

**The absence of fatherhood: Achieving true gender scholarship in family tourism
research**

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Abstract

The lack of research into fathers on holiday is a reminder that understandings of masculinities and gender relations in tourism are absent compared to other disciplinary areas. Research on family holiday experiences is largely informed by feminist gender representations rather than examinations of femininities *and masculinities*. True gender scholarship requires more holistic and critical appraisals of gender relations that recognise the intersection between gender and other social roles. This led to the adoption of whole-family research for this study into domestic summer holiday experiences in New Zealand, based on ten families (ten fathers, ten mothers, and 20 children) being interviewed three times over the course of one year. The findings highlighted similarities and differences in the meanings and roles for the fathers and mothers. For example, fathers take on primary responsibilities as entertainer of the children and facilitator of mothers' own interests, roles which are little acknowledged in the literature.

Introduction

Little has changed since Ryan's 2003 observation of the absence of fathers in the literature dealing with holidays away from home. Family tourism research is generally underdeveloped. However, studies which have focused on family holiday experiences have primarily come from the mothers' perspective and are informed by feminist traditions, to the detriment of the fathers' and children's perspectives. This is surprising given the recent special publications on fatherhood in leisure studies (Kay, 2006a, 2009b) and developments in family studies as illustrated by the establishment of the *Fathering* journal. Broader discussions on masculinities, femininities, and gender identities are also happening within sport studies (Aitchison, 2007). Instead, within tourism research recognition of the intersection between the gender roles of mothers and fathers, and their femininities and masculinities, or 'true gender research' is still missing.

This study on family holidays in New Zealand has adopted the whole-family methodology from family research and applied it to tourism to include all family members in the research process. Based on ten families, it involved interviewing all family members as a group (collectively) and individually (sequentially) to ensure that their family persona and their personal perspectives are being heard. The whole-family research was carried out within the domestic context three times over a period of about one year, once before, and twice after their summer holiday. This was to capture anticipation, and short- and longer-term recollections of holiday experiences. The study focused on the social experiences and meanings of family holidays over time for the family and its members using gender, generation, and group dynamic perspectives. This paper highlights the generational commonalities of the combined parental perspective as well as the different gendered perspectives of fathers' and mothers' holiday experiences. It acknowledges that true gender scholarship requires more holistic and critical appraisals of gender relations that recognise the

intersection between gender and other social roles. For this reason, the masculine voice is emphasised in its own right, as a companion to the mothers, and in the role as fathers to their children, thus, achieving true gender scholarship and generational scholarship.

Family holidays, fathers, and masculinities in the literature

The family, including children, represents one of the largest markets for the tourism industry (Carr, 2006). Given its economic significance, it is surprising that family holidays have largely been marginalised in research that examines leisure travel (Schänzel et al., 2005) and is deemed to be a more ‘mundane’ and trivial type of tourism (Bærenholdt et al., 2004). Most family tourism research is market- and consumer-driven and focused on the themes of decision processes and roles (Lehto et al., 2009) with a lack of research into broader experiential dimensions. There are UK and Australian studies on family holiday experiences that are mainly informed by a feminist perspective and are, thus, focused on mothers’ family holiday experiences (Anderson, 2001; Davidson, 1996; Deem, 1996; Small, 2005). These studies highlight the never-ending physical and emotional work of motherhood both at home and when travelling. However, there is no published tourism study specifically on the family holiday experience of fathers. Instead, fathers are largely invisible in tourism apart from their joint parenting voice (with little gender considerations) (Gram, 2005; Shaw et al., 2008) or seen in comparison with mothers, from a women’s perspective (Anderson, 2001). Ryan (2003) suggested that while the issue of fathers has been ignored by tourism academics the demand for family holidays and its potential to create meaningful family relationships can be of more societal importance than the economic impacts of tourism. Engagements with masculinities in tourism are mainly restricted to sex tourism (Jacobs, 2009; Padilla, 2007) and are absent within the family tourism literature.

Fatherhood within the family leisure literature is a relatively new theme (Such, 2006). Kay (2006b) considers fathers and fatherhood as an 'absent presence' in leisure studies but also argues leisure-based activities (such as sport) are potentially more prominent in fathering than they are in mothering (Kay, 2006a). For example, in Australia, engagement in 'sport is perceived as a major site for fathering to occur' (Thompson, 1999: 53) and for fathers to show emotional connection to their children (Harrington, 2001, 2009). There is also a sense of fostering the next generation through children's leisure activities which is central to the generative notion of fathering (Harrington, 2006, 2009). Fathers in the UK described leisure to mean 'being with' their children resulting in a kind of 'leisure-based' parenting (Such, 2006, 2009). Instead, self-determined and independent leisure was perceived as irreconcilable with contemporary definitions of fatherhood as active and 'involved' (Such, 2009). Fathers in general, thus, use sport and leisure not only to enact their fathering ideology but increasingly as a strategy to express their masculinities (Kay, 2009a).

The largely feminist literature on women's leisure has debated whether leisure can be both empowering and constraining and if it differs between women (Hall et al., 2003). The constraints of leisure for mothers are associated with an 'ethic of care' (Bialeschki, 1994; Henderson and Allen, 1991) and are based on Gilligan (1982). Gilligan's research highlighted that women's greater concerns for social responsibility and relationships place a constraint upon their lives as 'others' are often placed before self. However, it should be remembered that men, as well as women, face gender-related constraints. Better understanding needs to be gained about the relationship between masculinities and femininities in leisure and the gender roles of mothers and fathers. Instead, most leisure research has focused on mothers, leaving fathers' leisure deserving of greater attention.

The family literature on fatherhood has mushroomed since the 1990s (Marsiglio et al., 2000). Most has been grounded in feminist concerns regarding, for example, the division of labour. Less research has focused on the qualitative dimensions of fatherhood such as the important social role of fathers in teasing, talking to, and teaching children (Lareau, 2000). Family scholars have realised that fathering must be understood in its own context and not simply as an adjunct to maternal care giving (Brotherson et al., 2005). Allen and Daly (2005) recognised that there is an ideology of fatherhood affecting not only the meaning of family time for fathers but also their identity formation. However, little of that research on fatherhood in the leisure and family literature has been acknowledged in the tourism arena. This is a reminder that tourism research is not only lagging behind other social research but also that gender research in general has been dominated by a concern for women and femininities.

A number of authors have described five major stages in the development of gender research in general and tourism in particular and (e.g., Norris & Wall, 1994). The *first* stage is where women are invisible (i.e., ‘womanless’). In the *second* stage researchers attempt to compensate for the earlier lack of recognition of gender differences (i.e., ‘add-women-and-stir’) and involves the identification of, and focus on, woman as a discrete group or type of ‘other’ (Swain, 1995). The *third* stage is concerned with dichotomous sex differences with statistical analyses seeking to determine the type and extent of male female differences. The *fourth* stage is based on the emergence of women-centred approaches or feminist scholarship (i.e., ‘women-centred’) and includes the emergence of social constructionism as a core paradigm (Moscardo, 2008). The recognition of the intersection between gender and other social roles leads researchers into the *fifth* stage of gender scholarship (Stewart and McDermott, 2004) (i.e., ‘true gender scholarship’) and allows a more holistic appraisal of

gender relations (Aitchison, 2001). To date, the objects of gender research in tourism have almost exclusively been women, rather than women *and men* (Pritchard et al., 2007). The exception is gay and lesbian tourism where the emphasis has been on the separate experiences of men and women (Hughes, 2006).

Research on family holiday experiences have been dominated by women's voices, speaking as mothers and often representing the parental voice, rendering the father's voice almost silent. To address this, the purpose of this study on family holiday experiences was to understand the perspectives of all family members, including both mothers and fathers, and from their individual and interactive family group perspectives and, thus, achieve true gender scholarship. The study focused on domestic tourism in New Zealand which accounts for over half of all tourism earnings in New Zealand, of which families represent a major market. With the aim of finding out more about family holiday behaviour in New Zealand a parental survey was distributed through five primary schools in the Wellington region (Schänzel, 2008). The survey also recruited ten families as research participants in a whole-family study which is the focus of this paper.

Whole-family study methodology and analysis

The study aimed to understand the individual and collective experiences and meanings of family holidays over time for all family members. Whole-family methodology was adopted from family research (Handel, 1996); this involved interviewing, first, all family members together in a group interview and, then, each family member separately to capture their collective and individual perspectives. This was repeated three times, once before and twice after their summer holiday to capture their anticipation as well as short- and longer-term recollections of holiday experiences. The inherently private nature of families and their

mobility on holiday did not allow for research access during the holiday experience. The application of the whole-family method longitudinally (three times over one year), thus, gave a temporal, experiential, and whole-family understanding of holidays (Schänzel, 2010).

Ten families participated in this element of the study, involving ten fathers, ten mothers, 20 children (eleven boys and nine girls, ranging from six–16 years). To give a gender perspective on parenthood, only two parent/guardian families were selected (94% of the 110 survey respondents fitted this family form). This allowed for step-parents, however, no blended families volunteered, meaning the sample was made up of ten sets of biological parents and their children (between one and three children per family). The participants were all white, Anglo-New Zealand, middle-class, and residents in the Wellington region, making the families relatively homogenous and not representative of the diversity of New Zealand families.

The choice of methodology was underpinned by the philosophical perspective of interpretivism with the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). A symbolic interactionist perspective was adopted for this study which focuses on the connection between *symbols* (i.e., shared meanings) and *interactions* (i.e., verbal and nonverbal actions and communications) and also formed the basis for a grounded theory methodology (GTM) used for the analysis. This allowed a focus on inter-personal relations within the family group. Case studies of families are mainly based on interviews and a small number of cases (Handel, 1991) and are almost always conducted in the home (LaRossa et al., 1994).

The three stages of interviews were all digitally recorded and later transcribed. The GTM was carried out through manual coding in that data were initially coded by reading through the transcripts several times while making notes which was then sorted into themes and integrated into a theoretical framework. Only after the core themes were established was selective coding applied using the computer program NVivo 8 for the writing up of the findings. This program proved especially helpful with managing the volume of data (150 interviews: 30 group and 120 individual interviews) in that it enabled specific searches using more than one code/theme simultaneously and according to the perspectives (e.g. fathers).

Using the GTM meant that the successive stages of research involved the concurrent collection and analysis of data informing the next stage or constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which led to the modification of the interview questions as the study progressed. After all of the interview data had been coded a comparative analysis was conducted. During this stage of the analysis some codes were merged, while others emerged, were subdivided and/or redefined which proved to be an organic process. After the comparative analysis was completed, all the data fitted into the theoretical framework of the main themes of family time and own time. Theoretical saturation was deemed achieved when the addition of new data fitted into themes already devised (Morse, 1995).

The holiday experiences of fathers

The results of the whole-family study led to the development of a thematic model of the family holiday experiences that centres on the ideal of family togetherness in family time and the reality of also needing own time, and the negotiation of the internal dynamics between the two. Family time encapsulated the purposiveness of spending time together with the immediate and extended family and included idealised notions of novelty or change of routine,

social connectedness, and social identities. In contrast, own time encapsulated freedom from those family commitments to pursue familiar interests alone or with peers, which increased in importance with age of the child(ren). The relationship between family time and own time lead to the internal family group dynamics of cooperation, compromise, and conflict.

The different perspectives of gender and generation were applied to this model. These resulted in six thematic summaries on parents and children, mothers and fathers, girls and boys; those discussed here relate to parents, mothers, and fathers. Looking first at the generational perspective, the family holiday experiences for the parents are presented. This is followed by the gendered perspectives of mothers and fathers holiday experiences. Attention is focused on the less heard masculine voice, and where appropriate comparisons are made to the feminine perspective to highlight gendered differences. Selected quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate the key themes with New Zealand birds as pseudonyms for family names.

Insert Figure 1 here

Figure 1 provides a thematic summary of the domestic family holiday experiences for the parents centring on the purposiveness of establishing social identities and traditions. This generational perspective gives a combined voice for the mothers and fathers in comparison with their children. Parents considered offering different or novel experiences on holiday a part of good parenting and quality time. Parents also saw family holidays as being about fulfilling children's need for fun and entertainment, by actively engaging with the children and mentally knowing the children were enjoying themselves. Facilitating the (re)connection with extended family and friends formed an important part of social identity formation. Those

social relations enabled the parents to take time out from their children. Family time, then, was perceived as parented time whereas in own time the parents sought freedom from those commitments and was perceived as relaxing. Parents in their own time sought engagement in their own interests which meant a continuation of regular interests and hobbies. The perceived entitlement for these personal pursuits increased with the age of the children. Parents also sought adult time, however, time with peers was more important for the children in own time. Compared to their children, parents were less deliberate about seeking fun and sociality and had a greater acceptance for internal dynamics such as having to compromise on holiday. This illustrates that there are generational differences on a family holiday that need consideration. While there was a shared parenting perspective, to gain a more complete understanding of fatherhood and masculinities on holiday the interaction between mothers and fathers (in a dual-parent family) or true gender scholarship needs also to be considered.

Insert Figure 2 here

The mothers' holiday experiences, as summarised in Figure 2, largely confirm previous studies in leisure and tourism in that mothers' sought a break from their motherhood discourse (Small, 2005) or ethic of care commitments. Mothers were also more emotionally involved with their children and more deliberate about social connectedness and social identity formation than the fathers in this study. In their own time mothers preferred less physical activities such as shopping and more restful relaxation such as reading. Mothers in this study also voiced greater claims on personal time than the fathers. This finding on holiday behaviour is a reversal from general leisure behaviour where mothers prioritise other family members' leisure over their own (Harrington, 2001). Thus, gender identities for the mothers or their femininities can be differently expressed in tourism than in leisure.

Insert Figure 3 here

The fathers' holiday experiences are summarised in Figure 3; these are now discussed with reference to examples from the interviews. The fathers' voices are given prominence but mothers and children are also included where they offer a deeper understanding. The main gendered difference between parents was that fathers were expected to take on a more physically active role as entertainer of children, with a focus on facilitating fun with the children. This was particularly prevalent when visiting attractions and activities. The contrasting parental roles are illustrated by the Hoiho family whose trip included a visit to the Rainbow's End theme park in Auckland. In the post-holiday family interview Hoiho Father emphasised his active involvement in the theme park experience:

'I did a lot of rides with the children. I was not a spectator so I accompanied the children on those rides. So I enjoyed those days as well because the children were enjoying themselves and just for their own sake. They were quite fun too.'

The on-holiday engagement of fathers in more active leisure behaviour with their children mirrors findings in the leisure literature (Kay, 2009). In contrast, mothers preferred a more passive and emotional involvement with their children and generally saw theme parks as more of a sacrifice, valued because of the children's enjoyment rather than their own. As illustrated by the Hoiho Mother in her final individual interview:

'There are certain things that I don't enjoy as much but I would do anyway. It is not that I hate them because if my kids are enjoying it then that is enough. Things like Rainbow's End do not particularly appeal to me at all.'

The on-holiday role with the father rather than the mother taking more responsibility for active entertainment was also recognised by the children themselves, who contrasted the activities and behaviours of their two parents on holiday. Including the perspective of the boys and girls in this study highlights gendered differences on holiday from the voice of the beneficiaries of the father-child relationship, for example:

'With mum it is more relaxing like playing card games; with dad it is more sailing and fishing.' (Kereru boy, final individual interview)

'Mum doesn't really like running around and sports things. She is more of an organised, relaxing person. And dad is more of a fun, sporty type person.' (Kea girl, final individual interview)

The gendered role of the mothers and fathers was further highlighted in their shared parenting perspective. The importance of establishing family identity was shared by both parents but was manifested in different ways. For the mothers establishing a family identity was about strengthening social relations, for fathers it was more linked to teaching skills to their children through activities such as fishing or sports.

The activities-based parenting of the fathers on holiday also meant that they were often the facilitators of the mothers' own time. This meant that fathers were entertaining the children partly to enable the mothers to pursue their individual interests, for example, read or go shopping. Returning to the Hoiho family, this facilitation role was acknowledged in both parents in their final individual interviews:

Father: 'I suppose at those campgrounds I would be happy to just sit in the chair and read but I realise that it is important for them [children] particularly to be entertained and have fun with me and do these sort of activities when I would

personally be just as happy sitting and reading because <wife> tends to spend time during the [school] term with dealing with the children while I am at work.'

Mother: *'I really appreciate <husband> going off and doing things with the kids because that gives me a bit of time out when I am with them more the rest of the year.'*

The Hohio parents illustrate the contrasts of at-home and on-holiday roles and behaviour. Other role reversals included cooking responsibilities, with fathers more active on holiday which provided the mothers with a break from their domestic responsibilities.

In their own time, fathers engaged in personal interests revolving more around independent physical and mental activities and challenges such as surf kayaking, sailing and sudokus, as below. Some of these activities fathers' only undertook in the holidays such as fishing:

'It is the sailing that is good sport. You try and make the boat go and just the challenge of making the boat work and sail and get where you want to go.' (Kereru father, post-holiday individual interview)

This differed from the mothers in the study who sought out fewer physical activities and more restful relaxation in their own time. For the fathers individual relaxation was more hedonistic in that it could involve drinking, doing nothing, and snoozing. In their own time fathers sought a continuation of their own interests that included exploring the holiday destination and often involved going for a drive in the car, for example:

'I am a bit different from the others [in the family]. I don't mind getting in the car and going other places and exploring. I am not one for sitting around doing nothing.' (Pukeko father, post-holiday individual interview)

This interest in exploration also manifested itself in the car drive to and from the holiday destination. Most fathers drove and relished the trip and their active involvement in it through driving, whereas none of the mothers took an active enjoyment out of it:

‘Loved it, did nearly all of the driving. It is actually relaxing. It relaxes me because it keeps me busy. I can’t just sit in the car.’ (Goldfinch father, post-holiday individual interview)

Discussion

The main gendered differences between the mothers and fathers centred on different parental roles on holiday and differences in personal interests, both reflecting their masculinities and femininities as well as continuations and reversals from their gendered roles at home. For the fathers, more of a continuation involved taking on the responsibility of leisure-based parenting (Such, 2009) by entertaining the children through activities. Holidays also included role reversals in the form of fathers’ taking on increased domestic responsibilities and facilitating the mothers’ own time. This form of masculinity is related to the gendered role of father. Fathers’ personal interests were more diversified than the mothers in that they were both more physically active and more hedonistically oriented. In their own time, fathers expressed a more action-orientated and self-centred form of masculinity that was more detached from their parental role. It can be surmised from the findings that fathers sought freedom from their entertainment commitments or fatherhood discourse in their own time but the men were less expressive about their social roles compared to the mothers. While mothers’ sought a break on holiday from their domestic responsibilities or motherhood discourse, fathers were not necessarily getting a break from their entertainment imperative or fatherhood discourse. This, however, has been largely unreported in the tourism literature due to a lack of research into fatherhood. Instead, previous studies have focused on holidays as a break from father’s (paid) work routines (Shaw et al., 2008), ignoring their at-home fathering roles. Thus,

within the holiday environment some mothers' individual time entitlements were privileged over fathers', which is a reversal from general leisure behaviour (Harrington, 2001). The whole-family methodology has also shown that despite the gendered differences, there were also generational commonalities between the mothers and fathers as parents. The common purpose for the parents when spending family time centred on forming social identities and traditions. However, for the fathers this purposiveness was more linked to practical skills whereas for the mothers it was more linked to social capital.

Conclusion

The lack of research on the fathers' perspectives of holiday experiences has concealed not only important gender differences in parenting roles but also negotiations of masculinities and femininities in tourism. The study of fathers on holidays is comparable to its contributions in leisure studies (Kay, 2006b). Giving a voice to fathers within the context of the family has identified the parental perspective and highlighted generational commonalities shared by fathers and mothers. Parents show a deliberation before, on, and after the holiday regarding the formation of social identities and traditions in their children. Mothers are more deliberate about establishing social connectedness, including with the extended family. For the fathers, social and family identity is manifested more in handing down practical skills such as fishing or sports and is more concerned with activity-based parenting. This echoes themes in the leisure literature on fathers and active involvement in their children's leisure (Kay, 2009b) and represents a continuation of their fatherhood discourse on holiday. The tourism context, however, extends our understanding of fatherhood as holidays are concentrated time spent with the family, away from everyday school, leisure, and paid work schedules. In comparison to previous family holiday studies that did not focus on fathers (Gram, 2005; Shaw et al., 2008), these findings also highlighted the undervalued fathering role as main entertainer of

the children and as facilitator of the mothers' own interests. Privileging the mothers' individual time entitlements meant that some role reversals are demanded on holiday. Family holiday environments offer places for negotiations to the roles of fathers and mothers without the institutionalised routines of paid work and school, thus, providing further insights into contemporary family life. More debate is, however, needed about the different gender and generational roles and understandings on holiday. Including the different perspectives of all the family members has provided a more complete understanding of the complex role of fathers and masculinities on holiday as it acknowledges that men can be parents, husbands/partners, and individuals. Whole-family methodology enables fathers to be positioned in relation to all the other members of the family and highlights generational, gender and group dynamics not identified through other research methods (Schänzel, 2010). Future research into fatherhood also needs to be more inclusive of diverse family forms and a range of fathering experiences (for example, step-fathers, solo-fathers, non-resident fathers, and gay fathers) and different cultural backgrounds with potentially different role characteristics for fathers and mothers. Consideration also needs to be given to the gendered role of the researcher (research on fathers by fathers, or at least men).

This whole-family study has highlighted that the perspectives of all family members are needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of fathers and their masculinities, whether related or more unrelated to their social role as fathers. This includes their partner/wife and child(ren), but potentially also extended family members and other travel companions. Inclusion of the different relationships and interactions within a family on holiday can, thus, achieve not only fifth stage or true gender scholarship but also generational scholarship. Including both group and individual interviews in the research process gave the opportunity to talk as a family member and individual. This highlighted that the individual pursuits of

fathers on holiday centre on more physical and mental activities and challenges alongside hedonistic interests. A focus on only the fathers' role with the children on holiday without an understanding of their own pursuits away from the children would provide an incomplete understanding of the complexities and contradictions of fatherhood and masculinities in tourism. A more holistic and critical approach in family tourism research is needed to provide a form of balance between the fathers' masculine identities based on collective pursuits and on more individual interests. This study, therefore, demonstrates the wider contribution that tourism research can make to the social enquiry into fatherhood, masculinities, and contemporary family life.

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Figure 1 Family holiday experiences for the parents

Family time

Own time

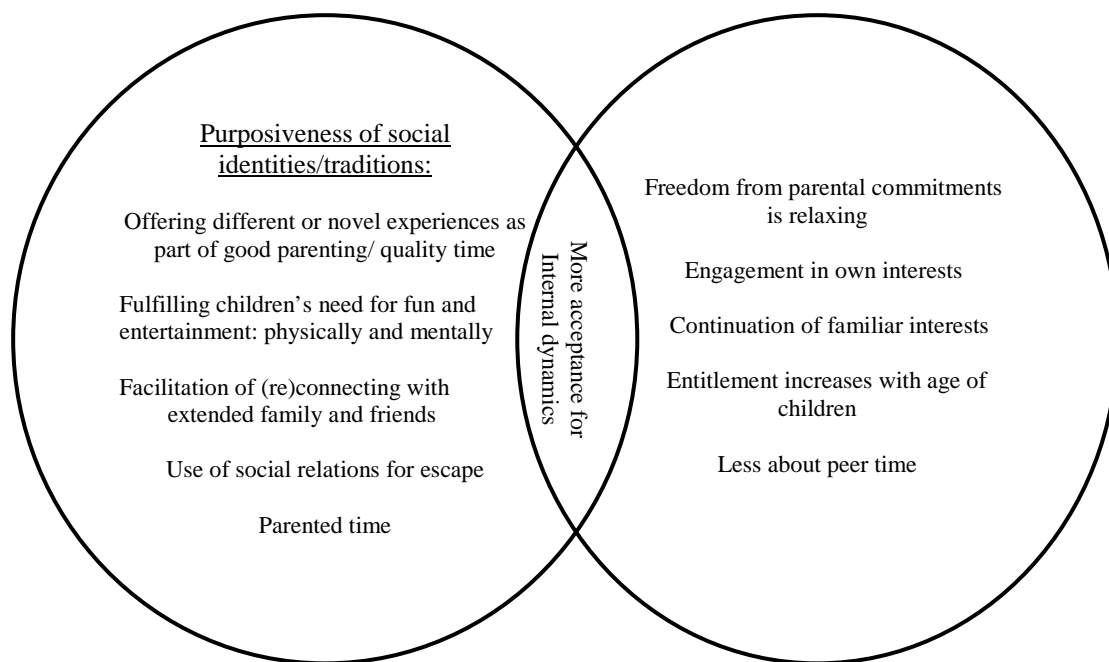


Figure 2 Family holiday experiences for the mothers

Family time

Own time

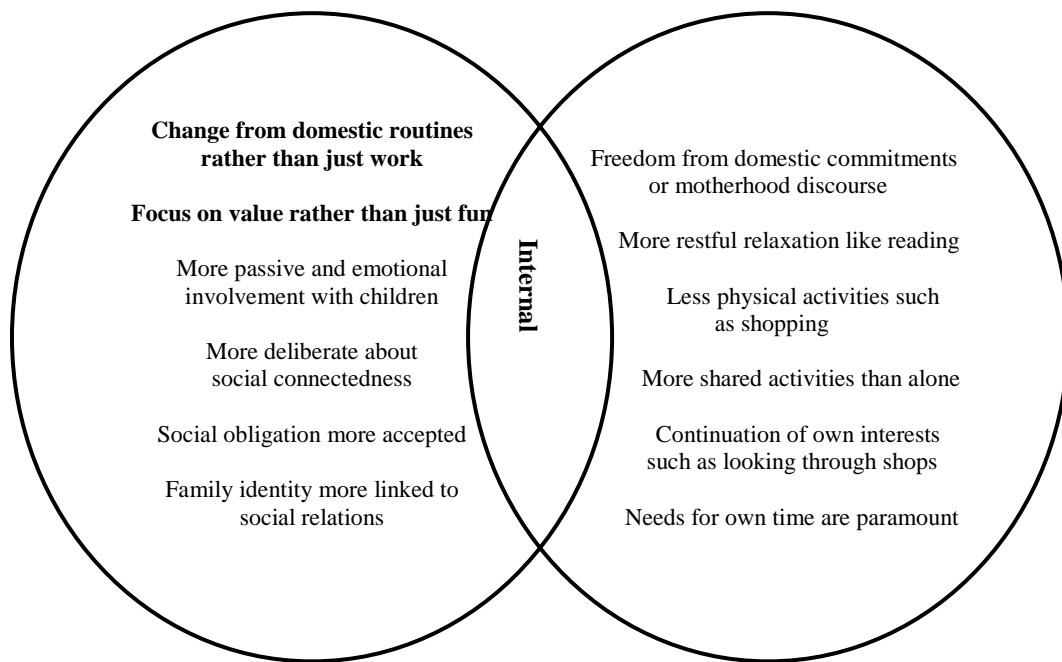


Figure 3 Family holiday experiences for the fathers

Family time

Own time

