

ICPSR 4549

The 500 Family Study [1998-2000: United States]

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 4549

Title: The 500 Family Study [1998-2000: United States]

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Scope of Study

Summary: The 500 Family Study was designed to obtain in-depth information on middle class, dual-career families living in the United States. To understand the complex dynamics of today's families and the strategies they use to balance the demands of work and family, over 500 families from 8 cities across the United States were studied. To address different issues facing parents with older and younger children, families with adolescents and families with kindergartners were included in the sample. Working mothers and fathers are now splitting their time between their responsibilities to their family, and to their respective occupations. This study of 500 families explores how work affects the lives and well-being of parents and their children.

The study's data allows researchers to explore a broad range of questions:

- How do dual-career families manage and organize their resources and time between family and work?
- How do work conditions, including characteristics of the job and workplace environment, affect the quality of relationships among household members?
- How do dual career parents manage the moral and social development and learning experiences of their children?

- How do the work-related responsibilities of working parents affect their child's moral, social, and educational development?
- What effect is consumerism and technology having on how working families direct the moral and social development of their children?
- What do parents believe is their role regarding the child-care of their children and how they should fulfill that role both in terms of time and in the allocation of economic and social resources? What are some of the resources in the community that parents use to supervise their children?
- How do families regard the "free time" of adolescents and how they allocate adolescent "free time" in maintenance of the household?
- What is the quality of relationships among family members?

To obtain a detailed picture of work and family life, mothers, fathers, and their children were asked to complete a series of instruments including surveys, in-depth interviews, and time diaries. These instruments were designed to provide information about work, marriage, child care and parental supervision, management of household tasks, time allocations, coping strategies, and psychological well-being.

The four datasets associated with this data collection are summarized below:

1. The **Cortisol Data** contains information for a subsample of families that elected to participate in a study of psychological stress. Parents and teenagers who agreed to participate completed an additional two days of ESM data collection. The health survey that was administered reported on a variety of health and lifestyle issues that might affect cortisol (stress hormone) levels such as medication use, consumption of caffeine and alcohol, use of nicotine, timing of menstrual cycle, pregnancy, presence of chronic illness, and respondent's height and weight. Additionally, parents reported on the health of the children (teenagers and kindergartners) participating in the study.
2. The **Experience Sampling Method (ESM) Data** contains a variety of information related to how individuals spend their time, who they spent it with, and what activities they were engaged in over the course of a typical week. Respondents wore programmed wrist watches that emitted signals (beeps) throughout the day. When possible, family members were placed on identical signaling schedules to provide information on a range of family activities. At the time of each beep, participants were asked to complete a self-report form which asked them to answer a number of open-ended questions about their location, activities, who they were with, and psychological states. Several Likert and semantic-differential scales were used to assess participants' psychological states.

3. The **Parent Data** contains basic demographic information from respondents as well as detailed information about parents' occupation job duties, income, work schedule, benefits (e.g., medical care, flexible work schedules, and family leave), and the consequences of their jobs (e.g. long hours, job stress, having to work weekends). Additionally, the data contain information about the extent to which parents experienced work-family conflict and what changes might help with better balance of the demands of work and family (e.g., more flexible work hours, more help from spouses with household and child care responsibilities, improved child care, and after-school care arrangements). Parental attitudes toward traditional arrangements, how household tasks were actually divided among family members, and how often the family paid for services (e.g., cleaning, yard work, meal preparation) were also captured. The data also contain information about how children are socialized in families with two working parents. Topics about the frequency with which parents engaged in various activities with their children (e.g., talking, eating meals together, attending religious services), how frequently parents monitored their teenager's activities, and how often they talked with their teenager about school activities, plans for college, career plans, friendships, and peer pressure.
4. The **Adolescent Data** contains data for sixth through twelfth graders, which focuses on family relationships and experiences, school experiences, paid work, psychological well-being and behavioral problems, and plans for the future (e.g., college, career, and marriage -- including expectations regarding spouses' sharing of responsibility for child care, cooking, chores, and paid work). To allow for comparison of parents' and adolescents' responses to similar questions, several items appear in both the adolescent and parent data. These items include the frequency with which parents and adolescents discuss school events, college and career plans, participation in religious and other activities, gender role attitudes and the division of household tasks within the family, and items measuring depression, stress, and anxiety.

Qualitative Data -- Interviews The main purpose of the interviews was to explore topics addressed in the parent and adolescent surveys in greater detail. Parent interviews were designed to examine how working parents cope with the demands of work and family life. Adolescent interviews touched on similar themes but altered questions to gauge the adolescent's perceptions of their parents work and family lives. Kindergarten interviews were brief and focused on children's after-school and child care arrangements and time spent with parents.

Subject Term(s): adolescents, child care, child rearing, domestic responsibilities, dual career families, everyday life, family relationships, family work relationship, housework, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, lifestyles, parent

child relationship, quality of life, school age children, social interaction, social life, stress, time utilization, work, working hours

Geographic Coverage: United States

Time Period: • February 1, 1998 - June 1, 2000

Date(s) of Collection: • 1997 - 2001

Unit of Observation: families (and family tracking beeps), students (and student tracking beeps), parents (and parent tracking beeps)

Data Type: clinical data, event/transaction data, and survey data

Data Collection Notes:

1. Data used for these analyses were collected using multiple methods, including surveys, qualitative interviews, standardized child assessments, and the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). Parents of teenagers were given slightly different versions of the instruments than parents of kindergartners so that each instrument asked questions that were appropriate for the age of the children in the family.
2. In general, Cortisol and Parent Data variables are derived from the Survey for Moms of Adolescents. This may or may not be indicated with the word "teen" in the variable label. If an item is taken from the Survey for Moms of Young Children, it should be have a "tot" designation.
3. To ensure confidentiality, respondents were assigned ID numbers and their names were removed from all original study materials. Individually assigned pseudonyms appear in the interview transcripts rather than actual names or locations. Additionally, to prevent family members from influencing one another's responses, researchers asked that individuals keep their responses to themselves.

Methodology

Sample: The 500 Family Study sample is purposive (nonrandom) and is comprised of data collected from communities throughout the United States (five in the Midwest, one in the Southeast, one in the Northeast, and one on the West Coast). These communities were largely urban or suburban, with only one rural site. Participants were solicited through local public high schools and elementary schools via advertisements that appeared in local newspapers, and through snowball recruitment. Of the 500

families that were studied, 300 families had teenaged children and 200 families had kindergarten-aged children. Seven of the eight communities studied were also studied in the SLOAN STUDY OF YOUTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1992-1997 [UNITED STATES] (ICPSR 4551). Sixty-three families who participated in SSYSD consented to participate in the current study.

Mode of Data Collection: mail questionnaire

face-to-face interview

self-enumerated questionnaire

Response Rates: Of the 512 families who participated in the study, 327 were families with teenagers, 157 families had kindergartners, and 28 had both teenagers and kindergartners.

Presence of Common
Scales:

Depression

Depression was assessed with the 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). The scale measures the frequency of depressive symptoms experienced by respondents over the course of the previous week.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was measured with the 15-item ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. This scale asks couples to assess their satisfaction with key aspects of their marriage such as communication, financial management, and parenting.

Time Use and Management

Respondents' day-to-day lives were captured using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). This is a unique method for examining how individuals spend their time, who they spend it with, and what activities they are engaged in over the course of a typical week.

Parent Surveys

To assure comparability with national datasets, several questions that were used in the parent survey were drawn from other surveys including the 1990 United States Census, the Current Population Survey, the National Survey of Families and Households, the General Social Survey, the Quality of Employment Survey, and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988-2000. Additional items measuring anxiety, anger, self-esteem, and stress were drawn from Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Taylor's Anxiety and Anger Inventories, and Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale. Mothers and fathers of kindergartners were

asked to complete a 20-item Parenting Hassles Scale, which assesses the degree of stress or difficulty parents experience in dealing with conflicts that routinely occur in families with young children.

Adolescent Surveys

To ensure comparability with national surveys of adolescents, survey items were drawn from several previous studies, including NELS 1988-2000, the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development, the General Social Survey, and the Families in Communities Study. A modification of items from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment was also included as a measure of adolescent attachment.

Standardized Child Assessments

Three sets of standardized assessments were used to assess young children's cognitive and social competence, school readiness, and behavioral problems. These assessments included the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Harter Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children, and the Child Behavior Checklist.

Extent of Processing: Created online analysis version with question text.

Performed recodes and/or calculated derived variables.

Checked for undocumented or out-of-range codes.

Access and Availability

Note: A list of the data formats available for this study can be found in the [summary of holdings](#). Detailed file-level information (such as record length, case count, and variable count) is listed in the [file manifest](#).

Some instruments administered as part of this study may contain contents from copyrighted instruments. Reproductions of the instruments are provided solely as documentation for the analysis of the data associated with this collection. Please contact the data producers for information on permissions to use the instruments for other purposes.

Restrictions: This data collection may not be used for any purpose other than statistical reporting and analysis. Use of these data to learn the identity of any person or establishment is prohibited.

Due to the sensitive nature of the data and to protect respondent confidentiality, the 500 Family Study Qualitative Interview Data (DS5) are restricted from general dissemination. Currently, these data are

accessible only via the ICPSR physical data enclave and may only be accessed at ICPSR's location in Ann Arbor, MI. Users wishing to view these data must first contact Research Connections (contact@researchconnections.org), complete an Application for use of the ICPSR Data Enclave (available [here](#)), and receive permission to analyze the files before traveling to Ann Arbor. More information may be found at ICPSR's [Enclave Data](#) Web site.

Completed forms should be returned to: Director, Research Connections, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Institute for Social Research, P.O. Box 1248, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248, or by fax: 734-647-8200.

Original ICPSR Release: 2008-05-30

Version History: The last update of this study occurred on .

- Dataset(s):
- DS1: Cortisol Data
 - DS2: Experience Sampling Method (ESM) Data
 - DS3: Parent Data
 - DS4: Student Data
 - DS5: Qualitative Interview Data