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**Beyond the Extremes: The "Pace of Life" and Media Use**

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**Abstract**

In this paper we ask how socio-demographic factors like gender, education, family-type and age, affect the "Pace of Life" in the case of secondary media use. We assume that "harriedness" which in modern life is mostly connected with high social status is reflected by simultaneous media use as a strategy of effective time use. In our study we use German time-use data which were collected by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany in 2001 and 2002. Concentrating on full-time and part-time working individuals we found strong evidence for the hypotheses that men and women as well as different educational groups differ significantly in their share of secondary media use. Women as well as high-educated spend a greater share of secondary media use than men or low-educated individuals do, which can be seen as proof for a greater "harriedness" of women and high-educated in our society.

**\*\*Draft version; Please do not quote without permission.**

## **1 Introduction and Theoretical framework**

The "pace of life" (Simmel, 1908) has not only attracted attention in social science but also in the public discourse. There is a wide use of terms like "time squeeze" or "time poverty" of the working population in our days. Moreover, "time poverty" has become a status symbol which we demonstrate by doing "more things at the same time", like talking on the phone while sitting in the restaurant or running through the park, working on the plane while travelling to a conference or checking e-mails while listening to music. Making use of "time saving strategies" and demonstrating to be "more time efficient" than others is, however, not a really new phenomena.

More than thirty years ago it was Staffan B. Linder (1970) who analyzed time in the sense of consumption time in his famous book of "The Harried Leisure Class". If a person's income is growing while working more or even with same hours, people develop new needs (corresponding to their working activities they strive for productivity in their leisure time too) and therefore need more time to spend. In this context he mentioned three forms of acceleration: firstly, the consumption of luxury goods, secondly, "successive consumption", meaning that one enjoys one commodity at a time, but each one for a shorter period, and thirdly "simultaneous consumption". (Linder, 1970, p. 79). In analogy to the latter Scheuch (1972) has coined the term "time deepening": If a person was able to do several things simultaneously he could "crowd a greater number of activities into the same 24 hours" (p.77).

More than twenty years later Robinson and Godbey (1999, 38p.) described four similar forms of time deepening: Attempting to speed up a given activity (e.g., visiting a national park without getting out of the car) on the one side, substituting a leisure activity which can be done more quickly for one that takes longer (e.g., phoning for home-delivered fast-food instead of cooking) on the other side, furthermore, doing more than one activity at once (e.g., reading while watching TV and eating dinner), and finally undertaking a leisure activity with more precise regard to time (e.g., planning bathroom time).

Some of these strategies which are supposed to "save time" are also of great interest in media research. Media researchers have been paying great attention to the phenomenon of simultaneous media use for some years, especially with focus on TV watching. In Germany the work of Neverla (1992), Beck (1994), Ottler (1997) Cornelißen (1998) and Kuhlmann and Wolling (2004) can be mentioned in this context. In the U.S. simultaneous TV watching has already been discussed in the late 1970s (e.g. by Comstock, 1981).

The starting point of this paper is the hypothesis that "the harried leisure class", defined as "the time poor with high social status", use *more* time-saving strategies with respect to media use than the "time-poor/ low social status" or the "time-rich/high social status" due to their greater "pace of life" compared to the other groups.

In further research we analysed only "extreme" types related to time and social status ("the time-poor/high status"; "the time-rich/high status"; "the time-poor/low status"). Using different indicators for social status, like profession and education on the one side, and "leisure" or "time for paid work" describing the time dimension on the other side, we found that the share of reading as secondary activity is higher on working days than on weekend days in all groups defined as "time-poor/status high". Differences concerning TV viewing are not as discriminating as concerning reading. Furthermore, using "time for paid work" as indicator instead of "leisure time" the differences between the time-rich and the time-poor high professionals with respect to simultaneous media consumption are not as obvious.

In this paper, we go beyond these "extremes", that is beyond our typology taking the complete sample into account. We assume that indicators like *gender, education, family type, and stages of life* are additional factors affecting "the pace of life". Besides, we assume that subjective dimensions of time-perception, like satisfaction with time-use for leisure or perceived stress vary with respect to these indicators. In current time-use research objective and subjective dimensions have been taken into account simultaneously to describe and explain lifestyle patterns of social groups (see e.g. Robinson 1983; Clark et al. 1990; Michelson 1999).

We concentrate on simultaneous media use as a strategy to use media more efficient and focus on media use in general, on the one hand, and the relation between reading and TV viewing, on the other hand. When looking at different socio-demographic groups women show a greater preference for simultaneous media use than men. There is empirical evidence for women watching more TV (in minutes) defined as parallel or secondary activity than men (see e.g., Cornelißen 1998). Furthermore, we assume in accordance to Linder that with higher income (and education) individuals spend a greater share of their media budget as simultaneous activities. Concerning the so-called "rush-hour" of life, working individuals between 30 and 50 are supposed to be more "harried" than other groups of age. At that age individuals might tend to do more things at the same time because they face greater "time conflicts" combining family, work and leisure issues than younger age groups or older ones.

The analysis is based on data from the German Time Use Survey 2001/02. Our original sample consists of fulltime and part-time workers. The following hypotheses were tested: With higher education individuals use more strategies of efficient media use. Women use more time-saving strategies in media use than men do. The higher the professional status, the greater is the share of secondary media use. The higher the income, the greater is the share of secondary media use. Full-time working individuals spent a greater share of secondary media use than part-time working individuals. Family status affects the share of secondary media use. Furthermore, we look at different "time intervals", like 12 - 2 p.m., 6 - 8 p.m. and 8 - 10 p.m., as we assume that there are more specific differences when taking the "point of time" into account. As media use can be regarded as part of leisure, we further test the assumption that satisfaction with time use for leisure and perceived stress vary across different socio-demographic groups.

## **2 Data and Method**

In Germany, the importance of time use research from an international comparative perspective has been verified by the time budget studies carried out by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany in 1991/1992 and 2001/2002. The latter is part of the Eurostat Time Use Project capturing time use data from 13 European countries following standardized guidelines (European Commission, 2003, 2004). Our analyses are based on data obtained during the most recent study in 2001/2002. The entire spectrum of daily activities was collected on three days (two weekdays and one weekend day) from members of German households aged ten years or older. The original quota sample consisted of about 34,000 diaries completed by approximately 12,000 individuals.

The diary method allows the collection of activities (among them media use) a person attends to during a 24-hour day by the individuals themselves. The participants of the German Time Use Survey were asked to fill out a paper-and-pencil diary structured by ten-minute intervals. The diary provided the opportunity to differentiate between primary and secondary activities, and the participant was able to provide information about the social and local context. Consequently, the researcher is able to find out how long (duration), how often (frequency), with *whom* (social context or family context), *where* the activity took place and whether the activity was done as *main* or as *secondary* activity. This paper is limited to the aspects of "duration" and "simultaneousness" which are directly related to "time". The diary enables the participants to write down the activities in their own words, which are later recoded into a standardized activity scheme (of about 220 categories). Media use forms one of the main activity categories and is further subdivided into reading, watching TV (and video), listening to music and the radio, computer use.

The sample consists of part-time and full-time working individuals. The unit of analysis is the entries of a diary for one single day which is conventionally used for analysis in time budget research.

Indicators for "simultaneousness"/"harriedness" are the share of secondary media use taken from the total media budget, the share of secondary reading activities taken from the total reading budget as well as the share of secondary TV viewing activities taken from the total TV viewing budget. Furthermore, the share of secondary reading and TV viewing activities is analysed for the time intervals "12 - 2 p.m.", "6 - 8 p.m." and "8 - 10 p.m." Educational status was measured by three categories. Low educational status was operationalized by the qualification "Hauptschulabschluss", described as an extended primary education (consisting of nine years of schooling). Medium education was operationalized by "Realschulabschluss", a form of secondary education which prepares pupils for vocational training. High education was operationalized by "Abitur/Fachabitur", a form of secondary education which prepares pupils for attending a university.

*Table 1: Distribution of the Sample by Sex, Age, Educational Status, Employment Status, and Professional Status and Family Type (N = 16.487)*

	N	full-time	part-time
<b>Sex</b>			
Men	46.1	69.2	11.4
Women	53.9	30.8	88.6
<b>Education</b>			
low	26.0	26.8	22.9
medium	35.7	34.5	39.7
high	38.4	38.7	37.4
<b>Family Type</b>			
Single	8.2	9.2	4.7
Couple	15.9	16.2	14.9
Single-Parent	9.6	8.6	12.9
Parents with Children	62.7	62.2	64.4
other	3.6	3.8	3.1
<b>Age</b>			
< 30	14.4	17.4	4.2
30 - 39	24.3	22.6	29.7
40 - 49	37.9	36.7	41.8
50 - 59	19.8	19.6	20.4
> 60	3.7	3.6	3.9

The subjective dimension of temporal wealth is captured by satisfaction with time use for leisure (as media use is supposed to be part of leisure activities). Satisfaction with time use for leisure is

measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (1 = very satisfied) to 7 (7 = very dissatisfied). We are using the arithmetic means as measure. Furthermore, perceived time pressure is captured by the question: "Do you spend enough, too little or too much time on leisure?"

### 3 Selected Findings

The data set was weighted by the factor individual time use as has been recommended by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany to ensure that the results are representational. In the first step we tested the hypotheses above with respect to different time-intervals. All diary days were taken into account. In the second step, we looked at differences between working days and weekend days in order to specify our results. Finally, we explored how different socio-demographic factors affect the "pace of life" in a more subjective sense.

#### 3.1 Objective Factors Affecting the "Pace of Life" in the Case of Simultaneous Media-Use

Testing the hypothesis that full-time and part-time working individuals differ in their share of secondary media use, only significant differences were found for the share of secondary reading between 12 and 2 p.m. and for the share of secondary TV viewing activities between 8 and 10 p.m. Looking at the latter interval it can be shown that full-time workers spend a greater share of simultaneous TV viewing than part-time workers who spend a greater share of simultaneous reading activities between 12 and 2 p.m. No significant differences were calculated for the share of simultaneous TV viewing but the values point in the same direction.

*Table 2: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing of Full-time and Part-time Working Individuals*

% -share of secondary activity	media	reading				TV Viewing			
		total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.	in total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.
Full-time	39.9	29.5	19.6*	25.1	25.6	14.3	19.6	25.1	25.6**
Part-time	40.6	27.7	26.5*	24.3	24.3	15.1	26.4	22.8	24.3**

\*\*p < .01; \*p < .05

As full-time workers are supposed to be more time-restricted than part-time workers they obviously spend a greater share of their media budget as parallel activity which can be seen as hint for more “harriedness”.

Clear evidence was found for our hypothesis when looking at different educational groups. Individuals with high education spent a much greater share of simultaneous media activities (reading as well as TV viewing) than those with medium or low education. This result hints to a greater time pressure of the high educated compared to lower educated individuals, whose everyday life is assumed to be less time-restricted.

*Table 3: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing of Individuals with low, Medium and High Education*

% -share of secondary activity	media	reading				TV Viewing			
	total	total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.	in total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.
low education	34.8**	26.0**	17.9	17.7**	24.5	11.0**	26.5**	19.5**	7.6**
medium education	41.4**	28.9**	20.3	24.0**	27.5	14.7**	33.1**	23.0**	12.6**
high education	42.9**	31.9**	22.2	31.0**	24.1	17.3**	40.6**	26.9**	17.5**

\*\*p < .01

Moreover, strong evidence for a gender-gap was found which was in line with our theoretical assumption: In most cases women spend a greater share of simultaneous media use than men. But, there is one exception with respect to reading in the late evening. Men spent a 26.3 percent share of their reading activities simultaneously, whereas women spent only a share of 24.5 percent of their reading activities as secondary activity. This finding could be seen as a hint to different reading styles of women and men, especially in the late evening. Women might prefer bedtime reading to a greater extent without using other media at the same time whereas men might tend to a greater extent to secondary reading, e.g. combining reading the newspaper and watching TV before sleeping.

*Table 4: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing of Women and Men*

%-share of secondary activity	media	reading				TV Viewing			
		total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.	in total	12-2 p.m.	6-8 p.m.	8-10 p.m.
Men	37.5**	29.4	17.7**	23.3**	26.3**	12.00**	28.9**	19.4**	10.8**
Women	43.8**	20.0	24.5**	27.2**	24.5**	18.2**	40.3**	28.8**	15.2**

\*\*p < .01; \*p < .05

When taking the family type into account we found no evidence for the assumption that families which can be characterized by high time restrictions (e.g. single mothers) spent more time on secondary media consumption than individuals living in other family arrangements like couples or families in general. Individuals living in single-households can be described as the most "harried" with respect to media consumption. Besides, this result points to different social needs across individuals living in various family arrangements. Media use of "singles" might compensate to a certain degree for missing social interactions which are part of everyday life in family or couple arrangements.

*Table 5: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing of Different Family Types*

%-share of secondary activity	Media	Reading	TV Viewing
	total	total	total
Single-Household	47.8**	30.0**	20.7**
Couple	41.5**	31.5**	16.5**
Single-Parent	42.0**	27.1**	16.5**
Families	36.5**	28.2**	11.15**
other	36.5**	27.4**	13.7**

\*\*p < .01



Regarding different stages of life significant evidence was found for the hypothesis that different age groups vary in their share of simultaneous reading activities. But the findings are not in line with our hypothesis of the “rush hour of life”.

*Table 6: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing of Different Age Groups*

%-share of secondary activity	Media	Reading	TV Viewing
Age	total	total	total
< 30 years	41.6**	29.5	15.8**
30 - 39 years	41.2**	29.6	15.7**
40 - 49 years	39.6**	29.2	13.4**
50 - 59 years	37.9**	28.4	13.0**
>= 60 years	36.9**	31.1	10.8**

\*\*p < .01

With respect to media in general and TV viewing, we found that individuals younger than 30 years are those with the greatest share of secondary media use. The relatively high share of simultaneous TV viewing of the youngest group of age could be rather taken as an expression of youth culture than regarded as an argument for more "harriedness".

In the second step, we looked at differences in the share of secondary media use on working days and weekdays. As there was only relatively strong proof for the gender- and education-hypothesis, we concentrated on gender and education as dimensions of "harriedness". In order to reduce complexity of previous analyses we did not discriminate between different windows of time. With respect to different educational groups we can generally show that the share of secondary media use is higher on working days than on weekend days. Working days are generally more filled with daily activities (such as paid work, domestic work) and therefore media are obviously used to a greater amount as secondary activity. Comparing individuals with respect to education we observed that the gap between working and weekend days seems to be greater for these with higher education and lower for those with lower education. This result might also point to a greater diversity of leisure patterns of high educated groups compared to lower educated groups.

*Table 7: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing between Working (WO) and Weekend Days (WE) of different educational groups*

%-share of secondary activity	Media		Reading		TV Viewing	
	WO	WE	WO	WE	WO	WE
low education	36.6**	31.2**	27.3**	23.5**	11.5**	10.0**
medium education	43.4**	37.1**	31.1**	24.2**	15.5**	13.0**
high education	45.3**	38.0**	34.9**	25.1**	18.6**	14.7**

\*\*p < .01

Looking at women and men there is further evidence for our hypothesis that women spent a greater share of secondary media use than men, with one exception: Reading on working days. This difference might be an expression for different reading manners or preferences between women and men. As it is widely known from reading research women tend to read more fiction books than men do whereas the latter prefer non-fiction books to a greater extent than women do. These differences in preferred reading patterns is a reflection of different reading styles, as reading as secondary activity (e.g. reading the newspaper while watching TV) or reading as main activity as an expression of escape from reality.

*Table 8: Share of Secondary Media Use, Reading and TV Viewing between Working and Weekend Days of women and men*

%-share of secondary activity	Media		Reading		TV Viewing	
	WO	WE	WO	WE	WO	WE
men	39.6**	33.0**	32.3**	23.2**	12.7**	10.4**
women	45.7**	39.6**	30.5**	25.9**	19.2**	16.1**

\*\*p < .01

### 3.2 Subjective Dimensions of the "Pace of Life"

In order to capture subjective dimensions of the pace of life we used two indicators: "satisfaction with time-use for leisure" and "perceived stress".

Regarding "satisfaction with time-use for leisure" we used the arithmetic means based on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (1 = very satisfied) to 7 (7 = very dissatisfied). Here we found that women are statistically significant less satisfied with time- use for leisure than men are (M = 4.33 vs. M = 4.20). Looking at education the lower educated (M = 4.13) are obviously more satisfied with time-use for leisure than those with medium education (M = 4.29) and those with higher education (M = 4.31). The former results are verified by taking the subjective dimensions into consideration.

With respect to different age groups the most satisfied are the elderly ( $\geq 60$  years) and the young ( $< 30$  years) with M = 3.81 and M = 3.95; at the opposite the most dissatisfied with time-use for leisure are those between 40 and 50 years old (M = 4.43). This result can be seen as proof for the so-called "rush-hour of life" hypothesis, that individuals in the middle of their life tend to feel most under stress and might therefore be less satisfied with leisure. In former analysis there was no proof for the "rush-hour of life"-hypothesis.

"Perceived stress" was captured by the questions: Do you think that you have not enough time for leisure, quite enough time for leisure or too much time for leisure? When looking at different income-groups we found clear evidence for our hypothesis that individuals with higher income are more time-restricted than individuals with lower income. Comparing the income-rich and the income-poor, 71.2 percent of the income-rich indicate that they do not have enough leisure, whereas only 56.9 percent of the latter share this opinion.

*Table 9: Perceived Stress between Individuals with different Income*

income group (Euro)	low (up to 750) (n = 3.267)	medium (750-2.500) (n = 10.465)	high (> 2.500) (n = 2.755)
Perceived leisure in %			
not enough time for leisure	56.9**	66.2**	71.2**
enough time for leisure	40.1**	32.0**	28.0**
too much time for leisure	3.0**	1.8**	0.8**

\*\*p < .01

## **4 Conclusion**

In sum, our findings have shown that objective and subjective measures have to be taken into account when analysing the “pace of life” of different social groups. In general and in accordance to previous research we found that gender, education, income and time for paid work are crucial factors to explain “harriedness” in everyday life when looking at simultaneous media use. Women as well as high-educated or high-income groups spent a greater share of secondary media use than men or low-educated or low-income groups. With respect to the theoretical assumption of the “rush hour of life” there was no clear evidence found when analysing simultaneous media use as an objective indicator of “harriedness”. Here, the analysis of subjective dimensions leads to a better explanation. In line with our assumption we can demonstrate that the most satisfied with time-use for leisure are those who are supposed to be relatively less time-restricted: the old and the young.

The analysis of the subjective dimension with respect to the “pace of life” with the underlying time-use data can only be seen as a first step. Additional methods like in-depth-interviews e.g. are needed to capture the complexity of time-perception or perceived stress.

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