

men, masculinities, travel and tourism

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**GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**



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# 9

## Ephemeral Masculinities? Tracking Men, Partners and Fathers in the Geography of Family Holidays

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Whereas holidays commonly represent leisure time away from work (for adults) or school (for children), family holidays seem to evoke a more complicated picture. Significantly, the notion of a holiday as a time 'without the watch' (Daly, 1996), where there is no need to manage family schedules linking house-school-work, is particularly heuristic. Additionally, the physical and/or psychological distance from the world of paid work helps to foster aspirations of an increased chance of absolute and unconditional enjoyment for parents and children being together. Parents recognise that the short time they spend during the year with children may somehow be filled by the investment in a holiday time together (Gillis, 2000). Even though children have other opportunities for holidays (e.g., with the grandparents or in summer camps), the possibility of enjoying quality time together is perceived as a temporary opportunity, almost ephemeral, to be the family that the constraints of the daily life do not allow.

Often desired and planned by adults for different places outside the familiar environment and 'away from home', holidays mark a 'distinct time' in the annual calendar of families. Time and place are, thus, fundamental coordinates to understand not only what family holidays actually are but also what they are to be: different and socially constructed experiences of dreams and anticipation. This is especially true for both middle-class and working-class families, since both daily face the lack and the pressure of time. For these, holidays are moreover idealised as a time and space away from unpaid household work and the subsequent gender division (Sinclair, 1997; Coltrane, 1998; Carr, 2011). However, holidays with small children always involve, in some degree, domestic