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Methodological issues in time-use data collection

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Measuring *activities* using time-use surveys

- ✓ Time-use surveys measure the time individuals devote to *activities*, understood in a very broad sense.
- ✓ Time-use surveys can have different objectives, i.e., be designed to study particular sets of activities. They are the only known way to measure *unpaid care work* but they have been used for other purposes.
- ✓ Some sociologists' and feminist scholars' criticism to this “quantitative” and “lineal” approach to time-use data collection.
- ✓ Feminist economists' contributions to measure *care*.

A methodological approach to time-use data collection

I. Type of household survey;

II. Survey Design:

- a. type of survey instrument used for recording activities;
- b. activity selection; and
- c. mode of data collection.

III. Sample Design:

- a. coverage;
- b. reference period; and
- c. reference population, including unit of analysis.

I. Type of household survey

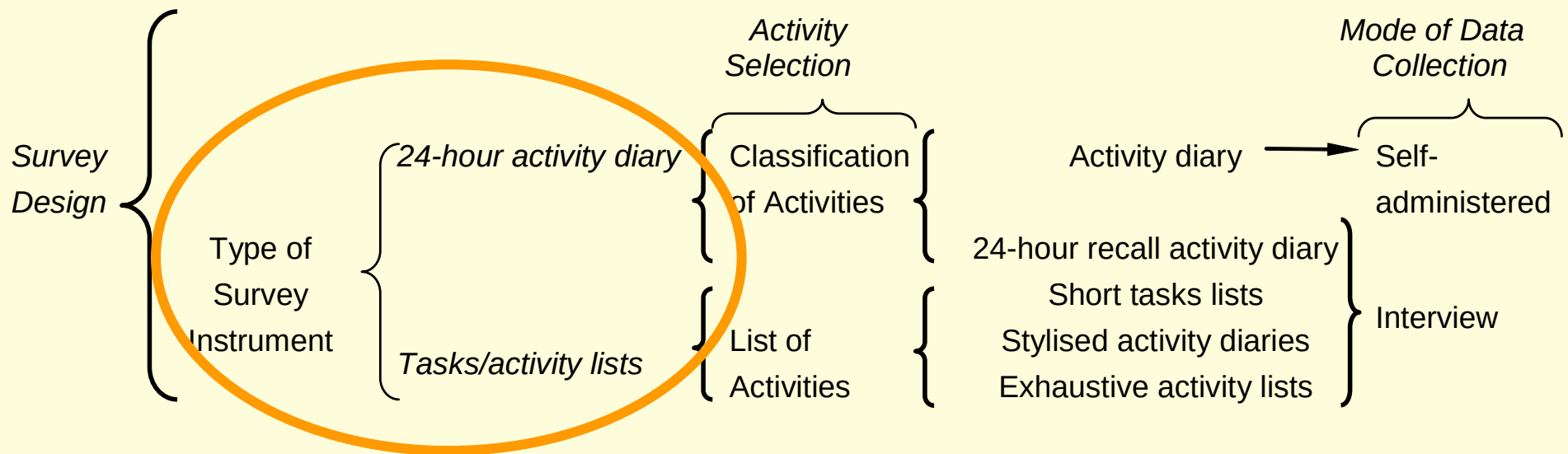
I.1 Stand-alone time-use survey:

Expensive surveys. Mainstreamed in developed countries. In developing countries, tied to the availability of foreign funds. In LA, only Cuba.

I.2 Module attached to a multi-purpose household survey:

Living conditions, labor force, or income and expenditure survey. The core survey methodological design imposes limits to the time-use module. There are advantages, though.

II. Survey design

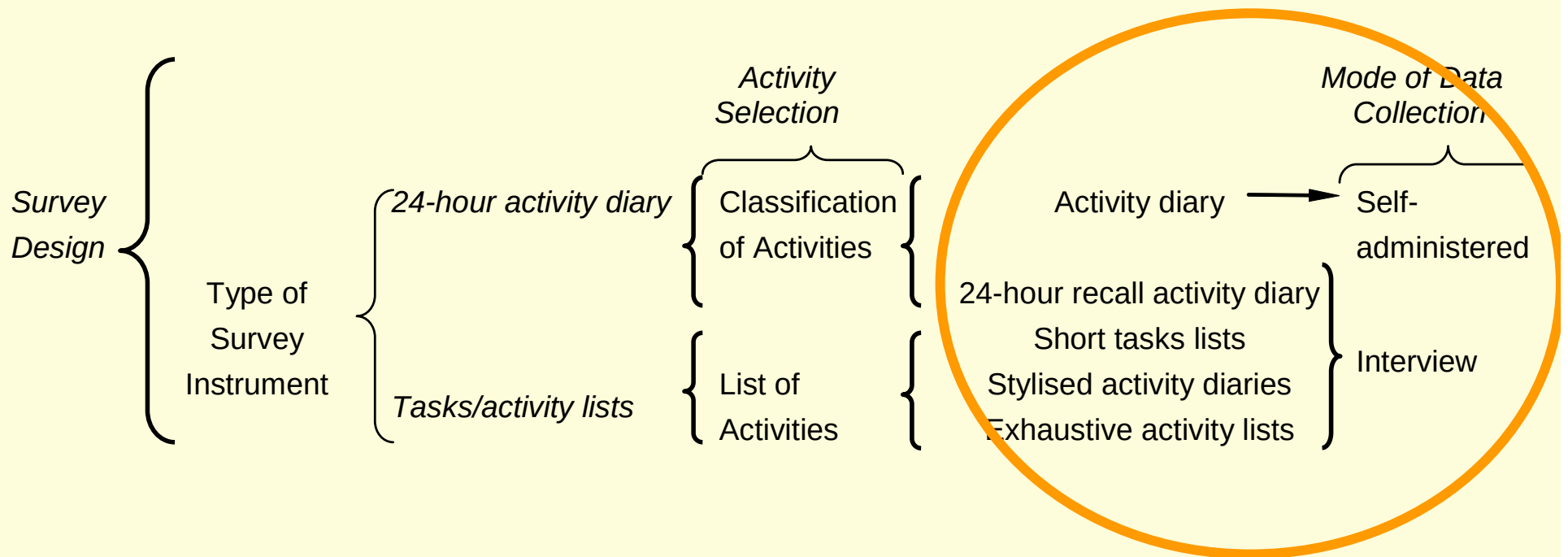


II. Survey design

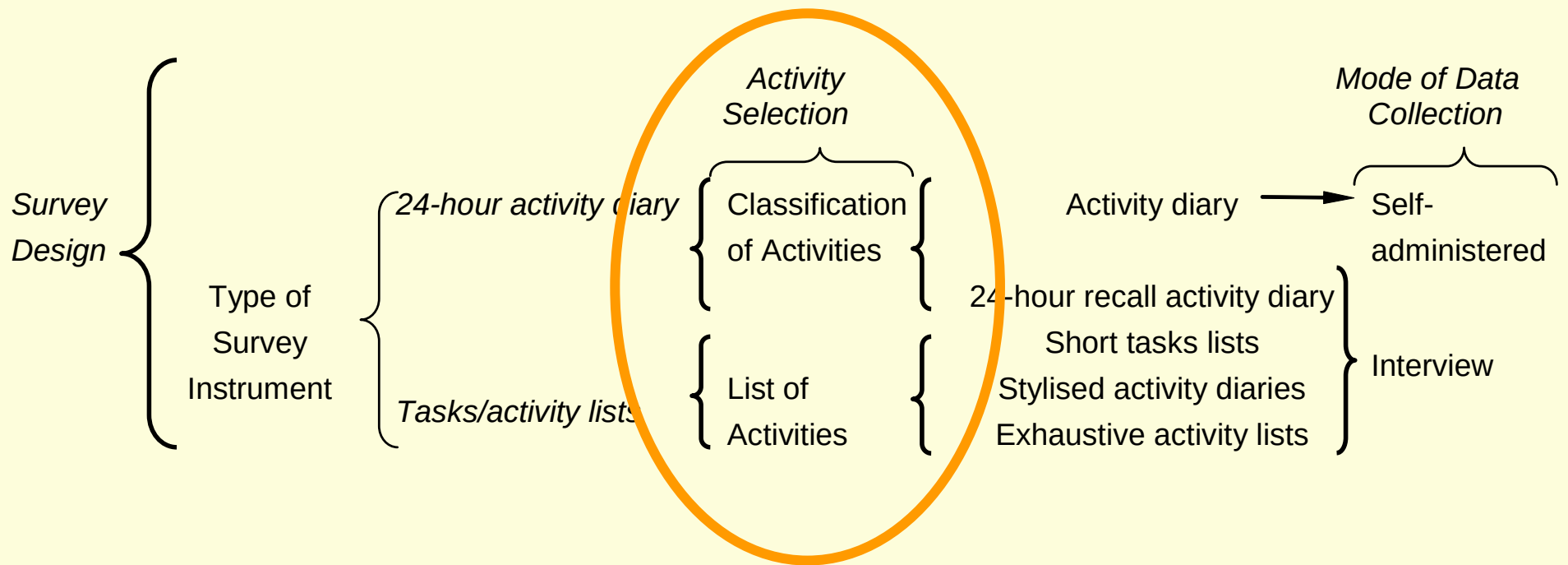
II.a Type of survey instrument:

- Short tasks lists*: stylized questions that target the time devoted to specific tasks. Do not cover the entire day.
- Stylized analog to diaries*: short and comprehensive listing of activities. Usually, one digit ICATUS. Difficulties to include pre-defined “simultaneous” activities.
- Exhaustive activity list*: aimed at covering all possible activities, not only tasks. Fairly long (maybe too long).
- 24-hour activity diaries*: twenty-four-hour schedules, divided in fixed time slots (ten, fifteen or thirty minutes long) with room for 1, 2, or 3 activities in each of them. Captures simultaneous activities. Could be self-administered, but can also be filled in during interviews.

II. Survey design



II. Survey design



II. Survey design

II.b Activity selection:

-*Task/ activity list design:* defining the length of the list (whether it should be exhaustive or not) and the level of detail. Inclusion/exclusion of different activities under broad categories (i.e., travelling). Problems of phrasing.

-*Classification of activities:* ICATUS (1997 or 2001). Major divisions. Level of aggregation related to the length of time-slots.

III. Sample design

III.1 Coverage: national or local.

III.2 Reference period: “yesterday”, “last week”.
Seasonal variations.

III.3 Reference population: age limits.

III.4 Unit of analysis: the individuals (women and men), although some attempts to use households.

Trade-offs related to TUS design

- ✓ ***Respondents' burden versus fieldwork burden:*** activity diaries minimize respondents' burden, as opposed to exhaustive activity lists. But careful calibration of **fieldwork** is required (selection of individuals and days to collect information on), and might not be possible in the case of modules.
- ✓ ***Surveying households (i.e., all individuals in the household) versus surveying individuals:*** also related to response rates.
- ✓ ***Considering simultaneous activities:*** unsatisfactory way of dealing with simultaneous activities with instruments other than activity diaries.

Potentials and Limitations of Latin American TUS to Inform Public Policy

- ✓ Difficulties to go beyond very crude measures of unpaid care work (sometimes not being able to separate housework from care work). Measures are not refined enough to feed into macroeconomic modeling, nor to be used into microeconomic (household level) analysis.
- ✓ Downward bias of measures of unpaid care work as simultaneous activities are not considered in most cases.
- ✓ Contextual information (socio-demographic information), particularly in the case of modules. Some important information is not provided (access to infrastructure, children's hours at school, paid domestic work).
- ✓ The relationship between labor market functioning and time-use is usually not analyzed. Daily rhythms.