



Task allocation and gender roles in dual earner households: The issue of escorting children

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ABSTRACT

This article reports results of a study on task allocation in dual-earner households in Netherlands with special reference to escorting children. Using a multinomial logit model, the probability of who (father, mother, other or no-escorting) take care of escorting is analyzed as a function of age and gender of the children, personal characteristics of the parents, properties of the activity schedules of the parents, personal interest and gender match. Results indicate that gender equity in escorting is only approximated if both parents work full-time and are highly educated. Otherwise, classic gender roles prevail with mothers taking primary responsibility for escorting children. Involvement of others in escorting has a differential effect between fathers and mothers, setting free significantly more time for fathers. Fathers show a tendency to escort children to activities that interest them and demonstrate a stronger gender match.

1. Motivation

Protagonists of time geography have argued that joint travel arrangements and activity participation exert a strong influence on the scheduling of activities (e.g., Rasouli and Timmermans, 2014e). The reason is that the schedules of the persons involved in joint travel arrangements and activity participation need to be synchronized in time and coordinated in space. Thus, to understand and predict daily activity-travel behavior, processes underlying joint travel and activity-travel participation need to be well understood.

An examination of the relevant literature indicates that the number of studies on joint travel arrangements is still rather limited, relative to the number of studies on joint activity participation. This is particularly the case for dual-earner households with children in the context of escorting behavior. Escorting in this context concerns joint travel in which the child is accompanied by another, generally older person. Usually, escorting is not pre- or preceded by a joint activity at the same location. Either the accompanying person continues traveling to the next activity location after dropping off the child or waits until the child has completed his/her activity (e.g. sports). Escorting may also involve a group of children, although we do not consider this explicitly in this study.

One may argue that escorting children in traditional families seems largely a matter of gender roles (e.g., Scheiner, 2016a,b). In traditional

families, men tend to be responsible for bringing in money, and technical and financial tasks, while women tend to be responsible for running the household and taking care of the children, including escorting tasks (e.g., Fyhri and Hjorthol 2009; Barker, 2011; Ekert-Jaffé, 2011). However, in recent decades, with an increasing number of women participating in the workforce, the household decision process has become more complicated in the sense that both parents may be time-pressured and carry with them the burden and anxiety of their jobs and careers. It implies that former more or less habitual, gender-roles driven decisions have been replaced by more explicit decisions on task allocation.

It raises interesting research questions such as: (i) to what extent is there still evidence of gender roles even if both adults work, maybe with the same number of work hours?; (ii) what is the effect of parent work schedule differences on the allocation of escorting tasks? (iii) to what extent is gender match important in deciding who is escorting the children? (iv) is the age of the children a moderating variable in this context?

To provide an answer to these questions, the aim of the present study is to analyze task allocation and gender roles in escorting decisions of dual-earner households. A multinomial logit model is estimated predicting who (father, mother or other) is escorting the children as a function of personal characteristics, work schedules, characteristics of the child, nature of the activity that is conducted, and gender-match.

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This paper complements another paper using the same data set (Han et al., 2018). Whereas the present paper addresses the questions raised above treating every escorting episode as an independent measurement and therefore examines structural patterns in escorting behavior, the complementary paper examines temporal regularities in escorting behavior focusing on turn-taking behavior.

In the remainder of this paper, we will first provide a brief overview of the literature to support our introductory statements. Next, we provide details of the data collection and sample characteristics. This is followed by an explanation of the analysis that was conducted and a discussion of the results of the analyses. A summary and discussion of main findings and future work complete the paper.

2. Literature review

The escorting phenomenon points at travel in which a particular individual is co-traveling with one or more other persons for protection or guidance (e.g., Gupta et al., 2014). The concept of escorting is closely related to concepts such as chauffeuring and parenting. Escorting and chauffeuring have been used more or less interchangeably, although some differentiate these concepts based on whether the accompanying person is actually driving (e.g., Carver et al., 2013). We view the concept of parenting as the set of activities to stimulate and support the multi-faceted development of a child. It thus is a much broader concept, but in some of the transportation literature escorting is seen as a manifestation of parenting.

If we adopt an activity-based perspective, a day can be divided into a consecutive series of activity and travel episodes. An activity episode is a block of time during which a person conducts a particular activity at a particular location. If we rule out multitasking (Rasouli and Timmermans, 2014f), a travel episode is a block of time during which an individual travels from one location to another. In both types of episodes, an individual may be accompanied by or may accompany one or more other persons. In case of activity episodes, generally we use the term joint activity participation to indicate that an activity is conducted jointly with others. In case of travel episodes, the general term joint travel arrangement is commonly used to indicate that an individual is traveling jointly with others.

Further conditions need to be specified to these general terms more specific. *Escorting* is a travel episode in which there is an element of protection or guidance. In that sense, it can be viewed as a special case of a travel arrangement. In travel behavior analysis, it often refers to adults traveling with children. Most research is about escorting children to school (e.g., Daisy and Habib, 2013; Deka, 2013). In this case, an adult (parent, neighbor, grandparent, etc. or a combination of these) drops off the child at school and then continues to the next activity location, which may be home or office. The concept may also involve travel to other activities as long as the accompanying person is not involved in the activity that follows the travel episode. For example, one of the parents may escort a child to swimming or ballet lessons and may wait there until the child's activity is completed. *Chauffeuring* points at joint travel involving a car/van or maybe non-regular bus service in which an individual drives one or more other persons to a particular destination (e.g., Carver et al., 2013). It differs from escorting or drop off/pick up in that the latter concepts are not necessarily tied to driving a vehicle, but may also involve, for example, biking or walking. Thus, chauffeuring can be viewed as a subset of escorting.

The relationship between the escort and the escorted individual(s) can be manifold and involve for example parents, siblings, relatives, neighbors, and professional help. In contrast, *parenting* implies that parents are involved. As indicated, the term however has a much broader meaning to indicate the process of stimulating and supporting the multi-faceted development of a child. It is less useful in travel behavior analysis.

Research on escorting in travel behavior research has adopted at least three different perspectives. One stream of research has examined

parents' activity travel patterns and analyzed to what extent particular choice facets of their trips differ if their trip chain (usually based on a commute trip) involves escorting. Other research has opted for exactly the opposite perspective and analyzed the conditions that affect various facets of children's school trips. A third focus, which is the interest of the present study, has been concerned with task allocation in (dual-earner) households. Although these different perspectives are closely related, they differ in terms of the unit of observation. The first stream of research uses the trips of parents (in particular commute trips) as observations; the second analyzes the school trips of children, while the third stream is based on task allocation data.

Several studies, including for example McDonald (2008), Deka (2013), and Hsu and Saphores (2014) have provided evidence to the effect that parents' travel patterns and children's travel to school are co-dependent. Departure times of work commutes have been shown influenced by school start times (Deka, 2017; Ehteshamrad et al., 2017a,b). Fox et al. (2015) found that the great majority of school escort tours, are made between 08:00–08:59 and 15:00–15:59 when children are traveling to and from school in the West Midlands Region of the UK. Escort tours for other purposes are less frequent and more spread out during the day. Typically, non-home-based escort tours and trips involve some detour from the parents' activity location, mostly work.

Examining parents' mode choice for escorting trips, Mehdizadeh et al. (2016) concluded that children's trip-related-variables significantly improved the explained variance of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Carver et al. (2013) concluded that most escorting trips involved cars, particularly if the school is located too far from home.

In addition to this stream of research that analyzed aspects of parents' commute trip choice, a second stream of research has examined aspects of children's school trips. The key conceptual considerations underlying these studies do not fundamentally differ from general transportation mode choice studies. They highlight the importance of distance and travel time in the choice of transportation mode in the sense that beyond some distance threshold particular transport mode options are no longer realistic. However, the choice set tends to differ. As young children are not allowed to drive a car (formal age depending on country), the car choice option means they are car passengers and they are being chauffeured. In some countries a school bus is an important option and is added to the choice set. As in other countries mopeds are popular among 16 year olds and higher, depending on whether these children are included in the analysis a refinement of the various types of motorcycles may be relevant.

Several studies (e.g., McMillan et al., 2006; McDonald, 2008; He, 2013; Samimi and Ermagun, 2012b; Daisy and Habib, 2013) reported that an increasing distance or travel time from home to school considerably increases the tendency of using the car, simultaneously reducing the probability of walking or cycling to/from school.

Of special interest in studies on children transportation mode choice has been the issue of safety as reflected in distinct features of the built environment and parents general attitudes and concerns with respect to safety and educating children (Eyer and Ferreira, 2015). Safety in these studies includes both traffic safety and the risk of being harassed or worse. Examples include Copperman and Bhat (2007a,b), McDonald and Aalborg (2009), Fyhri et al. (2011), Giles-Corti et al. (2011), Elias and Katoshevski-Cavari (2014), Susilo and Liu (2015), Ermagun et al. (2015), Guliani et al. (2015). Results of these studies seem to indicate that after some age boys have a lower probability of being accompanied on their way to school, and therefore have a higher propensity traveling alone or with peers as opposed to being escorted (Zwerts et al., 2010; McDonald, 2012). This tendency is amplified by the fact that parents are more concerned about girls traveling independently (Yarlagadda and Srinivasan, 2008; Samimi and Ermagun, 2012a). This concern is higher for trips from school to home, since generally school time finishes earlier than work time. Younger children are more likely to be

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