

The Death of the "Stay-at-Home Parent"? Gender, Work and Parenting in the 21st Century U.S.

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Using a combination of Census microdata from the American Community Survey, household time diaries, and semi-structured interviews, this paper critically evaluates the conceptualization and measurement of stay-at-home parenthood. More specifically, I employ time diary and interview data with 40 fathers to empirically examine the time use of men who "stay home." I find that -- due to fathers' participation in paid work, volunteer work, and leisure, as well as children's hours in school and activities -- men who identify as "staying home" report little difference in "primary caregiving" time from full-time employed fathers. In addition, 2 out of 3 stay-at-home fathers would be excluded from the Census' count due to participation in the labor force, duration at home, or reasons for staying home. I extend my findings to stay-at-home mothers, predicting that the term "stay-at-home parenthood" is becoming antiquated, and conclude by suggesting that the Census measures "primary caregiving" instead.

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