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PARENTHOOD AND EVERYDAY MOBILITIES IN PORTUGAL: A GENDER APPROACH (1)

The spatial transition of individuals and their families between the different contexts of home, work/school, and leisure activities, as well as the time spent during this “interface”, are attracting growing attention from sociologists. The focus in the present study is the transportation of children to and from day-care, school or extracurricular activities, with as central objective an examination of the sharing of responsibility for this task between parents. A secondary question relates to the types of transport employed and their possible correlation with the gender of the user. In an analysis of the various dimensions of this parental task, attention is paid to the central place children occupy in today’s families, strengthening parents’ protective instincts. The data presented result from a study of households in two zones in Portugal with diverse geographical and demographic characteristics. The quantitative and qualitative data indicate differences between men and women in types and patterns of mobility, and also in the access to and use of means of transport. The daily school run, in its broadest sense, can be taken as an activity pertaining to the domain of “caring” and to a certain extent this is reflected in its gendered character, as mainly women are responsible for it.

Keywords: children’s mobility, parents’ role, gender, time use, Portugal.

Vecāku loma un ikdienas mobilitāte Portugālē: dzimumu pieejamība (1)

Indivīdu un viņu ģimeņu pārvietošanās telpā starp māju, darbu/skolu un atpūtas vietām, ka arī laiks, kas tiek patērēts šīm aktivitātēm, piesaista paaugstinātu sociologu uzmanību. Dotā pētījuma priekšmets ir bērnu nogādāšana uz/no skolas un ārpuskolas pasākumiem, savukārt, pētījuma mērķis ir novērtēt šī pienākuma sadalījumu starp vecākiem. Pētījumā arī tiek izskatīti izmantota transporta tipi un to iespējama saikne ar lietotāja dzimumu. Analizējot dažādus šāda vecāku uzdevuma aspektus, uzmanība tiek veltīta bērnu centrālajai vietai mūsdienu ģimenēs, kā arī vecāku aizsargājošo instinktu pastiprināšanai. Rakstā piedāvātie rezultāti tika iegūti, pētot mājsaimniecības no diviem Portugāles reģioniem, kuri atšķiras pēc ģeogrāfiskām un demogrāfiskām iezīmēm. Kvantitatīvie un kvalitatīvie pētījuma rezultāti parāda atšķirības starp vīriešiem un sievietēm pēc mobilitātes tipiem un formām, kā arī pēc transportlīdzekļu pieejamības un to izmantošanas. Ikdienas skolas gaitas, to plašākajā nozīmē, var tikt uztvertas kā aktivitātes, kuras attiecas uz rūpēm par bērnu un zināmā mērā tās izpaužas caur dzimumu piederību, jo, galvenokārt, par šīm aktivitātēm ir atbildīgas sievietes.

Atslēgas vārdi: bērnu mobilitāte, vecāku loma, dzimums, laika izmantošana, Portugāle.

Роль родителей и повседневная мобильность в Португалии: гендерный подход (1)

Передвижение индивидов и их семей в пространстве между домом, работой/школой и местами отдыха, а также время, затрачиваемое на данную деятельность, привлекает повышенное внимание со стороны социологов. Основным предметом настоящего исследования является доставка детей в/со школы и внешкольных мероприятий, в свою очередь, разделение данной обязанности между родителями является целью данного исследования. При анализе различных аспектов данной задачи родителей внимание уделяется центральному месту, которое дети занимают в современных семьях, а также усилению защитных инстинктов родителей. Результаты, представленные в данной статье, получены посредством исследования домашних хозяйств из двух регионов Португалии с различными географическими и демографическими характеристиками. Количественные и качественные данные исследования демонстрируют различия между мужчинами и женщинами по типам и формам мобильности, а также по доступу к транспортным средствам и их использованию. Повседневная школа, в ее самом широком смысле, может восприниматься как деятельность, относящаяся к проявлению заботы, и в определенной степени это находит отражение через гендерный признак, поскольку, в основном, это является обязанностью женщины.

Ключевые слова: мобильность детей, роль родителей, пол, использование времени, Португалия.

1. Modern society: automobility

Spatial mobility has been a constant in human society. However, widespread use of the car as an everyday mode of transport is one of the defining characteristics of modern society (for example, Oakil et al. 2016). This model of automobility has a major impact on society, particularly in terms of land usage and time management. According to Urry (2004), the exceptional strength of this model lies in a unique combination of flexibility and coercion. On the one hand, the car offers great autonomy and freedom of movement, but on the other, the management of spatial and temporal limitations and opportunities arising from car ownership demands extreme flexibility. The question of time spent travelling illustrates the ambiguous nature of automobility. Although the car reduces distances, being a faster mode of transport than walking, people who travel by car tend to spend more time in transit than those who use other modes of transport, since car access incentivises them to travel greater distances and make more trips (Robinson, Godbey 1997).

The ambivalent nature of automobility is particularly relevant when analysing differences in the everyday mobility patterns of men and women and the influence which automobility exerts on the production and/or reproduction of gender. Women's mobility patterns are generally characterised by lower rates of car access and more journeys made on foot or by public transport; shorter trips than men; and more complex journeys, which include series of short stops (trip-chaining), for purposes related to family life (taking children to school, shopping etc.). Meanwhile, men tend to travel more for professional reasons (Urry 2004; McGuckin, Nakamoto 1995; Oliveira 2014). There is a widespread belief that an increase in car usage among women has given them greater freedom of movement, contributing to their emancipation and enabling them to join the workforce. However, some authors stress that women who drive often do so to fulfil their role as a wife and mother (Scharff 1991; Dowling 2000; Murray 2008).

2. The centrality of children in family life

In recent decades, family life has undergone major changes, in particular a tendency towards sentimentalisation, privatisation, individualisation and secularisation (Torres et al. 2006; Wall 2005; Cunha 2007). The modern family attaches great importance to emotional life, manifested in a search for fulfilment and personal wellbeing within the family environment. It also exhibits greater equality between the sexes. Not unrelated to these changes is the new role of children within the family. Seen as a rare and precious gift, they occupy a central position in family life, and in the construction of their parents' identity.

According to Beck (2002), the significance which parenthood has acquired in the lives of individuals can be explained by the process of individualisation. Children have become the last resort against solitude in a society facing major risks and uncertainties, which trains individuals for rationalism, efficiency, speed and success. Children, as a source of happiness and wellbeing, represent the opposite of these qualities. They allow parents to express affection and form part of their search for personal self-fulfilment. According to Beck, children offer a private type of *re-enchantment*, bringing new meaning and purpose to the lives of individuals. The centrality of children within the family therefore stems from the important role they play as a source of socially valorised identity and self-fulfilment for their parents (Cunha 2007).

In the modern family, parenthood has ceased to be a natural destiny, instead becoming a deliberate choice and an unconditional lifelong relationship, founded on personal and emotional bonds. However, this conscious desire brings with it enormous responsibilities for the parents, with great emphasis placed on parenting. Parenting now focuses on shaping the child's identity by providing a stable environment, constant attention and a more egalitarian relationship. Viewed in this light, parenting is a demanding task and although the number of children per household has decreased dramatically, financial and emotional investment has increased considerably.

In this regard, numerous studies have demonstrated an increase in the amount of time that parents in Western countries devote to their children, in terms of activities such as everyday care, leisure, help with school work, shopping, transport, etc. (Bianchi 2000; Hallberg, Klevmarken 2003; Gershuny 2000). However, modern parenting not only requires parents to devote a greater quantity of time to children, but also focuses on the quality of this time. It assumes that in order to maintain and improve family wellbeing, there is a need for quality family time, defined as uninterrupted, concentrated and stress-free time shared with other family members. This idea of quality family time, more widespread among middle class households, contributes to creating feelings of guilt among parents with less free time (Kremer-Sadlik, Paugh 2007).

Great demands are placed on parents, who do not always have the necessary resources (money and time, but also patience and energy) to fulfil them, and are often forced to sacrifice their own interests. This situation heightens pressure within the daily routine, especially for mothers who, despite increasing employment rates, continue to bear the brunt of childcare responsibilities. Nevertheless, pressure is felt by both parents, leading to changes in their relationship due to the shortage of time. Children are not only a source of gratification for their parents, but also introduce potential

tension, conflict and worry (Marques 2008, p. 9). As such, family life represents a constant balancing act between various conflicting demands: the need to travel for work, parenting obligations, childcare duties and routine household chores (Beck 2002, p. 148).

3. Transporting children and perception of risk

The child-centeredness of parental behaviour is also reflected in the way children are transported, which is viewed as one of the parents' duties. Parents see the routine of dropping off and picking up children as one of the many tasks involved in their care, and as such it requires dedicated time and adjustments to the family schedule. These moments of interface between locations visited by parents and children on a daily basis (home, school, nursery, extracurricular activities, work, etc.) take on a range of meanings. In general, these journeys are viewed as tiresome and time-consuming (Cruz 2004; Torres et al. 1998), especially by women, to whom this task is usually assigned. However, they can also represent an opportunity for quality family time, a chance for parents to converse and share with their children (Kremer-Sadlik, Paugh 2007).

Portugal, the country on which we focus in this article, is no exception to this development. In this state the duration of parental leave (which can be shared, to a certain extent, between the mother and the father) is between 120 and 180 days. Another important feature is that usually both the father and the mother have a full-time job. Therefore, many children are from an early age accustomed to spending the day outside their home, in particular in childcare facilities, with grandparents, and in pre-school, and so the daily "school run" is a common routine long before the children have reached the age of mandatory schooling (6 years).

In an effort to keep children as safe as possible, they are accompanied on their daily journeys to an increasingly advanced age. We are witnessing a generational shift in the travel patterns of children, with a tendency towards decreasing independence and increasing car usage. The majority of children aged between 6 and 15 travel to school with adults, usually their parents, and the car is the dominant mode of transport (Cordovil et al. 2012). This trend is linked to the parental perception that public space is dangerous. Parents' concerns regarding independent travel through public areas focus on the possibility of children being injured in a traffic accident or abducted by strangers, while the children's own concerns centre around the presence of unfamiliar people and the fear of bullying (Cordovil et al. 2012; Trocado 2012).

According to Murray (2008), the perception of risk entertained by parents is shaped by the discourses of specialists, the mass media, and their own experience, especially among women. In Portugal, the extensive coverage of certain cases of disappearance of children by the mass media has increased the anxieties of parents. Consequently, the car has gained new significances associated with the idea of security and protection, features also associated with motherhood (Murray 2008). In fact, the mobility of daily life might be contributing to the construction of motherhood. Referring to the middle-class suburbs of Sydney, Dowling (2000) reports how the transport-

ation of children by car is considered to be one of the qualities of a “good mother”. The car helps in the management of the complex daily routines and is an emotional investment in the children, as it creates an affective context for the relationship with them (Sheller 2004). The car transforms into a mobile extension of the family space and in this sense it is experienced as a safe place and a multipurpose instrument for the care of children.

As has been stated, modern parenting, with its features of child-centeredness and concerns for child welfare, often results in an overprotective approach, the effects of which are reflected in travel habits. The use of the car often is a welcome and even obvious solution. Taking into consideration these characteristics of modern life, this article assumes a gender perspective in discussing everyday mobilities. We will concentrate on the following questions: How is the responsibility for the transport of children shared between parents? And which are the means of transport used? The analysis of these questions will be based on data from a survey conducted in the Castelo Branco and Braga districts, in Portugal. A brief description of its methodology is provided in the following section. Next, we will consider everyday journey types according to sex, age and area type. Then, we will analyse the amount of time which families with dependent children spend travelling, with an emphasis on gendered differences. These differences also come to the fore in the final topic addressed, the school run, which is viewed as a childcare task. In the following sections, we will consider the empirical reality within the context described in the opening paragraphs of this article.

4. Methodology

The empirical evidence presented comes from the study “Time and Technology: a gender approach for the Portuguese context” (2), which combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

In the first phase, a questionnaire was designed and used to gather descriptive information on the time and technology use among individuals living with a partner in the Castelo Branco and Braga districts. The questionnaire is divided into four thematic areas: sociodemographic data on the households, the time participants spend on domestic tasks, technology use and ownership within the household and, finally, a section on transport. This final section contains a series of questions concerning the modes of transport which participants use, the journeys they make, their purpose and duration. The growing importance of travel in everyday life, with more time spent in transit and car use on the rise, was a major factor in the decision to devote a whole section of our research to this topic. On the one hand, journeys form part of the daily routine of the couples, and despite taking place outside of the domestic sphere they do, to a certain extent, reflect the division of domestic responsibilities, as well as connections to spaces outside the home. On the other, the fact that the majority of these trips are made by car (whether as a driver or a passenger), presents an opportunity to explore the use of a traditionally gendered technology, in particular in single-car households.

The questionnaire was completed by a non-random sample. This sample consisted of couples living together in both districts. First, they were stratified non-proportionally by district and by classification of the parish (*freguesia*, the smallest administrative unit in Portugal) according to the INE (National Institute for Statistics) typology of urban areas (TIPAU 2009). In each district and area type, parishes were chosen at random. In order to select the final survey participants, quotas were established according to age and sex. After validation of the questionnaires, we were left with a sample size of 430 people (211 men and 219 women), of whom 212 lived in the district of Braga and 218 lived in the district of Castelo Branco.

During the second phase, qualitative methodologies were used to identify and explain the range of descriptions, meanings and practices regarding time and technology use within the domestic sphere, focusing on the gender relations underlying the couples' everyday interactions. To this end, we conducted four focus group sessions. Each focus group was composed of participants with the same sociographic profile, in terms of sex and employment status. One consisted of working women with and without children; another consisted of men with the same characteristics; a third was formed of unemployed and retired women with and without children, and the final group consisted of unemployed men with and without children.

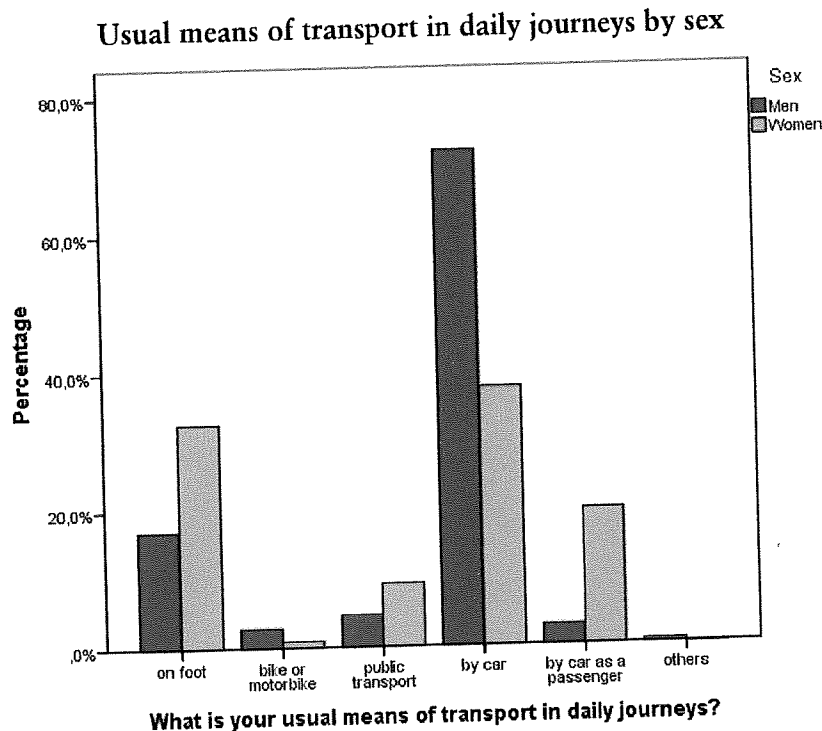
20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 10 couples, divided between the Castelo Branco and Braga districts. We opted to interview the two partners separately, as trials of joint interviews proved unsatisfactory in terms of data collection. The interviewees were aged between 25 and 45. The sample structure was established according to level of education, whether or not they have children and employment status, mainly targeting couples where both partners work.

5. Modes of transport in daily life

The car is the principal mode of transport among survey participants, whether as drivers (54.5%), or passengers (11.4%). This is followed by journeys made on foot (24.9%) and by public transport (7%). As for motorbikes and bicycles, these are only used by 1.9% of participants. This reaffirms the dominance of the private car for everyday trips, as already demonstrated by other authors (Oliveira 2014; Urry 2004). When we break down modes of transport according to gender, this hierarchy remains unchanged, with the car occupying the dominant position with regards to the other modes of transport. However, some interesting differences emerge, in particular a strong link between men and cars, suggesting that the car continues to be perceived as a masculine mode of transport, despite increasing use by women. This is illustrated by the fact that men drive considerably more than women (72% of men compared to 37.6% of women) (Pearson Chi-Squared 66,564^a, df=5, sig 0.000). For men, this mode of transport is followed by walking, in a distant second place (17.1%). The use of other modes of transport, such as public transport, traveling by car as a passenger, motorcycle or bicycle is even lower. As for women, their usage of the various modes of transport is considerably different and more evenly balanced. Journeys made by car as the driver do, however, remain the most frequent choice (37.6%), followed by

journeys on foot (32.6%), by car as a passenger (19.7%), by public transport (9.2%) and by motorcycle or bicycle (Figure 1). In short, although driving is the most common form of transport for those surveyed, women travel as passengers and by foot considerably more often than men and drive less, as well as using public transport notably more often (Pearson Chi-square 66.564^a, df=5, sig 0.000). These gender differences remain unchanged when cross-checking with other variables such as age and area type, as we will see in greater detail in the following sections.

Figure 1

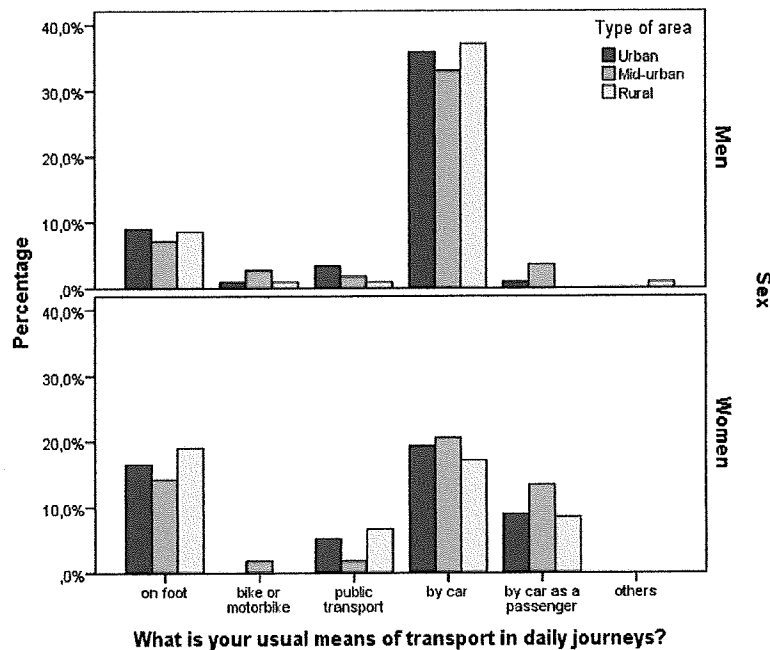


Source: elaborated by the authors, based on data of the project "Time and Technology: a gender approach for the Portuguese context".

The existence of certain services and the population density within certain areas tend to influence the chosen mode of transport. In order to analyse these differences, we will use the Urban Area Typology (TIPAU 2009) categories, developed by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), on the basis of functional and planning criteria. This typology brings together a range of demographic and administrative territorial indicators and distinguishes between three area types: predominantly urban areas (APUs), semi-urban areas (AMUs) and predominantly rural areas (APRs). However, among the sample surveyed, there were no major statistical differences in terms of habitual mode of transport. The only difference observed concerned usage of the car as a passenger, which is significantly higher in AMUs.

When the survey results are broken down by sex, distinct gender patterns once again emerge, almost independently of area category (Figure 2). Half of the participants mention driving a car, irrespective of area in which they live, with men using this mode of transport considerably more than women. These gendered differences are more striking in rural areas (APRs) than in other area types. The next most common form of transport chosen by women is walking, particularly in rural areas (37% in APRs compared to 27.6% in AMUs and 33% in APUs). On the other hand, men in semi-urban areas travel on foot less than men living in other areas. It is important to note that travelling by car as a passenger, a mode of transport used overwhelmingly by women, is significantly more common among women living in AMU areas (25.9%, compared to 17.9% in APUs and 16.7% in APRs). Finally, public transport is also used more frequently by women than men, particularly among those living in rural and urban areas.

Figure 2
Usual means of transport in daily journeys by type of area and sex

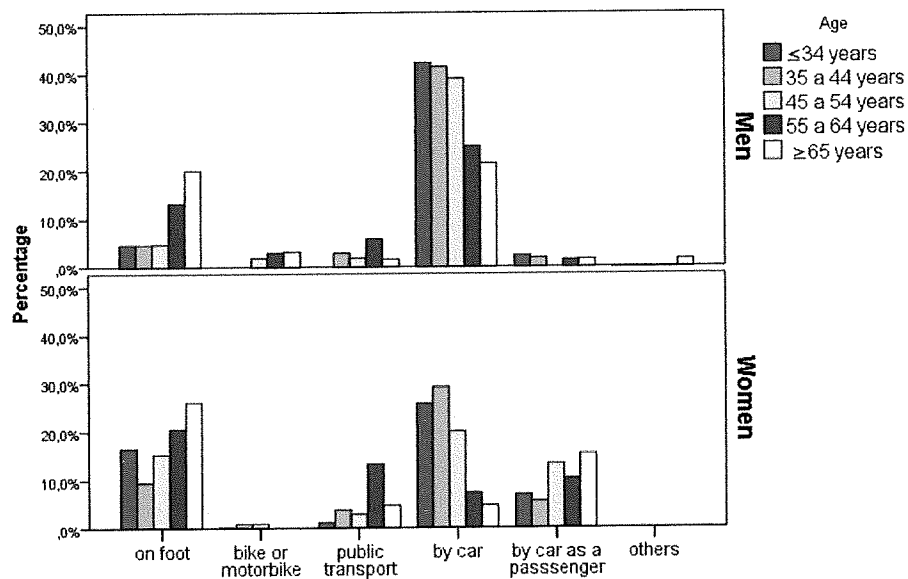


Source: elaborated by the authors, based on data of the project “Time and Technology: a gender approach for the Portuguese context”.

Age is another variable which goes some way towards explaining the variations in use of the different modes of transport. In effect, as age increases, we see a decrease in rates of car driving, in favour of journeys made on foot or by car as a passenger. Public transport is a residual or minority choice among all age groups, being used significantly less by younger people in both districts.

When we break down data by the age and sex, we can see that rates of driving decrease with age. This is more pronounced in men than women (Figure 3). Men aged over 55 travel by foot more and drive less, a trend replicated in women. It should also be noted that as age decreases, women are considerably less likely to travel by as car passengers. This coincides with the growing percentage of young women who drive, the increasing number of women belonging to the younger generations who hold a driving license, and the rising rate of household car ownership, in particular the phenomenon of the “two car” family (3). Of the sample studied, 87.6% of participants own a car, with car ownership at its highest in younger households. Ownership of a second car also appears fairly widespread among families (40% own two). It must be noted that when a family owns one car, 55% of survey participants of both sexes report that the man is the principal car user.

Figure 3
Usual means of transport in daily journeys by age and sex



Source: elaborated by the authors, based on data of the project “Time and Technology: a gender approach for the Portuguese context”.

Both sex and age are significant when explaining the car’s status as the principal mode of transport, either as a driver or a passenger. One of the main differences revealed by our survey data relates to the roles played by men and women, and their relationship with technologies which have traditionally been considered masculine, such as the car. IMTT (4) data illustrate a gradual increase in the percentage of female drivers. Among the younger generation, a similar proportion of men and women hold licenses. However, gendered differences in this area increase with age.

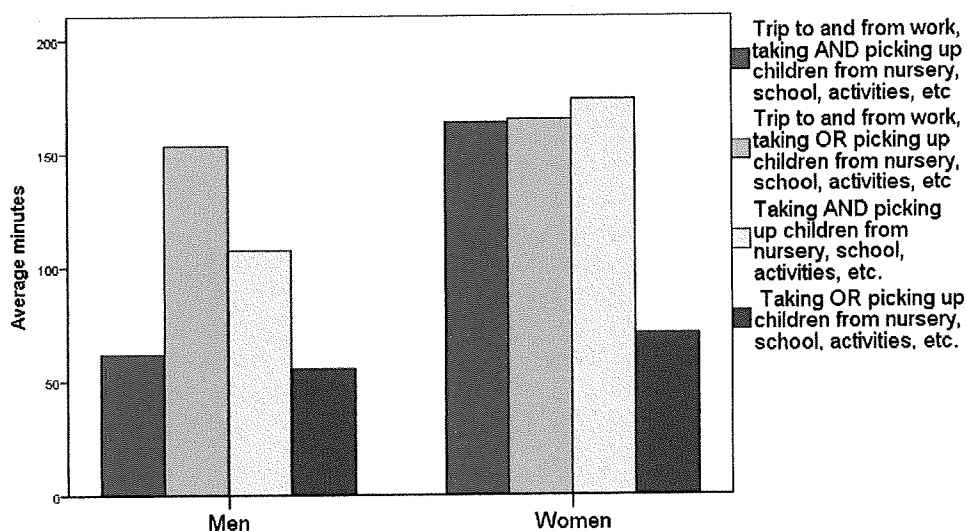
5.1. Time spent on routine journeys during the week

In addition to the means of transport used, it is important to understand how much time the survey participants spend on routine journeys during the week. To this end, the survey included questions about journeys made and their purpose. These included simple trips (the commute to and from work, the school run, visits to family and friends, shopping and errands, and leisure trips), as well as more complex, or chained, journeys, which involve a series of consecutive trips combining different purposes, in particular the commute to work and the school run.

Focusing only on families with dependent children, the first finding to emerge from our analysis concerns gendered differences in mobility patterns. When the sole purpose of a journey is to take children to school, nursery etc. or pick them up, we observed that this task tends to be performed by women. However, when the journey combines the commute to work with the school run, the figures for men and women are similar. Likewise, more women than men travel for shopping and to visit friends and family, while more men than women mention travelling for leisure activities. These disparities appear to reveal a gender bias, with women, in the great majority of cases, continuing to bear the brunt of responsibility for childcare (including the school run), everyday shopping and maintaining contact with friends and family (Perista et al. 2016). This persistence of gendered roles is reflected in their mobility patterns.

Figure 4

Average weekly times in trips with children by sex



Source: elaborated by the authors, based on data of the project "Time and Technology: a gender approach for the Portuguese context".

In terms of the average time, survey participants usually spend on the trip types studied, significant gender differences only emerge in two situations (Figure 4). Men

tend to spend less time on all but two trip types (leisure and commuting to work), and the statistical difference is only significant in the first of these cases ($t=2.226$; $df=80.222$; $sig=0.026$). Hence, men spend considerably more time travelling for leisure purposes (92 minutes per week, as opposed to 60 minutes for women), as well as spending 201 minutes per week on journeys where the sole purpose is “commuting to and from work”, compared to 171 minutes for women. With regards to the second point, it is also worth noting, that women have shorter commutes to work, both in terms of time and distance, detailed in the existing literature. The principal explanations suggested for this difference are precarious employment and family responsibilities (leading to a preference for jobs closer to home), and a lower rate of car access among women (McGuckin, Nakamoto 2005). Indeed, among those who took part in the survey, focus groups and interviews, we found that men travel further for work than women with children. The mobility demanded by many jobs today (both in terms of location and time), leads to longer journeys to more distant locations. The fact that this is more prevalent among men than women with family responsibilities can be explained, to a great extent, by the assumption of gendered roles, specifically motherhood, which demands that the mother remains close to the child.

Women spend more time than men on all of the remaining journey types do. These trips, the school run, shopping and errands are more strongly associated with the traditional role of the women as the person responsible for children and the home. This disparity between men and women in terms of average weekly journey times is particularly striking for trips which include “commuting to and from work, dropping off AND picking up children from school, nursery etc.” ($t=3,111$, $df=14$; $sig=0.008$ – 163 minutes for women compared to 62 minutes for men), and “dropping off children at school, nursery etc. AND picking them up” (174 minutes for women compared to 107 minutes for men”. These complex journey types are bound by rigid schedules at two times of day, further increasing time pressure on women.

5.2. The school run

The school run is part of the daily routine of families. It not only demands time, but also requires coordination efforts between the various family members. What is more, transporting children entails a series of preparatory tasks and considerations, such as settling the children into their seats, packing rucksacks, bags, lunchboxes and baby buggies etc. There is a whole set of tasks, which increase or decrease depending on the age of the child, their level of independence and the mode of transport chosen for the journey. This routine, which generally involves multiple trips made according to a set schedule, is experienced as a stressful chore. The following quotes illustrate the feeling of time pressure which results from these temporal and spatial constraints and the necessary feats of organisation which parents perform in order to reconcile their schedules with those of their children.

“One of us drops them off at school, the other picks them up; one packs the rucksack, the other helps with their homework. Sometimes it’s a little difficult, because of our schedules, as my husband also works shifts. Generally when he’s free when I’m

at work, so it's rare that we... that's why we need to plan". (Focus Group: Female, age 40, with 1 daughter aged 12, operations assistant).

"Quarter past seven or half past seven... I wake up, then my wife and daughter... I have to wake them up too... They both start at the same time. I drop one off at work and then rush to get the other to school, then from school, I go to work, but I always arrive at the last minute, we're always in a rush". (Focus Group: Male, age 38, with 1 daughter aged 10, warehouse employee).

Although the school run is less markedly gendered than other tasks such as laundry, cleaning, or preparing meals, more women than men take responsibility for the transport of their children (59.4%), particularly when the sole purpose of the trip is to drop children off at school or nursery and picking them up.

By analysing the profiles of men responsible for the school run, we gain an insight into the circumstances which lead them to assume this duty. Male participation depends mainly on the employment status of the couple and their location. Thus, 70% of men responsible for the school run are in relationships where both partners work. However, when neither partner works, more women tend to assume this task. It is worth noting that in urban areas, the percentages are similar for both sexes (51.4% women and 48.6% men). However, as we move into semi-urban and rural areas, the percentage of women responsible for the transport of their children increases, (63.2% in semi-urban areas and 83.3% in predominantly rural areas). In addition to living in urban areas and being in relationships where both partners work, these men tend to have long working days (72% work forty or more hours a week), reflected in a strong feeling of time pressure in half (50%) of all cases. In terms of habitual mode of transport, an overwhelming majority (89.3%) of men drive, generally combining the journey with their commute to and from work. Furthermore, with regards to the perceived balance of domestic chores within the couple, 30% of men who do the school run say that they share household chores evenly with their partner, while 60% claim that the woman does most of the chores.

Another factor which has contributed to increased male participation in the school run is the shift brought about by new interpretations of, and approaches to, fatherhood (Mendes 2007). This has led to the valorisation of a more hands on role for fathers in raising their children and a more even distribution of domestic chores.

"Because it is important, maybe that's why, because I want to be there. A child is part of your life, the most important person in your life. [...]"

– Of all of the tasks you mentioned, is one particular task more important?

– They're all important, aren't they? They're all... all necessary. Each has its relative importance, so there isn't just one, one which is special. The one which brings me most pleasure, which I like the most? That's got to be looking after our son, hasn't it? Definitely looking after my son.... You understand". (Interview: Man, age 37, 1 son aged 4, working in services of public sector).

With this new view of fatherhood comes the explicit recognition that the school run is a domestic task comparable to any other. The school run is not only considered a logistical necessity within the family, but also a parental responsibility. Consequently, the performance of this task is recorded in the "imaginary account" of times and tasks kept by couples who divide household chores evenly, or aspire to do so.

“... my wife manages to take him to school. She has a work schedule and a type of job which make this easier for her, but it counts as a domestic chore, it is still her time she uses, maybe she could be doing something else [...]. In professional terms, for example, my wife has more free time than me, but she spends it with our son... you see... on the school run... you have to account for that”. (Focus group: Man, age 41, 1 son aged 9, technical sales consultant).

As noted above, women, on average, tend to dedicate more time than men to transporting their children, irrespective of the type of journey made. This is unsurprising when we consider that it is usually women who make series of short, chained trips.

When looking at the school run, we must also consider the mode of transport used and the justification for its choice. This can reveal a great deal about the various time constraints on families, who tend to prioritise speed, as well as the choices and limitations of the local area, in terms of distances and infrastructure. It must also be noted that routine trips made with children during the week depend on the location of services or venues, mainly those associated with childcare: schools, nurseries, family members, activities, etc. The location of these services, in particular schools, is of prime importance for parents, who tend to choose options close to their home or workplace (Cordovil et al. 2012).

Firstly, we will consider routine trips made during the week which combine two purposes: commuting to work and the school run (“travelling to and from work, picking up AND dropping off the children”). Nobody is able to choose public transport for this type of journey, for the simple reason that it does not exist or is inadequate, making it impossible to successfully reconcile work and school timetables. The overwhelming majority (80%) travel by “car as the driver”, the reasons for this choice being that it is “quicker” (33.3%), because “there is no alternative” (26.7%), or because it is “more flexible and allows greater independence” (13.3%). The second most commonly used mode of transport is “walking” (13.3%), which is followed by “travelling by car as a passenger” (6.7%) in last place. Both of these options are chosen for their speed. It should also be noted that the breakdown of these results by sex simply reaffirms the overall usage figures for the various modes of transport. In other words, women are slightly less likely to drive and slightly more likely to be passengers. More women also claim to use the car because “it is cheaper”, or because “there is no alternative”.

The big picture is similar for combined journeys, which only include half of the daily school run, in other words commuting to and from work, either picking up OR dropping off children”. The overwhelming majority of people drive (92.9%), and only a small minority (7.1%, all of whom are women) use public transport, stating price (“it’s cheaper”) as the reason for this choice. The reasons given for driving are speed (28.6%), flexibility and independence (28.6%), a lack of alternatives (21.4%) and convenience (14.3%). It is worth highlighting that it is mostly women who refer to a lack of alternatives when explaining their choice of car as a means of transport, while men mention the convenience of this option.

In the case of journeys made solely for the purpose of transporting the children, “picking them up AND dropping them off”, without any other stops, it is observed

that the majority of people travel by car (63.2%), the remainder making this journey on foot (36.8%). Once again, women are more likely to walk than men, stating proximity as the reason for this choice. The reasons for using the car are related to speed (especially among women), a lack of alternatives, and convenience, particularly among men.

Finally, in cases where an individual makes only one of the routine journeys with the children, “picking up OR dropping off the children”, the results are similar with regards to the mode of transport used. The majority opt to drive (61.3%) and a third (33.1%) walk, while the remainder, all of whom are women (5.6%), travel by car “as a passenger”. More women than men make this journey on foot, and the reasons cited for this choice are proximity or the belief that this is the quickest or cheapest mode of transport. On the other hand, the car is chosen due to its convenience, because it offers greater flexibility and independence, for its speed, and due to a lack of alternatives.

In summary, more complex journeys, combining trips associated with the everyday tasks of the parents and their children, are usually made by car, with the mother or father at the wheel. For this kind of journey, with rigid schedules and greater time pressure, participants prioritise speed and flexibility, which they see as being offered by the car. When journeys are less complex (only picking up and/or dropping off the children), a greater number of people walk. A third of those surveyed, mainly women, claim to travel on foot, citing proximity as the main reason for choosing this mode of transport.

6. Final Remarks

In this article, based on field research in some areas in Portugal, we have analysed the school run as an aspect of the labour of childcare. The centrality of children in family life has led to greater paternal involvement in childcare tasks, and to the school run being included among their number. Regarding the question about the sharing of the responsibility of the routine transport, it was found that the involvement in this task lays particularly with the women, which is reflected in their mobility patterns: in comparison with men, they practice more trip-chaining, have lower rates of car use, and spend more time travelling with the children. More recent studies in Portugal, based on national samples, show the same pattern (Perista et al. 2016).

The reasons cited for using each mode of transport elucidate the gendered differences in terms of time management within families. Women tend to plan their time according to the schedules of their children and other domestic duties which require them to travel (shopping and errands), as they assume the principal responsibility for these tasks. The required coordination of schedules places women under severe time pressure, and as a result they prioritise speed (either by car or on foot), as well as the flexibility and independence offered by the car, while men tend to highlight convenience.

The results suggest that in families with dependent children, there is a prevailing pattern of automobility in everyday journeys, which has allowed for the development

of more flexible and complex schedules, in particular for women. The car is perceived not only as a mode of transport, but also a means of looking after the children: private space which extends the protective sphere of the family beyond the walls of the home.

Notes:

(1) A version of this text was presented at the Ninth Portuguese Congress of Sociology, at the University of Algarve (Faro), in July 2016.

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(3) According to Associação Automóvel de Portugal (Portuguese Automobile Association) data, the number of people carriers and off-road vehicles has increased exponentially in Portugal, from 692,000 in 1974 to 4,457,000 in 2009. Available: <http://www.acap.pt/pt/noticia/14/estatisticas-do-sector-automovel-em-portugal/>

(4) Instituto da Mobilidade e dos Transportes Terrestres (Institute for Mobility and Land Transport). Available: http://www.imtt.pt/sites/IMTT/Portugues/Noticias/Documents/Evolucao_Cartas_Conducao_Genero_1950-2009.pdf

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