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Gay Parents in Heterosexual Family Holiday Space

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Title: Gay Parents in Heterosexual Family Holiday Space

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Abstract:

There is a growing research interest in demographic characteristics and motivational factors of the LGBT travel market (Hughes and Southall, 2012; Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy, 2016). However, the profile of LGBT travellers has been predominantly single gay men with high levels of disposable income and education, whose main travel motivation is to look for sexual encounters and escape from their daily heterosexual environment (Gluckman and Reed, 2012). This homogeneity and overrepresentation in the LGBT tourist profile has been criticised for neglecting lesbians, transgender persons and families (Badgett, 1997). Indeed, Lucena et al. (2015) and Hughes and Southall (2012) emphasise the importance of researching LGBT families, given their distinctive motivations and characteristics. A recent report by the European Travel Commission (2018) suggests that LGBT family tourism broaden the idea of a 'gay vacation' and contribute to a more inclusive concept of gay travel.

Holiday spaces are socially constructed spaces in which social interaction, group dynamics and self-identities take place and are negotiated. Heteronormative assumptions continue to regulate sexuality in public spaces, often generating tension for gay men and lesbians. For homosexual families with children, there is the added pressure of the potential for heightened visibility and inadvertent disclosure of sexuality on holiday.

This presentation discusses a work-in-progress project about exploring sexuality negotiations of same-sex parents in heteronormative family holiday space, and the impact of the overall travel experience. Responding to Lucena et al. (2015)'s call on researching how the presence of children affects the ways parents navigate their sexuality in public holiday spaces, this presentation firstly synthesises the complexities of performing homosexual family lives, as well as the additional complexities of space with the fluidity and blurred boundaries between public and private, virtual and physical, as well as heterosexual and homosexual. We then propose a queer paradigm with toolkits of worldviews, philosophies, and methods to conceptualise an inclusive holiday space above heteronormative family space and/or homogeneity of the gay space. Empirically, in order to understand same-sex parents' emotional journeys within the socially constructed space, we will discuss how the queer paradigm and queer theory will influence our research design. In this research, we are planning to apply non-representational theory and performance theory to allow investigating the embodied experience of same-sex parents in the homogeneous holiday space. A detailed research plan and potential research contribution of the empirical study will be presented.

CTS 2019

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Vorobjovas-Pinta O and Hardy A. (2016) The evolution of gay travel research. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 18: 409-416.
