Sex or Sexuality?
Exploring Household Labor and Travel Among Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Households

Anne Brown
Institute of Transportation Studies
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

Michael J. Smart
Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Brian D. Taylor
Institute of Transportation Studies
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
A Nation of Schleppers

• We tend to focus most on the journey to work
• Household-serving travel constitutes a far larger share of personal trip-making

42% of trips

16% of trips

• We need to understand what’s behind trends in household travel
  – To plan intelligently for the future
Modern Family

• Much travel behavior research focuses on traditional nuclear families
  – And almost all on heterosexual households

• But family demographics have been diversifying for decades
  – And at an accelerated rate in recent years

• Examining time use and travel in gay and lesbian households
  – Offers insight on how the gendered division of household travel may be expected to change in the years ahead
Gender, Paid Labor, & Housework

- Men are doing more housework
  - But, women still do 60% more household labor and make more household serving trips than men

- Lesbians divide labor more equally than either heterosexual or gay households
  - Gender roles are more fluid in same-sex couples

Bianchi et al. 2012; Downing & Goldberg, 2011; Kurdek, 1993; Rosenbloom, 2004; Niemeir & Morita, 1996
Gender & the Commute

• Women make shorter commutes in both distance and time compared to men
• Married heterosexual women have shorter commute time compared to partnered lesbians
• Gay men and lesbians work closer to home than heterosexual counterparts

Crane & Takahashi, 2009; Hanson & Johnson, 1985; Hanson & Pratt, 1995; Rapino & Cooke, 2011; Smart & Klein, 2013
Our Study

• Current literature focuses primarily on heterosexual households

• Objective
  – How do gay and lesbian households’ division of household-serving labor and travel differ from straight households’?

• Findings
  – Gay and lesbian households represent a middle ground between men and women in straight households.
  – Sex, more than sexuality, defines the division of household-serving labor and travel
Data & Methods

• Data
  – Sample limited to respondents 1) ages 18-65; 2) employed full-time; 3) in a couple
  – Identifying sexuality within the ATUS
  – Limitations: aspatial data; unable to examine exact tradeoff between members of households

• Methods
  – Mean and median comparisons between groups
Household Characteristics

- Median Household Income:
  - Straight Men: $67,500
  - Gay Men: $87,500
  - Straight Women: $87,500
  - Lesbians: $67,500

- Employed Full-Time:
  - Straight Men: 80%
  - Gay Men: 82%
  - Straight Women: 71%
  - Lesbians: 55%

- Have Children:
  - Straight Men: 53%
  - Gay Men: 28%
  - Straight Women: 12%
  - Lesbians: 53%
Household-Serving Labor & Travel

- Household Cleaning & Maintenance
- Care for Household Members & Pets
- Food Related Activities
- Household-Serving Travel
- Financial, Civic, and Religious Activities

Minutes

- Straight Men
- Gay Men
- Straight Women
- Lesbians

- Household Cleaning & Maintenance: 53, 48, 51
- Care for Household Members & Pets: 42, 27, 37
- Food Related Activities: 35, 55, 44
- Household-Serving Travel: 37, 29, 34
- Financial, Civic, and Religious Activities: 11, 8, 14, 15
Household-Serving Labor & Travel

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Minutes

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Household-Serving Labor & Travel

Minutes

- Household Cleaning & Maintenance
- Care for Household Members & Pets
- Food Related Activities
- Household-Serving Travel
- Financial, Civic, and Religious Activities

Bar chart showing minutes spent on various activities by different demographic groups.
Household-Serving Labor & Travel

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Findings: Household-Serving Travel

- Across all groups, having children increases the percent of respondents making at least one household-serving trip.
Findings: the Journey to Work

• Having children most reduces the time straight women spend on work-related activities, including travel.
Findings: the Journey to Work

- Straight men and lesbians’ commute times increase when children are present, while gay men and straight women’s commute times decrease.
Discussion

• Gendered division of labor and travel persists in straight households
  – Gay and lesbian households occupy a middle ground
  – Same-sex households may divide household serving labor and travel more equally than heterosexual households
Discussion

• Embedded gender roles persist regardless of sexuality; gay and lesbian households more egalitarian because men behave like other men and women behave like other women
  – In other words, it’s sex, more than sexuality, that largely defines the division of household-serving labor and travel

• When forecasting, planning, or researching travel, must consider the growing diversity of household structures and the trips they generate
Thank you

Anne Brown
aebrown0316@ucla.edu

Michael J. Smart
mike.smart@rutgers.edu

Brian D. Taylor
btaylor@g.ucla.edu
Sources


