

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

“Comparing the Affective Wellbeing of Parents and Nonparents across the Life Course – Evidence from Time Use Diary Data”

Abstract:

The goal of this project is to better understand how the presence or absence of children from adults' lives affects their affective wellbeing: a question that continues to challenge social scientists.

Affective wellbeing (e.g., stress levels) has been shown to have a significant effect on mental and physical health, and growing interest in improving the health and wellbeing of populations, highlights the importance of this work for public policy. Whether or not someone is a parent may have significant implications for these outcomes, since parenthood plays a major structuring role in people's lives and carries the possibility of both stress and rewards.

Building on extant empirical research and the Life Course Theory, I will contribute to existing knowledge by investigating whether: (1) there are simultaneously both positive and negative effects of parenting on wellbeing, (2) if these patterns vary by activity type, and whether being a parent may be a more positive experience for some segments of the population than others depending on the (3) ages of the children and (4) the adult's education. I will use data from the Wellbeing Module of the American Time Use Survey (2010, 2012, 2013) - a unique source of time use diary information for a nationally representative probability sample of Americans - to measure how parents and nonparents compare in terms of affective wellbeing (i.e., positive and negative emotions) across some of the most common daily activities (i.e., market work, nonmarket work and leisure), and whether child age and adult's education moderate this relationship.