

# Use of Time and Preferences for Time Allocation Among Urban, Employed, Married Women

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the relationship between employed wives' preferences for household production time, employment time, leisure, and their actual time use. A random sample of 235 employed, married women estimate their time use on an average weekday and weekend day in 13 activities and indicate their preferences for time in those activities. Hierarchical multiple regression procedures are used to examine the relationships between actual and preferred time use. Weekday employment time is not related to preferences for more or less time in household production but wives allocating more time to employment want to spend less time at that employment and more time in leisure. Weekend employment time is related to preferences for more time in leisure, child care, and other household work. Time spent performing household work is not related to preferences for more or less time in any activity except the desire for more leisure time on weekends.

**KEY WORDS:** Employed Women, Household Production, Time Preferences, Time Use, Work Loads

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## Introduction

National and international studies of time use (Robinson, 1977; Szalai, Converse, Feldheim, Scheuch, & Stone, 1972; Walker & Woods, 1976) documented that employed, married women had longer workdays than their husbands when employment and household production time were combined. Family economists (Fox & Nickols, 1983; Nickols & Metzen, 1982; Sanik, 1981) found that a relatively small decrease in household work resulted from women's increased labor force work and these were not accompanied by equally large increases in the household work by spouses or children. Family sociologists (Moen, 1982; Pleck, 1985; Voydanoff & Kelly, 1984) addressed the problems and stresses among wives associated with multiple and simultaneous demands, but empirical attempts to measure employed wives' attitudes toward their daily time use or workloads were few.

Family sociologists indicated that employed wives were not dissatisfied with their role responsibilities. Degler (1980) reported that regardless of employment status, wives were very satisfied with their wife, mother, and housekeeper roles. Pleck (1985) found that most employed wives preferred to have primary responsibility for performing household tasks. While attitudes among younger women toward labor force participation became more liberal, traditional attitudes toward household work were held by women of all age groups (Albrecht, Bahr, & Chadwick, 1979). However, these studies did not directly measure wives' subjective attitudes toward their time use, *per se*.

The study reported here directly addressed the subjective aspects of employed wives' time use in their many activities, including household work, employment, and leisure. It had two main objectives: (a) to describe employed wives' preferences for their time allocations to household tasks, employment, and leisure; and (b) to investigate the relationship between these preferences and women's actual time use.

## Background of the Study

Voluminous research by economists and family economists has been done on the allocation of time by family members to household production and labor market work as well as factors related to such time use (Abdel-Ghany & Nickols, 1983; Gramm, 1974; Gronau, 1976,

1977; Hafstrom & Schram, 1983; Hunt & Kiker, 1981; Nickols & Metzen, 1978; Sanik, 1981; Stafford, 1983). It has been well documented that wives' employment hours explained little variation in time spent in every household task except shopping (Sanik, 1981), and regardless of wives' employment status, husbands allocated relatively little time to housework (Nickols & Metzen, 1978). Based on the empirical evidence, researchers studying time use data have mildly suggested that a time crunch existed for employed wives (Fox & Nickols, 1983), and have more emphatically maintained that:

The persistence of traditional attitudes and behavior in the face of changes in the family and in the world of work has created strains and discontinuities which have damaging effects on the economic and social well-being of individuals and families. (Vanek, 1980, p. 288)

However, family economists have not investigated family members' attitudes about this time allocation or explored what factors may have been associated with positive or negative thoughts about their time allocation.

One reason these studies have not included subjective aspects of family time allocation may have been that many were influenced by Becker's (1965) seminal work on integrating the allocation of time into neoclassical theory of consumer demand. In traditional economic thought, preferences for time (or goods) did not need examination. They were revealed by observable behavior, purposefully chosen to maximize utility. That is, individuals must have chosen to allocate their time the way they did because that allocation was the utility-maximizing one. If any other way of spending time would have brought more utility to the individual than the current pattern, then time would have been reallocated in that manner.

Other economic concepts used in the analyses of firms and business situations that related to time have not been systematically applied to family work. The economic concept of the diminishing marginal utility of time has been based on the premise that each additional increment of time, past a certain threshold level, would become less satisfying than the previous increment (Blau & Ferber, 1986). If this explained family members' satisfaction with household work time, the more time spent by individuals performing household work, the more they would prefer decreasing their time in that work. Each additional minute would provide less satisfaction than the previous minute.

Recent critiques of the economic model and the applicability of economic concepts to the study of the family have raised important questions. Is it plausible to extend the assumption of purposeful rational behavior to household decision making (Berk, 1980; Blau, 1977; Mack & Leigland, 1982)? It has seemed illogical that employed wives would prefer the inequitable situation that existed for most; that is, total workloads, including employment and household task performance, which have exceeded those of their husbands and non-employed counterparts (Walker & Woods, 1976). Is it realistic to assume that families make decisions as homogeneous units maximizing one family utility function (Berk & Berk, 1978)? Are there no differences in time allocation preferences across the sexes that are settled by coercion, compromise, or habit? Berk (1976) proposed that many women have accepted household work inequalities as normative and prescriptive, and that their attitudes have been influenced by the perception that their efforts were labors of love, or that they perceived they had few alternatives.

Critics of the economic model of time allocation have asserted that in reality, preferences for time use have reflected a variety of factors considered important by sociologists but generally not recognized by economists (Blau & Ferber, 1986). For example, Nye (1976) stressed the importance of socialization in the formulation of attitudes concerning role performance. Slocum and Nye (1976) found that wives gave highest priority to family roles over occupational roles, regardless of the amount of time the former required, and they relegated recreational roles to an even lower status. Pleck (1977) argued that for women, family roles were permitted to intrude on their work roles. Others have found that even dual career wives were unwilling to downgrade the importance of family life and children (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rosen, Jerdee, & Prestwich, 1975).

However, sociologists have not focused on preferences for or satisfaction with time use, *per se*, or on the relationships between actual hours and preferences, but on multiple roles, role strain, and satisfaction with role responsibilities (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977; Pleck, 1985; Pleck & Staines, 1985). A recent exception was a study of work-time preferences among two-earner parents of children under 12 years of age (Moen & Dempster-McClain, 1987). The researchers concluded that actual hours on the job did not correspond to parents' preferred work-time involvement, as a majority of mothers and fathers wanted to spend less time at work in order to have more family time. Gender, actual work hours, and perceived work-family interference were re-

lated to the likelihood of preferring reduced work hours. These findings tended to underscore the research concerning role salience (Nye, 1976; Slocum & Nye, 1976), but the researchers did not address the relationships between preferences and actual time spent performing family and household work.

An additional body of research produced tangential but inconclusive evidence as to the relationships between actual time and subjective preferences for that time. Studies of the quality of life conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan (1975-1976) included some subjective questions on beliefs about activities. A nationally representative sample of respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point, Likert-type scale how satisfied they were with 18 facets of their everyday lives. Robinson (1977) reported that women derived between some and much satisfaction from household production activities but several other facets of women's lives (such as being with relatives, helping others, and being with friends) were rated as much more satisfying than the household work activities performed by these women. Additional multivariate analyses controlling for the effects of employment status, marital status, number and age of children, sex, and day of the week of the interview, provided some support for the premise that people spent their time in ways that provide them satisfaction:

the data . . . offer dramatic support for the controversial and usually empirically unsupported view that people's attitudes and their behavior are strongly interdependent (Robinson, 1977, p. 121).

Although Robinson reported that people allocated time to activities that were most satisfying, analyses of another dimension of subjective aspects of time use provided conflicting results. When asked to isolate the highlights and low points of a particular day, respondents reported housework as both a source of enjoyment and one of displeasure. Apparently there was no clear pattern of the relationships between what people perceived as enjoyable or displeasurable and their actual allocation of time.

Some clarification of the national time use data were provided by a panel follow-up conducted in 1981-82 (Juster, 1985). Respondents were asked to record their level of enjoyment of numerous daily activities, not the outcome of activities, on 10-point scales. Results indicated that activities involving interaction with others, such as child care, were more enjoyable than activities involving low interaction.

Outside jobs received a high ranking but most household work activities, other than child-related activities, received very low rankings. Housecleaning was a very time-intensive activity for most women but associated with low levels of enjoyment. Clearly, from these results, women did not enjoy the process of performing certain specific household tasks.

Therefore, no consensus has been reached regarding employed women's attitudes toward the amount of time they were spending performing family and household work or about the relationships between these attitudes and actual time allocations. Although economists and sociologists have drawn inferences concerning time preferences from various empirical studies, few definitive answers have emerged. The study reported here was designed to augment current understanding of the relationships between actual time use and attitudes toward time use.

### Objectives and Hypotheses

The first objective was to describe married women's preferences about whether and how they would change their time use if they could. A second objective was to investigate whether time allocated to employment and to household work was related to time preferences for various activities.

#### *Employment Time*

Previous research provided conflicting bases for predicting the relationships between time spent in employment and preferences for time use. Time spent on the job represented a significant block of time for employed women. Therefore, diminishing marginal utility of time mandated that women allocating longer hours to their jobs should prefer to decrease that time. Family sociologists Moen and Dempster-McClain (1987) found that mothers working longer hours were more likely to prefer to decrease that time, although they did not test the economic concept of the diminishing marginal utility of time.

Because time is limited, wives employed full-time may have felt that they simply did not have enough time for non-work activities and they may have preferred to spend time in any other activities. The threshold beyond which additional time spent in these activities became less satisfying may not have been exceeded. For example, Pleck and Staines (1985) reported that a major concern of employed

mothers was that they were not spending enough time with their children. For these women, each additional minute with their children would likely be more, rather than less, satisfying.

Because there were many tangible and intangible rewards associated with employment, some wives may have preferred to allocate more time to employment rather than spending time performing unpaid household work that was often unnoticed by others. Even if a wife worked long hours in the paid labor force, certain household tasks were necessary, and other family members did not significantly increase their time performing household tasks (Nickols & Metzen, 1982). Even wives deriving substantial tangible and intangible rewards from employment may have preferred to allocate more time to household tasks, leisure, and other activities. For example, a woman's standards for cleanliness or her attitudes about appropriate role behavior may have influenced the perception that she needed to spend more time cleaning her home.

Some wives spent time on weekends performing employment-related activities. Professionals, managers, entrepreneurs, and teachers often brought work home and spent time on weekends catching up. Frequently, medical and sales personnel were scheduled for weekend work. Researchers examining sample design issues of time use studies (Kalton, 1985) reported that the day of the week should not be ignored. Employed wives reported spending more time performing routine household work such as housecleaning and shopping on weekends than on weekdays (Kalton, 1985). Also, family members were more likely to be home on weekends than on weekdays, thus doing housework on the weekend may have produced satisfaction because one could be observed doing it.

### *Household Work Time*

Whether the concept of diminishing marginal utility of time was applicable to household work time was problematic. For household tasks that were time consuming, perceived as boring or repetitious (Maloch, 1963; Ronald, Singer, & Firebaugh, 1971), and were least liked (Juster, 1985; Robinson, 1977), a negative relationship should have existed between actual time spent performing these tasks and preferences for more time. However, the posited relationships were less certain for other family work that was perceived as creative, such as meal preparation, or involved interaction with others.

It has been well documented that on the average, employed wives reported having very little leisure time (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Walker & Woods, 1976). Strober and Weinberg (1980) found that employed wives often reduced leisure time in order to cope with other time pressures. It was unlikely that the employed wives in the present study had so much leisure time as to prefer to have less of it. Therefore, it was hypothesized that a positive relationship would be found between employment time, household work time, and preferences for more leisure.

### *Control Variables*

Several personal and family characteristics that had been found to be related to time use in previous research were included as control variables. They included Age, Education, Occupational Status, Family Income, and the presence of a Child Under 18. A negative relationship was expected between wives' age and the desire to spend more time in employment and leisure activities because younger wives have indicated more liberal attitudes toward employment and personal fulfillment (Ferree, 1984). Wives' education was predicted to be positively related to preferences for more time in employment, child care, and leisure, but negatively related to preferences for more time in household production (Hofferth & Moore, 1979). Because wives in higher level occupations were more likely to have more and diverse employment responsibilities but also problems reconciling the demands of employment and children's needs (Rapaport & Rapaport, 1976; Rosen et al., 1975), they were expected to prefer more time in employment and child care, but less time performing housework. The relationships between having children living at home and time preferences were uncertain. While mothers may have believed that they needed to spend additional time with their children and time performing the household work associated with having children (Walker & Woods, 1976), they may have wanted to provide the material resources that could be realized by additional employment hours. Consistent with economic theory concerning time use (Becker, 1965), wives in higher income families were expected to demand more leisure time, consequently preferring to decrease their time allocations to other activities.

Additional control variables included Gender Role Attitudes and Career Commitment. Women who held more traditional attitudes to-

ward gender role behavior were expected to prefer to spend more time performing household work, whereas women having more egalitarian attitudes were expected to state preferences to spend less time performing stereotypically feminine household tasks such as housecleaning and food preparation, but want more time for leisure and employment activities. The direction of any relationships between Career Commitment and preferences for time use were uncertain. It was logical that women who were very committed to their careers probably wanted to allocate more time to that employment at the expense of household production and leisure time. However, they may have been currently allocating much time to that employment and thus experiencing guilt associated with beliefs that they were neglecting household work and interaction with children (Rapaport & Rapaport, 1976). It was also feasible that Career Commitment facilitated the management of other responsibilities, such as established daily routines and procedures so that they were very satisfied with their time allocations; that is, preferred to spend the same amount of time that they were spending in various activities and tasks.

## Methods

### *Subjects*

The data were collected in 1984 via questionnaires mailed to 500 randomly selected, married women who resided in a large city in the Southeast. The city directory was used as the population list because it included employed wives and was judged to be the most complete list of married, employed women available. A total of 58.2% of the questionnaires were returned from eligible women and of those, 235 (53.7%) were available for inclusion in the present analyses, although the number in each analysis varied due to missing time use data for some wives in specific activities, such as child care.

The sample women were mostly white (95%), middle aged ( $M = 45$  years), well educated women ( $M = 14$  years of schooling). They had been married, on the average, 22 years to husbands who were still generally employed (89%). Over one-third (38%) of the women had no children under age 18 living at home, 26% had one child, 26% had two children, and 9% had three or more children under 18 living at home.

Many were employed in sales and clerical jobs (41%), were managers or administrators (27%), or teachers (20%). Only a few wives were employed as professionals or as skilled or semi-skilled workers. Their median annual income was \$14,500, higher than the 1984 mean annual income of \$12,235 for white females in the South Atlantic states (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986).

### *Measurement of Variables*

*Preferences for time use.* Wives reported their preferences for use of their time (Preferences For Time) by checking one of the following responses for each activity: *prefer to spend a great deal less time, prefer to spend less time, prefer to spend a little less time, spend about the right amount of time, prefer to spend a little more time, prefer to spend more time, and prefer to spend a great deal more time.* The activities included 11 specific household production tasks: meal planning, food preparation, kitchen cleanup, shopping, housecleaning, car and yard care, home repairs, clothing care, bill paying and record keeping, discussing and making financial decisions, and caring for children. Also included were two broadly worded activities, employment and leisure. Responses were coded from 1 to 7 with 1 representing a preference to spend *much less time* and 7 representing a preference to spend *much more time* in the activity.

*Time use.* Respondents reported their Time Allocations on a typical week day and weekend day in the same set of activities. Asking subjects to recall typical allocation of time was less precise than the recall and diary methods used by Robinson (1977) and Walker and Woods (1976), but a major advantage of this method was that it more effectively measured usual time allocation for those individuals where "today's" or "yesterday's" time use was atypical of normal life patterns. The actual variables used in the analyses presented here were minutes per day in each type of day reported by wives.

*Control variables.* Wives' Age was measured in years and Education in number of years of schooling completed. Occupational Status was measured using the Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) 7-point occupational scale and coded so that a 7 represented professionals.

Annual Family Income was measured by asking subjects to select 1 of 14 income categories. Responses were recoded to category midpoints and included in the analyses as continuous variables. The presence of one or more children under age 18 was included as a dummy variable which equaled 1 if children were present and 0 otherwise.

Wives' attitudes toward gender roles were indicated on six items each measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The six items were one dimension of Gender Role Attitudes identified by Tomeh (1978) from items originally developed by Scanzoni (1975). That dimension placed emphasis on the real possibility of a husband's sacrifices in his time, energy, and interests to accommodate the wife's occupational interests. Tomeh (1978) reported a reliability coefficient of .84 for this dimension of the scale. Wives' scores on the six items were summed and entered as one independent, control variable. Higher scores reflected modern gender role attitudes. That is, gender roles were characterized by flexibility and role sharing between the sexes.

Career Commitment was calculated using wives' responses on three 4-point items. Wives indicated either *strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, or strong disagreement* to the following: (a) "Except for possible short-term interruptions, I plan to be continually employed until retirement age"; (b) "I view my employment as more than a job, it is a career which requires a great deal of commitment on my part"; and (c) "My work provides me with oppor-

tunities for personal growth and development." Higher scores represented stronger career commitment of wives.

### *Data Analysis*

A series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed to analyze the linear relationships between wives' preferences for and their actual time allocations. In each analysis the dependent variable was wives' Preferences for Time in one of the 11 household production activities, employment, and leisure. The set of control variables were entered first to partial out any variability in wives' time preferences attributable to those variables. Wives' time in employment activities on an average weekday and weekend day were entered in Step 2. Finally, variables representing wives' time on a weekday and weekend day allocated to the household production activities (e.g., meal planning, food preparation, kitchen cleanup, shopping, housecleaning, car and yard care, home repairs, clothing care, bill paying and record keeping, discussing and making financial decisions, and caring for children) were entered in Step 3 of each analysis. Changes in  $F$ -values and  $R^2$ s are reported after each step. Only those analyses resulting in a statistically significant  $F$ -value at one or more of the three steps are reported.

## **Results**

Frequency distributions of wives' Preferences for Time and estimations of actual Time Allocations on an average weekday and weekend day are presented in Table 1. The means for actual time were in some instances slightly higher than those reported by previous studies that used the time diary method for recording time use, but were not extreme. Over estimations probably resulted from reporting time spent in separate activities when in reality, those activities were performed simultaneously. For example, time spent preparing meals may have also been time spent overseeing the activities of young children.

An examination of descriptive data of Preferences for Time use (see Table 1) revealed some interesting patterns. On the average weekday, wives allocated almost one-third of the total time available to employment activities, and the majority were either satisfied (i.e., wanted to spend about the same amount of time, 38%) or wanted to spend a little less time (33%) in employment. Conversely, most wives reported little weekday or weekend leisure time compared to time spent performing household work. An overwhelming majority wanted more time for leisure and recreation activities. The descriptive data for child-care time pertained to women who had one or more children

**TABLE 1**  
**Employed Wives' Preferences for Use of Time and Mean Time Allocations**

Activity	n	Wives' preferences for use of time					Mean time allocations				
		Much less time	Little less time	Same time	Little more time	More time	Much more time	Weekday		Weekend day	
								Hours	Mins.	Hours	Mins.
<i>Household production activities</i>											
Meal planning	198	3.0	4.5	5.6	35.9	26.8	19.7	4.5	4.6	25	43
Food preparation	198	3.5	5.1	8.6	37.9	27.8	13.6	3.5	4.4	7	34
Kitchen cleanup	200	9.2	10.7	16.3	44.4	12.2	6.1	1.0	3.6	41	0
Shopping	198	5.6	9.1	14.1	57.1	9.6	3.5	1.0	3.7	31	41
Housecleaning	200	9.5	8.0	12.4	26.9	26.4	10.0	7.0	4.1	50	26
Car & yard care	200	5.9	4.8	6.4	39.6	25.7	11.2	6.4	4.3	10	47
Home repairs	166	5.4	2.4	3.6	50.6	19.3	13.9	4.8	4.4	5	18
Clothing care	194	4.6	5.7	10.8	46.4	21.1	8.2	3.1	4.1	44	16
Record keeping	188	6.9	3.2	11.7	63.8	8.5	5.3	.5	3.8	21	18
Financial decisions	188	1.6	4.3	8.0	53.7	22.3	12.2	3.7	4.4	17	18
Caring for children	90	1.1	4.4	5.6	41.1	21.1	13.3	13.3	4.7	3	23
<i>Employment and leisure activities</i>											
Employment	197	6.1	15.2	32.5	37.6	4.6	3.0	1.0	3.3	7	6
Leisure & recreation	191	0.0	0.0	1.0	17.3	30.9	28.8	22.0	5.5	53	10

*Note.* Tabled values for wives' preferences are percentages.

under age 18 living at home, thereby excluding the grandmothers who expressed preferences for time caring for their grandchildren. Many mothers (48%) wanted to spend more time caring for their children, although for most, child-care was time intensive, an average of almost 3.5 hours on a weekday and 6 hours on a weekend day.

For more specific household production activities, Preferences for Time use were not so precise. Tasks that were most time consuming pertained to production of meals (including meal planning, food preparation, and kitchen cleanup), as well as housecleaning and clothing care. Many wives wanted to spend more time planning (51%) and preparing meals (45%), but few preferred to spend more time or much more time cleaning the house (17%) or kitchen (7%) or caring for clothing (11%), although a few wanted to spend a little more time housecleaning (26%) and in clothing care (21%).

Many wives were satisfied with their Time Allocations to household tasks. That is, they preferred to spend about the same amount of time performing the activities as they were currently spending. More than 50% indicated that they did not want to change their time allocations to the least time consuming tasks of shopping, home repairs, record keeping, and discussing and making financial decisions.

The results of the regression analyses are reported in Table 2. No significant relationships were found for wives' time preferences for shopping, bill paying and record keeping, and discussing and making financial decisions. Therefore, these results were omitted from Table 2. For these three activities, there was less variability in wives' preferences and at least 50% of all wives indicated satisfaction with current time allocations.

*Wives' employment time.* Wives' time in employment on an average weekday was significantly related to Preferences for Time in two activities, employment and leisure. In accordance with the theory of diminishing marginal utility of time, wives who spent more time in employment preferred to allocate less time to that employment and more time to leisure and recreation. Weekday employment time was not related to wives' Preferences for Time in any of the household production activities. Wives who allocated many hours to employment did not express the desire to spend more or less time cooking, housecleaning, or performing any of the other home tasks, and not because they actually spent much less time than other wives doing household work. Correlations revealed that wives who allocated more time to weekday employment did spend less weekday time than other

**TABLE 2**  
**Results of Regression Analyses for Wives' Preferences for Time Allocations**

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Preferences for time allocated to:</i>									
	<i>Meal planning</i>	<i>Food preparation</i>	<i>Kitchen cleanup</i>	<i>House-cleaning</i>	<i>Car and yard care</i>	<i>Home repairs</i>	<i>Clothing care</i>	<i>Caring for children</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Leisure and recreation</i>
<i>Control variables</i>										
Age	-.1598	-.0041	.0224	-.0105	.0263	-.0070	.1504	—	.0186	.0190
Education	.0423	-.0156	-.0610	.0754	.0089	.918	.1448	.0395	-.1726*	.0066
Occupational status	.0092	.0283	.2288*	.1791*	.1393	.1014	.0324	.2708	.0185	.0817
Family income	-.1759	-.1103	-.1399	-.2995**	-.1640	-.2297*	-.2276**	-.0815	.0815	.0819
Child under 18										
(0 = no child)										
1 = child	.1972*	.1408	.1258	.1462	.0949	.0925	-.0137	—	.0767	.0615
Career commitment	.0090	.0360	.1138	-.0045	.1441	.1478	-.0843	-.1922*	.1637*	-.0651
Sex role attitudes	-.0187	.0430	-.1676*	.0409	.1489	.0422	.0862	.2238*	-.1417	.2449**
F	3.58	1.32	2.14*	3.02**	3.29**	2.64*	2.31*	3.80**	2.34*	3.26**
R <sup>2</sup>										
(after Step 1)	.13	.05	.08	.11	.12	.11	.09	.20	.09	.12



wives planning meals, shopping, and caring for car and yard, but these were not very time intensive activities (see Table 1).

Wives' weekend employment time was significantly related to preferences for more time planning meals, preparing food, caring for clothing, and caring for children. Logically, wives who spent more time in employment on weekends may not have had time to prepare food or clothing for the coming week or for spending time with their children. However, this was not verified by the data. Correlations between weekend employment hours and actual weekend time use produced no statistically significant coefficients except in one activity, meal planning. That is, wives who spent more hours in employment on weekends spent no less time than did other wives working at home, other than in planning family meals. Because weekends are often viewed as time available to spend with family members and performing household production tasks that require blocks of time and effort, perhaps employment time on weekends reinforced stresses associated with time constraints. Consequently, these women wanted even more time to care for children, prepare food, and maintain clothing, even though they were actually spending no less time in these activities.

*Wives' household work time.* Time spent in 11 household production activities was summed for an average weekday and also an average weekend day and these two variables were entered last. Overall, only two statistically significant changes in  $F$ -values were produced. Wives who allocated more time to household work preferred to spend more time performing home repairs, although additional variability explained by household work time was small (4%). Weekend household production time was statistically significant and positively related to preferences for time in leisure and recreation. That is, wives who spent more time on weekends performing household work preferred to spend more weekend time in leisure and recreation. Rightly so, because additional analyses produced a statistically significant and negative Pearson's correlation coefficient between the summed variable and leisure time on an average weekend day. That is, wives who spent more time performing household labor on a weekend day, reported having less leisure time. Overall, however, the amount of time wives spent performing household work was not related to their preferences for more or less time in any activities other than home repairs and leisure.

*The effects of control variables.* The combined set of control variables produced statistically significant  $F$ -values for wives' time preferences in all activities except food preparation. As predicted, Annual Family Income was statistically significant and negatively related to wives' preferences for time in four household production activities (meal planning, housecleaning, home repairs, and clothing care). That is, wives in higher income families preferred to spend less time in these activities. Correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationships between income and actual Time Allocations to the activities. Results indicated that although wives from higher income families spent less time housecleaning on weekdays, there were no significant correlations between income and time allocated to housecleaning on weekends or to meal planning, home repairs, or clothing care on weekdays or weekend days. Either these wives hired help or used services in addition to their own time allocations, or higher income primarily served to legitimize preferences to spend less time performing routine household chores.

Occupational Status was statistically significant and positively related to preferences for more time for kitchen cleanup and housecleaning. Wives in higher level occupations wanted to spend more time cleaning, probably because they actually spent less time than wives in lower occupations, as Occupational Status was negatively correlated with time in these activities ( $p < .05$ ) Wives with lower Career Commitment scores wanted to spend more time caring for children. Wives who were more committed to their careers preferred to allocate more time to their jobs, but no relationship was found between career commitment and a preference for leisure time. As predicted, wives who held more modern Gender Role Attitudes preferred to have more leisure time and to spend more time caring for children, but wives who held more traditional Gender Role Attitudes wanted to spend more time cleaning their kitchens. Gender Role Attitudes were not related to employment time preferences.

### Summary and Discussion

What are wives attitudes toward their time use? They want more time for leisure and recreation activities, but also more time for family tasks and responsibilities. The majority are either satisfied or want to spend a little less time in employment. Approximately 21%

would more extensively decrease their employment time and only 9% want to spend more time performing employment activities.

For the wives in the sample, the economic theory of diminishing marginal utility of time seems applicable to employment and leisure time. For employment, after a certain threshold level, each successive minute is less satisfying than the last. After controlling for personal and family characteristics and attitudes that may affect wives' preferences for their time use, wives who allocate more hours to employment want to spend less and wives allocating fewer hours want to increase their time inputs. Concerning leisure time, the threshold is not reached. Over 80% of the wives in the sample desire more time for leisure and recreation but are getting little, an average of 53 weekday minutes and 2 hours and 10 minutes on weekend days. Wives who are more committed to their jobs, who spend more time at employment on weekdays, or more time doing household work on weekends hold stronger preferences for more leisure and recreation time.

If Kingston and Nock (1985) are correct in their observation that longer work days produce greater needs for more free time, the wives' preferences in this study reflect this need but actual time use does not. It is interesting that weekday household work time does not produce the desire for more leisure as does weekday employment time. Wives want more leisure at the expense of reduced employment hours rather than reduced household work time at home.

The economic theory of the diminishing marginal utility of time is not applicable to preferences for time allocated to household work as many wives want to spend even more time in the most time consuming of household tasks regardless of their actual time expenditures in those tasks. However, it may be that some wives do not spend enough time performing household work activities to attain the threshold point where each successive minute becomes less satisfying. An alternative explanation is that wives' preferences regarding family and household work were learned years earlier from mothers who were not employed. Unlike leisure time and employment time which are legitimately flexible, their family responsibilities are interpreted as normative and prescriptive (Berk, 1976) and even central to self-definition (Ferree, 1980). Wives who spend long hours are just as likely as wives who spend little time doing household work to want to spend more time performing a variety of household work activities.

Of course women's time preferences may be affected by other factors not measured in this study. Some women may want to allocate more time to household work and family tasks because they actually

enjoy performing those tasks. As Vanek (1980) indicated, some women may prefer to allocate more time on weekends to household work because that effort is visible and therefore more likely to be appreciated by family members. Also, recent research has found that for some tasks, satisfaction with end results rather than actual enjoyment of task performance is an important issue in relation to satisfaction with time use (Juster, 1985). For example, some wives may prefer to spend more time housecleaning not because of enjoyment of the actual cleaning activities, but because personal standards of what constitutes a clean house are not being met.

In this study it is not possible to parcel out all factors, and considering the unexplained variability, much work remains to be done concerning attitudes toward and preferences for time use. Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples and should include questions about reasons for women's time preferences. However, a major finding of this study is that while actual employment and leisure time may affect wives' satisfaction with and preferences for their time allocations to employment and leisure, preferences for time use in household tasks and family work are not related to wives' actual time expenditures.

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