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LEISURE BEFORE AND AFTER PARENTHOOD

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ABSTRACT. The leisure time of 117 wives and husbands was studied to determine the effect of parenthood on this time allocation. Data from both a weekday and a weekend day, both before and after the birth of the first child were analyzed. Ordinary least squares regression was used to analyze the time use model which controlled for weekend/weekday, and looked at the effects of personal characteristics such as wife's education and employment status, husband's wage rate, and number of years married as well as parental status. The time of the wife and the husband and the ratio of the wife's to husband's time were negatively related to parental status. Each personal characteristic was negatively related to the wife/husband ratio of leisure time and unrelated to husband's leisure.

Leisure time allocation of first time parents is affected by personal characteristics, role status and situational circumstance. Central to this examination is the analysis of homemaker's and spousal leisure time allocation before and after a change in family structure, the birth of a first child. This study specifically examined the ratio of wife's to husband's time during the third trimester of pregnancy and approximately three months after the birth of the first child. Central to this examination are the questions: (a) How does the presence or absence of the first child affect leisure time allocation? (b) What affect do personal characteristics, roles and situation have on the choice of leisure time allocation? and (c) How are personal characteristics, role and situation related to the ratio of leisure time allocation?

BACKGROUND

Allocation and use of leisure time in family time-use decision making is one of the neglected aspects of time-use studies in home economics and social science literature. Generally, leisure has been studied as a separate sphere of activity rather than as an integral part of family relationships and resource systems (Nichols and Abdel-Ghany, 1983).

The definition of leisure varies but has always included the amount of time devoted to participation in discretionary activities. Nichols and Abdel-Ghany (1983) defined leisure as the social and recreational activities pursued for enjoyment compared to other uses of time such as paid work, personal care or organizational participation.

Time used to fulfil employee, spouse or parent roles is related to other activities both inside and outside the household system. Reallocations of time to one role or demand produces changes in the proportion of time spent in other activities and in the relationship between time-use activities (Rowland *et al.*, 1986). Role expectations of husbands and wives often complicate the leisure time allocation decisions for both individuals and couples. Marks (1977) stated that role conflicts and strain were inevitable and directly related to scarcity in an individual's time and energy resource. Moore stated that "given the scarcity of time and energy, the probability of time conflict for the multiple joiner is somewhat more than abstract and hypothetical" (1963, p. 923).

Linking the scarcity approach with theories of multiple roles is best seen in three additional works: Goode (1960); Slater (1963); and Coser (1974). Coser (1974) states that the problem of competition for loyalty and commitment is a personal problem because of scarce resources. Not only do human beings possess only finite "libidinal" energies for social participation, but their resources of time are similarly limited. As a consequence, various activities having a claim on the individual's energies and time compete with one another in an effort to draw as much as they can, within normative limits, from the available pool of resources. The struggle over their allocation is as much a root fact of social life as is the competition of users of scarce resources in economic affairs (Coser, 1974). Goode is likewise concerned with the impact of the claims made on multiple role players. Goode argues that the individual's problem is how to allocate his energies and skills so as to reduce role strain to some bearable proportions. The individual solves the problem altogether by either avoiding certain roles altogether or by making certain role bargains in which his interest is to demand as much as he can and perform as little (Goode, 1960). Slater (1963) concluded that people who do not have enough time or energy to participate in the activities of demand and choice must do some compromising.

Given these considerations, the scarcity argument about time might

go as follows: When social institutions in a complex society become segregated from each other such as modern families and workplaces then time becomes universally scarce, since so many of one's activities will isolate one from so many of one's role partners to whom some time is owed (Marks, 1977). There is still evidence of considerable variation in the way that time is structured and experienced within that framework, and some of these variations reveal an abundance of leisure time (Seiber, 1974; Coser, 1975; Marks, 1977).

Role strain comprises two overlapping problems. These are role overload and role conflict (Goode, 1960). The former refers to constraints imposed by time: as role obligations increase, sooner or later a time barrier is confronted that forces the participant to honor some roles at the expense of honoring others. The problem of role demand requiring a particular time and a particular place or the expenditure of a finite sum of role resources. Role conflict refers to discrepant expectations irrespective of time pressures. One might assume that multiplication of roles imposes the double burden of overload and conflict inasmuch as the more roles one accumulated the greater the probability of running out of time and of confronting role partners whose expectations are contradictory. A full-scale theory of the consequences of role accumulation would need to distinguish between the independent variables of role strain; conflict and overload, parent, spouse, employed worker, volunteer, etc. (Seiber, 1974; Marks, 1977; Bird *et al.*, 1983; Presser, 1987).

There is a wealth of empirical work dealing with the conflicts between occupational roles, familial roles and marital roles. Although attitudes regarding household division of labor have become more egalitarian during the last decade (Scanzoni and Fox, 1980), there has been a lag in actual egalitarian role behaviors (Araji, 1977). Beckman and Houser (1979) concluded that individuals can compartmentalize their various roles such that the addition of an employment role by the wife does not necessarily mean changes in gender-specific behavior with the family. Edgell (1970) examined conflicts which arose when a commitment to one role detracted from a commitment to another role and inevitably lead to a drain on both time and energy. Hughes (1961) stated that time allocation focused on tasks that must be done and the priorities placed on those tasks. Hughes stated that there were four

reasons for carrying out tasks: (1) spontaneous enjoyment; (2) spontaneous loyalty; (3) anticipation of some perceived regard or (4) avoidance of perceived punishment. Any of these reasons can be related to the leisure time use by families.

Robinson (1977) reported that there were four factors interacting with each other which determine how time is used in households: (a) person, those unique personal characteristics which influence most time use decisions; (b) role, the functioning position delegated to various members of a household; (c) environmental, the settings in which household members function; and (d) resource factors both human and material which contribute to time allocation decisions in the household. Any reallocation of time to one role or demand results in changes in the proportion of time spent in other activities (Berk and Berk, 1979: p. 222). Orthner (1975) discussed role expectations of husbands which often complicated the leisure time allocation decisions of both individuals and couples. The time couples shared in leisure activities often influenced the time allocation decisions of the individual partners.

Because components of the resource system are often related and interchangeable to some extent, a change in one component of the system would bring about change in other components of the resource system (Gross *et al.*, 1980). Therefore, time allocation to shared leisure activities impacts the leisure time available for individual use. Gerner and Zick (1983) examined empirically the simultaneous nature of time allocation decisions of husbands and wives in relation to utility maximization. They found that when a resource such as time was constrained the priority ordering of activities including leisure time was changed in order to achieve maximization. The results indicated that when family size changed or the number of hours worked are changed time allocation decisions also changed. Hofstrom and Schram (1983) indicated that the greater the constraints placed on time allocation decisions such as the number and age of family members the fewer hours of discretionary time was available for use by individuals.

METHOD

Sample

Data were collected from 126 first-time parents in the central Ohio areas encompassing Columbus in 1987. Consenting subjects contacted through preparation for childbirth classes and pre-delivery hospital tours met with an interviewer during the third trimester of the pregnancy to complete a questionnaire and time use record for a weekday. A second time chart and appropriate supplemental questionnaire were left for a Saturday time use record which was picked up and checked by the interviewer. Approximately three months after the baby was born, two additional time charts and a questionnaire were completed. Nine couples did not provide 4 days of information making the total sample size 117.

Many of the wives were employed: 81.2 percent before the birth and 56.9 percent three months after the birth of the baby (Table I). The number of years married ranged from 0 to 12, with a mean of 3.4 years. Most parents had some education beyond high school, which is a high percentage for the population at large but which may be more indicative of today's two-parent household's, expecting their first child.

Model

This study investigates the relative amounts of time allocated to leisure by couples. The dependent variable, leisure, was defined as the sum of time reported in non-work activities of organization participation, social and recreational activities, personal care (including rest and sleeping) and eating.

Years married, wife's level of educational attainment, wife's employment status and husband's wage comprised the personal characteristic variables for the study. Parenthood constituted the situation role while the constraint of weekday/weekend status was used as a control variable.

Time devoted to leisure was analyzed using OLS regression. Preliminary analysis indicated no significant interaction effects between weekday/weekend and parental status.

TABLE I
Sample description

Wife's Employment Status			
	Before Birth	81.2%	
	After Birth	56.9%	
		MEAN	
		(SD)	
Years Married		3.39	
		(2.50)	
	Wife		Husband
Education	14.4		15.1
	(2.25)		(2.53)
Age	26.8		28.3
	(4.10)		(4.15)
Wage Rate (If Employed)	6.30		10.34
	(7.27)		(4.88)
Mean Hours Per Day in:	Wife		Husband
Organizational Participation	0.21		0.18
	(0.77)		(0.65)
Social and Recreation Activity	3.96		4.39
	(2.65)		(3.14)
Personal Care	10.06		9.04
	(1.92)		(1.71)
Eating	1.11		1.12
	(0.55)		(0.61)
Total Leisure	15.35		14.73
	(3.58)		(3.72)

FINDINGS

The model explained 24 percent of the variance in the ratio of the wife's to husband's time in leisure activities (Table II). Parental status was highly significant in explaining the variance in the ratio of leisure time. The ratio of wife's to husband's leisure decreased by 0.20 hour (or about 12 minutes) per day after the birth of the baby. All variables in the model explained a significant amount of variance in the ratio of wife's to husband's leisure time ($p > 0.10$). The number of years married had a small negative effect on the leisure time ratio as did the

TABLE II
Leisure time of parents

	Wife's Leisure		Husband's Leisure		Ratio (Wife's/Husband's Leisure)	
	Regr. Coef (S.E.)	p	Regr. Coef (S.E.)	p	Regr. Coef (S.E.)	p
Yrs. Married	-0.19 (0.06)	0.0009	-0.05 (0.07)	n.s.	-0.01 (0.01)	0.0418
Wife's Education	-0.04 (0.06)	n.s.	0.07 (0.07)	n.s.	-0.01 (0.01)	0.0821
Wife's Employ- ment Status (1 = Employed)	-2.31 (0.30)	0.0001	-0.20 (0.34)	n.s.	-0.14 (0.02)	0.0001
Husband's Wage Rate	0.03 (0.03)	n.s.	0.05 (0.03)	n.s.	-0.005 (0.002)	0.0785
Weekend (1 = Yes)	2.49 (0.26)	0.0001	4.23 (0.30)	0.0001	-0.12 (0.02)	0.0001
Parental Status (1 = After Birth)	-3.86 (0.27)	0.0001	-0.99 (0.31)	0.0016	-0.20 (0.02)	0.0001
R-Square	0.45		0.34		0.24	

wife's years of education and the husband's wage rate. Employed wives' ratio of leisure time was 0.14 hour (or about 8 1/2 minutes) less than the ratio for nonemployed wives, all other things constant. The control variable, weekend/weekday, indicated a decrease in the ratio of 0.12 hour on weekends.

In order to better understand the allocation of leisure time of both husbands and wives, the same model was used to analyze the daily leisure time of the wife separate from the husband's. By using the same variables in the model for the analysis of both the husband's and the wife's time, we avoid the problem of simultaneity in analysis. While the model explained 45 percent of the variance in leisure time for wife's only 34 percent of the variance in husbands leisure time was explained.

The wife's role variables were highly significant in explaining her time in leisure activities. After the birth of the baby, her leisure time decreased by 3.86 hours per day, *ceteris paribus*. If employed, the wife's leisure likewise decreased by 2.31 hours per day. For every

additional year wives were married, their leisure time decreased by 0.19 hour per day. On weekends wives leisure time increased 2.49 hours per day. Neither wife's education nor her husband's wage rate explained significant variance in her leisure time.

The husband's parental role was the only variable which significantly explained his time in leisure in addition to the control variable weekend/weekday. His leisure time decreased by 0.99 hour per day after the birth of the baby. His weekend leisure was 4.23 hours more per day than on weekdays.

DISCUSSION

Parental role and situation variables were significant in explaining variance in both wife's and husband's time allocation. This supports findings by Rowland, Nichols and Dodder (1986) where time allocation or reallocation of one role or demand resulted in changes in the proportion of time spent in other activities and in the relationship between time-use activities. Hughes, 1961; Orthner, 1975; Hofstrom and Schram, 1983; and others agreed that time allocation for leisure focused on tasks that must be done, the priorities placed on those tasks by the person and the role as well as the environment and resource factors available to the household. The employment status of the mother accounted for a significant effect in her leisure time allocation further supporting the contention of the dynamic interaction between role, situation and activity performed.

The ratio of wife's to husband's leisure time ranged from 0.45 to 1.86, with a mean value of 1.04. This indicates that most wives had more leisure than their husbands. It is important to emphasize, however, that in the before birth period most of the women were in the ninth month of their pregnancy. As rest and sleep were included in the definition of leisure, the physical well-being of the women may have prevented a more active lifestyle.

SUMMARY

Parental status decreases not only the total amount of leisure of husbands and wives but the ratio of the time as well. Therefore, as it

has been in the past, wives lose more leisure after the arrival of a baby than their husbands. Not unexpectedly, the situation ie, whether the day was a weekday or a weekend significantly explained variance in leisure time and is, therefore, needed as a control variable in the analysis of time use.

Although all of the personal characteristic variables were significant in explaining variance in the ratio of wives to husbands leisure time, the effects are relatively small: ranging from about one-half minute per day for an additional year of marriage to 8.5 minutes per day if the wife is employed. The personal characteristics are not significant in the husband's model for leisure time. Years married does make a negative contribution to the wife's leisure time. Her leisure time is unresponsive to her education and to her husband's wage rate.

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