

Parental Time Use as a Measure of Child Poverty

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Children's well-being has been strongly linked to parental investment of time. Recent research in the area of parental time investments have reported that, contrary to popular belief, parental time devoted to children appears to be increasing, on average, over time despite higher labour force participation rates of mothers and mean hours worked by parents³. Results also suggest that, although mothers continue to devote substantially more time to 'child friendly activities', the gender gap is decreasing. The findings have been observed in Canada, the US and several other countries and authors have suggested a global trend towards an increase in parental time investment in children.

To date, studies in the area tend to report mean time spent in 'child friendly activities' by working mothers or fathers in coupled households. Few studies examine time use for 'child-friendly activities' across household types (married vs lone-parent families) or by employment status⁴ and offer little adjustment for household size or ages of children. This paper extends the literature concerning parental time use as a child investment in three ways: 1) by studying changes in the distribution of parental time use for child activities; 2) by utilizing parental time use for child activities as a measure of resources available to children; 3) by updating available results.

Following our earlier work on the evolution of income and consumption poverty among Canadian children⁵, we will provide a detailed examination of the changes in parental time available to children, particularly less fortunate children, over the period 1986–2005. We use Statistics Canada's General Social Survey: Time Use Cycles 2 (1986), 7 (1992), 12 (1998) and 19 (2005). The first stage of the paper will examine issues regarding the use of parental time for child-friendly activities as a resource available to children and as a measure of child poverty including: use of an absolute vs. relative measure; weighting; adjustment for children's ages; adjustment for number of children in the household (equivalence scales); and measuring time use in two-parent vs. one-parent households (particularly when data are only available on one household member). The second stage of the analysis investigates poverty subgroups in the population of children and relates changes in aggregate parental-time poverty among children to socioeconomic and labor market developments by decomposing aggregate changes into changes in population shares, changes in within group poverty and a residual. Finally, the American Time Use Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, will be used to compare most recent Canadian and US results.

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³ see for example, Yeung, W. Jean & Rebecca Glauber (2007) "Children's Time Use and Parental Involvement in Low-Income Families" National Poverty Center Working Paper Series #07-03.; Gauthier, Anne H., Timothy Smeeding, & Frank F. Furstenberg Jr. (2004) "Do We Invest Less Time in Children? Trends in Parental Time in Selected Industrialized Countries since the 1960s" Center for Policy Research Working Paper No. 64 Center for Policy Research, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.; Sayer, L., C., S.M. Bianchi, & J.P. Robinson (2004). "Are parents investing less in children? Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children". *American Journal of Sociology*. 10, 1:1-43. ; Bianchi, S. (2000) "Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity?" *Demography*. 37, 4: 401—14.

⁴ exceptions are Yeung and Glauber, 2007; Sayer et al., 2004

⁵ Crossley, Thomas F. & Lori J. Curtis (2006) "Child Poverty in Canada" *Review of Income and Wealth*, 52(2):237-60