

Mothers and the clock

The Time Use of Mothers in the United States at the Beginning of the 21st Century. By Rachel Connelly and Jean Kimmel, W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, MI, 2010, 165 pp., \$40/cloth; \$18/paper.

Many mothers of young children will likely have comparison in mind when approaching this book: “How do I measure up to *other* mothers caring for their children? Do I spend more time caring for them than average? What about other mothers in my income bracket, or with similarly aged children?” *The Time Use of Mothers in the United States at the Beginning of the 21st Century* is data rich and has those answers, but it is written more for researchers than for a mother who wants to quickly see how she stacks up while she transitions between making a meal, snuggling and reading with children, ensuring the cleanliness of the kids and their clothes, and guaranteeing that homework gets done.

In the book, authors Rachel Connelly and Jean Kimmel explore the differences in time choices of American mothers because they affect mothers’ well-being and their families. There is a strong relationship between quality caregiving and children’s well-being; however, caring for young children requires considerable time, resulting in less time for other activities. Connelly and Kimmel investigate how mothers reallocate their time and whether that reallocation differs between demographic groups, by time of day, and by weekday versus weekend. The importance of this study is

encapsulated in the concluding remarks and remains with the reader like an alarm bell’s reverberation: “Time is our most scarce resource and children our most precious.”

The study focuses on the time use of mothers aged 18–60 who are co-residing with at least one dependent child under the age of 13. The data cover the years 2003 to 2006 and are from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). The ATUS collects one 24-hour time diary from selected respondents of the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). This connection with the CPS provides considerable additional information about the time survey respondent’s household. The ATUS, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the first nationally representative, large-scale time diary data collection instrument in the United States; before the ATUS, researchers interested in the time use of women in the United States had few resources available.

Past studies in the field separated time use into three categories: labor, leisure, and “home production.” A contribution Connelly and Kimmel make to the literature is that caregiving time is treated as a distinct time use category. In their view, “[c]aregiving time does not behave like either leisure or home production in its response to the predicted prices of time, demographic differences, or timing and spatial differences. In addition, child care does not simply take the middle road between leisure and home production. Instead, child care times behave quite distinctly from both of these time uses.” If caregiving time were to be combined with either leisure or home production, they reason, one would expect it to have a

similar response to increased wages, decreasing when wages increase; in fact, caregiving time *increases* as wages increase. (See item 2 on the next page.) Rather than the three aforementioned categories, Connelly and Kimmel have collapsed the ATUS’s 300 different detailed time categories of the evaluated 24-hour period into five time use groups: paid work, leisure, unpaid home production, child caregiving, and the catch-all group “all other activities.” They use descriptive statistics, as well as regression results, to show the relationships between different variables and these time use groups.

Some of the results Connelly and Kimmel find are predictable:

1. Unmarried mothers reported significantly less caregiving time compared with married or cohabitating mothers, and the unmarried mothers put in more employment hours.
2. Mothers whose youngest child was 5 years or younger spent 13 percent of their time in childcare, compared with 7 percent for mothers whose youngest child was 6 to 12 years. This extra caregiving time of mothers of younger children was accomplished by decreasing weekday employment and engaging in slightly less leisure.
3. Time dedicated to leisure and home production was higher on the weekends, while the opposite was true for employment and caregiving.
4. Most child caregiving occurred in the morning and in the evening.

Other results are less predictable:

1. Higher wage married mothers devoted more time to caregiving both on weekdays and weekends, compared with low-wage and mid-wage married mothers.
2. When wages increased, leisure and home production dropped and employment and caregiving increased.

The authors also identify family, education, and taxation policy they believe could be improved upon. I found this discussion enriching. For example, because 26 percent of a married mother's day is spent in unpaid household work and caregiving, and a married father's is 10 percent, "public policy concerning child support does not reflect the divorcee's increased time pressures as well as the increased cost of outsourcing family chores. A more comprehensive view of spousal support would incorporate the lost time as well as the lost income of the non-custodial parent." Connelly and Kimmel have this to say regarding education policy: "policymakers thinking about school readiness should be interested in our finding that high-wage mothers spend more time on caregiving, as well as being able to afford higher quality non-parental care. Overcoming that double inequity of both time and money investments [of low-wage earners] may mean that our national child care policy should be more focused on low-income families."

An interesting trend emerges from the book's review of existing time use studies: despite increasing employment of women, maternal caregiving time has increased while maternal housework time has decreased, but "[s]ome of the decline

in home production time is made up for by an increase in men's home production time, such that the average time devoted to home production by all prime-age individuals has not changed much over the long period studied by Ramey and Francis (2006) and by Ramey (2008)."

As a formerly sleep-challenged parent, I wish the authors had extracted sleep from the "all other activities" group to create a separate, sixth "sleep" category. The "all other activities" category currently includes sleep; education; job search and interviewing; medical and personal care services; and travel related to work, education, medical care, and personal care. These activities are combined because they are considered actions dedicated to investment in current and future productivity. While writing this review in a café, I met a mother of a 3-year-old and an infant. When asked how much sleep the mother gets, on average, she replied, "Ahhh... about 5 hours." That sounds about right to me, as a mother, yet Connelly and Kimmel's study shows mothers of children aged 0–5 spending 9 hours and 50 minutes per day in the diverse "all other activities" category. Sleep affects productivity, health, and temperament, and I believe warrants its own category. I also would have liked the book to use bullets, color, or images that tell a quick story, because the study's interesting results were sometimes challenging to extract quickly from the text, gray-scale charts, and tables. Showing time in units of hours instead of percentages of the 24-hour period also would have helped in conveying the data quickly.

There are time and financial trade-offs involved in caring for children. This book does a thorough and well-structured job of showing how

different types of mothers reallocate their time to care for children. Academics, policy analysts, and policymakers will appreciate the authors' multivariate regression analyses, t-test results, probit coefficients, and market wage and child care price elasticities. For these individuals, I strongly recommend the book.

Still, the book's mathematical formulas and calculations make it less accessible to general audiences. If I were giving advice to one of those mothers looking to make a quick comparison with other mothers, I would recommend that she find a different book. And that she keep snuggling those children. They stay children for only a short time.

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Workplace inequity in the developing world

Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing. By Teri L. Caraway, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2007, 208 pp. \$18.95/paperback.

Gender inequalities continue to exist as a source of concern in many parts of the world. There are numerous different types of gender inequalities and even more theories as to why they occur. One type of inequality that cuts across borders is inequity in the workplace: In 2012, *Forbes* magazine reported that "half of the pay gap between men and women is due to women having a tendency to work in different occupations and industries than men." But what happens when women are given no say in the occupation or industry in which they

work but are instead slotted into particular jobs? And what if, along with lower pay for women, these jobs are highly labor intensive, are monotonous, and provide no chance of advancement? This cocktail can quickly become toxic for women's well-being and any hope for a better future.

In this book, Dr. Teri L. Caraway, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Minnesota, takes a closer look at gender inequalities in the manufacturing sector post World War II in the developing world. She attributes these continued inequalities to gender divisions in the labor markets and focuses on 10 countries in three regions of the world: Latin America, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. She examines gendered patterns of industrialization at various levels (shop floor, industry, sector, and country), definitional and theoretical concerns, and market–non-market factors, and then draws on her observational research in Indonesia in order to bring new insight into an old problem: why do gender inequalities in the manufacturing sector persist in the 21st century? There are four recurring themes in her book: (1) the source of feminization, (2) the supply characteristics of female labor, (3) mediating institutions, and (4) gender discourses of work.

Caraway emphasizes that the way women enter the workforce in developing countries plays a large part in whether they will be able to improve their lot in those countries. She describes the importance of the political climate at the time of a woman's entry. She also provides detailed descriptions of market orientations

(export-oriented industrialization and inwardly directed industrialization), the balance of employment between labor-intensive and capital-intensive sectors, and how these factors affect women in the respective countries she examines. What she finds is that women are less likely to integrate seamlessly and successfully into the workforce when the primary purpose for feminization is purely to insert female workers into labor-intensive industries.

The supply characteristics that women currently offer to prospective employers in the developing world are that women are cheaper to employ and are more likely to stay longer in dead-end jobs. In comparison with men, women are also thought to be more detail oriented and have more patience with repetitive tasks; a more recent development is that women are thought to have relatively lower fertility rates than in the past. Although one would think that these traits would tip the scales more in favor of women, Caraway makes the point that that is not necessarily the case because many employers still have a built-in bias toward hiring male employees.

Caraway describes the influence governments, unions, and other mediating institutions have in the integration of women into the workforce. Government policies generally have a positive impact by increasing education levels (among other things) in the developing world, but union strength often has an inverse relationship to female employment. Although strong unions have empowered women in the developed world, they can create resistance to women's entry into the workforce in the developing world; weaker labor

unions, in contrast, have inadvertently facilitated women's employment by allowing employers more freedom to hire women.

Gender discourses of work are another factor that determines the fate of women workers in the Third World where, historically, men and women are commonly accepted to be different types of labor. Cultural bias can lead to women being perceived as weaker, not just physically, but emotionally and in terms of their leadership skills and reliability. Employers subject to this bias can and do make hiring decisions through "gendered lenses."

Assembling Women offers a lot of information on the topic of women in global manufacturing. There are many intricate details intertwined in cultures that cannot easily be captured or realized by an outsider at a personal level; however, Caraway does a good job of providing the reader with a thoroughly holistic top-down view of her perspective. Caraway's research is an improvement because she includes men in the discussion for comparison, giving dimension to her analysis and allowing for a truly "gendered view" of the issue. The book could have benefited from a better organizational structure, and the explanations could have been more concise. Overall, however, the book is an interesting read, and I recommend it for anyone interested in, and with some knowledge of, gender segregation, feminization, manufacturing, employment, and cross-national analysis. □

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