Ten Research Questions You Might Answer with ATUS Food-Related Data

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The Revolutionary ATUS

- Immensity of sample size
  - Four months of ATUS 2003 exceed any previous US sample
  - 2003-2005 ATUS exceeds any previous sample worldwide
- Sample size allows focus on narrow subgroups’ time use
- Continuing sample allows measuring changes over business cycles
• Allows link to respondents in CPS. This provides information on non-diary spouses.
• Allows link to CPS Supplements—e.g., Food Security—for 1/3 of each year’s ATUS respondents.
• Allows link to March Income/Demographic information—for 1/3 of the ATUS.
• ATUS vaults U.S. from derriere garde to forefront of time-use data worldwide
• Caveat: One can hope that research with this rich resource goes beyond pedestrian summing-up of time use by category by demographic group.

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Integrative Questions

• Time-diary data are usually summed into categories

• A few sample food categories in ATUS
  – Grocery shopping
  – Purchasing non-grocery food
  – Eating and drinking
  – Food and drink preparation
  – Kitchen and food clean-up
1. How Are Time and Goods Inputs into Eating Related?

- ATUS provides data on all food-related activities.
- Link these to 2003 CEX data on food spending.
- Create age-education-marital status cells.
- Measure how the time-goods ratio varies across cells—the roles of price of time and income.
- Assess the “food welfare” of the population—looking at food spending *in vacuo* is insufficient.
2. How Have Food Time and Food Spending Changed over Time?

- Fundamental U.S. fact—rising earnings inequality since the middle 1970s
- Use earlier time-use and CEX data with current CEX, ATUS to examine demographic/economic correlates of changing goods and time inputs into eating
- Allows measuring the importance of an additional dimension of changing inequality
3. How Do the Location and Time Spent in Food Consumption Relate to Obesity?

• Use ATUS location information to examine demographic/economic correlates of where and how much time is spent on eating—food at home vs. food away from home
• Relate this information by state or even metro area to obesity data
• Is time spent on food—eating, shopping, etc.—related to obesity? Is location?
4. What are the Implications of the Social Context of Food Consumption?

- Use ATUS data on context (persons) to examine social aspects of food consumption
- What determines differences in who consume with?
- What are roles of income, value of time, education, etc?
- What does this imply about the future demand for food?
5. How Does Eating Function as Child Care?

• Use ATUS time and context data to examine eating and cleaning-up time with older (>=6) children

• How do food-related activities function as child care and attitude formation? Eating together as creating human capital

• Are there demographic/economic and geographic differences—what would one expect?
6. What Determines Food Shopping Time?

- Food shopping is food search—can we use predictions of search theory to develop empirical models of time use?
- How does time differ by marital status, demographic/economic correlates?
- Are there geographic and urban/suburban/rural effects?
- Can also examine food shopping as a social activity using ATUS context data.
Instantaneous Questions

• Time diaries come in episodes; the activity summaries are computed from the original episode data
• Very little research of any kind using timing information (but see DSH papers)
7. What is the Role of “Grazing?”

- How many times per day do people eat?
- How does grazing relate to demographic/economic characteristics?
- Theory might rely on set-up costs, demand for variety
- Potential importance for nutrition
8. At What Times of Day Do We Eat?

- Are there demographic differences in the timing of eating? Is there anything beyond work timing?
- Again, potential link to nutrition/obesity issue
- Importance of spousal behavior/work—implications for family bargaining
9. What is the Role of Eating During Work?

- Who is able to eat during work—what is the relation to kinds of work, wages/income?
- What does eating during work due to time spent in other eating activities in shopping/cleaning up?
- Is eating during work an amenity—something valued by workers, costly to employers?
10. What Determines the Timing of Food Shopping?

- When do people shop for food—day of week, time of day?
- How is the timing of shopping related to work status, demographics, income and time value?
- What are the implications of these facts for regulations involving store opening hours?