


Holidaying and Social Exclusion

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Key Question

Can holidaying improve the quality of life for children and their families experiencing poverty and contribute to social inclusion?




Outline of Presentation

- Holidaying and Social Exclusion
- Methodology
- Research findings - Benefits of Holidaying
- Policy Issues




Holidaying and Social Exclusion

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Holidaying in Contemporary Society

- Holidaying has become an increasingly prevalent activity in Irish society
- Mickleright and Stewart (2001) argue that more holidays away from home are one of the benefits of rising national income
- According to Dawson (1988), economic prosperity has created a situation where leisure is essential to individual and community wellbeing.
- Yet, EU-SILC (2005) data show that 23% of Irish people did not have a holiday away from home for financial reasons



Benefits of Holidaying

- Extensive literature documenting benefits of holidaying
 - Essential break from routine
 - Opportunities for social interaction
 - Increased life satisfaction, well-being and quality of life
 - Improved mental and physical health and well-being
 - Opportunities for personal development
 - Improved self image and self esteem
 - Reinvigoration and improvement of relationships

Research Context – Holidaying and Social Exclusion

- Increasing recognition that holidaying is characterised by social exclusion
- People from lower socio-economic strata have lower holiday participation rates
- Low income and economic constraints identified as the largest single factor constraining holiday participation (ETB 1989, European Commission 1998, 2001)
- Issue - is it that those in most need of a holiday are actually being denied access to the process?

Social Value of Holidays

- Emerging claim - non-participation in holidays is a social welfare issue with health and social care implications for children and families (Haukeland, 1990)
- 'Holidays cannot be dismissed lightly as a frivolous pursuit' but should be seen 'more as an investment in the well-being and social fabric' of society (Hughes, 1991, p196)
- Risk of holiday non-participation leads to a feeling of deprivation and social exclusion in young people and others (Hazel, 2004)

Conceptualising Social Tourism

- *'the inclusion of people living on a low income in holiday and leisure activities'* (Family Holiday Association, UK)
- [social tourism] *'is designed to make travel accessible to the highest number of people, particularly the most underprivileged sectors of the population'* (EESC, 2006, p3)

European Policy Agenda

- Social tourism appearing on pan-European agenda:
 - European Commission
 - European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
 - European Parliament.
- 2001: idea of tourism as a 'right for all' acknowledged at Commission level.
- EESC (2003) calls for the establishment of
 - 'social tourism programmes in all EU member states under conditions making them financially accessible to everyone and conducive to the well-being of users, providing workers with all-year-round employment and underpinning the profitability of companies' (p13).

Mechanisms and Agencies Involved

- Access to holidays facilitated by e.g. govts, public orgs, employers, trade unions, and tourism sector
- Actors work both independently or in unison at national and/or regional levels
- Intermediary organisations, often voluntary, are key in overall provision
- Initiatives and incentives vary from universal paid holiday entitlements, to measures targeting specific groups
- Provision in some countries (e.g. France, Belgium) outweighs that in others, including Ireland and UK

Rationale

- Measures from a social inclusion perspective
 - holiday grants for those with economic and/or social difficulties in France;
 - financial assistance for families on low income in the UK
- Measures based on well-being
 - family welfare payments for holidays in France;
 - subsidised holidays and facilities in Finland
- Rights/equal opportunities rationale
 - preferential rates for accommodation in France
- Measures explicitly adopted to achieve economic objectives
 - seasonality in Spain; regional development in France; domestic economy in Poland.

Social Tourism: National Policy Level

- o France: explicit social tourism policy '*equal access for all, throughout life, to culture, sports, holidays and leisure constitutes a national objective*'
- o Belgium: Social Tourism Policy – Tourism for All - adopted by the Flemish Government in 2001

European Best Practice

- o France: Holiday Cheques scheme
- o Spain: IMSERSO
- o UK: Family Holiday Association

Ireland – Policy and Practice context

- o Social inclusion, well-being and quality of life are firmly and explicitly on the Irish policy agenda
- o Access to holidays is not recognised at national or policy level
- o Current provision exists in the absence of any overall, integrative structure / rationale
- o Little strategic attempt to conceive of access to holidays as one of a range of subventions made to populations in need.

Extant provision

- o Government role through the public welfare sector is evident but ad hoc and informal. Subvention can be case-by-case and discretionary.
- o Some local authorities have area-based initiatives but provision is uneven and ill-integrated with other providers
- o Other public agencies, like the VEC are involved, through the hiring of facilities to NGOs

Extant provision

- o Dominated by NGOs
- o Mainly child focused although limited other provision exists
- o Supply inadequate to demand
- o Poorly integrated with agencies' other supports
- o Segregation approach prevails
- o Holiday provision - low among multiple NGO priorities
- o Poor linkages (and knowledge) between providers
- o Poor linkages with public agencies
 - Determining groups in need and referral
 - Information / resource sharing
 - Allocating supply over time

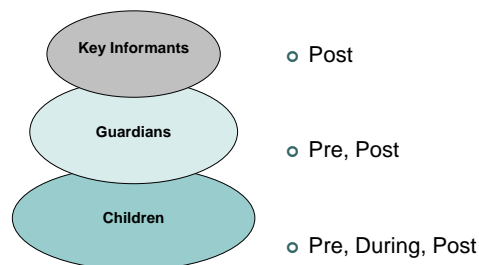
Methodology

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Research Objectives

- Review European mechanisms for facilitating public, private and NGO involvement in broadening access to holidays
- Develop a series of indicators that measure how access to holidays benefits children, and their families, experiencing disadvantage in Dublin.
- Start to build a case for developing policy in the area.

Approach to primary research



Methodology

- Multi-stage qualitative approach
- Studied structured, child-centred holidays provided in summer 2006 by:
 - The Sunshine Fund
 - Teenhols
 - Darndale New Life Centre
- Hear voices of those living in poverty
- Non-intrusive – diaries, photos, artwork
- Participant as observer

Data Collection


- Pre Holiday focus groups:
 - 35 guardians
 - 75 children (aged 8 – 15 yrs)
- Post Holiday interviews:
 - 16 guardians
 - 25 children (aged 8 – 15 yrs)
- Key informant interviews: 16

Background Context

- 6 study areas in Dublin – differing levels of economic & social disadvantage, including RAPID & non-RAPID areas
- Commonality: areas studied had at least 1 NGO active in providing holidays for people who might otherwise not have had an opportunity to take a holiday that year.
- 16 families – participated in all stages (including 10 lone guardian families)
- 4 'low income' households
- 12 households social welfare dependent


Research Boundaries

- Dublin based
- Focus on 'well-being', not 'well-becoming'
- Findings focus on child-only holidays offered by voluntary organisations
- No attempt has been made to query the relative merits of different types of holidays – issue for future research




Holiday Benefits

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Home Environment

- Boredom & absence of recreational opportunities
- Safety and Security risks
- Limited geographical and social worlds



Benefits to Children

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Benefits to Children 1

A 'temporary break' / 'respite' from routine, home environment

*'ah, I thought it was good. Getting out of ** for a while ... something else to do for a change on the summer holidays'*
(13 yr boy, south suburb)


'get them away from the flats ... anything is better than these flats'
(mother, south inner city)



Benefits to Children 2

Children are allowed to be children

- They are safe, relaxed, no longer 'parentified' and so **can have fun**
- 24 of 25 children interviewed post holiday thoroughly enjoyed their holiday
- Outdoor activities, sports, playground, sight-seeing, beach activities



Benefits to Children 2

Children are allowed to be children

'It's a lot different from home ... they have plenty more things to do and you get to go to the beach everyday'
(8 yr girl, west suburb)

'I would go there every week ... because it's very good down there. You would rather live down there than live up in these flats'
(9 yr girl, south inner city)

Benefits to Children 3 Broaden social worlds & make friends

- o 'Making new friends' - a benefit mentioned by virtually all children

'They kind of play with the same kids all the time and if they're not in, they're sitting around waiting for them to come home and they won't go out'

(mother south inner city)

'made loads of new friends, we made friends with everyone down there ... I got all their numbers and we're meeting up on Saturday in town'

(15 yr girl, south inner city)

Benefits to Children 4 Builds self-esteem

- o Typically, these children face difficulties in building self-esteem

'I should have got put into A4 but I got put into A2, that's the dumb class in my school and I can't get changed now ... we're all dumb in my class'

(14 yr boy, North suburb 2)

Benefits to Children 4 Builds self-esteem

- o Emphasis on mutual respect, praise, affirmation, use of first names, prize giving

'Oh the trophies (laughing), that's all you hear about is the trophies, yeah ... you wouldn't get anything like that up here'

(mother, west suburb)

'creates self esteem and gives them courage to go out there with their friends instead of being bullied into the one place'

(grandmother, south suburb)

Benefits to Children 5 Opportunities to learn & acquire new skills

- o Children were challenged to take on new challenges in controlled and appropriate environments

'all the different things, rock climbing and canoeing, even though I can't swim, trying new things'

(10 yr boy, north suburb 2)

Benefits to Children 5 Opportunities to learn & acquire new skills

- o They develop skills related to self-reliance, coping & independence
- o According to guardians, children: 'grow up', 'develop maturity', 'more confident', 'full of themselves'

'Oh God, yes, yes, cause they've never been anywhere, you know what I mean, like, I can't afford to bring them away on a holiday and I think it's good for them to have their own, you know, their own time away from parents, I think it gives them a lift to go on holiday'

(mother, west suburb)

Benefits to Children 6 Quality relationships with 'significant' adults

- o The holiday leaders emerged as very important figures - possibly filling a void in children's lives
- o Children introduced to positive role models

*'he took a shine to ** and now he wants to for to the school that ** went to and done his Leaving'*

(mother, north suburb 1)

'fantastic, made him feel special, with not being a man in the house it kind of gave him somebody that thought something of him'

(mother, north suburb 2)

Benefits to Children 7 Improved behaviour

- Guardians described children as 'in great form' 'more alive', 'had come out of themselves' on return
- The holiday had 'brought them on a lot', developed 'rosy cheeks', 'settled him down .. He can be bold'
- 2 guardians said their sons were being more helpful around the house.

Benefits for the Wider Family & Guardians

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Benefits for the Wider Family

- The absence of 1/more children helps reduce the chaos of family life
- Reinvigorates the family unit as a whole – children came home with stories to tell, trophies & photos to display
- Improves communication, especially child to guardian

Benefits for the Wider Family

- Renews mutual guardian – child appreciation and recognition
- Reduces negativity
- *'coming back with good feedback, (parents) can see their children as more than just a nuisance'. 'When parents hear good things about their children they behave more positively towards them'*

(comments from 2 social workers)

Benefits for Guardians

- A general theme evident – if children are happy, then their guardians are happy
- Guardians get some time to themselves, reduced work load and responsibilities

'it's a great break for their mums and they're delighted and they go off or they go out and have a good time and, you know, just sleep. A lot of them will tell you they rest, they sleep on in the morning and it's great'


(community worker)

Benefits for Guardians

- Lessens guardians' guilt for being unable to adequately provide for children's needs.
- However, problematic also because of worry/anxiety, loneliness / inability to cope


'cause I had nothing to do, nothing to do and nowhere to go ... I didn't know what to do with myself ... I just sat there reading the newspaper, staring out the window. I thought home they would never get'


(mother, north suburb 1)



Longer Term Benefits

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- ## Longer Term Benefits
- o Acknowledgement that long-term behavioural change is not being sought:
 - 'our agenda is not to change a child's life, just to give them a holiday for a week'* (NGO key informant)
 - o Period of anticipation pre-holiday
 - o Period of happy memories post-holiday
 - o Children introduced to ideas about positive human interaction, positive leadership, etc.

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- ## Benefits Summary
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| <p><u>Benefits for Children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Temporary break o Being children o Broadens social worlds o Builds self-esteem o Learn new skills o Positive role models o Improved behaviour | <p><u>Benefits for Wider Family</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Reduce chaos o Reinvigorates family unit o Improves communication o Renews mutual appreciation o Reduces negativity <p><u>Benefits for guardians</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o They get a break too o Lessens sense of inadequacies |
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Policy Issues

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- ## Developing Awareness
- o Key finding: limited awareness exists in respect of:
 - Value of providing access to holidays
 - Level of extant holiday provision among policy-makers (in either children, welfare or tourism domains)
 - NGO provision among other NGOs
 - NGO provision among welfare/health care workers
 - o Developing awareness of this value is a priority

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- ## Justification for Policy Development
- Research case: facilitating access to holidays for people experiencing disadvantage has value
 - This case has been accepted in most EU domains - Ireland (& UK) is out of step
 - Irish policy e.g. National Play & Recreation Policy, National Children's Strategy - indirectly acknowledges value of holidaying
 - An explicit policy on broadening access to holidaying is needed
 - NGOs, public sector practitioners and participants see the value
 - More research is needed to strengthen justification in Irish context

Determination of Policy Rationale

- Policy development can be underpinned by a number of rationales
- Rationale forwarded here: social well-being, welfare and social inclusion
- Economic rationale may also underpin developments – possibility of developing an integrated policy approach involving DAST

Needs Analysis and Support Development

- Address issues in relation to current provision gaps/overlaps/needs
- Network of Social Tourism Providers
 - Raise awareness of linkages which exist
 - Establish Code of Conduct/Guidelines & Best Practice Model
 - Facilitate learning and mutually beneficial exchange of information

Policy delivery: prioritising a partnership approach

- EESC's (2006) Opinion on Tourism for All: policies premised on partnership appear most apt
- Develop combination of public, private and voluntary initiatives and interventions – maximally effective
 - Harness existing expertise and energy in NGO sector
 - Strengthen NGO activity and address gaps in provision through enhanced public and private support
 - Strengthen public sector intervention through private and NGO partnership arrangements

Policy delivery: prioritising an integrated approach to supply

- Agencies and actors need to recognise role that access to holidays can play as one part of the broader set of strategies devised to combat social exclusion
- Need to identify ways of integrating holiday services into overall and ongoing support provision for populations in need

Policy delivery: prioritising a flexible, area-based approach

- Geographically uneven provision
- A strong logic for an area-based/ community-based approach emerged
- Key issues
 - Flexibility: no 'one size fits all' solution – need to work with local specificities
 - Priority is to capture those most in need
 - Avoid stigmatisation
 - Appropriateness of delivery channels vary by target group

Concluding comments

- Exploratory research
- Many avenues for further research – detailed in working paper
- Very timely area - addresses the qualitative dimensions of poverty

'poverty means going short materially, socially and emotionally. Poverty means staying at home, often being bored, not seeing friends, not going to the cinema, not going for a drink and not being able to take the children out for a treat, a trip or a holiday'
(Oppenheim, 1990, p3)
- Tremendous scope for policy development



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