

Inconsistencies in the time use information

The user will note a small number of instances of apparent inconsistencies in the diary information. For example, a user may find an episode when a diarist reports a main activity of travel, a secondary activity of eating or drinking, a location of at home/kitchen, and a mode of travel as in a car/motorcycle. Such a case may well look like an error, and in many cases will reflect an error – but not necessarily.

Such a case may reflect a diarist's reporting error arising from a temporary distraction while reporting the activity. Such a case also might reflect an interviewer or coding error – that is the interviewer or coder meant to record 43 for location being in the car and instead accidentally entered 13 for in kitchen. Such a case may reflect a different sort of interviewer error, for instance:

Interviewer: And what did you do next.

Diarist: Got back in the car and ate the sandwich and drank the coke I just bought at the gas station while driving home.

Interviewer: And where were you while you did this?

Diarist: thinks “moron, I just told you where I was – ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer”, says sarcastically “in my kitchen”

Interviewer records kitchen.

Such a case, however, might indicate that the diarist was in a camper van, that someone else was driving, and that the diarist while travelling in the moving vehicle walked to the kitchen unit in the camper van to eat a snack.

Some methodological research suggests that diarists may not provide the same level of accuracy to all elements of a diary. The user will need to examine possibly inconsistencies with care, note the degree to which such cases occur, and decide how to handle the situation. The vast majority of cases are not inconsistent.