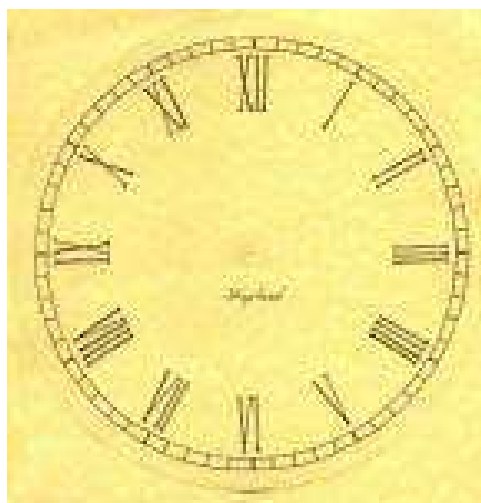
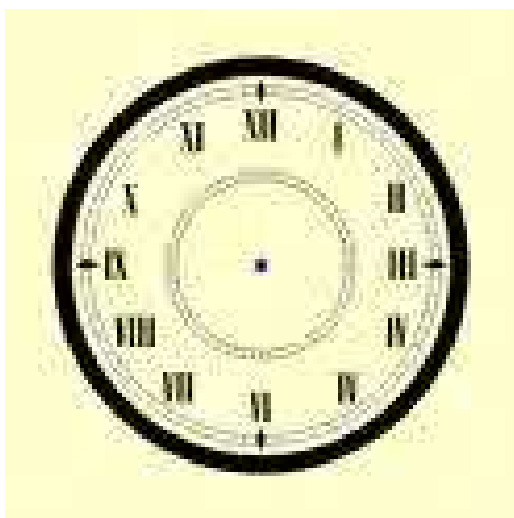


Time Use Surveys: Successes, Shortcomings, and Possibilities



Nancy Folbre
Political Economy Research Institute
University of Massachusetts Amherst
and Levy Economic Institute of Bard College
folbre@econs.umass.edu

Outline

I. Successes

(including examples from my own research)

II. Theoretical Issues

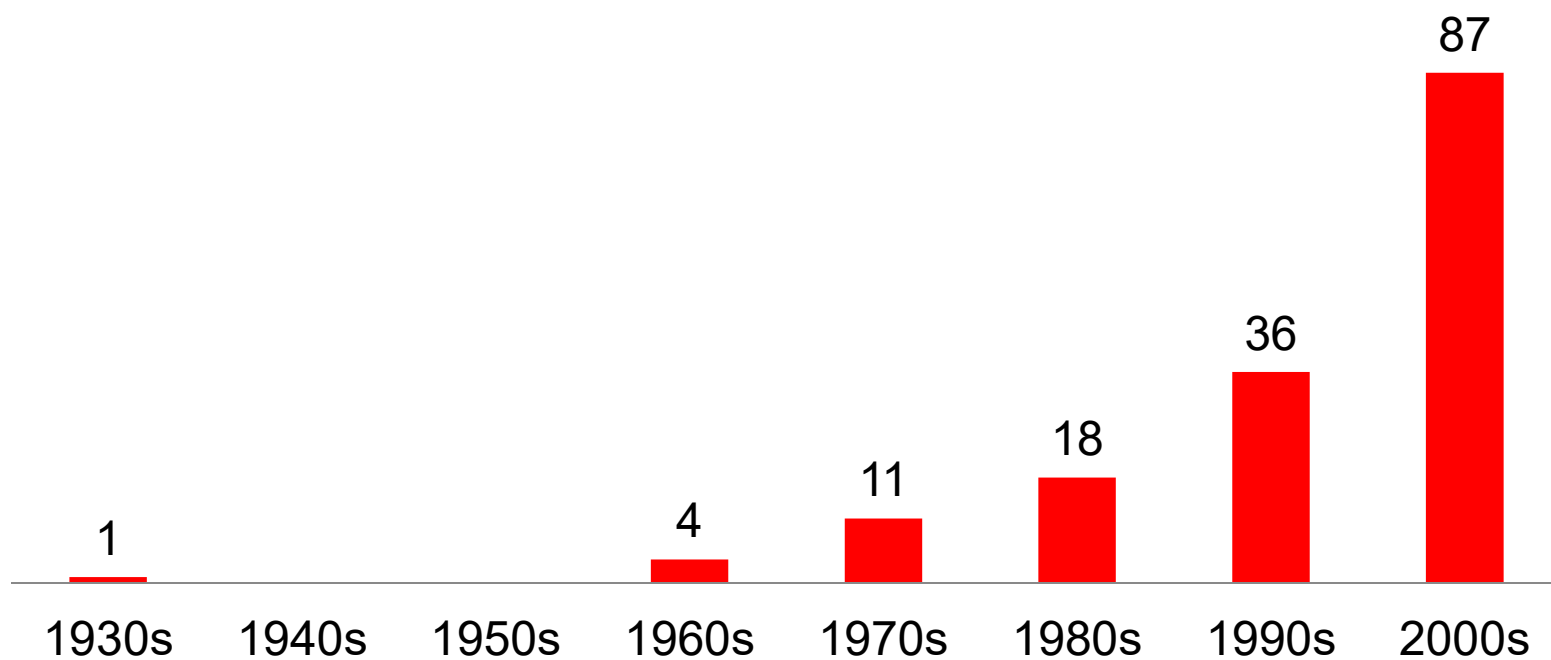
A. Conceptualizing activities and responsibilities

B. Valuation

C. Harmonizability

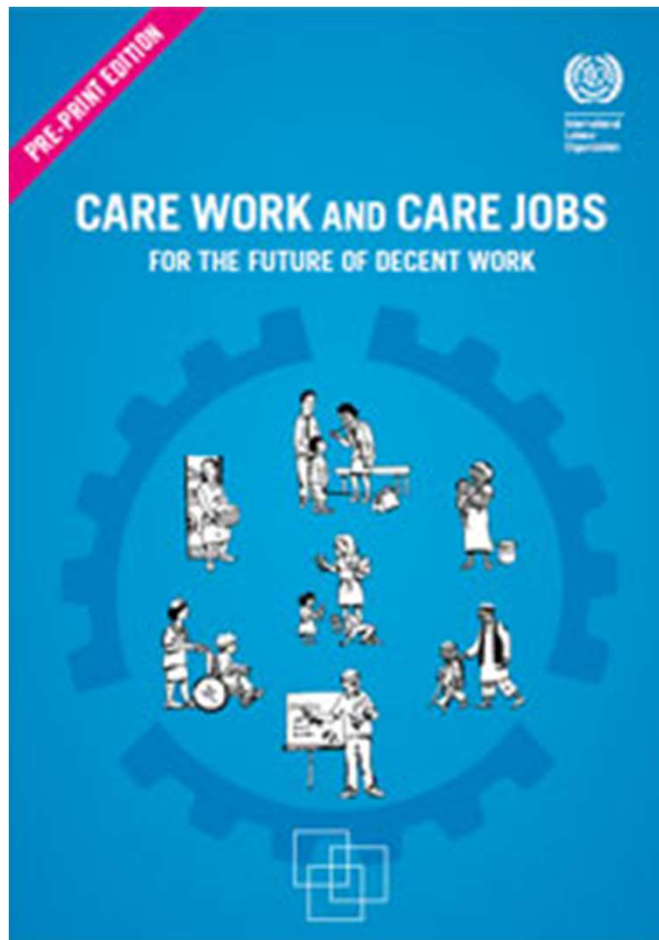
III. Suggestions and Possibilities

The Growth of Official National Time-Use Surveys, 1930-2009



Sources: U.N Statistical Office, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/tuse/tu3.aspx>;
Oxford University Centre for Time Use Research, <http://www.timeuse.org/mtus/surveys>.
Both websites accessed February 9, 2015.

New International Labour Office Report



Data from 126 time-use surveys carried out in 75 countries.

Based on background paper by Jacques Charmes.

Impacts

- New definition of work!
- New measures of gender inequality!
- Inputs into Sustainable Development Goals
- Additions to National Income Accounts
- Stronger case for social investment
- Better measurement of informal sector
- New research on family living standards and decision-making processes and how they are affected by economic development



My Research Trajectory

...from measurement of women's labor force participation to measurement and valuation of unpaid work on the macro and micro level...

...to develop a feminist economic analysis of social reproduction and the "care sector."

Historical Trends in Women's Employment in the U.S.

1875 Census of Massachusetts listed “Housewife” as a productive occupation.

Those not so engaged were termed “wives, merely ornamental.”



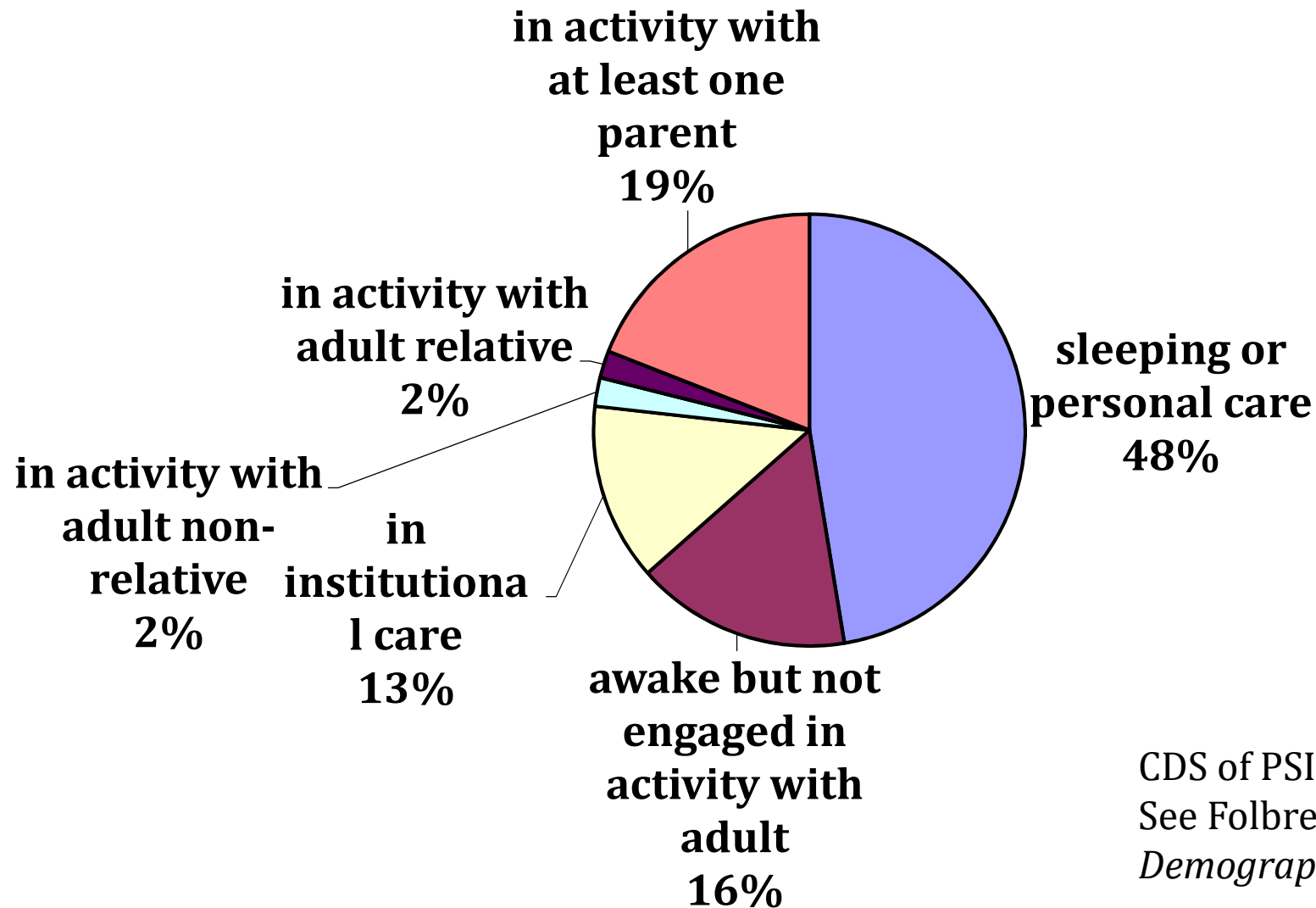
Basis for revised estimates of U.S. economic growth, 1800-1930
See Journal of Economic History and Feminist Economics articles (with Wagman)

Australian Time Use Survey (1997)

- Emphasizes "passive care" as a primary AND secondary activity.
- Women's market work relatively small effect on child care activities other than passive care.
- Likewise, utilization of child care reduces passive care far more than active.
- Men do far more passive care than active care.

See Folbre and Bittman, *Family Time*

Under-13 Children's Time Use in the U.S.



CDS of PSID, 1997;
See Folbre et al,
Demography

How Supervisory Care Differs from Active Care in the American TUS

Married and Cohabiting Persons in a Household with the Youngest Child under 13 but no Child Over 13, 2003 ATUS (n=3080)

	Weekday			Weekend		
	Male (n=1158)	Female (n=1344)	Male/ Female	Male (n=1276)	Female (n=1460)	Male/ Female
Primary child care activity	1.09	2.70	.40	1.26	1.89	.67
Child “in your care”	3.47	6.61	.52	7.91	9.76	.81

Implications for Macro-Valuation

- Replacement cost estimate should value supervisory time but at a lower wage than true activity time.
- Revised satellite account estimates of unpaid work for U.S. based on pooled data (big increase!)

(See Folbre and Suh, *Review of Income and Wealth*)

Micro-Valuation:

Estimates of Household Extended Income

Compare two married-couple families with two children under the age of 4 with annual market income of \$50,000.

Family A: a wage earner employed 40 hours per week, brings home \$50,000 and does no household work; a full-time caregiver devotes 40 hours per week to household work.

Family B, both adults employed 40 hours per week, each brings home \$25,000 per year, and each devotes about 10 hours per week to unpaid family work.

Family A has a higher living standard because it does not need to purchase childcare or substitutes for non-market production and works fewer hours overall.

See Folbre et al in Gornick and Janti, eds., *Income Inequality*



Supervisory Responsibility also Relevant to Household Extended Income

- Big economies of scale in supervisory care
- Cost of supervisory care outside the household (e.g. childcare) is high.
- Current equivalence scales applied to market income give an incorrect picture of household living standards

See Folbre et al., *Review of Economics of Household*.

Three Big Theoretical Issues

Activity vs. Responsibility

- Time use is not just about activities.
- Parents have a legal responsibility to supervise children (and be “on call” for sick or frail family members).
- But this supervision is not as demanding as care activities--it can be combined with leisure as well as household work.

work

play

what's your
point of view?

work

play

yourpointofview.com

HSBC 
The world's local bank

Implications for Activity Lists

- Capture supervisory time better than most diaries
- BUT, fail to distinguish between activity and responsibility (or between primary and secondary activities, which is similar but not the same).

▪

Valuation

- Contradictory to call unpaid work productive but “not economic.”
- Must acknowledge that time and money are NOT perfect substitutes
- BUT unpaid work affects family living standards in ways that can and should be approximated.

Italy and the United Kingdom now estimate the contribution of “underground activities” (prostitution and illegal drug sales) to GDP—but not unpaid work.



Harmonizability!

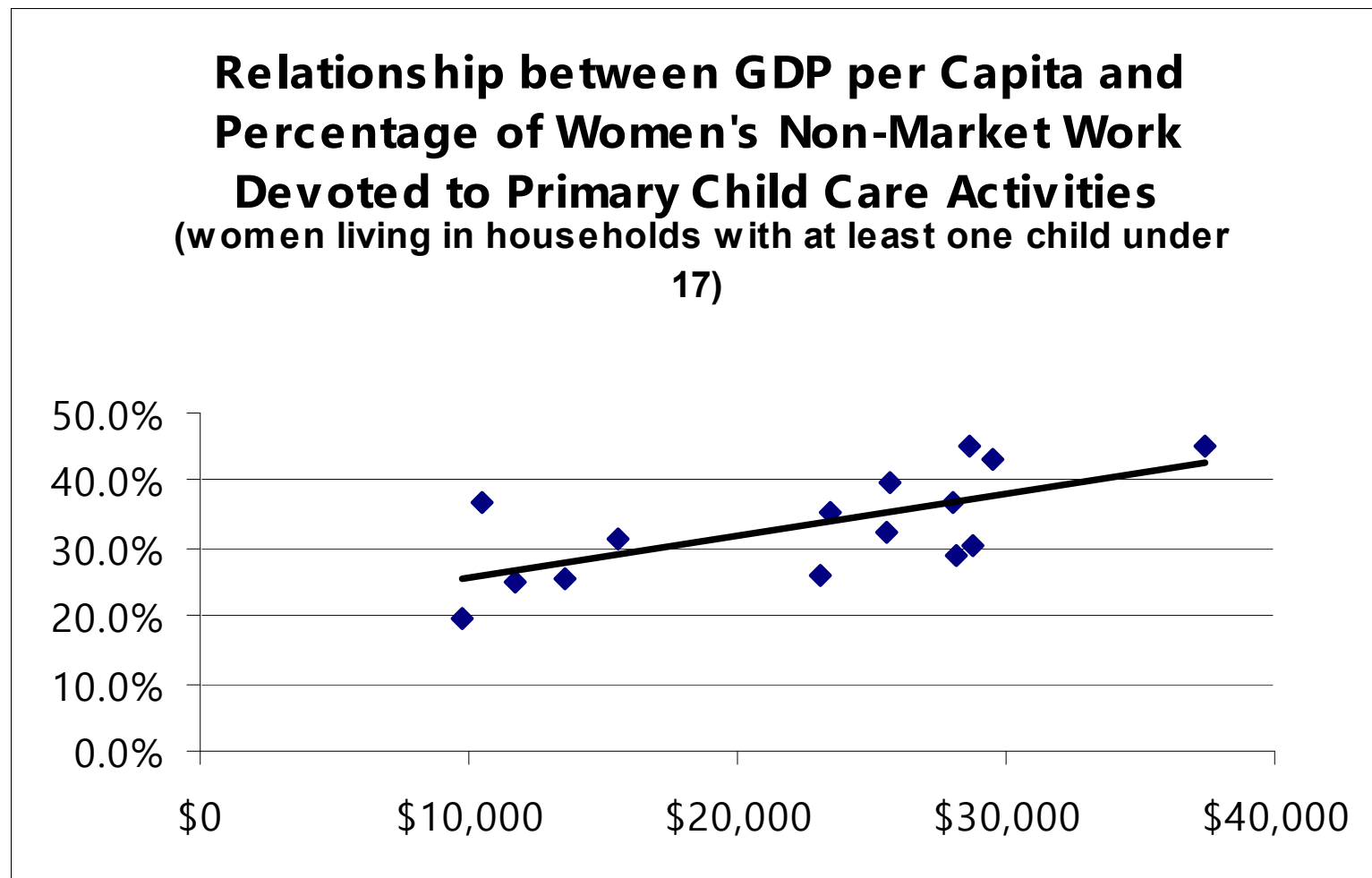
Surveys need not be identical, or even harmonized.

But they should be “harmonizable” in order to inform public policy on both time use AND valuation.

Consider one example from Europe and from Latin America.

Comparisons of 15 Countries in the HETUS

(Harmonized European Time Use Survey)

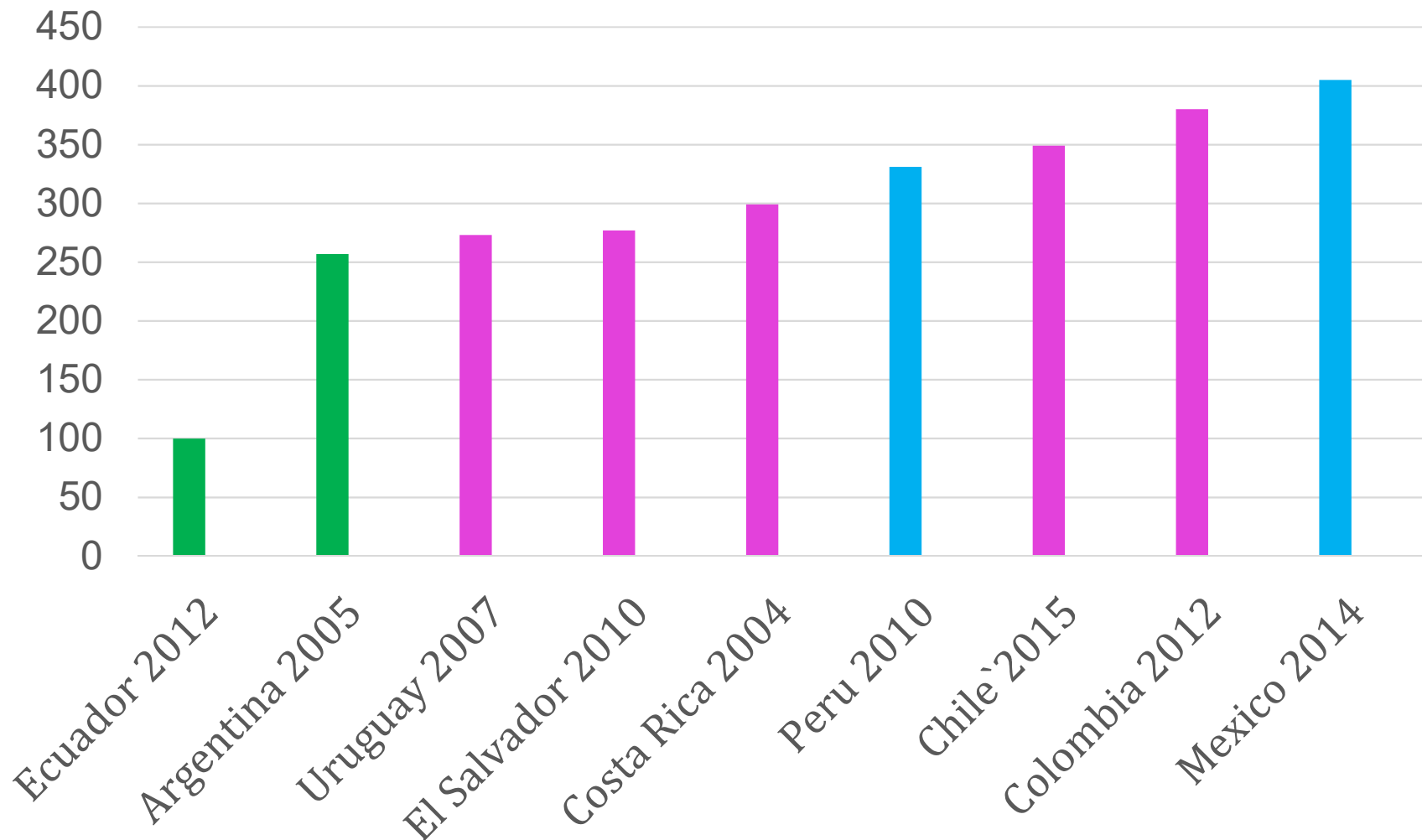


Folbre, UNRISD report

Time Spent by Women in Unpaid Care Work in Urban Areas in Latin America

green=diary data;

blue=known explicit listing of supervisory care



Suggestions, Recommendations, Possibilities

- More methodological analysis.
- More international, academic, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- More efforts to hybridize time diaries and activity lists (mestizaje!) e.g. “light diaries”; activity lists for previous day rather than week, broken down by periods of time, with an explicit distinction between activities and responsibilities and a 24 hour constraint.

Adelante!