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 fulfill employee, spouse or parent roles is related to
other activities both inside and outside the household system. Reallocation
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