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Introduction

This conceptual paper examines the relationship between tourism and family violence. In particular, this paper focuses on the relationship between Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel and family violence. Family violence is one of the most serious problems plaguing society at present and is regarded as both a public health problem and a major threat to human rights (Glass et al., 2008). With police in Australia's state of Victoria receiving more than 76,000 calls each year from family violence (Deery, 2018), it is not surprising that family violence is referred to as being "deeply embedded in our culture" and will "take a long-term effort to tackle it" (Deery, 2018).

Alarmingly, almost 2.1 million men and women in Australia have witnessed their mother's partner being violent towards their mother (Francia, Millear, & Sharman, 2019). The field of family violence is discussed in many different disciplines, reflecting the broad impact that family violence has. At its most obvious level, the subject relates to criminology, legal studies, psychology, social work, and health. However, family violence is broader than those core disciplines. For example, family violence is also relevant in education as it impacts on educators who at a primary and secondary school level face children with behavioural problems and/or court order complexities as a result of family violence.

Family violence is also relevant in management, because at a workplace level, some staff may be impacted and as such managers need to understand the area of family violence in order to support their staff appropriately. Some larger organisations may also want to consider providing for family violence leave (sometimes referred to as 'white ribbon' leave in Australia). Aspects such as offering employees leave for family violence matters can also assist workplaces gain white ribbon accreditation (White Ribbon Australia, 2019). Therapists and medics are often faced with situations that involve treating victims of family violence but have not been trained in the field. Tourism is also a discipline area not immune to family violence. Indeed whilst the idea of taking a holiday is considered liberating and exciting to many people; sadly, family violence does not take a holiday.

In particular, the area of events is considered to be closely intertwined with tourism. Events are often a time when family violence rates increase and therefore raising family violence in the tourism discipline area is appropriate and important. Whilst tourism and events tend to be regarded positively, society cannot move forward without acknowledging areas that carry risks. Tourism practitioners and researchers need to be aware of family violence as it is an area that is heavily intertwined in the discipline but has simply been overlooked by academic researchers to date.

Many Destination Marketing Organisations have events departments. Some, are even dually titled (for example Tourism and Events Queensland). Some Universities also consider the areas of tourism and events closely connected and offer events subjects within their tourism degrees, or offer dual title qualifications (for example Murdoch University's Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and Events). Accordingly, tourism and events can be regarded as highly intertwined in both academe and industry. The relationship between events (including VFR events such as Christmas holidays, weddings, and graduations) is especially relevant to family violence. This area will be explored in detail within this paper.

This paper will examine the relationship between tourism (especially VFR travel) and family violence. Further, this paper will highlight the ways in which VFR travel may hold risks but also benefits to the quality of life for victims of family violence. As quality of life has increasingly become a key health indicator, and includes constructs such as education, health, safety, basic rights, and social interactions, this lens seems appropriate for examining the relationship between family violence and VFR travel. This paper will also focus on separation from family violence which is an area often overlooked in the field of family violence.

Literature review

Victims of family violence can be severely traumatised by exposure to family violence, but the traumatic experience does not in itself mean that they have a mental illness. Knowing how to treat the victims can be difficult because they may suffer from trauma but not a mental disorder. Similarly, children can exhibit behavioural problems that are related to family violence exposure and lack of knowledge and lack of training in the space can result in an incorrect diagnosis. Lawyers also deal with clients who may be either victims or perpetrators of family violence, but again, have not received specific training in family violence. This can complicate negotiations and result in outcomes that are not in the best interests of the child/ren. The tentacles of family violence are far reaching; and tourism is not immune to this. Yet, to date not a single article exists in tourism that examines the relationship between tourism/events and family violence. Yet family violence doesn't take a holiday when the family are on vacation. Therefore, tourism researchers cannot continue to ignore family violence. It affects tourism and events. Family violence doesn't take a holiday.

This paper will focus specifically on the relationship between family violence and VFR travel. VFR travel is a substantial form of tourism worldwide comprising around half of Australia's domestic visitor numbers (Backer, 2012; Backer & Morrison, 2017). Given the size of travel to visit family and friends, it is axiomatic that family violence will play a role in those trips. In some cases trips for VFR purposes (eg a wedding or funeral) may reconnect family members who have been exposed to family violence and face perpetrators from their past. Events, such as Christmas, are also a time for family violence to spike. In other cases, there may be family violence in a home that family members or friends visit. Other situations may involve a family in which family violence exists who visit friends or family and the tensions of the trip trigger family violence episodes from the perpetrator. In other cases, friends and family can possibly provide support and refuge for victims whilst they attempt to free themselves from family violence.

There are multiple ways in which family violence and VFR travel can interconnect. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to introduce the reader to the ways in which family violence and tourism/events interconnect; but especially to focus on the connection between VFR travel and family violence. It is considered important to raise the topic of family violence in the tourism sphere for several reasons. Firstly, with a focus by many departments to educate people on what is family violence and to 'call it out', tourism practitioners must also have awareness of family violence. Secondly, one of the tactics often employed by perpetrators of family violence is to isolate the victim from their friends and relatives, which enhances dependency on the perpetrator and makes it more difficult for the victim to escape the abusive relationship. Awareness of this problem may help practitioners to consider VFR education campaigns to encourage family and friends to become alert to signs of abuse and to travel to support the victim and/or encourage the victim and children to travel to visit them to seek refuge. Thirdly, events are closely connected to

tourism and there are often spikes in family violence during events (both family events such as Christmas as well as other events, in particular sporting events).

The separation phase is important to examine because often this is when victims of family violence are exposed to the most risk. In addition, separation is when VFR travel may provide particular benefits to victims of family violence and their children. Whilst on the surface it may seem that separation is the pathway to freedom, if there are children in the relationship those children connect the parents and often result in ongoing family violence post-separation. Those parents who attempt to provide safety for themselves and their children may find themselves disappointed and perhaps even disadvantaged by the family law court. Unfortunately, laws relating to family violence are implemented by lawyers and judges who often do not understand family violence (Hunter, 2006). Significantly, this is the first academic paper to consider the relationship between tourism/events and family violence.

The period of separation is considered to be the riskiest for victims of family violence and their children (Family Court of Australia, 2018; Meyer, 2015; The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration, 2017). Accordingly, this conceptual paper focuses on assessing VFR travel during the separation phase. Such research does not exist. In fact, VFR travel may even provide an important form of support and security to victims of family violence, and could assist in improving quality of life. Such an association has not been considered previously and as such this paper potentially raises important aspects relating to family violence beyond the tourism discipline that may even have a transforming role to assist victims in their recovery in their quest to break free from the hold of coercive control.

Quality of Life (QOL) research is relatively new to tourism, but has been evident in other disciplines for many decades. QOL has been discussed in the medical sciences as far back as the 1940s (Land, Michalos, & Sirgy, 2011). Understanding the importance of quality of life for many decades, medical researchers and practitioners acknowledge the need for society to focus on preventative medicine through maximising “health and quality of life for all members of that society” (Elkinton 1966, p.711). Not surprisingly, much of the quality of life research that has taken place in the medical and nursing fields has been physical health-focused (Farquhar, 1995). Moreover, many definitions and conceptual frameworks for quality of life measurements have been based on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition, which emphasises physical health and function (Farquhar, 1995).

More recently, however, it has been argued that it is important to consider quality of life more broadly, since “quality of life incorporates objective and subjective information along a number of dimensions” (Cutter, 1985, p.2) beyond physical and economic quality of life. This broadening of the quality of life construct has developed as quality of life research has moved beyond the economic and medical disciplines to be embraced by researchers in sociology, philosophy, history, geography, psychology, and nursing (Farquhar, 1995).

Consideration of the relationship between tourism and quality of life is recent, but has been recognised as an important focus, and as such has started to attract research attention (Lehto, 2013). Much of this attention has focused on how tourism can enhance the quality of life of host populations (for example Aveiro & Eusébio, 2015; Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012). It is well-recognised that tourism is important in terms of economic contribution, and QOL indicators have been revealed as key elements in destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Quality of life constructs include: health, employment, education, leisure, social interactions, sense of safety, and sense of basic rights. Therefore, it seems appropriate to discuss the relationship between family violence and VFR travel through a quality of life lens.

In addition, the focus of this study being on women and children as victims should also be noted. Whilst it is recognised that there are some cases where men are subjected to abuse and control from women, these cases are extremely rare (Bancroft, 2002; Our Watch, 2018). It is also acknowledged that family violence exists between same-sex couples. Given the significant proportion of cases of women as victims of family violence where the male is the perpetrator, the focus of this paper is accordingly on women and their children as victims where the perpetrator is male. It is also noteworthy that “violence against women has been a weapon in men’s arsenal for centuries” (Stark, 2007, p.172).

It is also noteworthy that women with children are in a particularly vulnerable position as victims of family violence. This is partly because the children are essentially a life-long umbilical cord connecting the victim to the perpetrator for life. However, it is also partly because family violence actually is perpetrated towards mothers at higher rates than towards women without children (Denham et al., 2007; McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & Green, 2006).

Leisure travel and quality of life

Leisure travel experiences are acknowledged as having health and wellbeing advantages that improve quality of life (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Recently, research has revealed the benefits to quality of life from VFR travel whereby quality of life was shown to improve for most people visiting friends/family or being visited (Backer, 2018). Whilst there are many definitions of quality of life, it “is broadly defined as an individual’s happiness or satisfaction with life and environment including needs and desires, aspirations, lifestyle preferences, and other tangible and intangible factors which determine overall well-being” (Cutter, 1985, p. 1). Quality of life comprises numerous domains that are relevant for family violence, such as finance, freedom, safety, culture, subjective satisfaction, and social support. Understanding whether and to what extent VFR travel could improve quality of life for victims of family violence seems important.

VFR travel, rather than leisure tourism, has been specifically identified in this conceptual paper as a focus for future research. There are four main reasons for this. Firstly, the separation period offers the greatest challenges and greatest risks for personal safety (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2011; Logan & Walker, 2004). Secondly, property and parenting matters may take considerable time to resolve and there may be limited access to finances. Thirdly, it may be difficult for the victim to be ‘allowed’ to go on a holiday with the children as the father can argue that this is taking the children away from him. However, visits to or from family will be viewed differently as connections with extended family and close friends is considered in the child/ren’s best interests. In addition, connections with VFRs can occur through friends/family visiting the victim and her children. Thus, it is believed that since the greatest risk time for victims of family violence is separation, and that leisure travel is unlikely to be practical for a range of reasons during this time, research focus should be on whether and to what extent VFR travel (visits from and/or visits to) may aid quality of life for victims and their children during separation. Through the difficult transition phase, it is strongly believed that leisure tourism will be untenable for far too many victims until property and parenting matters are resolved.

Fourthly, family and friends have been found to have positive efforts towards victims of family violence. Such positive benefits have been found to be present in terms of the personal support with the victim, as well as the interactions family and friends have with family violence support agencies (Trujillo, 2011).

Family and friends

It can be challenging for friends and family of a person in an abusive relationship to know how best to support the victim. Perpetrators of family violence tend to adopt strategies to isolate a victim of family violence because family and friends can offer support, which poses a risk for the perpetrator. Isolating a victim helps perpetrators to maintain control. Interestingly, women often do not want to leave their abusive partner and may still love them (Hunter, 2006). Instead what victims of family violence often want is to save the relationship and retain connections with their partner and children, but simply yearn for safety (Hunter, 2006) and to live without fear. However, abusive men rarely change as it is in their best interests to behave as they do (Bancroft, 2002).

Isolation is a key tactic employed by perpetrators of family violence; and isolation and family violence are tightly intertwined. Perpetrators of family violence will often tell the victim that the victim's friends and family are trying to ruin their relationship and become abusive if the victim wants to spend any time with friends/family away from the perpetrator. Since contact with family/friends can result in abuse from the perpetrator, the victim tends to increasingly withdraw from the friends and family to avoid the abuse from the perpetrator (Carver, 2019a). As revealed in Figure 1, isolation includes controlling who the victim can see, talk to, and where they go.

Figure 1 Power and Control Wheel



Source: University of Michigan, 2019

Another interesting aspect of the Power and Control Wheel (Figure 1) is the ‘male privilege’ component. This inequality between men and women is of course hardly new, as women were effectively regarded as the property of men in traditional patriarchy (Stark, 2007). In fact, the history of women changing their surname when getting married stems from the women’s ownership passing from father to husband. It is therefore ironic that in today’s society where many women on one hand fight for equality, at the same time will unquestioningly change their surname when they get married. Despite the complexity and difficulty in changing the surname across many agencies, many women change their surname and then become, based on tradition, the property of the husband. The children too will generally hold the father’s surname. This can be complicated for children who have either witnessed or experienced abuse at the hands of their father to have to ‘keep’ his name throughout their children and the psychological impact of that process is an area worthy of examination but outside of the scope of this paper.

As shown in Figure 1, at the centre of the wheel is 'power and control'. Most certainly, a pattern of control over the partner is the central behavioural characteristic of a perpetrator of family violence (Bancroft et al., 2011). That control can be carried out through various mechanisms such as criticism, verbal abuse, economic control, isolation, cruelty, amongst other tactics (Bancroft, 2002). What is perhaps surprising to many people, and makes family violence particularly complex, is that the vast majority of perpetrators of family violence do not tend to have chronic problems with violence outside of the relationship with the partner (Bancroft, 2002). Most perpetrators will restrict their violence to their intimate partner. In fact, most perpetrators of family violence are capable of exceptional self-control, which makes it challenging for police officers to know how to respond if called to an alleged family violence situation (Bancroft, 2002; Bancroft et al., 2011).

Events

As introduced earlier in this paper, the field of events is closely intertwined with tourism. With VFR travel, events hold great importance for driving travel. Events for VFR travel can be:-

- Social catch-up travel events
- Significant family/friends events (eg graduation, christening, funeral, significant birthday, wedding)
- Community/sporting/tourism events that are attended

It is because of the unique situation of VFR travel, that astute friends/family can carefully support their victim friend/family member. As outlined earlier and shown in Figure 1, isolation is a key component of family violence. However, despite the strategies employed by perpetrators, there are still 'open doors' for victims of family violence through VFR travel. Social catch up events can still occur to ensure the victim remains connected, although care will need to be made to ensure the victim knows that they are supported without attempting to interfere or the well-meaning friend/family member may find themselves pushed away as a psychological coping mechanism for the victim in the abusive relationship (Carver, 2019b). Significant family/friends events are also opportunities for connecting more broadly with family and friends and widening support circles through connections.

The interesting aspect of family violence is that there is more attention provided to the behaviour and the personality of the victim of family violence than to what perpetrators do (Stark, 2007). However, understanding family violence requires consideration of many aspects and each victim who is freed from an abusive and controlling relationship will require great care and often planning that may take years to put in place by the victim. This is where friends and family can assist, and certainly travelling to the victim, or getting the victim to travel away geographically may be powerful strategies in the quest for freedom.

Significantly, in the period of separation, where a victim has finally found the strategies and strength to separate but is at great risk of being 'pulled back' by the abuser, and greater risk of experiencing violence at the hands of the perpetrator, VFR travel can hold a vital role. Separation is stressful and exhausting, even for couples who do not have the added layer of family violence. The risks involved in dealing with an abuser makes separating far more complicated and draining for a person who is likely to have already been traumatised to the point of having little self-confidence or strength.

It also needs to be recognised that there is a strong correlation between festive events and family violence. Family violence incidents increase during Christmas and the New Year period (Collard, 2018; Gilmore, 2018; Perkins & Butt, 2018). In addition, there is also a strong correlation between sporting events and family violence (Boutilier, Jadidzadeh, Esina, Wells, & Kneebone, 2017; Gallant & Humphreys, 2019; Pescud, 2018). Research undertaken in Calgary, Alberta, revealed a significantly higher rate of family violence during key sporting days, with some sporting events reporting a 15% increase and key Cup games revealing a 40% increase in reports of family violence (Boutilier et al., 2017). Research in Australia has revealed a similar pattern, with for example State of Origin game nights resulting in a 40.7% increase in family violence assaults (Pescud, 2018). According to crime statistics, the increase in violence against both women and children during State of Origin matches has been consistent between 2012 and 2017 (Pescud, 2018). Results in other countries reveal the same pattern. A key example is the World Cup, where reports of family violence increase markedly (Dearden, 2018). Such problems resulted in the creation of a poster campaign to highlight the relationship between family violence and football matches (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Poster campaign highlighting the relationship between football matches and family violence



Source: Deighton (2018)

Discussion

In recent years, there has been considerable focus on the problem of family violence. Universities are establishing research centres dedicated to family violence as well as developing courses in the field. Society is concerned with this problem. Family violence represents the main cause of homelessness for women and their children in Australia (White Ribbon Australia, 2018). According to White Ribbon Australia (2018) one woman in Australia is killed each week, on

average, by a former or current partner. Globally, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) affects close to one in three women in their lifetime (Heise & Kotsadam, 2015).

Tourism and events carry risks regarding family violence and as such it is critical for family violence to be discussed within the tourism/events discipline. Much of the discussion of literature within this paper has focused on outlining family violence, because it is new to tourism/events. Thus, some foundation understanding of the behaviours associated with family violence is essential for this paper. As outlined in this paper, events holds significant family violence risks and there are spikes in family violence incidents at family event times such as Christmas as well as sporting events such as football.

However, on the positive, it may be that VFR travel could represent an important role for victims of family violence and their children to aid recovery after separation. Ironically, separating from an abusive partner is considered harder to do than leaving a non-abusive partner and she is most at risk during this time (Bancroft, 2002). The man has lost control and often tries many tactics to regain it. That control may take the most serious form, such as physically harming the ex-partner, or harming the children as the ultimate form of revenge on the mother. Legal separation can be a form of control and tactics may be employed to draw out negotiations. Parenting agreements can become complex. The process may be litigated and separation can take years. Women who have been choked by their partners are considered to be at particular risk of life-threatening injury or death during separation (Glass et al., 2008). Thus, the victim might need physical protection and she may need help with caring for the children.

Accordingly, VFR travel (either visits to or from friends/family) may provide critical strength and support at a vulnerable and complex time for the victim. The experiences of how women “navigate the leaving process and the impact on their safety, health and quality of life” (Broughton & Ford-Gilboe, 2017, p.2469) is acknowledged as being complex and their access to social support and resources is recognised as being important. Thus, family and friends will be potentially helpful at this time. The opportunity to “escape” geographically through VFR travel may offer numerous benefits. Firstly, time with friends/family may offer important social support. Secondly, being in a different geographic location will make it more difficult for the perpetrator to access the victim or stalk them. Time away may assist healing and provide an important time for internal healing and strengthening to ensure resilience. The benefits of time away for children was captured by a quote from a respondent in a study by McCabe (2009):-

Caring for my two grandchildren who are currently on the child protection register. They have suffered the effect of domestic violence and physical abuse and neglect. A break from our current area surroundings would be a distraction from above and allow the children to be children for a short time (p.676).

Separation is also a difficult time for victims trying to navigate the legal process to formally separate from their abusive ex-partner and settle property and parenting matters. In Australia, changes to the Family Law Act in 2006 by the Howard Government resulted in the assumption that ‘equal shared responsibility’ was in the child’s best interests. Equal shared parental responsibility means that both parents need to consult each other to make the major long-term decisions that impact their child/ren. Such decisions include their name, cultural upbringing, religion, education, health, and living arrangements. Whilst Section 61DA of the Family Law Act allows the presumption to be rebutted if there are reasonable grounds to believe there was child abuse or family violence, proving family violence can be difficult, and abusive and controlling

men may recruit lawyers with more aggressive tactics to fight against it. Equal shared responsibility may provide some abusive men with the opportunity to continue controlling their previous partner – just from outside instead of inside the house. Abusive and controlling men are often extremely gifted at playing the role of a victim and making outrageous claims about the victim that can make it very complex and challenging for the already-weakened victim to fight against (Bancroft, 2002).

With safe houses for victims of family violence already at capacity, “too many victim survivors of family violence are forced to choose between their safety or the streets” (State Government of Victoria, 2018) and accordingly in Australia, the Government provided AU\$152 million for family violence housing in their 2016-2017 budget.

Conclusion

Since ‘regular’ VFR travel improves quality of life for most people (Backer, 2018), and social networks and support are beneficial for victims of family violence, it seems axiomatic that VFR travel may hold important links to aiding recovery for victims of family violence and their children. Perhaps packages to offer subsidised travel could be provided to particularly needy victims of family violence to encourage VFR travel as part of a rehabilitation program. Such provisions may offer valuable support and important preventative healthcare provisions for victims and their children. Potential areas for research could be:-

- Do visits *from* family/friends improve quality of life for victims of family violence?
- Do visits *to* family/friends improve quality of life for victims of family violence?
- Are there differences in social support based on culture?
- Are there differences in social support based on past background (eg there was family violence in the victim’s background)?
- How regularly, and by whom, should the victim be visited and for what length of time to aid recovery?

This conceptual paper does not provide answers to these important research questions. Its purpose is to bring a discussion concerning family violence into the tourism/events discipline because family violence cannot be ignored. Family violence, sadly, does not take a holiday. And in fact, is more likely to be worse (for example celebratory times such as Christmas and New Years as well as during events such as sporting events). Another aim of this paper was to identify the relationship between VFR travel and family violence as a critical and urgent area of research for the future. Whilst tourism/events are part of the problem of family violence, tourism may also (through VFR travel) be part of the solution. It is hoped that this paper will encourage tourism researchers to investigate this area and provide critical empirical research to inform future research and more importantly, improve the quality of life of many women and their children around the world.

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