

**When Home Becomes Work: Measuring Home-Based Work Measures in the 2004 ATUS
and the May 2004 CPS Work Schedules Supplement**

Sara B. Raley

Vanessa R. Wight

Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park

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The demands of family life coupled with changes in the economy and the increasing complexity of workplace practices, such as when and where paid work takes place, makes parenting in the 21st century no small feat. Aside from the fact that so many parents today, especially mothers, are caring for children without a live-in spouse or additional caregiver, most two-parent homes are families where both spouses balance paid employment and childrearing. Jacobs and Gerson (2004) argue that the increase in dual-earning strains families' capacity to arrange childcare, coordinate paid work schedules, and compromise their ability to balance the demands of work outside the home with caregiving in the home. In short, the rise in dual-earner families, with more women working outside the home than in the past, has led to an unprecedented pressure on families, particularly mothers, to find creative and flexible ways to balance the demand of paid work with family responsibilities.

To balance the generally incompatible time demands of paid work and caregiving, some married-couple families rely on extensive and often complex childcare arrangements in order to retain their position in the workforce, while others, either individually or jointly, reduce paid employment hours when children are very young (Cohen and Bianchi 1999). Yet, there are a unique group of parents for whom work and family obligations are not necessarily an "either/or" proposition. For these parents, moving the location of paid work into the home may be a solution to the work and family conundrum.

Home-based work has several appealing features from a work-life balance perspective. First, it may be compatible with ideology surrounding good parenting, particularly good mothering, as well as the ideal worker norm. For example, as Hays (1996) argues, the ideology of "good" or "intensive mothering" requires women to act unselfishly by assuming primary responsibility and transferring large amounts of time, energy, and material resources for the

rearing of their children. Yet, this is typically at odds with what Williams (2000) describes as the ideal worker norm or the ability to maintain unfettered ties to the labor market and work full time (or even overtime) without interruption. The ability to perform some, if not all, work at home, may allow parents, particularly mothers, to at least partly fulfill the role of a good mother while at the same time assuming the role of an unencumbered worker. Second, home-based work may allow parents to better control their own work schedules, which is particularly relevant considering that conventional work schedules do not jibe with children's school schedules (Crouter & McHale, 2005). Work at home may increase parents' ability to cover blocks of time that typically overlap with conventional work hours when children require parental coverage. Third, home-based work may grant workers the ability to save on commuting and additional work-related expenses.

Although home-based workers may be an intriguing group to understand from a work-family perspective, they may be a difficult or elusive group to study from a methodological perspective because there are multiple ways to measure work at home. In the past, home-based workers have been defined as those who do not report a commute to work, while others have relied on survey measures asking respondents to self-identify as home-based workers. Multiple of home-based work raise questions about how home-based workers are defined and what constitutes home-based work. For example, what is the appropriate universe of workers who work at home? Are home-based workers those who do all or some of their work at home? What about those workers for whom work at home is merely an extension of their already long work hours in an office building?

The purpose of this paper is to better understand home-based work patterns and measurement using two different types of nationally representative data collections derived from

the Current Population Survey, which is widely considered the “gold standard” for assessing labor market participation. The first survey, the 2004 May Work Schedules Supplement is a labor market survey questionnaire that provides a more conventional survey-based assessment of home-based work. Release of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), however, provides a large representative sample of working days on which we know not only the total daily hours parents work for pay, but also *where* these hours were worked and during which hours of the day, what activities filled nonwork time, and who was with the worker during nonwork hours. In this study, we use the ATUS time-diary data to provide a new measurement perspective on work at home. Further, because the ATUS samples respondents from individuals in their eighth and final CPS interview, for a small number of cases, we have respondents who were present for *both* the work schedule supplement and the time diary. This is particularly advantageous because among many of the questions fielded in the work schedule supplement, a few of them ask respondents to report on whether, as part of their job, any work is done at home and the number of hours usually worked at home. Thus, we are able to assess how well reports of working at home in the work supplement questionnaire, which has been the primary instrument used to assess home-based work in previous research, corresponds to what respondents report on their time diary. Therefore, in this paper we ask:

1. How do measures of the incidence and duration of home-based work compare across the 2004 CPS May Supplement and the 2004 ATUS? For example, is home-based work more often reported in survey measures when compared with time-diary measures? Is the duration of paid work reported at home consistent across the two data sets?

2. Do the characteristics that predict home-based work differ between the two datasets? For example, do the ATUS findings support previous research showing that home-based workers tend to be older and white (Deming, 1994; Edwards & Field-Hendry, 1996; Horvath, 1986; Kraut and Grambsch, 1987; Presser and Bamberger, 1993)?
3. Among those who complete both the May 2004 Supplement and the 2004 ATUS, how do their reports vary by the method of data collection, i.e., survey versus time-diary format? Further, among respondents with work-day diaries in the ATUS, how well do reports of working at home in the supplement predict working at home in the ATUS?
4. Of those who report working at home in the supplement and who completed the ATUS, when does work occur during their diary day? For example, are home-based workers more likely to work during nonstandard hours or during standard daytime hours?
5. Of those respondents who completed the ATUS, how is work at home (i.e., both incidence and degree) associated with other patterns of time use (e.g., family time and time for oneself)? For example, are home-based workers able to spend more leisure time than other workers or does work at home encroach on freetime? Further, does this vary by whether respondents work a few hours or all their hours at home?

To assess these questions, we analyze data from the 2004 American Time Use Survey (ATUS), and the 2004 May Work Schedules Supplement. The ATUS, which is sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, samples approximately 14,000 randomly-selected individuals age 15 or older who were from a subset of households completing their eighth and final month of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Some of the respondents who completed the ATUS also completed a work schedules supplement in their

fourth month of the CPS. This supplement collected detailed information from approximately 67,000 individuals age 16 and older about whether respondents work at home, their work schedules, and the main reasons for their current work arrangements. To understand how home-based work estimates assessed in the diary format of the ATUS compare to the survey estimates from the May supplement, we assess the likelihood of working at home separately in each data set. Then, to examine whether the time diary format captures the same workers who self-identify as home-based workers in the supplement questionnaire, we link the records of approximately 1,100 employed individuals in the supplement to their work day diaries in the ATUS.

The ATUS is particularly well suited for examining the scheduling of work hours because respondents provide a detailed account of one 24-hour period, i.e., what they were doing between 4:00 a.m. of the previous day and 4:00 a.m. of the interview day. For each activity reported, the respondent is asked how long the activity took place, where they were (e.g., at home versus at an office), and who was with them. Because the ATUS is comprised of a subset of CPS participants, the data also include extensive information on the labor force characteristics of household members, usual hours worked, earnings, and weeks employed over the year. The information on the work schedules supplement adds greater detail on respondents' work arrangements such as when and where work takes place.

The final step of our analysis is to examine what we know about the time use patterns of parents who work at home by assessing the relationship between home-based work and when work takes place, time spent with family members, and time spent on oneself in leisure and personal care activities like sleep. We capture time spent in multiple domains of parents' lives—time use patterns that have implications for their health (i.e., sleep and exercise time), marital quality (i.e., time with a spouse), and children's well-being (i.e., parental availability and time

spent with children). Although this paper does not speak directly to the behavioral and emotional outcomes of work at home, it provides rich description of the time use patterns that may be the "mediating" factors between work at home and both positive and negative outcomes for workers and their families.

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