

Journal of Child and Family Studies

“To Spank or Not to Spank? #discipline”: A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents’ Spanking Tweets --Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	
Full Title:	“To Spank or Not to Spank? #discipline”: A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents’ Spanking Tweets
Article Type:	Original research
Keywords:	Discipline; Corporal punishment; Spanking; Twitter; Stay-At-Home Parents
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Funding Information:	Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan (US) (185) Not applicable
Abstract:	Objective: This qualitative study used Twitter to examine stay-at-home parents’ publicly available contributions to Twitter about discipline and spanking. Background: Many adults still support the use of spanking despite a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that spanking is linked to a range of negative child outcomes. Little is currently known about how parents think about spanking as a disciplinary practice and how parents express these beliefs online. Method: Five million publicly available tweets were collected from self-identified stay-at-home parents. Tweets were screened for discipline and spanking content. A qualitative analysis was conducted on the final set of tweets (N = 648). Results: Stay-at-home parents were most likely to tweet about information related to discipline and spanking compared to tweets that made up other global themes (e.g., discipline tips). Parents most commonly posted tweets that reflected their anti-spanking beliefs compared to tweets that made up other subthemes (e.g., pro-spanking). Tweets in support of spanking emerged as well, with fathers being more likely than mothers to tweet about pro-spanking beliefs and desires. However, mothers were more likely than fathers to tweet about pro-spanking behaviors. Conclusion: Our results provide evidence that stay-at-home parents turn to Twitter to obtain disciplinary information and disclose their anti-spanking and pro-spanking beliefs. Anti-spanking tweets potentially reflect changing social norms and suggest that some stay-at-home parents on Twitter may be engaging in selective self-presentation. Clinical significance: Twitter may be one avenue to use for interventions to set social norms that aim to reduce parental corporal punishment.

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“To Spank or Not to Spank? #discipline”:

A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents’ Spanking Tweets

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Declaration of interest: none

Abstract

Objective: This qualitative study used Twitter to examine stay-at-home parents' publicly available contributions to Twitter about discipline and spanking. **Background:** Many adults still support the use of spanking despite a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that spanking is linked to a range of negative child outcomes. Little is currently known about how parents think about spanking as a disciplinary practice and how parents express these beliefs online. **Method:** Five million publicly available tweets were collected from self-identified stay-at-home parents. Tweets were screened for discipline and spanking content. A qualitative analysis was conducted on the final set of tweets ($N = 648$). **Results:** Stay-at-home parents were most likely to tweet about information related to discipline and spanking compared to tweets that made up other global themes (e.g., discipline tips). Parents most commonly posted tweets that reflected their anti-spanking beliefs compared to tweets that made up other subthemes (e.g., pro-spanking). Tweets in support of spanking emerged as well, with fathers being more likely than mothers to tweet about pro-spanking beliefs and desires. However, mothers were more likely than fathers to tweet about pro-spanking behaviors. **Conclusion:** Our results provide evidence that stay-at-home parents turn to Twitter to obtain disciplinary information and disclose their anti-spanking and pro-spanking beliefs. Anti-spanking tweets potentially reflect changing social norms and suggest that some stay-at-home parents on Twitter may be engaging in selective self-presentation. **Clinical significance:** Twitter may be one avenue to use for interventions to set social norms that aim to reduce parental corporal punishment.

Keywords: Discipline; Corporal punishment; Spanking; Twitter; Stay-At-Home Parents

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4 Parents are a group who frequently use social media. A Pew Research Center survey found that found that
5
6 three-quarters of parents use social media, with mothers generally being more likely than fathers to use social media
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8 (Duggan, Lenhart, Lampe, & Ellison, 2015). This is consistent with research on new parents' use of Facebook,
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10 showing that mothers were more likely to use Facebook than fathers during the transition to parenthood
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12 (Bartholomew, Schoppe-Sullivan, Glassman, Kamp Dush, & Sullivan, 2012). Parents use social media for several
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14 reasons, including obtaining social support, asking parenting questions to their social networks, and acquiring
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16 parenting information (Duggan et al., 2015; Lee & Lee, 2018). Further, parents have identified social media as a
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18 source of useful information and parenting tool, with mothers using it as a parenting resource—both for information
19
20 and social support—more often than do fathers (Duggan et al., 2015).

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22 Studies examining anonymous or pseudonymous social media platforms have found that such outlets could
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24 potentially serve as places for parents to discuss sensitive parenting topics (Ammari, Schoenebeck, & Romero,
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26 2018; Schoenebeck, 2013). Schoenebeck (2013), using 51 million posts and comments from an anonymous message
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28 board for mothers (i.e., YouBeMom.com), found that mothers most commonly referenced their husbands and were
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30 likely to express their negative emotions towards them. Analyzing approximately 1.5 million comments from
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32 Reddit, a pseudonymous discussion website, Ammari et al. (2018) found that parents commonly discussed
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34 discipline, vaccination, child custody, and circumcision—topics that are typically considered divisive and thus
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36 avoided on Facebook (Ammari & Schoenebeck, 2015). These findings suggest that parents may turn to social media
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38 platforms where anonymity or pseudonymity are ensured when wishing to discuss sensitive parenting issues. Less is
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40 known about how parents behave on less anonymous social media platforms, such as Twitter.

41 42 **Self-Presentation on Twitter**

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44 Twitter as a social media site that parents frequent to acquire parenting information or support has been less
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46 explored. Approximately, 23% of parents ages 18-65 use Twitter, with no significant difference between mothers
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48 and fathers (Duggan et al., 2015). However, we know little about the content generated by parents who use Twitter.
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50 Twitter allows users to broadcast their thoughts and opinions to a wider network of followers compared to Facebook
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52 (Bazarova & Choi, 2014). This is because Twitter does not require that a user request to become a “friend” before
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54 being included in one’s social network. Rather, a user simply clicks the “follow” button on another user’s profile to
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56 become a follower irrespective of online friendship. Further, Twitter gives users the option to self-disclose their
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4 thoughts either using pseudonyms or users' real names (van der Nagel, 2018). This feature enables Twitter users to
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6 engage potentially in selective self-presentation.
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8 Goffman (1959) first developed the theory of self-presentation, which posits that actors on stage (in this
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10 case, social media platforms) use various verbal and nonverbal cues, as well as adapt what they say, change their
11
12 tone of voice, and switch what they wear to achieve the preferred impression from their audience (Goffman, 1959).
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14 Those who engage in self-representation do so for identity maintenance, economic or social gains, and self-esteem
15
16 (Goffman, 1959). Prior research suggests that Twitter users use profiles and tweets as their "stage" to perform for
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18 their followers (Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017; Cha, Hamed, Fabricio, & Krishna, 2010;
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20 Hanusch, 2018). By tweeting, censoring their tweets, and managing their retweets, Twitter users proactively control
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22 how their followers perceive them (Uski & Lampinen, 2016; Vitak, 2012). This process of curating one's self-image
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24 is an ongoing process on Twitter (Brems et al., 2017), with a focus on maintaining positive impressions while also
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26 appearing authentic to followers (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). The self-presentation literature suggests that Twitter
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28 users may deliberately present themselves in a positive manner, especially when discussing controversial topics (i.e.,
29
30 corporal punishment).
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32 **Corporal Punishment and Parental Beliefs**

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34 Corporal punishment is defined as "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to
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36 experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling the child's behavior" (Donnelly &
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38 Straus, 2005, p.3). Corporal punishment is also commonly known as spanking, hitting, popping, or whooping
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40 (Brown, Holden, & Ashraf, 2016; Ispa & Halgunseth, 2004; Fréchette & Romano, 2017) and has been identified
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42 globally to be the most common form of violence against children (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment
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44 of Children, n.d.). Over the last several decades, much attention has been paid to the question of how corporal
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46 punishment affects children's mental and socio-behavioral health outcomes. That is, a substantial body of research,
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48 including a recent meta-analysis (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016), suggests that spanking does not improve
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50 children's behavior and is linked with increases in child behavior problems and other negative outcomes, such as
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52 child protective services involvement (Lee, Grogan-Kaylor, & Berger, 2014).
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55 Although research has repeatedly demonstrated the associations between spanking and undesired child
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57 outcomes, most adults in the United States support the use of corporal punishment (Child Trends, 2015). In 2014, a
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59 nationally representative survey found that 65% of women and 76% of men aged 18 to 65 agreed that a child
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4 sometimes needs a “good hard spanking” (Child Trends, 2015). Some evidence suggests that parents believe
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6 spanking actually improves child behaviors (Gagné, Tourigny, Joly, & Pouliot-Lapointe, 2007; Holden, Williamson,
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8 & Holland, 2014; Taylor et al., 2016). Taylor et al. (2016) analyzed online comments ($N = 581$) on media coverage
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10 of a corporal punishment study and found that approximately 70% of the comments expressed approval of spanking
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12 a child for discipline. Reasons for approving spanking were rooted in the beliefs that spanking is linked with positive
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14 or neutral outcomes, today’s generation is worse than prior generations, one’s religion guides one’s disciplinary
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16 practices, and that children have too much power.
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18 **Differences Between Mothers and Fathers and Traditional Gender Norms**

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20 Research findings have been inconsistent about whether mothers and fathers differ in their use of corporal
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22 punishment. Some studies have found that mothers and fathers are more similar than different in their use of
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24 spanking (Holden, Miller, & Harris, 1999; Wissow, 2001). Other studies have shown that mothers use more
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26 spanking than fathers do (Kim, Lee, Taylor, & Guterman, 2014; Lansford et al., 2010). For instance, Lansford et al.
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28 (2010) conducted interviews with parents and children ages 7 to 10 across nine countries and found that mothers
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30 reported spanking their children significantly more than fathers did in seven countries. One reason for this gender
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32 difference in parents’ use of spanking may be because mothers typically spend more time with their children and
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34 engage in more daily caregiving activities compared to fathers (Day & Lamb, 2004). Mothers may be more exposed
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36 than fathers to their children’s misbehaviors and thus have more opportunities to respond with disciplinary actions
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38 such as spanking (Lansford et al., 2010).
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41 There are other differences in how mothers and fathers parent their children, although some argue that such
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43 differences are not very large, and there are likely to be a number of underlying similarities between mothers and
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45 fathers (Jeynes, 2016). For instance, fathers are less likely than mothers to report self-efficacy related to infant care
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47 (Hudson, Elek, & Fleck, 2001), engage in caregiving activities and house chores (Pelchat, Lefebvre, & Perreault,
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49 2003), and seek out parenting information from online blogs (Fraga, 2017). Less is known about the parenting
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51 behaviors of nontraditional parents, such as stay-at-home fathers who have been described as those defying
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53 traditional norms about division of labor and gender by being primary caregivers of their children and proactively
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55 engaging in nurturing behaviors (Solomon, 2014). Nevertheless, stay-at-home fathers still hold some views—such
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57 as the need to be independent, not ask for help, and feel respected by others—that may be interpreted as adhering to
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59 traditional gender norms (Lee & Lee, 2018).
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Focusing on Stay-At-Home Parents

The number of stay-at-home parents has been increasing in recent years. For example, 29% of mothers were stay-at-home mothers in 2012, a 6% increase from 1999 (Cohn, Livingston, Wang, 2014). Researchers have attributed this increase to a mixture of demographic, economic, and societal factors (Cohn et al., 2014), including the rising cost of childcare (Desilver, 2014). Similarly, the number of stay-at-home fathers has risen substantially, going from 1.1 million in 1989 to 2.0 million in 2012, with 35% the stay-at-home fathers reporting that they have decided to stay home mainly because of a disability or an illness, 23% reporting that they could not find a job, and 21% reporting that they would like to be the ones caring for their family (Livingston, 2014). This group of parents, who defy traditional gender norms, often turn to social media to obtain parenting information and social support (Ammari & Schoenebeck, 2015). Social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter, have been found to be valuable tools for stay-at-home fathers to combat their loneliness and social isolation related to being the primary caregiver of their children (Lee & Lee, 2018).

In general, the topic of stay-at-home parents' social media use has received little attention in the family literature although millennial parents are likely to rely on information available on their social media sites (Arnold, 2018; Duggan et al., 2015). We know even less about what and how parents think about child discipline, although over half of parents (57%) from a nationally representative study reported struggling with figuring out the most effective way to discipline their children (Zero to Three, 2016). Ammari et al. (2018) showed that parents on Reddit discuss discipline and corporal punishment by using terms, such as "hit," "spank," and "punish," and that they distinguish between spanking and child abuse. Currently, there are no comparable studies with online stay-at-home parents. Given their primary caregiver status and proximity to their children, stay-at-home parents are a relevant group with which to examine sensitive parenting topics, such as discipline and corporal punishment.

Current Study

The current study was exploratory in nature with the aim to isolate a group of self-identified parents (i.e., stay-at-home home parents) and examine their publicly available tweets concerning discipline and spanking. In particular, the study focused on exploring the specific ways in which stay-at-home mothers and stay-at-home fathers talk about spanking as a disciplinary method. Based on self-presentation theory, we speculated that some stay-at-home parent Twitter users may deliberately present themselves in a positive manner when discussing the topics of child discipline and spanking.

Method

Dataset

Data on individual tweets were collected from Twitter. Tweets are publicly available data that are typically 140 characters or less although the character limit has recently increased (Tsukayama, 2017). Twitter is a public forum in which users follow real-time information and can network with other users by following the feed of other user accounts (Lyles, López, Pasick, & Sarkar, 2013). Despite the limited number of characters allowed in each tweet, tweets are often rich in content since links to news articles, blogs, pictures, videos—as well as information on other user accounts and conversations between users—can be detected (Lyles et al., 2013). Individual Twitter accounts can either be public or private depending on the tweeter's preference.

Sampling

Twitter users. Stay-at-home parents, especially stay-at-home fathers (and fathers in general), represent a group that is challenging to reach through traditional means of recruitment (Mitchell et al., 2007; Stahlschmidt, Threlfall, Seay, Lewis, Kohl, 2013). Research with fathers has suggested that snowball sampling, a technique where the next set of study subjects are gathered from the acquaintances of the current study subjects, may be an effective way to recruit fathers (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). The current study was also part of a larger big data project that involves research questions related to exploring the parenting topics stay-at-home parent discuss as a group on Twitter which required that we identify and track stay-at-home parents' followers who were also stay-at-home parents themselves. Based on these reasons, we deemed snowball sampling as an appropriate sampling methodology.

First, we used Twitter's publicly available Streaming API across a time period of 30 days, from April 24, 2017, to May 23, 2017, to query hashtags using the following terms for stay-at-home parents: #stayathomedad, #stayathomemom, #stayathomefather, #stayathomemother, #sahd, #sahf, and #sahm. This yielded a dataset of 9,665 Twitter users who mentioned one or more of these hashtags in their tweets. After excluding duplicates, we were left with 3,087 unique Twitter users. We then employed regular expressions, a sequence of characters and symbols expressing a pattern to be searched for within text, to the users' profiles to obtain the first set of self-identifying stay-at-home mothers ($n = 37$) and stay-at-home fathers ($n = 15$). This first set served as the seed dataset from which to build the next set of stay-at-home parents. Self-identifying stay-at-home parent users were defined as those who explicitly described themselves as a stay-at-home mother or stay-at-home father in their individual Twitter profiles

(e.g., “Stay at home dad with 2 beautiful girls and letting the world watch through my blog,” and “I am a chubby jolly stay at home wife and mom”).

In accord with the snowball sampling method, we first obtained the handles of those following stay-at-home parents in the seed dataset. We used Twitter’s publicly available Resting API which allowed us to request 3,000 followers every 15 minutes (Twitter, Inc., n.d.a). Our attempt to obtain the first iteration of followers yielded a total of 72,565 unique followers. Of these, 209 identified themselves as stay-at-home fathers and 761 were identified as stay-at-home mothers based on content found in the users’ Twitter profiles. We then used the handles of these stay-at-home parents to obtain the next iteration of followers. The second iteration yielded a total of 812,183 unique followers. Of these, 9,462 identified themselves as stay-at-home fathers and 35,130, as stay-at-home mothers in their Twitter profiles. Next, we combined the seed dataset, first iteration of followers, and second iteration followers and cleaned the larger dataset, excluding duplicate handles, dead accounts, and protected accounts. This process yielded 685 unique stay-at-home father handles and 4,103 stay-at-home mother handles. The disproportionate number of handles between the genders led us to run another iteration of followers for stay-at-home fathers. The third iteration only yielded 12 new handles, suggesting diminishing returns. The final dataset included 697 unique stay-at-home father handles and 4,103 unique stay-at-home mother handles.

Tweets

We used Twitter’s publicly available Resting API and the final dataset to obtain stay-at-home parents’ tweets. Twitter returns up to 3,200 of the most recent tweets for each user (Twitter, Inc., n.d.b). We obtained a total of 5,631,109 stay-at-home parents’ tweets in a few weeks. Specifically, 936,985 tweets were from the 697 stay-at-home father users, and 4,694,124 tweets were from the 4,103 stay-at-home mother users in the final dataset. Hereinafter, stay-at-home fathers are simply referred to as fathers and stay-at-home mothers as mothers.

Discipline and spanking tweets. Given our interest in stay-at-home parents’ tweets related to discipline and spanking, we used regular expressions to identify tweets with the stemmed versions of the words *discipline* and *spank* in them. Using this method, we identified all related variations (e.g., disciplined, disciplinarian, spanker, spanking). We screened identified tweets for discipline and spanking tweets in the context of parenting. That is, we eliminated tweets that may have used the words *discipline* and *spank* (and their variations) but occurred in or referenced contexts other than parental discipline (e.g., self-discipline: “I need to discipline myself to go to the gym more often. A disciplined life is a happy life. #MondayMotivation”; sports: “The Eagles totally spanked Patriot’s

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4 butt! #GoEagles #NFL). A total of 282 fathers' tweets mentioned the word *discipline* or any of its variations, and of
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6 these tweets, 66 pertained to discipline in the context of parenting. A total of 119 fathers' tweets mentioned the word
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8 *spank* or any of its variations, and of these tweets, only 28 pertained to spanking in the context of disciplining a
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10 child.

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12 Given the small number of tweets that mention spanking, we decided to use synonyms of spanking to build
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14 a corpus of spanking tweets. We reviewed the corporal punishment terminology literature which has demonstrated
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16 that parents use terms, such as "beat," "punch," "slap," "tap," and "whoop" to refer to spanking (Brown et al., 2016;
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18 Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Fréchette & Romano, 2017). Based on these efforts, we identified the following
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20 synonyms of spanking: *smack*, *slap*, *whoop*, *beat*, *hit*, *punch*, *swat*, *pop*, and *tap*. Once more, regular expressions
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22 were used to identify tweets containing the above synonyms and each of these tweets was screened to assess for
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24 spanking in the context of parental discipline. For instance, a total of 122 fathers' tweets mentioned the word *smack*
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26 or any of its variations, and of these tweets, 11 pertained to smacking in the context of disciplining a child. A
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28 detailed breakdown of the proportion of each tweeted synonym is provided in Figure 1. Fathers' spanking corpus
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30 increased from 28 to 56 tweets. We employed the same method for mothers' discipline and spanking tweets.
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32 Mothers' spanking corpus increased from 144 to 211 tweets.

33 34 **Analysis Plan: Qualitative Content Analysis**

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36 Given the small number of fathers' and mothers' tweets, we decided to conduct a qualitative analysis to
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38 examine themes that emerged from stay-at-home parents' tweets. Consistent with prior studies that qualitatively
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40 examine tweets (Lyles et al., 2013), we first examined 20% of stay-at-home parents' discipline and spanking tweets
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42 (including all synonyms). Hereafter, *spanking tweets* refer to the corpus we created by merging all spanking and
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44 spanking synonym tweets. From 20% of the tweets, we developed an overall coding scheme that included five
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46 global themes for both discipline tweets and spanking tweets. Subsequently, we developed a codebook that listed
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48 each global code, along with descriptions of the code, instructions for using the code, and example tweets related to
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50 the code.
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53 The first author trained coders to appropriately use the codebook, and two masters-level coders coded the
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55 remaining tweets. Coded results were compiled on a Google Sheet. The coders wrote memos while coding as a way
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57 to provide rationale for each code. They engaged in additional exchange of memos during meetings where coded
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59 results were compared and discrepancies in coding were discussed. Where the coders could not resolve
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4 disagreement, a third member of the research team intervened to help the coders reach a consensus. Several tweets
5 were ambiguous in their meanings. Hence, we searched for the actual tweets on Twitter to examine the context of
6 the tweets (e.g., conversations with other users). Retweets—tweets forwarded from another source to one's own
7 followers—were interpreted as expressing agreement with the original tweets, if not endorsement. This was
8 determined based on research showing that retweeting is likely to indicate agreement with the content of a tweet or
9 endorsement of its message (Metaxas & TwitterTrails Research Team, 2017). All co-authors checked the coded
10 results for accuracy in coding and agreement between the two coders.
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18 Given our primary interest in stay-at-home parents' corporal punishment tweets, we further coded spanking
19 tweets only for subthemes. This subcoding process was iterative. The first author developed a preliminary set of
20 subcodes and incorporated them into the codebook. Then, the first author and a research assistant independently
21 applied the subcodes to small proportions of the spanking tweets (20%). Next, the pair met to compare their coded
22 results and engage in discussion to further refine the subcodes (e.g., by collapsing or eliminating subthemes).
23 Regular exchange of memos took place during this process, as well as consulting co-authors for their inputs. Several
24 rounds of these meetings, discussions, and exchange of memos resulted in a full set of subthemes which were edited
25 in the codebook accordingly. The final codebook was reviewed by all the co-authors for approval and is available
26 upon request.
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36 Using this finalized codebook, the same two masters-level coders independently engaged in coding of the
37 remaining spanking tweets. The coded results were again compiled on a separate Google Sheet. To account for
38 overlap in themes, tweets with more than one subtheme were allowed to be double-coded with other subthemes. The
39 coders wrote extensive memos while coding the remaining spanking tweets as a way to provide rationale for each
40 code. Coders engaged in additional exchange of memos at meetings where they compared results and resolved
41 discrepancies in their coding. Further, the coders called upon a third member of the research team to help them reach
42 consensus on coding disagreements. This third member also independently examined the two coders' double-coded
43 results. Finally, all co-authors checked the final coded results for spanking tweets for accuracy and agreement.
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52 Although intercoder reliability can be helpful for ensuring consistency of coding, some researchers have argued that
53 the numeric measures (e.g., Cohen's κ) are easily influenced by many arbitrary factors (Milford et al., 2017). As
54 such, we relied heavily on the integrative method of meeting regularly, engaging in in-depth discussion, and taking
55 extensive memos for establishing agreement between coders and for our overall decision-making process.
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Results

A total of 648 tweets were coded altogether, with 122 tweets from fathers and 526 tweets from mothers. These tweets were generated by 43 fathers and 126 mothers. Of the 122 fathers' tweets, 66 were general discipline tweets and 56 were spanking tweets. The total spanking tweets increased to 69 after accounting for double-coded tweets (i.e., 13 spanking tweets were double coded for fathers). The most commonly used synonyms for spanking in fathers' corpus of spanking tweets were *smack* and *hit*, and the least commonly used synonyms were *pop*, *swat*, and *tap*. Of the 526 mothers' tweets, 315 were general discipline tweets and 211 were spanking tweets. The total spanking tweets increased to 240 after accounting for double-coded tweets (i.e., 29 spanking tweets were double coded for mothers). The most commonly used synonyms for spanking in mothers' corpus of spanking tweets were *hit* and *whoop*, and the least commonly used synonyms were *pop*, *swat*, and *tap* (see Figure 1).

Discipline Tweets

Five identical global themes emerged from fathers' and mothers' discipline tweets. These included (1) discipline tips; (2) positive discipline; (3) personal beliefs about discipline; (4) experiences of disciplining a child; and (5) facts or information related to discipline. Discipline tip tweets offered parenting advice related to various forms of discipline. Positive discipline tweets included content related to non-violent forms of discipline (e.g., time-outs). Personal beliefs about discipline tweets reflected stay-at-home parents' beliefs related to different disciplinary practices. Facts or information tweets were concerned with information related to various forms of discipline.

Stay-at-home parents most commonly tweeted about facts or information related to discipline (38.43%), followed by their personal belief about discipline (20.83%) and experiences of disciplining a child (20.37%). In general, tweet content was similar across fathers and mothers. Fathers most commonly tweeted about their experiences of disciplining a child (33.3%) and facts or information related to discipline (31.8%). Mothers most frequently tweeted about facts or information related to discipline (46.0%) and their personal beliefs about discipline (24.8%). Discipline tips were the least frequently tweeted global themes for both genders. We did not code the discipline tweets for subthemes as our aim was to focus primarily on coding spanking tweets in detail.

Spanking Tweets

Five global themes also emerged from fathers' and mothers' spanking tweets. These included (1) anti-spanking; (2) pro-spanking; (3) unsure about spanking; (4) experiences related to spanking; and (5) facts or information related to spanking. Anti-spanking tweets included content suggestive of an anti-spanking stance.

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4 Similarly, pro-spanking tweets included content suggestive of a pro-spanking stance. Unsure-about-spanking tweets
5 reflected conflict about using spanking. Experiences-related-to-spanking tweets dealt with experiences involving
6 spanking. Facts or information tweets were primarily concerned with information related to spanking.
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10 Stay-at-home parents most commonly tweeted about facts or information related to spanking (37.54%),
11 followed by an anti-spanking stance (27.18%) and a pro-spanking stance (22.01%). Both fathers and mothers posted
12 anti-spanking (31.88% for fathers, 25.83% for mothers) and pro-spanking tweets (24.64% for fathers, 21.25% for
13 mothers). Both parent groups were slightly more likely to post tweets against spanking than tweets in favor of
14 spanking. Fathers were slightly more likely than mothers to post tweets expressing their anti-spanking and pro-
15 spanking stances. Fathers were also more likely than mothers to tweet about being unsure about spanking. In
16 contrast, mothers were more likely than fathers to post tweets related to spanking information (for details, see Table
17 1). Results from further coding the global themes yielded several subthemes (Figure 2 and Table 1). The following
18 section delineates results from qualitatively analyzing subthemes.
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28 **Anti-spanking.** There were three subthemes under the anti-spanking global theme: One's belief about
29 spanking, one's reflection on others, and one's behavior related to spanking. One's belief about spanking subtheme
30 involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents' expressions of anti-spanking beliefs. One's reflection on others
31 subtheme involved tweets exhibiting stay-at-home parents' reflections on others' spanking or related behaviors.
32 One's behavior related to spanking theme involved tweets pertaining to stay-at-home parents' anti-spanking
33 behaviors.
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40 **One's belief about spanking.** Tweets about one's anti-spanking beliefs made up the largest spanking
41 subtheme. Both fathers and mothers were most likely to tweet about their anti-spanking beliefs compared to tweets
42 that made up other subthemes. These tweets made up approximately a fifth of all fathers' and mothers' tweets. Stay-
43 at-home parents exhibited similar tweets irrespective of gender, with many of them expressing their disapproval of
44 spanking children and criticism against those who employ such a disciplinary method. Compared with mothers,
45 fathers were more likely to invoke the National Football League (NFL) player, Adrian Peterson, who was indicted
46 for child abuse after disciplining his 4-year-old son with a switch and bruising his son's body. Fathers expressed
47 their anti-spanking beliefs by condemning the NFL and Peterson's actions (e.g., "I suppose NFL thinks beating
48 children is alright but an adult hitting another adult is not. #childabuse," "As a stay-at-home father, beating of
49 children was it, man. The Rice video was enough but Peterson thing was the final nail").
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4 ***One's reflection on others.*** Although a number of fathers and mothers tweeted their reflections on others'
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6 spanking or related behaviors, proportionately more fathers than mothers were likely to tweet about their reflections
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8 on others. These tweets were similar in quality to those about anti-spanking beliefs. The major difference lay in the
9
10 fact that they included reference to an actual person—another Twitter user, follower, or family member—instead of
11
12 being a general directive statement (e.g., “Don’t ever hit your children”). These reflections included what a parent
13
14 witnessed other parents doing (e.g. “I once saw a parent spank their six-year-old for hitting another child. So, they
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16 will hit their child while saying don't”) or heard a family members say (e.g., “What father tells his year-old son he's
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18 gonna whoop him if he doesn't stop crying?”). Since Adrian Peterson is an actual person, tweets with a reference to
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20 him and his actions were double coded under this subtheme.
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22 ***One's behavior related to spanking.*** Very few stay-at-home parents tweeted about their anti-spanking
23
24 behaviors. The few available tweets mentioned alternatives to spanking or related behaviors, suggesting that a stay-
25
26 at-home parent is likely to be an anti-spanker. For example, a father tweeted, “I don’t spank my kids anymore. I just
27
28 have them to sit in the bathroom with me while I go #2 now...” Similarly, a mother tweeted, “I think I stopped
29
30 spanking after I read ‘Uncon. Parenting.’ It’s an inspiration.”
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32 ***Pro-spanking.*** There were four subthemes under the pro-spanking global theme: One’s belief about
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34 spanking, one’s desire related to spanking, one’s behavior related to spanking, and reference to others. One’s belief
35
36 about spanking subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents’ expressions of pro-spanking beliefs.
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38 One’s desires related to spanking subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents’ desires to spank
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40 children. One’s behavior related to spanking subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents’ pro-
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42 spanking behaviors. Reference to others subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents’ comments on
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44 others’ use or practice of spanking.
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46 ***One's belief about spanking.*** A number of stay-at-home parents posted tweets expressing their pro-
47
48 spanking beliefs although fathers were proportionately more likely to post them than mothers. Collectively, these
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50 tweets included, but were not limited to, personal stance about spanking (e.g., “I believe there’s a difference
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52 between spanking & abusing and I see nothing wrong w/ the former as a last resort”); quotes pertaining to spanking
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54 (e.g., “Spanking a child does not teach him violence. It teaches him not to steal cars –Sinbad”); and definitions of
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56 spanking (e.g., “I define spanking as a swat on the child’s leg or bottom, hitting is equal to punching w/ a fist &
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58 slapping is equals to hitting on the arm or face”).
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4 ***One's desire related to spanking.*** Although few stay-at-home parents posted tweets expressing their
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6 desires to spank children, when they did occur, fathers were slightly more likely than mothers to tweet about their
7
8 desires to spank. These tweets were distinguished from general pro-spanking beliefs in that they included clear
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10 expressions of desire and want. For example, a father tweeted, "Anybody else out there who wants to punch their
11
12 2yr old in the face?" Likely responding to an anti-spanking news article, a mother tweeted, "@[news channel
13
14 anonymized] I hope we as parents can pop our child any day without CPS or the police calling it abuse."

15
16 ***One's behavior related to spanking.*** Pro-spanking behavior was defined broadly to include not only the
17
18 actual act of spanking a child, but also threats of spanking and predictions of spanking behaviors. Mothers were
19
20 disproportionately more likely to post these tweets than fathers. Most of these tweets occurred within the context of
21
22 disciplining a child (e.g., "I can't keep the kids down. I'm going to lay the smack down on these rascals"). Some
23
24 mothers specified the age of their children (e.g., "My 14 yr old tried raising her voice at me. I will still whoop that
25
26 ass #parenting"). Further, some mothers' tweets suggested spanking other parents' children (e.g., "RT If your child
27
28 tries to put his hand in my baby's car seat, I will smack his hand. I'm sorry").

29
30 ***Reference to others.*** Few fathers and mothers posted tweets commenting on others' use or practice of
31
32 spanking. However, when they occurred, these tweets mentioned witnessing another parent spanking a child and
33
34 praising such behaviors (e.g., "RT Just saw a kiddo get smacked over the head by his mother for dabbing.
35
36 #parentingwin"); identifying parents who engage in spanking (e.g., "@[anonymized] @[anonymized] I think you
37
38 guys are talking about parents who smack their kidz for any and every little thing"); and being critical of those who
39
40 were never spanked growing up (e.g., "If some of you all got spanked every now and then growing up maybe you
41
42 wouldn't be such sensitive little snowflakes as adults.").

43
44 ***Experiences related to spanking.*** There were three subthemes under the experience related to spanking
45
46 global theme: Experienced spanking as a child, discipline advice from others, and spanking experience related to
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48 others. Experienced spanking as a child subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents' recounting
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50 experiences of being spanked or experiencing related behavior as a child. Discipline advice from others subtheme
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52 involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents' comments about receiving discipline advice from other
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54 individuals. Spanking experience related to others subtheme involved tweets containing stay-at-home parents'
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56 references to someone else spanking, getting spanked, or any related experience.
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4 ***Experienced spanking as a child.*** A number of stay-at-home parents posted tweets recounting experiences
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6 of being spanked or experiencing related behavior as a child, with both fathers and mothers tweeting at equal rates.
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8 Both tweeted about being spanked by their own parents. There was more variability in how the tweeter responded to
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10 spanking among mothers' tweets than fathers' tweets. For example, mothers tweeted about learning a lesson (e.g., "I
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12 was spanked as a kid and learned my lesson real quickly"); deserving the spanking (e.g., "#wheniwasyourage my
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14 parents spanked me. I deserved it every single time. I might still benefit from a good swat once awhile"); and not
15
16 having a good relationship with their parent as a consequence (e.g., "My mom was a spanker. We don't have a good
17
18 relationship today. I don't want that for me and my kids").
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20 ***Discipline advice from others.*** These tweets made up a very small proportion of all the tweets and were
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22 posted by mothers only. Most of these tweets involved mothers talking about receiving discipline advice from their
23
24 own parents (e.g., "As #child gets older I'm having to politely deflect #parenting advice from my father. No, I'm not
25
26 gonna spank my 19 mo old ever"). One mother tweeted about getting advice from her child: "Discipline advice from
27
28 my toddler: 'Mama, don't spank me. Just hug me!' in the sweetest voice ever... Sheesh!".
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30 ***Spanking experience related to others.*** Similar to tweets about discipline advice, these tweets constituted a
31
32 small proportion of all the tweets and the majority were tweeted by mothers. These tweets varied, with mothers
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34 recounting their experience witnessing another parent spanking a child (e.g., "I once witnessed a parent smacking
35
36 their child") and others tweeting about their direct interactions with other parents (e.g., "Someone offered to spank
37
38 my kid for me. My response? [link to response post]). Some mothers tweeted about what might generally happen to
39
40 others as a consequence of a particular behavior (e.g., "Let a parent pop, spank, slap their kids in public for being
41
42 disobedient and watch people call the cops on that parent").
43
44

45 ***Unsure about spanking.*** There were no subthemes under the unsure about spanking global theme because
46
47 not enough data were available to engage in subcoding. These tweets reflected stay-at-home parents' internal
48
49 conflicts about whether to use spanking as a disciplinary method. A clear indication of conflict, with evidence for
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51 contemplating both spanking and non-spanking as options, needed to be present. Few stay-at-home parents tweeted
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53 about this although fathers were proportionately more likely than mothers to tweet about being unsure of employing
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55 spanking. These tweets took the form of either a comment (e.g., "That moment when you do not know whether to
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57 hit or high five your preteenager") or a question asked to stay-at-home parents' social networks on Twitter (e.g.,
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59 Hello SAHMs, should you or should you not use corporal punishment like spanking to discipline your kid?).
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4 **Facts or information related to spanking.** There were four subthemes under the facts or information
5 related to spanking global theme: Informational articles, information seeking, help seeking, and blog posts.
6 Informational articles subtheme involved tweets referring to general information, news articles, and research
7 findings pertaining to corporal punishment. Information seeking subtheme involved tweets containing content
8 related to stay-at-home parents actively seeking facts or information about spanking. Help seeking subthemes
9 involved tweets containing content related to stay-at-home parents actively seeking help and support related to
10 spanking. Blog posts subtheme involved tweets referencing stay-at-home parents' or other parents' blogs.

11
12 **Informational articles.** For these tweets, we allowed tweets from a wide range of informational sources,
13 including parenting experts, parenting authority sites, news media, universities, and researchers. The tweets made up
14 the second largest set of tweets (i.e., second largest spanking subtheme), followed by anti-spanking belief tweets.
15 Although mothers were more likely than fathers to post informational tweets, the tweets themselves were
16 qualitatively similar across gender. For example, many of the informational tweets were likely to be retweets by
17 fathers and mothers. Stay-at-home parents retweeted spanking-related articles from news channels (e.g., CNN) and
18 professional magazines (e.g., Psychology Today) irrespective of gender. A similar trend emerged for retweets of
19 research findings (e.g., "RT An analysis of research on physical punishment of children [link to article]").

20
21 **Information seeking.** A number of stay-at-home parents posted tweets seeking information about spanking
22 although fathers were slightly more likely than mothers to tweet about seeking information. A majority of these
23 tweets took the form of a question, soliciting answers from individuals in stay-at-home parents' social networks.
24 One father asked, "Is spanking your child an act of discipline or can it be seen as an act of violence? Children see it
25 as parents 'fighting with them.' What do you think?" Similarly, a mother posed this question: "RT Have you ever or
26 do you believe in spanking your kid?"

27
28 **Help seeking.** These help-seeking tweets were distinct from information-seeking tweets in that they clearly
29 demonstrated the despair or helplessness a father might feel in trying to discipline his or her child. Words such as
30 *help*, *desperate*, and *need* characterized these tweets. Further, unlike help-seeking tweets, they did not always take
31 the form of a question. Overall, there were very few help-seeking tweets, and all were from mothers (e.g., "My child
32 cries more when his feelings get hurt cuz I said no than when I spank him. Lord help me, my hands are full with
33 him"). A number of help-seeking tweets overlapped with other subthemes, so they were double coded.

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4 **Blog posts.** These tweets were distinct from informational, news, and research article tweets in that they
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6 were written primarily by a parent rather than a journalist, parenting expert, or researcher. Although both fathers and
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8 mothers tweeted about blog posts, mothers were substantially more likely than fathers to mention such tweets. Stay-
9
10 at-home parents tweeted about their own blog posts (e.g., “Time-outs, spanking, & other discipline thoughts from a
11
12 stay-at-home father of 5 kids. [link to blog post]”) and retweeted others’ blog posts (e.g., “RT Giving up spanking in
13
14 favor of real world discipline [link to blog post]”). A small group of mothers tweeted content suggestive of video
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16 blogs, or vblogs.

17 18 **Discussion**

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20 Our study makes a unique contribution to the literature by expanding parenting and corporal punishment
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22 research to Twitter, a virtual setting where parents’ attitudes and beliefs can be observed. The main findings
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24 demonstrated that stay-at-home parents were most likely to tweet about facts or information related to discipline and
25
26 spanking compared to tweets that made up other global themes. This was the case across both genders. Personal
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28 beliefs about discipline, experiences disciplining a child, anti-spanking stance, and pro-spanking stance were the
29
30 next most common tweets. Stay-at-home parents used a range of synonyms to refer to spanking. Specifically,
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32 mothers were more likely than fathers to use the term *whoop*, whereas fathers were more likely than mothers to use
33
34 the terms *smack* and *hit*.

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36 Specific to spanking tweets, our main findings showed that both fathers and mothers tweeted about their
37
38 anti-spanking and pro-spanking stances, with fathers being a little more likely than mothers to post such tweets. For
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40 both genders, anti-spanking belief subtheme tweets were most common, followed by spanking informational
41
42 subtheme tweets. Although fathers were more likely than mothers to tweet about their pro-spanking beliefs and
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44 desires, mothers were more likely than fathers to tweet about pro-spanking behaviors. Mothers were also more likely
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46 than fathers to tweet about parenting advice from people, spanking experiences related to others, and blog posts.
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48 Fathers were more likely than mothers to tweet about being unsure about spanking. Both groups of parents tweeted
49
50 an equal amount about their experiences of being spanked as children.

51 52 **Informational Tweets and Virtual Norm Setting**

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54 Among global themes, the most common tweets about discipline and spanking were related to facts or
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56 information, suggesting that parents who discuss child discipline online may be looking for developmentally
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58 appropriate parenting information. This is consistent with prior research demonstrating that parents turn to social
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4 media to raise questions about parenting and acquire necessary parenting information (Duggan et al., 2015). This
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6 informational component of stay-at-home parents' tweets suggests that social media may be a fruitful place for
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8 intervening and changing parenting beliefs. We are aware of no examples of Twitter-based parent education
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10 interventions that have examined whether Twitter could be used to change parents' beliefs and social norms about
11
12 the use of corporal punishment. However, experimental research in communication and political science has
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14 demonstrated that Twitter-based interventions hold promise for reducing racial harassment and correcting health
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16 misinformation (Munger, 2016; Vraga & Bode, 2017a, 2017b). For instance, Vraga and Bode (2017b) used Twitter
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18 to examine to whether corrections from another user or an expert source—the Centers for Disease Control and
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20 Prevention (CDC)—were successful in reducing health misinformation about the causes of the spread of the Zika
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22 virus and found that a single correction from the CDC was sufficient to reduce misinformation among participants.
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24 Such research suggests that a similar approach can be taken to ensure that parents on Twitter are exposed to accurate
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26 parental discipline information.
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28 **Anti-Spanking Belief Tweets, Changing Norms, and Self-Presentation**

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30 Among spanking subthemes, fathers and mothers most commonly posted spanking tweets that reflected
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32 their anti-spanking beliefs. This seems to be consistent with research demonstrating that there has been a general
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34 decline in the use of corporal punishment in the past two decades across all socioeconomic levels, with upper-
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36 middle-class mothers reporting the most decline (Child Trends, 2002; Ryan, Kalil, Zio-Guest, & Padilla, 2016).
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38 Similarly, Child Trends (2015) reported that there has been a modest decrease in the proportion of endorsing
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40 spanking between 1986 and 2014, especially among women. However, the same report also highlighted that the
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42 majority of adults in the U.S. (76% of men and 65% of women ages 18 to 65) agree that a child sometimes needs to
43
44 be spanked (Child Trends, 2015). These results point to mixed views regarding parents' endorsement of using
45
46 corporal punishment. Also, such discrepancies in views likely reflect societal trends in which spanking, although
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48 becoming less normative over the years, is still readily used by most parents.
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51 Findings pointing to parents' mixed views on corporal punishment may also suggest that there is a gap
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53 between belief and behavior (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Parents may
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55 increasingly believe that spanking is harmful to children but use it anyway, especially at the heat of the moment
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57 when levels of parenting stress and negative emotions are high (Hurley, 2016) or when they feel the child "deserves"
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59 to be punished (Holden et al., 2014). In support, one study with a nationally representative sample of parents found
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4 that 30% of the parents reported spanking their children even though they do not feel okay about it (Zero to Three,
5 2016). This suggests that parent education programs should aim to not only target parenting knowledge, but also
6 parenting motivation and intervention that are likely to influence parenting behaviors (National Academies of
7 Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Norm changing may require targeting multiple domains of parenting:
8 knowledge, motivation, and behaviors.
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14 Another reason for discrepant finding may be attributed to Twitter users' selective self-presentation
15 (Goffman, 1959). We may have found more anti-spanking tweets by virtue of Twitter users wanting to be viewed
16 positively by their followers (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). It may be that some stay-at-home parents on Twitter engage
17 in curating a favorable self-image (Marwick & Boyd, 2011) by presenting themselves as anti-spankers or advocate
18 against corporal punishment. Consistent with prior Twitter studies (Uski & Lampinen, 2016; Vitak, 2012), stay-at-
19 home parents in our study might have censored their tweets or actively managed their retweets. Additional research
20 is needed to further elucidate the precise reasons and processes behind stay-at-home mothers' and stay-at-home
21 fathers' selective self-presentation on Twitter.
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30 **Pro-Spanking Tweets Between Gender**

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33 Fathers were more likely than mothers to tweet about *beliefs* and *desires* related to spanking, but mothers
34 were more likely than fathers to actual tweet about spanking *behaviors*. Although more men than women agree that
35 a child sometimes needs a "good hard spanking" (Child Trends, 2015), research on parents' behaviors suggests that
36 mothers engage in discipline more frequently than fathers. In a community-based study of parents of young children,
37 mothers more frequently engaged in spanking, slapping, hitting, and non-aggressive disciplinary behaviors than did
38 fathers (Kim et al., 2014). Another study found that mothers self-reported slightly higher levels of spanking than did
39 fathers (Lee, Lansford, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2012). These gender differences may be explained by the fact that
40 mothers spend more time with their young children than do fathers (Day & Lamb, 2004). This would not necessarily
41 hold true for fathers, who are the primary caregivers of their children. Related to the current study, it is possible that
42 fathers may be warier than mothers of the stigma attached to publicly reporting spanking a child and the
43 implications for tweeting such content (e.g., involvement by Child Protective Services or label as a child abuser).
44 This also suggests that stay-at-home fathers may be more prone than stay-at-home mothers to engage in selective
45 self-presentation to curate and preserve a positive self-image online.
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59 **Traditional Gender and Social Norms**

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4 Some stay-at-home parents' tweets seemed to reflect what may be considered traditional gender and social
5 norms. As a case in point, mothers were more likely than fathers to tweet about parenting advice from other people,
6 spanking experiences related to others, and blog posts. These patterns are consistent with research demonstrating
7 that mothers are more likely than fathers to turn to non-spouse family members and friends for parenting advice
8 (Pew Research Center, 2015), as well as have their own blogs and write blog posts (Friedman, 2016). Prior research
9 suggests that men typically rely on women for parenting information (Dayton et al., 2016). Moreover, our study
10 seemed to suggest that fathers were more likely than mothers to be unsure about using spanking as a disciplinary
11 method. It is plausible that, compared with mothers, fathers lack parenting knowledge pertaining to spanking, but
12 more research is needed to understand why they may be feeling uncertain about spanking.
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22 **Limitations**

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24 There are some key limitations to the current study. First, there are clearly social selection issues at play in
25 our data collection, as we limited our sample to only stay-at-home parents who had a Twitter account and directly
26 posted tweets about child discipline issues. Stay-at-home parents—especially stay-at-home fathers—are also likely
27 to be somewhat different from non-stay-at-home parents, as demonstrated by prior research (Fischer & Anderson,
28 2012; Solomon, 2014). Second, snowball sampling can be prone to bias because of the correlations between
29 individuals. That is, Twitter users in the subsequent round are not independent of Twitter users in the first round,
30 which could ultimately yield biased or inconsistent results. For these reasons, results of the study should be
31 interpreted with caution.
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40 Third, middle- to upper-middle-income individuals are more likely to use Twitter than low-income
41 individuals (Greenwood et al., 2016), limiting our knowledge of how low-income parents may express their
42 parenting beliefs on social media. Our results cannot be generalized to the broader group of stay-at-home parents
43 who do not participate in this form of social media. Fourth, we are unable to describe the demographic and
44 geographic characteristics of our sample given the limited sociodemographic information that can be obtained from
45 Twitter. Finally, our study procedure resulted in a relatively small sample of tweets from stay-at-home parents. This
46 may suggest that stay-at-home parents on Twitter do not tweet about discipline and spanking. This could be an
47 artifact of Twitter's 280-character limitation, which does not allow space for in-depth conversations about corporal
48 punishment.
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4 Despite the limitations, our study used an innovative source of parenting data collected on a social media
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6 site where parents were less likely to be concerned with social desirability and thus could share their thoughts and
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8 opinions. Furthermore, our research was able to capture parenting information directly from fathers. Researchers
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10 have noted the absence of fathers in social science research and the challenges of engaging fathers in studies
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12 (Cabrera, Volling, & Barr, 2018; Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). Our study methodology not only gave us access to
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14 fathers, but also allowed us to better understand how a group of traditionally understudied fathers—men who are
15
16 primary caregivers—think about sensitive parenting topics such as corporal punishment. Further, although tweets
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18 were small in number, when stay-at-home parents did tweet about disciplinary issues, the content seemed
19
20 meaningful and relevant for parenting in contemporary families.
21

22 **Implications for Future Research and Practice**

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24 More research on parents' beliefs of corporal punishment is warranted. Social media provides an important
25
26 avenue in which to examine how parents discuss parenting, seek parenting information, form supportive networks,
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28 and express parenting beliefs. Failure to utilize this data source may be a missed opportunity because social media—
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30 especially a predominantly open and public platform like Twitter—creates an environment where parenting attitudes
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32 and behaviors can be observed. Our study sheds light on the ways in which stay-at-home parents publicly talk about
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34 discipline and spanking. The existence of a community of parents discussing disciplinary issues on Twitter suggests
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36 that this form of social media may be amenable to norm-setting interventions that attempt to make use of the
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38 network of Twitter users. Cross-cultural research demonstrates that despite differences in parental use of discipline
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40 and normativeness across groups, spanking is likely to have similar negative consequences for children in all groups
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42 (Gershoff et al., 2010). It is worth considering emerging forms of intervention, such as No Hit Zones in hospitals
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44 (Frazier, Liu, & Dauk, 2014), which are designed to influence norms around parenting and suggest that spanking is
45
46 an unacceptable way to discipline children. It is possible that professionals, including researchers and clinicians, can
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48 help extend such norm-influencing interventions to social media.
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51 This study also raises important questions about the role of professionals with access to social media in
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53 addressing truly problematic inclinations, such as the parent who suggested beating a 2-year-old child. Professionals
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55 play a key role in influencing parents' attitudes toward corporal punishment (Taylor, Moeller, Hamvas, & Rice,
56
57 2013). Together, clinicians, educators, and researchers have the responsibility prevent and address corporal
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59 punishment and violence against children. This also applies to when they come across threats of such acts in tweets
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4 or other social media posts. Professionals can educate the social media user of the consequences of corporal
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6 punishment and violence on children's health and development, as well as provide alternative strategies for effective
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8 discipline. A reply to a tweet or post with a corrective or an educational comment may serve as a start to confronting
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10 and changing the online user's attitude. This approach is consistent with a brief online program using education to
11
12 reduce adults' positive attitudes towards corporal punishment (Holden, Brown, Baldwin, & Caderao, 2014).
13

14 **Conclusion**

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16 Little is known about how parents think about spanking as a disciplinary practice and how they express
17
18 these beliefs on social media. The current study used Twitter to examine self-identified stay-at-home parents'
19
20 publicly available discipline and spanking tweets and demonstrated that stay-at-home parents were most likely to
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22 tweet about facts or information related to discipline and spanking compared to tweets that made up other global
23
24 themes. Specific to spanking tweets, stay-at-home parents were most likely to post tweets that reflect their anti-
25
26 spanking beliefs compared to tweets that made up other subthemes. They also posted tweets that reflected traditional
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28 gender and social norms. Together, these findings suggest that parents turn to Twitter for parenting information;
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30 tweets can serve as potentially informative parenting data for social science research; Twitter may be a promising
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32 platform for adapting existing interventions to serve as virtual norm setting programs; and professionals should play
33
34 an active role in correcting misinformation by engaging in social media-based parent education.
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37 **References**

- 38
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STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS' SPANKING TWEETS

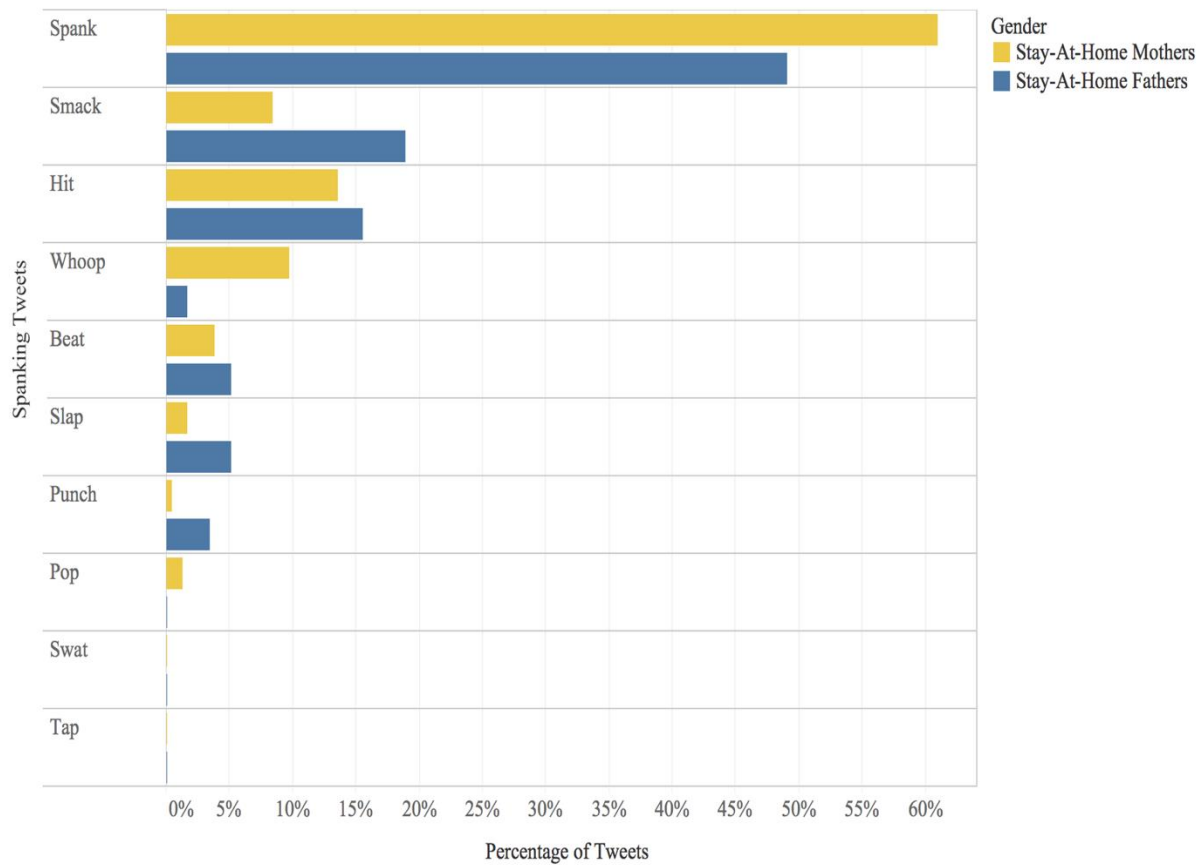


Figure 1. Distribution of tweets with spanking synonyms by stay-at-home parent gender. $n = 69$ stay-at-home father spanking tweets; $n = 240$ stay-at-home mother spanking tweets.

STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS' SPANKING TWEETS

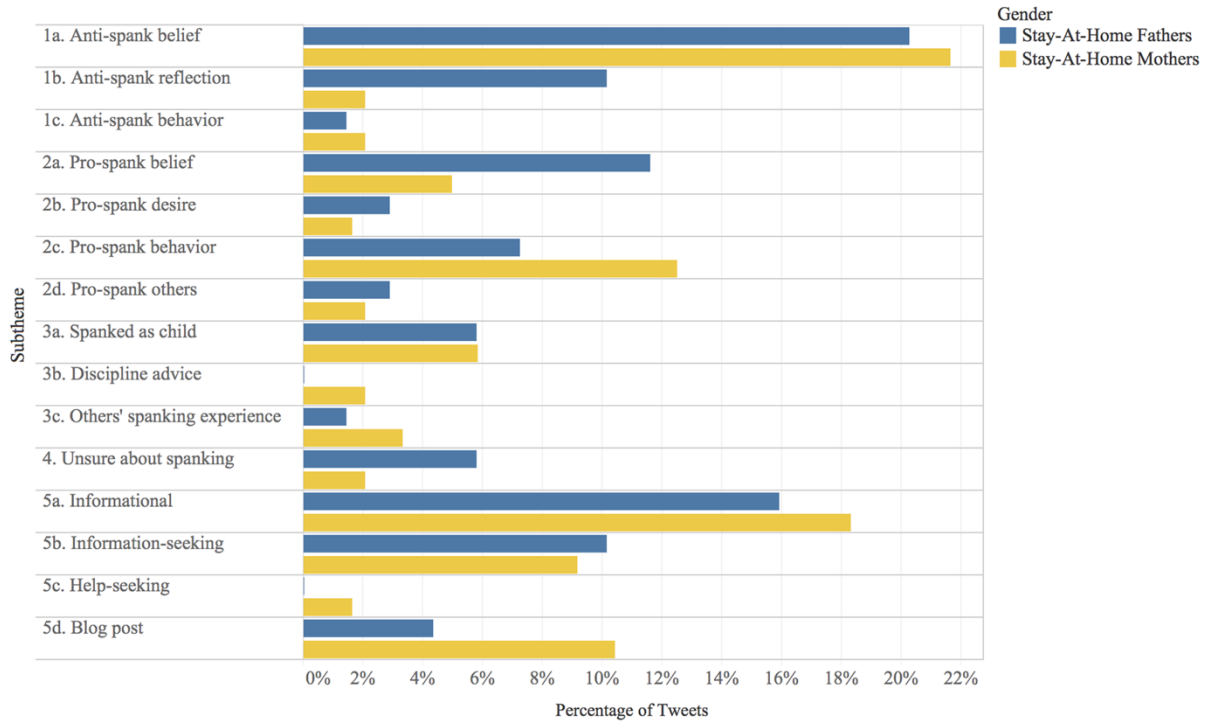


Figure 2. Distribution of spanking subthemes by stay-at-home parent gender. $n = 69$ stay-at-home father spanking tweets; $n = 240$ stay-at-home mother spanking tweets.

STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS' SPANKING TWEETS

Table 1

Global Themes, Subthemes, and Frequencies of Spanking Tweets

Global Themes and Subthemes	Overall		SAHFs		SAHMs	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1. Anti-Spanking	84	27.18	22	31.88	62	25.83
a. Anti-spank belief	66	21.36	14	20.29	52	21.67
b. Anti-spank reflection	12	3.88	7	10.14	5	2.08
c. Anti-spank behavior	6	1.94	1	1.45	5	2.08
2. Pro-spanking	68	22.01	17	24.64	51	21.25
a. Pro-spank belief	20	6.47	8	11.59	12	5.00
b. Pro-spank desire	6	1.94	2	2.90	4	1.67
c. Pro-spank behavior	35	11.33	5	7.25	30	12.50
d. Pro-spank others	7	2.27	2	2.90	5	2.08
3. Experiences related to spanking	32	10.36	5	7.25	27	11.25
a. Spanked as child	18	5.83	4	5.80	14	5.83
b. Discipline advice	5	1.62	0	0.00	5	2.08
c. Others' spanking experience	9	2.91	1	1.45	8	3.33
4. Unsure about spanking	9	2.91	4	5.80	5	2.08
5. Facts or information related to spanking	116	37.54	21	30.43	95	39.58
a. Informational	55	17.80	11	15.94	44	18.33
b. Information-seeking	29	9.39	7	10.14	22	9.17
c. Help-seeking	4	1.29	0	0.00	4	1.67
d. Blog post	28	9.06	3	4.35	25	10.42
Total	309	100.00	69	100.00	240	100.00

Notes. SAHF = Stay-At-Home Father; SAHM = Stay-At-Home Mother. *n* = 69 stay-at-home father

spanking tweets; *n* = 240 stay-at-home mother spanking tweets.