



Quantifying Care Work:

Design and Harmonization Issues in Time-Use Surveys

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The measurement of time itself has long been harmonized.

The system we rely on was proposed in 1878 but did not become mandatory in the U.S. until 1918.

We are still squabbling over the details today...

Improvement and harmonization of time use surveys should be an international priority.

The image displays a musical score for a short piece in 4/4 time. The score is written on two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system consists of two measures. The first measure is harmonized with a G major chord (Gmaj) and contains a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, and G4. The second measure is harmonized with a D minor 7 chord (Dm7) and contains a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F4, and D4. The second system also consists of two measures. The first measure is harmonized with a G7 chord and contains a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, and G4. The second measure is harmonized with a C major chord (C) and contains a melody of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, and C4. Red dots are placed above the notes in the first measure of both systems, and a red bracket is drawn above the notes in the second measure of the first system.

AREN'T THEY ALREADY RELIABLE AND HARMONIZED?



YES, ENOUGH TO DOCUMENT **LARGE** PATTERNS

- Hours devoted to unpaid work are high
- Women do far more unpaid work than men.
- Women typically have longer overall workdays than men.

BUT NOT ENOUGH TO ANSWER IMPORTANT

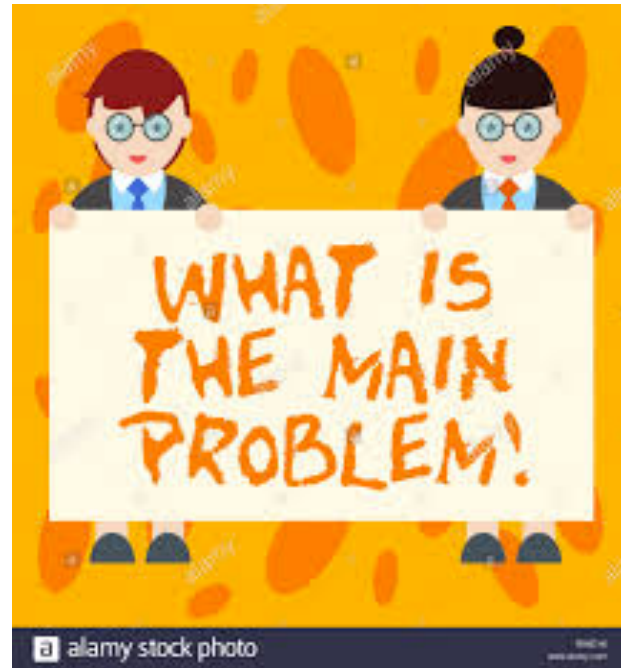


QUESTIONS:

Effects of public investment in infrastructure (e.g. water, gas, electricity, broadband) on unpaid work?

Effects of public childcare provision on women's employment opportunities?

Effects of COVID-19 on the organization of care for dependents?



Underestimation of temporal constraints
imposed by dependent care,

which vary considerably across cultural and economic contexts.

Other Related Problems:

Inconsistencies in measurement of direct care time* across surveys (in addition to larger inconsistencies in survey design).

How to achieve a consensus for cost-effective harmonization that also accommodates national differences and priorities?

*“Direct care time” involves face-to-face, in person or on-call care, as distinct from housework.



From their inception, most time-use surveys
(especially time-use diaries)
have focused on
ACTIVITIES

What is an “ACTIVITY”?

Many “activities” are conducted simultaneously.

As a result, some surveys distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” activities.

But supervision of dependents is **not always an activity**—it is better described as a **responsibility**.

Activities are more “salient” than background responsibilities and easier to locate in time.

Three Official Classifications

(and One Important Variant)

ICATUS:

International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics
Acknowledges forms of care not necessarily “active”—e.g. passive care

HETUS:

Harmonized European Time Use Surveys
No mention of passive care.

CAUTAL:

Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean
Many stylized questions regarding supervisory care

ATUS:

American Time Use Survey
Includes a stylized question: “while you were doing X, were children under the age of 13 in your care”

Measurement of Dependent Care

ICATUS surveys:

sensitive to tallies of secondary activities, wording and interviewer prompts. E.g. Australian TUS of 1997 shows very high unpaid childcare time

HETUS surveys:

relatively low levels of unpaid direct care

CAUTAL surveys:

very very high levels of unpaid direct care (children and elderly)
(related to use of stylized questions, discussed later)

ATUS variant of ICATUS:

time with children “in your care” roughly **three** times higher than tallied childcare activities.

Time Diaries **versus** Activity Lists

| G5.01: Now I'd like to ask you some questions regarding how you've spent your time over the last week and whether or not this was typical. ENUMERATOR NOTE: THERE ARE 168 HOURS/WEEK. | | In the last 7 days, how much time in hours did you spend on [ACTIVITY]? | Did you spend a usual amount of time on [ACTIVITY] in the last 7 days? | Since the last week was not usual, within the last 6 months how much time do you usually spend on [ACTIVITY] per week? |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | HOURS | CIRCLE ONE | HOURS |
| A | Farming | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |
| B | Fetching water | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |
| C | Cooking | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |
| D | Care for children/adults/elderly | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |
| E | Work as employed (incl. casual and salaried labor) | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |
| F | Own business work | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | Yes.....1→ NEXT ACTIVITY No.....2 N/A.....98 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |

Time diary-based surveys allow respondents to name the activities they perform, usually over the preceding 24 hours. Their responses are then coded into specific categories. Most regions of the world other than Latin America rely on these.

Activity list-based surveys ask respondents how much time they devoted to specific activities, often during the preceding week. Most Latin American surveys take this form.

Activity-list time-use surveys are less accurate and reliable than time-diaries,

EXCEPT FOR THEIR FAILURE TO CAPTURE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPERVISORY
OR ON-CALL
CARE FOR DEPENDENTS

Some Lessons from Analysis of Time Use Survey Data from Six Countries (in “Quantifying Care”)

In Mexico and Ecuador supervisory time for care of dependents is biggest component of women’s direct care time (over 40%)

Total household supervisory care for children in households with children under 5 does not exceed a benchmark for time these children require supervision (but comes close).

Significant supervisory care “deficits” are apparent in Ghana and South Africa despite prompts regarding passive care.

Large deficits also apparent in S. Korea and China, though these may reflect public or private child care provision

“With whom” questions do not solve the measurement problem.

Recommendations

- Encourage more methodological research, including combined qualitative/quantitative analysis.
- Develop “hybrid” methodologies—time-diary methods that include some stylized questions regarding temporal constraints.
- This is consistent with “light-diary” approaches that ask people to report time allocation to a specified “short-list”—approaches that are more easily digitized and decentralized than in-person interviews.
- Move toward greater harmonization of basic survey designs.