

# UKDS Time Use Talk

Activities in Context in Time Use Research

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## Overview

- The analysis of time spent in different activities throughout the day is the backbone of time use research...but
- Data about activities can be enhanced by putting it in context
- And contextual data can be a source of much that is interesting to know about how we spend our time

## About me

- Began working with time use data in 2003
- Main focus of research focuses on children's time use, and the gender division of labour
  - How has children's time use changed?
  - How it is impacted by parents?
  - How it has been impacted by technology?
- Also interested in questions about measurement of aspects of the context of daily life in time use surveys - particularly time with children and time using devices

## **What is context in daily time use?**

- The places where you are engaging in activities (at home, outside), and modes of travel when on the move
- The people you are with during the day - including time when you are alone
- Time using devices has emerged as an ambiguous area in time use as something directly linked to activities, but also serving as a platform for a range of other activities
- Have I missed anything?

## How is context captured in time use surveys?

- Running parallel to fields in time diaries that collect data on main and (sometimes) secondary activities, diary instruments [[doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk](http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk)] often ask a number questions capturing contextual information:
  - Where were you/mode of travel?
  - Who were you with?
  - Was a child in your care? (ATUS)
  - Were you using a device? (e.g., smartphone/tablet)

## **Why is context important?**

- Measuring time caring for children
- Analysing the impact of maternal employment on children's time use
- A multi-layered understanding change in children's time use
- Exploring the impact of digital devices in children's daily lives

## How much time do parents spend caring for children?

- A core question in time use research: scholars interested in tracking change over time, gender differences, and the impact of other factors such as education and parenting norms
- Focusing only on care recorded as a primary activity provides a limited measure
- Adding secondary activities is better, but:
  - Burdensome and prone to prompt bias; and another activity-based measure

## Using context to measure time caring for children

- Using contextual information about whether or not a parent is co-present with a child provides a more complete account of the total time parents spend caring for children
- There are variations in how this is conceptualized and measured
  - Co-present in the same room, or same place; engaged in the same activity (was anyone doing the activity with you?)
  - Can also incorporate bespoke fields; for example the 'in-your-care' question in the American Time Use Survey (ATUS)

## Maternal employment and childcare time

- What impact has increasing maternal employment had on childcare time?
- Time use research has convincingly shown that this had limited impact on the time they spent caring for children
- Impact concentrated in supervisory care
- Using contextual data (time co-present with children) was crucial to showing this

## Maternal employment and children's time use

- What impact has increasing maternal employment had on children's activities?
- Crucial to understand how maternal employment impacted who children spent time with as well as what they were doing
- **I combined data [onlinelibrary.wiley.com]** on children's activities with data on who they were with, showing that
- Less time with FT employed mothers, more time with fathers; and when with fathers...
- More time watching TV

## Change in children's time use

- Major study of change in children's time use from mid-70s to 2015: [A Child's Day](http://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk) [[bristoluniversitypress.co.uk](http://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk)]
- Focus on activities, but also on location - time at home
- Used a combination of information about activities and location to create a set of measure of time in different activities when at home and not at home
- Found a substantial shift toward spending more time in activities at home, with substantially less time in unstructured leisure outside the home

## Time using devices

- Screen time - major source of concern
- Critically, time use surveys recognise that device use is concurrent with time in other activities - it has become part of the context of daily life
- **I showed** [[link.springer.com](https://link.springer.com)] children spend a substantial amount of time using devices, but alongside time in other screen-based activities, with no evidence to suggest time in other activities was compromised in any way
- See [here](#) [[link.springer.com](https://link.springer.com)] for UK-US comparative analysis
- **Other work** [[onlinelibrary.wiley.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)], drawing on co-presence, location, and device use data, found a significant increase between 2000 and 2015 in time children stated they were alone, when at home when their parents were also at home
- Children reported using devices for most of this time ‘alone-together’

## Concluding comments

- Activities take place in context and sometimes aspects of this context is of primary interest
- Time use research can be enhanced by incorporating contextual data into measures of time use - alone and in combination with activities
- Thanks - any questions/comments?

Speaker notes