. We usually phone a lot. Therefore, if you feel you can do something, then you gladly do it.

(Clara)

The women thus appreciated spending time with parents. They enjoyed talking, celebrating Christmas, partaking in camaraderie, being waited on, and doing things of shared interest. Paris, who lived close to her parents (mother in nursing home), reflected: "I love my father a lot and appreciate our times together. He is healthy and that makes me happy. ... I help him out in the house and I enjoy it. It is not a duty. I look forward to our evenings and feel happy afterwards".



Daisy, who had recently again started to spend holidays with her parents, claimed she really liked it. She was ready to spend more time with them. Moreover, quarrelling did not mean the end of this relationship:

They are more likeable now than they were 15 years ago. Then you wanted to free yourself from the family, whereas now I am more ready to build closer ties to them. They are constant and always there. That was the reason you wanted to be free from them... . In the beginning, it was a bit like an admission of failure, but you realise that you actually like these people. You can argue with them and they are still there.

(Daisy)

Several women talked about wanting to travel more with their parents. This was something they had not done since they lived with their parents.

Filial duty during holidays was seen as a positive experience. It was a pleasurable choice. The co-presence was enjoyable and stimulating. The women's bonds to their parents were strong. It felt good to be with them, helping out, caring for them and doing things together, thereby further strengthening family bonds and creating new familial memories. Daisy's statement indicated that, as the women grew older, they started to appreciate intergenerational holidays more and became more willing to travel with their parents. As they had established an identity as midlife single within their family, they perhaps did no longer need to free themselves from it (Cargan, 2007).

#### *Time commitment, power and agency*

The women in this study also reported that intergenerational holidays entailed interpersonal challenges and ambivalences in line with Luescher and Pillemer's (1998) claim. They voiced perceived parental expectations of time commitment, a lack of "me-time" and time-agency, indicating aspect of the power relations imbuing care relations (cf. Lawson, 2007). The ideal amount of time alone a person needs varies; singles, however, are used to often being alone (DePaulo, 2014). For many singles, control over time is one of the advantages of living alone (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013). It is highly valued by those who are "single at heart" (DePaulo, 2018). One common negative comment was that "it gets a bit too close and too tight" (Emma). The women referred to a lack of physical space (small hotel rooms and parental homes), which restricted them as regards being and doing things alone. Sue pointed to perceived parental expectations of joint family activities that she, as a single women, was no longer used to participate in:

It gets too tight, in particular in the winter when you are not outside a lot. I am used to living alone. When somebody else always has a say about when we should do something and what we should do, then it can be too much, and not what I want. ... They are used to living together, and there I come.

(Sue)

The women felt that parental expectations of presence and shared activities limited their privacy and agency. They could seek 'me-time' by going out, and some did. However, they also felt that this was not normatively acceptable, particularly to some mothers. Jasmine, who spent beach resort holidays with her mother felt rather strongly that her mother expected them to be together all the time, unless she had very good reasons for going out alone. To get some 'me-time' on such holidays, Jasmine took up jogging, which was an activity that did not suit her mother. Meeting up with friends was another good excuse for leaving the parental house and the company of parents. Evelyn, who also felt certain expectations from her mother, had lost contact with most of her home town friends. Over the years, she had become used to remaining with her parents. This gave her a positive self-feeling:

At Easter it is enough to be there. Then it is sitting with Mum... . It does not feel like the sacrifice of not meeting others, as it might have done before ... . I have reflected a lot about why. I chose to have my social network here [Oslo] and not there [Tromsø]. It was a bit harder during the years I had a partner because he liked to do things and I just wanted to feel good about myself ... . Now I can do what I think is best. Just sitting there. ... I do it more out of duty than of joy. What I like is to have a good conscience regarding fulfilling my own expectations.

(Evelyn)

Perceived parental expectations of time commitment were temporal: spending Christmas holidays and parts of summer holidays with parents were "mandatory" for those not living in geographical proximity. The women felt morally obligated. When prioritising celebrating Christmas with friends over spending it with her parents, Sue felt like a "bad child" (Theixos, 2013). Her recollections of the first and only time she did this was: "When I told my father that I was travelling to Cuba, he was quiet ... they still talk about it ... they were shocked ... I should have been there, it is a certain pressure". Sue had also spent two Easter vacations in Oslo and "they did not like that". Coming home gave her more "good will". It pleased her mother, who would rather that Sue came home for the holidays than them travelling together.

Filial duty caused ambivalent feelings regarding how much time the women should, and wanted to, spend with parents during holidays, suggesting sociological ambivalence related to norms of co-presence and independence. Jasmine reflected that travelling with her mother was very nice and relaxing, but also a bit dull and not always what she really wanted. Her filial duty was about being present for, and participating in, family rituals. Jasmine also explained how her father's death was a turning point with respect to time commitment; that she became "locked into" this commitment (Finch & Mason, 1993, p. 59) and felt loss of agency regarding how she really wanted to spend many of her holidays.

Then I had to spend more holidays with my mother. I chaperoned her on several beach vacations, in many ways filling my father's role as a travel planner and partner. Often, we went back to the same destinations and visited the same restaurants. We truly

enjoyed being there, but in the role as a “chaperone”, my attention was almost fully on her wishes and desires. As her health declined and we stopped travelling, I felt that her demands on my time and presence became even greater. She increasingly expressed loneliness and a need for my presence, assistance and care. I complied out of love and spent more holidays with her. (Jasmine)

Filial duty was shared by siblings, but was also a duty imbued with singlism (cf. Byrne, 2000; DePaulo & Morris, 2006). For Doris' parents “there are other rules that apply to my sister who has children” with regard to holidays. There are also certain expectations of time commitment from married siblings. Jasmine's married brother expected her to be there with and for their mother during almost all holidays, not acknowledging her need for ‘me-time’, assistance and emotional support. This became a source of tension and potential conflict between them.

He is physically close, yet distant. Whether it is about gender, family life, work or family relationships, I do not know. Perhaps a mix of everything, and that he is used to, and expecting, me as single to be there in all holidays.

(Jasmine)

Only one woman had confronted her parents and siblings regarding their demands on her presence during the holidays. “I have confronted them because I was fed up with feeling that I should visit, in particular because they thought that as a single person I had a lot of time to spend with my parents” (Jane). Laura, however, argued that being single made it easier to spend holidays this way: “you are not dragged between mother and a partner”. She also felt that society expected her, as a single person, to spend holidays this way.

At times the women felt subdued by perceived parental, and sometimes also sibling expectations of time commitment, presence and participation in family activities, which limited their choices regarding ‘me-time’ and privacy during holidays. Balancing familial duty with own desires and needs for the holidays was challenging. This prompted negative feelings about filial duty. Some participants became used to, and did not confront, what they thought of as their parent(s)' sometimes boundless expectations of time commitment and togetherness, thereby suppressing their identity as independent singles (cf. Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). A few women challenged parental expectations. Sue did this by not coming home for a few holidays; but was later verbally sanctioned.

#### *Roles, personalities and health*

The women in the study also described negative experiences which resulted in tensions, conflicts and a sense of powerlessness. These related to parents' health and certain personality traits, particularly those of their mothers: irritation, anger and frustration – feelings that negatively shaped their eagerness to perform filial duty. They felt this when their mothers failed to communicate clearly what they wanted, spoke negatively about other people, interfered in the daughters' life, reacted in egotistical ways and when they did not acknowledge that their daughters had conducted the “rite of passage’ from daughterhood to adulthood” (Gordon, 1994, p. 98). Hazel talked about how her mother made her feel and act as a child again:

You become the child when you come home... It is like, my mother asks what do you want for dinner? I ask, can we barbecue? She answers, yes, if the weather is good. I ask again, but can we barbecue? Cannot papa stand under the canvas cover? Yes, he can... My mother in particular is very accommodating. I feel like a child again.

(Hazel)

Ambivalent feelings towards filial duty arose due to what some participants perceived as parental negativity. Doris termed this “bad chemistry” between parents. She got tired of “mediating between the parents” or trying to “uplift the atmosphere”. Her quota was filled after a few days, although she knew “they would wish that she could stay for three weeks”. For Hazel, whose father was very temperamental, three days was the limit, after which they “get on each other's nerves”. Her father then often suddenly grew “grumpy and furious”. She was not “patient enough to ignore him” and it “quickly escalates” into a conflict. However, when reflecting on when her parents would be frailer, Hazel was “prepared to come home more often” as “the future was filled with duty”.

When Evelyn's mother had a stroke and moved to a nursing home apart from her husband, filial duty became easier. Her mother's dominant and commanding personality disappeared, and she became placid and without much memory.

The atmosphere is relaxed. It is much nicer and easier just to visit him, and then go and see her ... She used to be a very dominating person, in charge, things had to happen when she wanted it. If she wanted anything, we had to put up with it. ... Even though it still is a duty, I do not have the same negative feelings about it anymore.

(Evelyn)

A decline in parental health was a turning point leading to increased and unfamiliar ambivalent feelings regarding choice and obligation. Although Laura's cognitively impaired mother was undemanding, she still felt her mother had become “self-centred” and repetitive: “I notice that on the first day I have already become impatient even after a short time together. I am happy when I can leave” the nursing home where her mother now lived. Laura described these holidays as both “depressing” and “valuable”, something that “I am doing for my own sake, but also because I have to ... I know she does not have many years left, in that sense it is valuable”.

Jasmine expanded on Laura's mixed feelings by reflecting on how her mother's illness changed their holidays. She had become filially mature and felt filial anxiety. Travel for pleasure with her mother was no longer possible. Visiting her mother during the holidays became more about domestic work, emotional support and hands-on caregiving. Caring responsibilities also became part of Jasmine's holidays without her mother, due to daily calls and updates. During one such holiday, Jasmine reflected on personality, role reversals, power shifts, own aging, dependence, caring, death, existential loneliness and her ambivalent feelings towards filial duty:

I know she likes it neat and in good order. I know she does not manage, so I try to do things her way. Now I am arranging

everything, and mum is watching. I do not want to take control and decide for her, but I do. I am now the mother and she is the child. Getting a 'child' when you are in your 50s is not very enjoyable. It is something I have to do. It will be strange and sad when she is gone. The ties between us are strong, but it also feels like a burden. I get tired and think it will be better when it is over. When I can do what I want in my holidays. It is like this for people with children and partners all the time. For me it is only with mum. After that, it is over. I am not going to have anyone to look after me. It makes me sad to think about all this.

(Jasmine)

All participants belonged to families with unique histories, family member personalities, parents' relationships with each other, and various health issues. This shaped parental expectations of, and the women's commitment and feelings towards, filial duty during holidays. To several participants moments of tension and irritation arose in interactions with their mothers. Family structure and aging often led to role reversals. Some of the women were treated as children again and parental frailty transformed them into children. Both of these challenged filial duty; by becoming a child again, the women lost their status as independent adults capable of caring for their parents (cf. Gordon, 1994). When parents were reduced by health issues to being children again, the women were overwhelmed by the new and unfamiliar responsibilities attending 'parenthood' and caregiving - alterations that changed the dynamics of intergenerational holidays. This latter power shift, balancing act and increased pressure of time commitment and co-presence lead to filial anxiety. The prospect of parental loss also made some participants reflect upon existential loneliness and what their singleness and childlessness would entail in old age.

## Conclusion

Tourism research has often focused on extraordinary experiences, a legacy from seminal thinkers such as Urry (1990). Exploring filial duty in intergenerational holidays stands in strong contrast to studies where holidaymaking is investigated as escape from everyday pressures, as happiness, joy and bliss, and as freedom from "conflicts, disappointments, difficulties or power struggles" and stressful situations (Deem, 1996, p. 115; Backer & Schänzel, 2012). This paper reminds us that holidaymaking is also about serious aspects of life, of duties and responsibilities, of sacrifices, caring, respect and love, and of ambivalent emotional experiences of well-being and burden. It forces us to think about the everydayness of holidaymaking, that tourists first and foremost are people who often spend time connecting with loved ones (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010). It pushes us to reflect on our own aging, mortality and family bonds, and the potential downside of living in individualistic Western societies marked by greater longevity (Birditt & Fingerma, 2013).

This present study supports Funk and Kobayashi's (2009) notion that filial duty is best understood contextually and relationally, and Fingerma et al.'s (2008) belief that it is about ambivalence. Contextually, family structure, proximity and holiday patterns shape the opportunities that the midlife single women have for filial duty. Relationally, love, care and joint pleasurable activities make filial duty an enjoyable and meaningful choice. Perceived parental expectations of time commitment and joint activities, however, caused several of the women to feel compromised in their need for 'me-time' and agency (cf. DePaulo, 2014; Willson et al., 2006) - not only during intergenerational holidays but also regarding how they wanted to experience other types of holidays. There was a pressure inherent in spending certain holidays and a proportion of the women's total number of holidays with parents, particularly because of their gender and singlehood (cf. Byrne, 2000). This heteronormative pressure mainly came from parental expectations but also from married siblings, potentially leading to sibling conflicts, as claimed by Strawbridge and Wallhagen (1991). Partly troublesome relationships with mothers and a parent's difficult personality traits constrained several women during intergenerational holidays. Some negative experiences, singlism, disempowerment and a sense of obligation thus meant that women's feelings towards filial duty often were ambivalent.

Much research on filial responsibility has focused on the lack of autonomy, time commitment and stress experienced by the caregiver (Wilson et al., 2008). This study also revealed the challenges imbuing filial duty, yet many of the women strongly stated that it was a very pleasurable, valuable and meaningful experience. They wanted to spend some of their time away from work with their parents. Caring for and helping parents during holidays differ from doing this in the everyday, with more flexibility in the use of time and therefore less stress. Most of these women still had relatively healthy parents; filial duty was not yet about providing intimate assistance. The pressure was mainly in co-presence, not caregiving. Filial duty was not yet transformed by the role reversals and power shifts that parental aging and frailness often bring about. For these women, filial duty in the holidays had not reached the phase of filial maturity; they were still relatively free to do as they pleased with their time. Some participants, however, had made this transition and these women also expressed filial anxiety during holidays.

Filial duty thus changes across the life course. Major transitions occur when parents' health declines and when one parent dies. Death and changes in an aging parent's health, particularly with a resultant role reversal (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989), put extra pressure on some of the participants, who slowly felt "locked into" filial duty during holidays (cf. Finch & Mason, 1993, p. 59). Particularly when parents became frail, filial duty was potentially a very demanding balancing act. Pressure was put on these women, who did not have a partner with whom to share the emotional burdens of filial anxiety, fear of their own aging and feelings of existential loneliness. They were often expected to commit more time and invest more energy to aging parents due to their lack of other familial obligations (cf. Byrne, 2000). As women, additionally, they were expected to do more for their aging parents than their brother(s).

Parental death is the only way out of filial duty for most adult children (Keller, 2006). The studied women loved, respected and shared unique bonds with their parents. They saw this relationship as a lifelong obligation that extended to the holidays. They were aware of the power relations attending ideologies of gender, singlism, heteronormativity and familialism, and how they shaped



intimate care relations (cf. Lawson, 2007; Valentine, 2008), but they did not often resist them. Filial duty and parental expectations and needs were thus fraught with power relations.

Some philosophers, Keller (2006), in particular, have claimed that the special goods of filial duty such as ongoing care, commitment and unconditional love, are what makes it different from generic caregiving such as shopping and cooking that anybody could provide for aging parents. This distinction is not clear cut. Even performing generic goods contributes to strengthening the unique bonds between parent and adult child. For some participants, helping parents with practical issues was part of a family holiday ritual. Some parents, for instance, waited for technical support until their daughters came home. Having their daughter helping with this made it more special and contributed to strengthening the family ties.

Filial duty is important in (family) tourism and holiday making research: as people continue to live longer (Statistics Norway, 2018). An adult child need to reflect upon how to balance individualistic societal values with the increasing filial needs of aging parents (Giddens, 1991). Here the focus was mainly on parental visits, from the point of view of midlife single women. Further research should explore other adult children's filial duty and leisure travels in the later stages of parental life. This knowledge, combined with knowledge of how to facilitate intergenerational holidays with frail parents, will enable the tourism industry to develop products aimed not only at those who have lost cognitive and/or corporal abilities but still wish to travel, but also their adult child, who could accompany and care for them. Based on the present research, it would then be important to take into account how such intergenerational holidays are empowered by love and constrained by reduced agency and familial power relations.

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