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## **Are we having a good time, boys and girls? The need for time and affect methodologies in understanding gendered wellbeing**

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# Are we having a good time, boys and girls?

The need for time and affect methodologies in  
understanding gendered wellbeing\*

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# Subjective wellbeing – conception and measurement

- Subjective wellbeing (SWB) increasingly recognised as an alternative indicator of personal and societal progress (as opposed to GDP, HDI, etc)
- However, there are disconnects between conventional and SWB measures – Easterlin's paradox
- Explained in part by theories related to adaptation: hedonic treadmill (Brickman and Campbell 1971); set-points (Andrews and Withey 1976); aspirational adjustment (Inglehart) and homeostasis (Cummins)
- However, there are other arguments that life-domain measures may not be the definitive and all-encompassing measures of SWB they are sometimes made out to be - particularly relevant to a gender context

# **Subjective wellbeing – conception and measurement**

- Standard measures of SWB relate to life as a whole, or else aggregated from satisfaction with particular life-domains, such as work, health, family relations etc (Cummins).
- Many links made between life-domain SWB and personal demographic and national indicators
- However, just as national accounts are not wholly sufficient, so too might life-domain SWB not capture the whole picture (Kahneman and Krueger 2006)

# Subjective wellbeing – measurement issues

- Distinction between life-domain/generalised vs experienced/hedonic wellbeing
  - How happy/satisfied are you with your life (etc) in general? (Easterlin, Oswald, Helliwell etc)
  - How much time do you spend doing enjoyable activities? (Kahneman and Kruegar, Juster, Robinson, Gershuny)
- Kahneman and Krueger lead the field in this area
  - Find (1997, 2006, Krueger and Schkade 2007) that life-domain assessments overweighted by extreme and recent experience, moods, and question-order effects
  - They suggest that ‘real-time’ methods, such as measuring time and affect through time diaries, are better for capturing SWB and avoiding such biases
  - Better? Debatable. Krueger et al (2008) do note that permanent and substitutable time allocation can help explain adaptation

# Why would wellbeing be gendered?

- Women report greater time stress from work/family balance (Craig 2009)
- Women potentially suffer worse impact from marital separation, and single motherhood
- Women are at greater risk of social exclusion – wage gap, lower retirement incomes, ageing alone (Pinquart and Sörensen 2001, Ogg 2005, Rosenman and Scott, 2009)
- Many of these patterns only visible through examining patterns of activity and time use, not SWB life-domains

## Is wellbeing gendered?

- Most studies using life domain measures small gender effect on SWB (Pinquart and Sörensen 2001) -
  - Blanchflower and Oswald (2000) find in comparing US (GSS) and UK (Eurobarometer) samples from 1970s to 1990s that women report slightly greater wellbeing
  - However, Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) use the US GSS to 2006 and find that women's happiness has declined absolutely and relative to men since the 1970's, with a gap appearing in the 1980s and 90's, but cannot adequately identify why this has happened (except to suggest that women now compare themselves more to men and their employment success)
- Many studies find gender effects hidden behind interactions between gender and demographic characteristics, such as age (Inglehart 2002, Heady and Wearing 2008), income and employment status (Pinquart and Sörensen 2001), and marital status.
- Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) point to the contradiction between women's improved income and employment, and declining SWB.

# Is wellbeing gendered?

- These studies use life domain measures and demographic characteristics, which infer, but do not reveal, what men and women do (or are constrained in doing) with their time to make themselves happy
- Kahneman and Krueger examine gendered wellbeing through time use, using the 2006 Princeton Time and Affect (PATs) Study
  - Find that American women in 2006 spend a slightly higher proportion of time in unpleasant activities (negative affect > positive affect), women 20% vs men 18%
  - Also, women's unpleasant time has remained fairly constant since 1965, while men's has decreased due to lower involvement in paid work (reinforces Stevenson and Wolfers – and explains why!)



# Is wellbeing gendered?

- However, problems with Kahneman and Krueger approach:
  - They aggregate emotions into a U-index – many might differ on gender
  - in working out U-indexes over time, they assign affect ratings retrospectively – disallows changes in the *nature* and *enjoyment* of activities
  - Ratings assigned retrospectively by activity only – no context used, who with, where etc
  - Only gather information on 3 episodes per person – lack context of surrounding activity, possible sample biases
  - No late night activity information - no sleep (just sleeplessness, day-snooze)
- Need to look at time and affect again – compare old and recent data, and look at different affect measures and affect by activity ratings separately by gender
  - Can use the 1985 AHTUS study – has enjoyment ratings for all episodes of activity, over 24 hour period – sleep very enjoyable!

## Samples and Research Questions:

|  | Male   | Female | Total  |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Princeton Time and Affect Survey<br>(PATs 2006) – person weighted episodes | 5,574  | 6,331  | 11,905 |
| American Time Use Survey (ATUS 1985) – gender<br>weighted episodes         | 35,150 | 36,584 | 71,734 |

### ■ Research Questions:

- Are there gender differences in life domain and activity affect ratings?
- Are there gender differences in how different activities elicit different emotions?
- Are there stable gender differences in the proportion of activities that are unpleasant (ie both in the past and the present)?
- Are there gender differences in how such activities interact in predicting different emotions, life-domain SWB, and unpleasant affect in regression analysis, and are predications of unpleasant affect stable over time?

## ■ AHTUS 1985 (Juster, Robinson)

- Time diaries gathered for the previous day
- Enjoyment of activity ratings gathered for every episode (0-10 scale)
- U-index calculated (unpleasantness) – any episode where enjoyment rating is less than the mean enjoyment rating (approx 7.02) (non-conservative approach to measuring unpleasantness - will have more unhappy episodes)

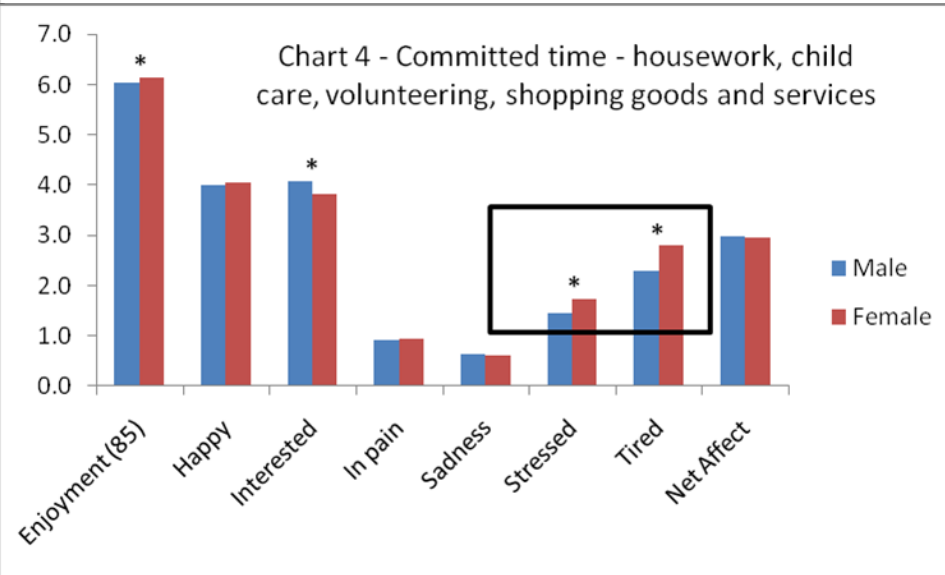
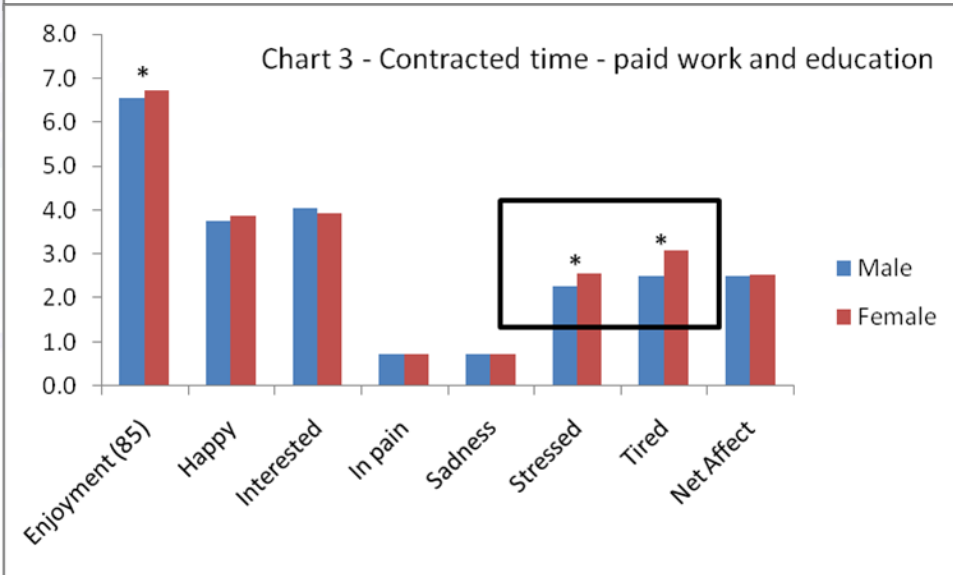
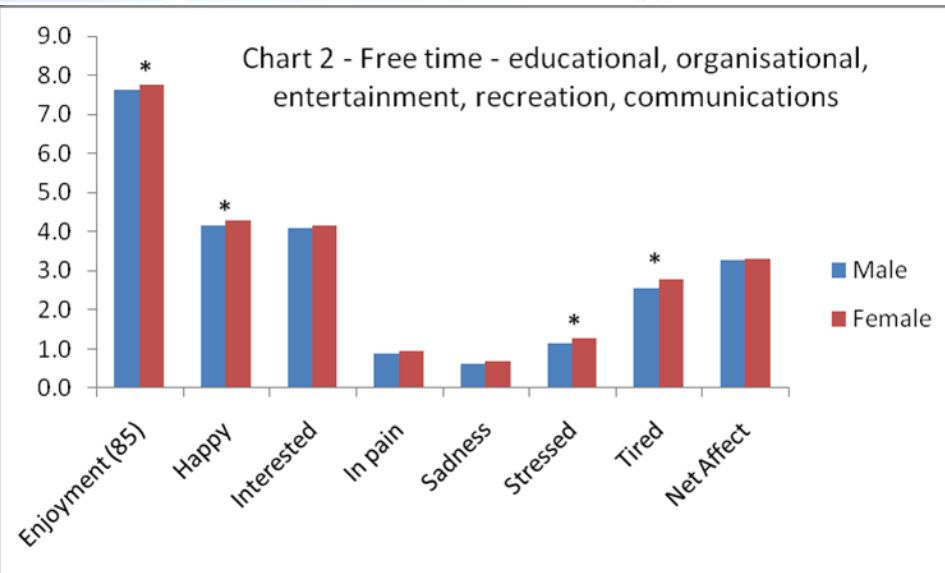
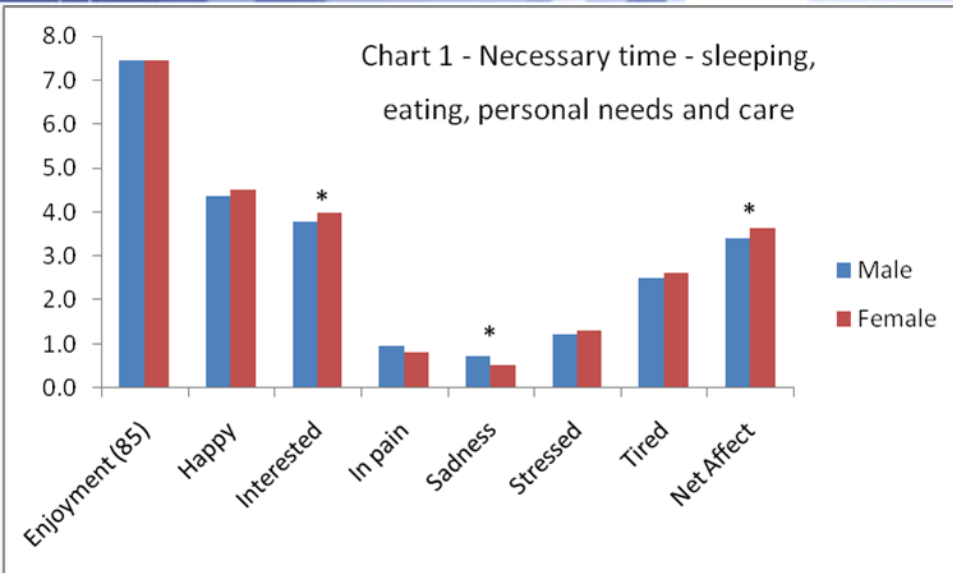
## ■ PATS 2006 (Kahneman, Krueger)

- Time diaries gathered for the previous day
- Affect ratings gathered for three episodes (randomly chosen) in that day
- 6 measures of affect, each on a 0-6 scale – happy, interested, pain, sad, stressed, tired
- Net-affect – average of positive emotions minus the average negative emotions
- U-index calculated (unpleasantness) – any episode where negative affect ratings outweigh positive affect ratings (conservative approach to measuring unpleasantness – will have fewer unhappy episodes)
- Also has life-domain satisfaction measures – life in general, health, home, work (work has reduced sample size)

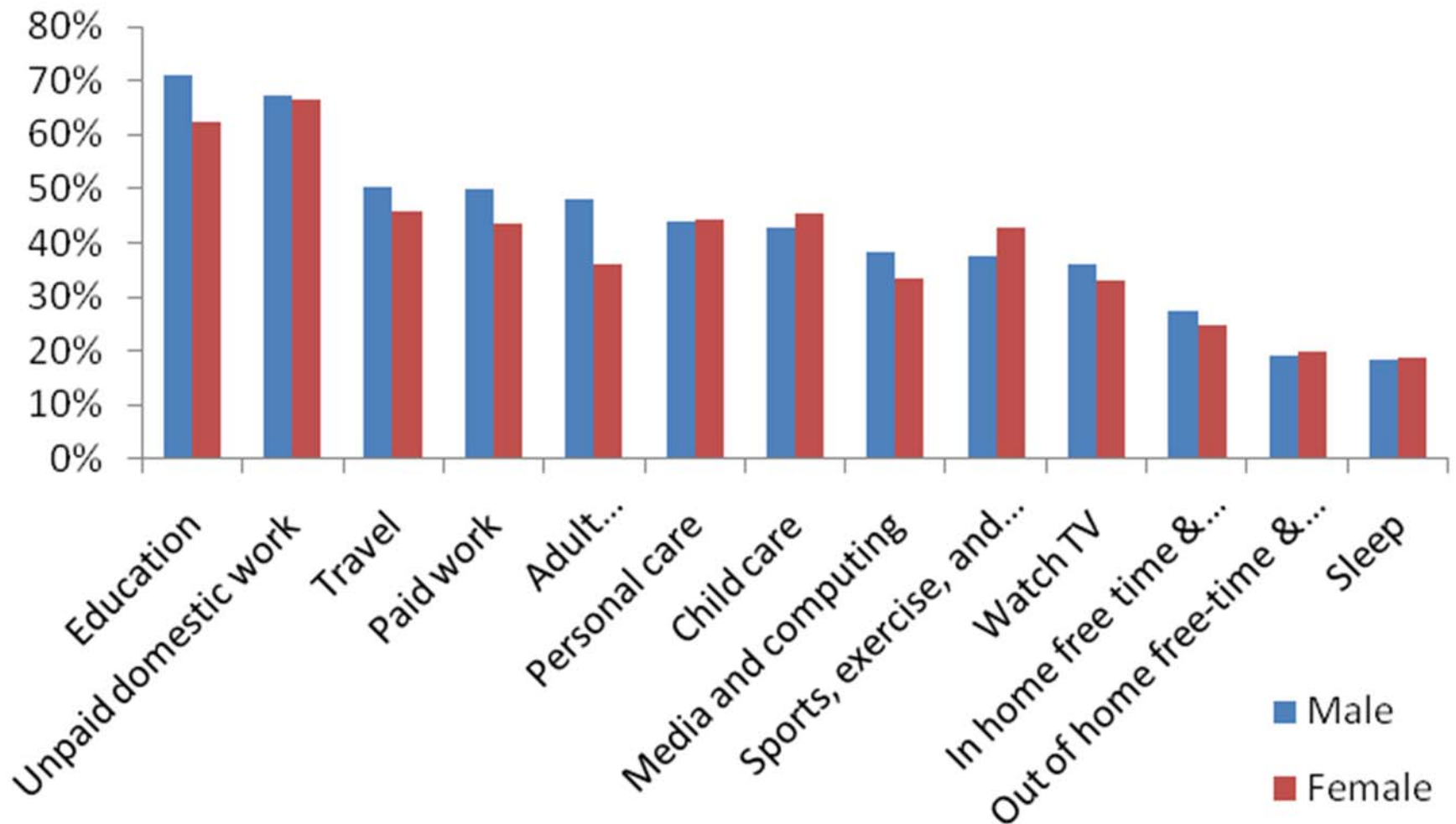
## Life domain and affect ratings

|  | Life-Domain                        | Men   | Women |
|--|------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| PATS Life Domain ratings (Scale 1-4)     | Life satisfaction                  | 3.30  | 3.33  |
|  | Home satisfaction                  | 3.43* | 3.37  |
|  | Job satisfaction                   | 3.13  | 3.13  |
|  | Health satisfaction                | 3.06* | 3.01  |
|  | Total satisfaction (including job) | 13.08 | 12.98 |
| (Scale 4-16)                             |                                    |       |       |
| (Scale 3-12)                             | Total satisfaction (excluding job) | 9.79* | 9.70  |
|  | Affect Type                        | Men   | Women |
| PATS episode affect ratings (Scale: 0-6) | Happy                              | 4.07  | 4.19* |
|  | Interest                           | 4.03  | 4.02  |
|  | Pain                               | 0.86  | 0.90  |
|  | Sad                                | 0.66  | 0.66  |
|  | Stressed                           | 1.46  | 1.58* |
|  | Tired                              | 2.49  | 2.81* |
|  | Net Affect                         | 3.08  | 3.14  |
| ATUS (Scale: 0-10)                       | Enjoyment                          | 7.05* | 7.01  |

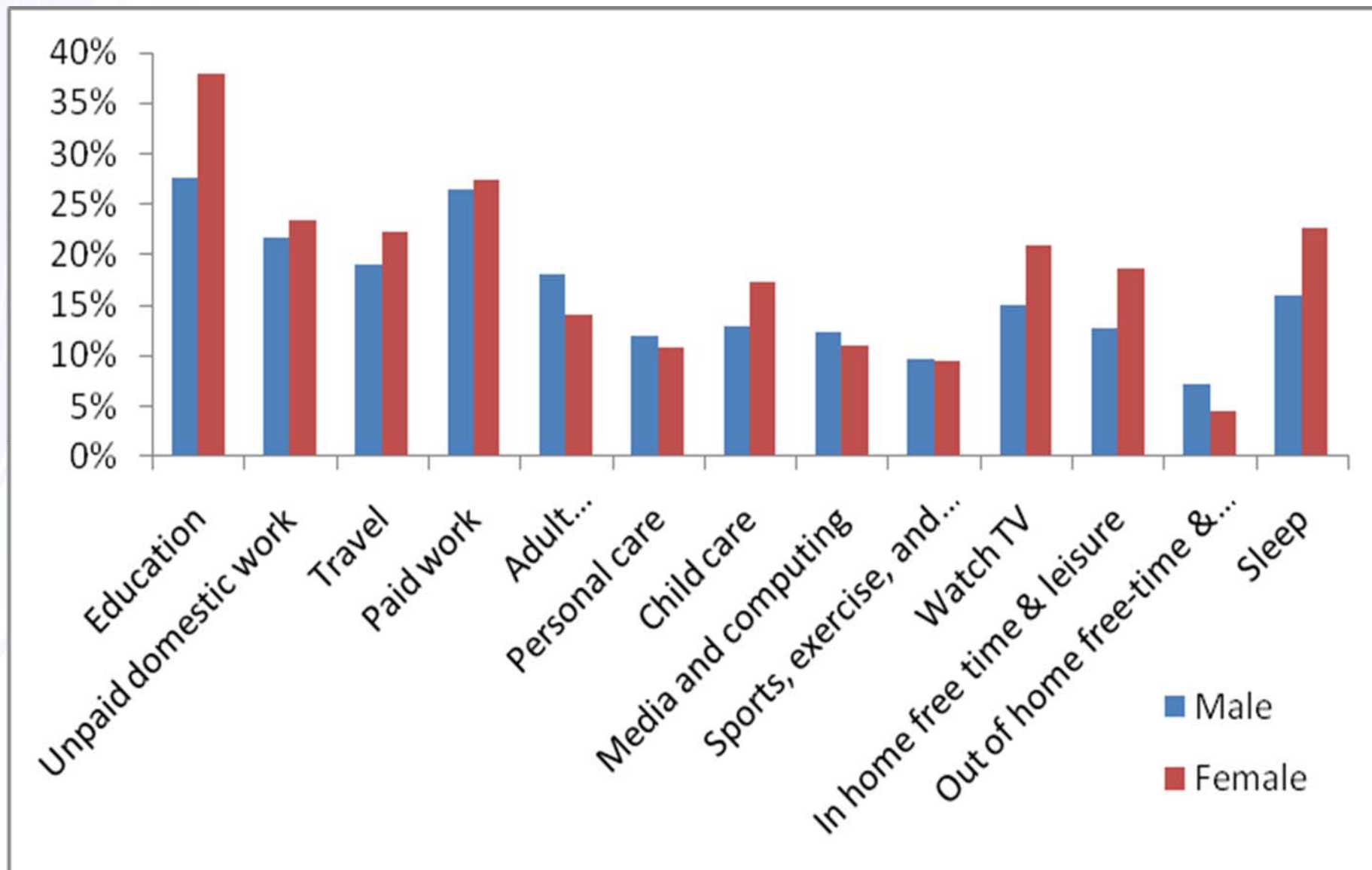
# Affect ratings by four broad time use categories



# AHTUS 1985 – U-index by 13 time use categories



## PATS 2006 – U-index by 13 time use categories





# Affect Ordered Logit regressions – (ref partnered male, controls: age, inc, edu, weekend, episode duration)

|   | Happy    | Interested | Pain    | Sad    | Stressed | Tired    |
|---|----------|------------|---------|--------|----------|----------|
| Paid work   | -0.72*** | 0.04       | -0.36** | 0.19   | 0.79***  | 0.00     |
| Education   | -0.70*   | 0.44       | -0.06   | 0.11   | 1.00***  | 0.06     |
| Unpaid domestic work                              | -0.64*** | -0.14      | 0.02    | -0.03  | 0.33**   | 0.02     |
| Adult care, civic, voluntary & religious activity | -0.01    | 0.77***    | -0.23   | 0.28   | -0.22    | -0.63*** |
| Out of home free-time & leisure                   | 0.65**   | 0.81***    | -0.81*  | -0.75* | -0.36    | -0.33    |
| Sports, exercise, and outdoor activities          | 0.19     | 0.36**     | 0.36**  | -0.32  | -0.19    | 0.18     |
| In home free time & leisure                       | 0.11     | 0.36**     | -0.18   | 0.05   | 0.03     | 0.04     |
| Media and computing                               | -0.44*** | 0.61***    | -0.45** | 0.08   | -0.05    | -0.22    |
| Travel  | -0.38*** | -0.36**    | -0.31*  | 0.01   | 0.48***  | 0.09     |
| Sleep   | -0.66*   | -0.88**    | -0.12   | 0.42   | 0.32     | 0.27     |
| TV Watching                                       | -0.77*** | -0.26**    | -0.36** | 0.11   | -0.19    | 0.35***  |
| Child care  | 0.33     | 0.69**     | -0.42   | -0.28  | 0.36     | -0.28    |
| Female  | 0.33**   | 0.27*      | -0.42** | -0.27  | -0.05    | 0.08     |
| Female*Paid work                                  | -0.01    | -0.18      | 0.15    | 0.13   | 0.13     | 0.25     |
| Female*Education                                  | -0.18    | -0.36      | -0.37   | 0.23   | 0.04     | 0.49     |
| Female*Unpaid domestic work                       | -0.21    | -0.38**    | 0.30    | 0.19   | 0.10     | 0.18     |
| Female*Adult care, civic, voluntary & religion    | -0.00    | -0.07      | -0.03   | -0.07  | 0.27     | 0.41     |
| Female*Out of home free-time & leisure            | -0.04    | -0.05      | 0.34    | -0.08  | -0.36    | -0.20    |
| Female*Sports, exercise, and outdoor activities   | -0.11    | 0.02       | -0.06   | 0.02   | -0.22    | -0.05    |
| Female*In home free time & leisure                | -0.04    | 0.06       | 0.44*   | 0.12   | -0.02    | 0.17     |
| Female*Media and computing                        | -0.06    | -0.17      | 0.54*   | 0.00   | -0.35    | 0.20     |
| Female*Travel                                     | -0.05    | -0.05      | 0.32    | 0.19   | 0.01     | 0.12     |
| Female*Sleep                                      | -0.10    | 0.11       | 0.30    | -0.15  | 0.40     | 0.99*    |
| Female*TV Watching                                | 0.05     | -0.02      | 0.53*** | 0.22   | 0.11     | 0.27*    |
| Female*Child care                                 | -0.45    | -0.41      | 0.16    | 0.12   | 0.31     | 0.82**   |
| Single - separated, divorced, widow, single       | -0.07    | -0.07      | -0.12   | 0.10   | -0.24**  | -0.12    |
| Female*single                                     | -0.13    | 0.02       | 0.22    | 0.14   | 0.29**   | -0.01    |



# Affect /Domain regressions – (ref partnered male, controls: age, inc, edu, weekend, episode duration)

|  | U-index<br>(AHTUS)<br>1985 | U-index<br>(PATS)<br>2006 | Disastisfied<br>with life | Disastisfied with life (life,<br>home, health) (OLS) |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Paid work  | 0.44***                    | 0.82***                   | -0.21                     | 0.09   |
| Education  | 1.26***                    | 0.95*                     | -0.15                     | 0.25   |
| Unpaid domestic work                                     | 1.05***                    | 0.65***                   | -0.25                     | 0.11   |
| Adult care, civic, voluntary & religious activity        | 0.39***                    | 0.52                      | 0.18                      | -0.04  |
| Out of home free-time & leisure                          | -1.10***                   | -0.86                     | -1.96                     | 0.64***  |
| Sports, exercise, and outdoor activities                 | -0.10                      | -0.11                     | -0.70*                    | 0.22   |
| In home free time & leisure                              | -0.56***                   | 0.21                      | -0.07                     | -0.07  |
| Media and computing                                      | -0.15*                     | 0.20                      | 0.30                      | -0.07  |
| Travel   | 0.23***                    | 0.54**                    | -0.07                     | 0.06   |
| Sleep  | -0.85***                   | 0.50                      | 0.32                      | -0.47  |
| TV Watching  | -0.15**                    | 0.29                      | 0.14                      | -0.06  |
| Child care   | -0.25                      | -0.08                     | -0.26                     | 0.10   |
| Female   | 0.05                       | 0.10                      | -0.31                     | 0.11   |
| Female*Paid work   | -0.26***                   | -0.22                     | -0.21                     | 0.00   |
| Female*Education   | -0.60*                     | 0.34                      | -0.34                     | 0.04   |
| Female*Unpaid domestic work                              | -0.01                      | -0.04                     | 0.29                      | -0.15  |
| Female*Adult care, civic, voluntary & religious activity | -0.62***                   | -0.57                     | -0.57                     | 0.27   |
| Female*Out of home free-time & leisure                   | 0.01                       | 0.10                      | 2.14*                     | -0.60*   |
| Female*Sports, exercise, and outdoor activities          | 0.25***                    | -0.41                     | 0.55                      | -0.12  |
| Female*In home free time & leisure                       | -0.14                      | -0.06                     | 0.32                      | -0.06  |
| Female*Media and computing                               | -0.21                      | -0.29                     | -0.22                     | 0.08   |
| Female*Travel  | -0.16*                     | -0.04                     | 0.20                      | -0.00  |
| Female*Sleep   | -0.00                      | 0.02                      | -0.07                     | 0.17   |
| Female*TV Watching                                       | -0.19*                     | 0.04                      | 0.10                      | -0.21  |
| Female*Child care  | 0.18                       | 0.49                      | 0.37                      | 0.09   |
| Single - separated, divorced, widow, single              | 0.09*                      | -0.04                     | 0.36*                     | -0.53***   |
| Female*single  | -0.11                      | 0.35*                     | 0.20                      | -0.09  |

# Substantive Conclusions

- There is some consistency between life-domain and hedonic measures of gendered wellbeing. Men are generally happier by life-domain measures, and women are more tired by affect measures – this seems largely due to the effects of greater time in childcare.
- Education, paid and unpaid work, and travel are the most unpleasant activities. To the extent that AHTUS and PATS data are comparable, these have always been unpopular activities, but paid work has become more unpopular, and women, who largely found them better in 1985, now find them worse than men in 2006.
- Education, paid work, and travel are associated with unpleasantness for men in regression in both 1985 and 2006. They are associated with pleasantness for women in 1985, but not in 2006. This is in keeping with Kahneman and Krueger, and Stevenson and Wolfers.

# Methodological Conclusions

- Need consistent time and affect measures in a time series. Look for next American Time Use Study
- Need such data in Australia. Only small beeper studies available
- Problems with 1985 ATUS study – need to ask about feelings in greater context (who with data), and also ask about more feelings than just enjoyment
- Problems with 2006 Princeton study – need to ask affect for each episode, and thus a more accurate measure of whether men or women are relatively better or worse off in terms of wellbeing.
- In criticism of all time and affect research - need to ask people to ascribe how they felt to one ore more particular aspects of their time – such as what they were doing, who they were with, where they were, and general mood.

# Comments, questions and contact details

## Contact details

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