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Housekeeping Styles – An empirical investigation

Over the course of the last century, the concept of life styles has gained considerable significance in many facets of the social sciences. Originally formulated in the hermeneutic tradition of the social sciences, over the last three decades, the subject has become supported increasingly by empirical cluster analyses. During this period of change, the concept has manifested itself as a householding-style and especially as a housekeeping style within the householding sciences. The latter is generally understood as the division of households into types on the basis of the sequences and manner in which time is used.

Some key questions are:

1. Is it possible to identify housekeeping styles by means of cluster analysis on the basis of different time use?
2. Does the cluster-analysis approach raise the predictive strength of socioeconomic theory, compared with the exclusive use of more conventional multivariate analysis, given that the cluster affiliation provides an autonomous explanation of the socioeconomic dimensions that are to be defined/specified?

The analyses were based on the Time Survey Data 1991/92 and 2001/02 of the German *Statistisches Bundesamt* and are limited to single households and couples without children. The "Zeitbudgeterhebungen" cover about 5000 households with nearly 14 000 members. The research tools were questionnaires and time diaries. Each member of the considered households was asked to document two successive days divided into a 5-minute-rhythm (1991/92) or three successive days divided into a 10-minute-rhythm (2001/2002).
The usual socio-demographic and socio-economic information was available, as well as very detailed data on time use.

At least for the subset of singles and childless couples, it was possible to classify the households by means of a cluster analysis, which linked the households on the basis of similarities in the course of their daily activities. The emerging and clearly differentiated clusters withstand a plausibility check.

Initially, the housekeeping styles were characterised firstly on the basis of their time use and sociodemographic parameters, and secondly, their modal day courses were represented. Numerous commonalities and similarities arose with respect to the discriminated clusters between the different groups of individuals and the different Time Survey Data.

A gradual linear discriminant analysis applied previously to the clusters, delivered those variables which are most suitable for differentiating between the clusters. Also with respect to these variables, numerous similarities were conspicuous. Some of the variables, such as the weekly hours of work, suited for all the examined persons by means of a common level of significance for both the former and the later Time Survey Data.

In the next step, a canonical analysis was conducted successfully, in order to examine the discrimination criterion. The differentiation of the day-course-based clusters can thus not only be based on socioeconomic background, but also on other dimensions such as the entropy of time use and the evaluation of available time.

By conducting several regressions, it could be shown that the cluster-affiliations are not displaced by socioeconomic variables. They hold their ground by common levels of significance. It was proved that a numerical classification of housekeeping styles is possible and provides a valuable extension to the hermeneutic tradition.

This result enables the assumption to be made that the clusters can be differentiated even more sharply from one another, by including not only the time pulses, but also those socioeconomic variables which contribute to differentiating the clusters with a high level of significance.

In the next step, the remaining types of households must be examined for both of the mentioned Time Survey Data. The most appropriate formalisation of the distance in the time use between the various households must still be investigated in more detail.