

Designing a Time Diary to Study Disability, Time Use, and Well-being Among Older Couples in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics

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This presentation describes a new methodological and analytical study of time use in a sample of 400 married couples ages 50 and older who will participate in the 2009 Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The overarching goals are 1) to assess the feasibility of including synchronized time diaries for couples on a larger scale in the PSID and 2) to produce a rich data archive to support innovative research on disability, time use, and well-being for couples in mid and late life.

The presentation will first focus on the motivation for studying disability and time use. Next, we will describe developmental efforts undertaken at the University of Michigan to build on established telephone-based time diary methods. Focus groups with 16 couples will guide the integration of several innovations—measures of well being, attention to how activities are carried out (with help and/or assistive technology), and measures of care giving to adults as a secondary activity. We will present focus group findings in three areas: 1) the degree to which participants can distinguish among co-presence, joint action, and helping (i.e., the other member is simply present versus actively engaged in the activity versus helping the respondent to engage in the activity); 2) the language used to describe secondary care activities (e.g., when another individual ‘stands by’ or is there ‘just in case’ even if they are also engaged in another activity); and 3) language used to describe positive and negative emotions while giving/receiving care. Implications for enhancements to the traditional time diary method will be discussed.