



Assessing Time Use in the PSID: A Sociologist-Demographer's View

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Research Interests in Sociology

- Life course transitions
- Social inequality/Stratification
- Gender division of labor
- Transmission of inequality across generations



Time Diary Data on Adults in the U.S.

- University of Michigan, 1965 and 1975
- University of Maryland, 1985 and through the 1990s
- Bureau of Labor Statistics American Time Use Survey (ATUS)



What Sociologists Have Studied with Time Diary Data on Adults

- Trends and gender differentials in:
 - Housework
 - Parental time with children
- Trends in:
 - Leisure (T.V., internet, reading, cultural activities)
 - Civic involvement
 - Religious participation
- Comparison of paid work hours



The Benefit of ATUS

- Replace smaller scale surveys
- Assess variation in daily activities across subpopulations
- Provide cross-sectional description and monitor trends over time



What Cannot be Studied with ATUS Data on Time Use

- Changes in time use with life course transitions
- Consequences of time allocation
- Stability of individuals' time use patterns across the life course
- The “jointness” of time use (e.g., couples, parent-child, siblings)
- Subjective experience of time



The Case for Time Diary Data Collection in the PSID

What makes the PSID a unique
survey in which to obtain
information on time?



Unique Features of the PSID

- Longitudinal panel fielded for 30+ years
- Quality data collection on money and material resources on families
- Follows families, not individuals over time – permits study of “linked lives”
- Following rules permit study of intra- and intergenerational relationships
- History of time diary data collection (CDS)



Priorities for Time Use Data Collection in the PSID

- Diaries on couples
- Parental diaries in conjunction with CDS
- Repeated collection to follow transitions (perhaps beginning in adolescence/early adulthood)



PSID, Time, and the Elderly

- To date, limited information on time use patterns among the elderly
- ATUS will remedy this
 - Activity reports provide information on market/nonmarket work and leisure pursuits
 - “With whom” data provides information on social isolation



PSID and Time Use Among the Elderly

- Could enhance ability to assess change in time use with transitions later in life
- Might focus on “linked lives” of elder parents and adult children, caregiving
- Limitations: Elder care more episodic than dependent child care
- Critique of child care applies even more so to elderly – issue of management versus providing, care a “state of mind”



Questions for Discussion

- What are the unanswered research questions about time use that are most compelling and best “fit” the PSID as a data collection vehicle?
- Are embedded time diaries of daily activities - or some other format for collecting information on time allocation - the best way to answer these “compelling questions”?
- What periodicity of collection would need to be supported for the data to be useful? (E.g., one round with couples? two waves with adults, 6 years apart as with the child diaries in CDS? ongoing collection (e.g., every two years) like the ATUS?)
- Who of the PSID family members are the highest priority for time use collection (either via diaries or some other format)?
- What do we need to know/test about competing formats before undertaking time use data collection in the PSID?