Whom to hang out with and why: the influence of social ties on social and recreational activity participation and travel of various ethnic groups in the Netherlands

Dick Ettema, Utrecht University
Mei-Po Kwan, Ohio State University

Background
- 60% of trips in Netherlands is social/recreational (SR)
- SR trips are often made jointly
- Social interaction affects frequency, destination, mode of most trips
- Insight in the role of social networks in SR activity generation is lacking

Previous findings
- Frequency of SR activities affected by SN characteristics (FH members, friends, affiliation alters, density, centrality, characteristics of alters, geogr. distance)
- Frequency of social contact affected by SN composition/ties (distance, #members, %relatives, Internet use, type/intensity of tie)
- Frequency of support activities affected by SN characteristics (distance, accessibility (phone, Internet), gender, size of SN, parent/child ties)

Research question/objective
1. To gain more insight in the mechanisms through which SN affect SR activities
2. To provide empirical underpinning for the hypothesised relationships

Theoretical insights
- Participation in SR activities depends on social capital (companionship, information, support) offered by friends, family and associational memberships.
- Exchange theory posits that individuals in social network ties exchange resources. Exchange is supposed to be reciprocal, but may be asymmetrical
- SN are multiplex, i.e. fulfill multiple functions (support, companionship, advice) and individuals have multiple types of SN

Hypotheses
- More interaction with family members leads to more leisure oriented activities
- More interaction with family members in one domain leads to more interactions in other domains
- More interaction with friends leads to more involvement in leisure oriented and cultural activities
- Associational memberships lead to more involvement in active activities involving specific skills and passive activities associated with the membership (e.g. watching ballet)
- Having a professional network leads to more and wider participation in recreational activities

Data
- Items on involvement in SR activities, freq. of contact family/friends, associational memberships

Analyses
- Ordered logit model of frequency of SR activities: seeing a play, seeing a movie, sightseeing, visiting a restaurant, sports, hosting visitors, contact with family
- Effect of SN variables controlled for socio-demographics and ethnicity

Results
- More of contact with family and friends and associational memberships lead to more frequent leisure and recreation activities
- Effects of different social networks are not (not only) domain specific
- Specific networks fulfill multiple functions (companionship, support, information), and networks functionally overlap
- Associational memberships and cross cultural contacts are more important for ethnic minorities