Spanking Children and the Real Differences Found in the GSS Based on Income

Jeremy Salinas

A04326651

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Professor Newling

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Introduction:

Spanking children, as a form of discipline, has been a technique used by all ethnic groups and age ranges throughout history, but it seems with the presence of new parenting styles or awareness of other styles the favor for using spanking has shifted away from being the only method. Studies and surveys are often done in order to find general patterns in data or some explanation to social a phenomenon such as child rearing. This study was conducted to see if attitudes towards Favor of spanking children as discipline correlated to the real income of the respondents answering these survey questions in the GSS2010 survey. Income was chosen to be the independent variable because when studying attitudes toward spanking it seemed important to also look at class differences, especially in places such as the United States where there is a huge range of income for citizens. Postulations were made wondering if income would be different among classes and perhaps if social mobility was affected by a possible correlation. Considering child socialization and learning as research data is relevant to the fact that birth is a thing happening at many different places around the world at the same time, and although different cultures have different methods for teaching children it is a thing most parents experience. If income were found to play a difference many other questions would be analyzed as to why this is so. The hope of the results was to not only further expand on knowledge of child rearing techniques but to get research out there letting other parents know other methods exist or that differences in attitudes could be based on factors such as income.

Literature:

When researching the existing literature for the correlation of income and being in favor of spanking as a type of discipline, it became prevalent that not many studies had been done to examine direct correlations between these two variables. However, instead of income directly as

a factor, the existing research contained variables that could theoretically be linked to income in application. To further explain this some apparent themes found in the research are listed below.

Types of Jobs By Parents

Previous research suggests that time parents are given with their children lead to changes in attitudes towards spanking, in households with dual earner incomes, or two parents working to bring in income, longer work hours were found to be correlated with fewer negative interactions with children (Bass et al., 2009) such as disciplining through spanking. The thought process held by this research was that as with an increase in amount of separation parents spent apart from their children an effect caused was missing the children in higher levels, which could be linked to better feelings at the moment they rejoined each other (Bass et al.). Increased sensitivity to children's feelings in these moments is more associated with middle class "democratic" styles of parenting that take more time addressing empathy and rational understanding (Chaudhuri et al., 2009). Not only does this correlate to amount of income in a household but also to the type of Socioeconomic class these parents found themselves in, for instance Parents in working class families had higher tendencies to authoritarian parenting, which was the style of parenting which had the most favor of spanking as discipline, because it correlated to the type of requirements needed in their job fields such as obedience to authority and respect (Chaudhuri et al, 2009).

Past experiences as an influence

Primarily through associations with spanking parents themselves might have experienced, we see the way parenting styles are passed onto offspring and the effect this also has. For instance, if a parent was spanked as a child but doesn't see their past as traumatic they are more likely to not think of it as a dangerous act. These parents see corporal punishment as not dangerous, or rather, not impressionable upon children and therefore have high rates of being in

favor of spanking children. But in parents who were abused psychologically, sexually, or physically they often tend not to use spanking because of the awareness of lasting effects (Gagne et al., 2007, Dejong et al., 2011). Ethnicity and cultural as a past influence plays into these experiences with Latin American parents being the primary users of the authoritarian style of parenting and European American mothers being the highest users of the Democratic style (Chaudhuri et al., 2009). Leading to higher rates of repetition for future generations from these ethnic groups. On a macro scale, the correlation to exposure to violence was also addressed, in that the more you were spanked as a child the more violence would seem as a solution to behavior or conflict to the extent previously stated earlier (Gagne et al., 2007).

Socioeconomic Factors

Low income and financial stress as the biggest predictors of attitude towards spanking were mentioned in the research, however it was claimed to have more to do with exposure to lower education and poorer neighborhoods (Chaudhuri et al, 2009). Often in situations involving children parents turn to professionals for advice such as pediatrics or mental health professionals, but as these experts are also found in socioeconomic areas matching the environment not all of the pediatrician and mental health professionals are aware of the programs in place or movements to step away from corporal punishment. Because of the lack of awareness, it is more common for these lower education environments to follow advice without question. But in contrary it is seen as more effective to adhere to programs geared to addressing parental education than just taking advice from professionals. (Bass et al, 2009, Dejong et al., 2011). Corporal punishment can be seen as a way to effectively stop a behavior but with the risk-to-benefit ratio for children in consideration, the lasting possible effects are not worth the risk and

should therefore lead to an increased teaching of alternatives for underprivileged environments and parents. (Dejong et al., 2011).

These themes found in previous research led to the importance of this study, finding if these factors did correlate with income or rather if data taken in regards to income directly would contradict factors such as socioeconomic status, past experience, or Job types. The importance of this study comes from the massive income differences the United States is known for and also the predictions as a society whether we will move away from spanking as disciplinary styles for our youth. This research will also contribute to how parents will perceive spanking among the different income groups in the US and whether it will help show differences among social classes. The Hypothesis for this research is that there is a significant difference between the income means of people who answered in the groups of favor of spanking children.

Methods:

The data used for this research was obtained second hand by analyzing data collected by the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the University of Chicago. The GSS survey has been conducted since the 1970's in an attempt to find social patterns and trends in the United States population. It includes questions addressing demographics, opinions, and social indicators such as stress and traumatic events. It is conducted primarily through face-to-face interviews, but is sometimes supplemented by telephone and computer assisted personal interviewing. Tom W. Smith currently directs the National Data Program, but over 60 members of the Board of Overseers maintain the data. Specifically, for the research conducted in this study, a subset of 54 variables from the GSS2010 was used and includes 2,044 cases total. The variables chosen from this data set were Respondents income in constant dollars and whether the respondent favored spanking as a type of discipline for children. For the income in constant dollars' variable there is

a total of 1202 valid answers to the survey question. Incomes ranged from $259, to $109,525, showing how this was an interval variable. For the "favor of using spanking to discipline a child" variable there were a total of 1417 valid cases out of the 2,044 total. The variable is ordinal because the answer choices were "Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree", thus it is non-parametric data. It was decided to treat it as nominal data for purpose of statistical analysis. Only those 822 cases that answered both the income and spanking questions are included in the data. In order to complete the analysis used in this research the central tendencies and frequencies for both variables were calculated and used to explain the data patterns. Given the data, an Analysis of Variance test will be carried out at the 0.05 level of significance, in order to find out if there is a significant difference in average income between respondents grouped according to their views on spanking children. After the data is calculated the ordinal categories will be aggregated into two new categories, "Agree" and "Disagree" in order to further test the hypothesis with an individual sample T- Test also allowing the use of the mean to make observed differences between incomes for groups that agree and disagree with favor of using spanking.

Findings:

Table 1. Number of Valid and Missing cases for The GSS Variables

	N(Valid)	**N(Missing)**
RS Income In Constant $	1202	842
Favor Spanking to Discipline Child	1417	627

Using the data in the SPSS program the frequencies for both the variables were calculated, because the real income variable was continuous data, the mean ($20,696.68), median ($14,245), and mode ($23,310) were all calculated. The mode or most frequent answer was found to be "Agree" for favor of spanking to discipline children. These Variables were then used

in an ANOVA test as planned, to test for significance between groups, as seen in Table 2 below. The finding was a P value of .037, which at the 0.05 level of significance, was found to be significant difference. This shows that between the 4 answer choices of "Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree", the means were significant enough to matter in the ANOVA test.

Table 2. Anova Analysis of Income Means Between Groups for Favor of Spanking Children

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Strongly Agree	192	17,967.63	18,430.043	1330.074
Agree	389	19,359.84	19,041.086	965.421
Disagree	176	22,308.41	22,621.606	1705.168
Strongly Disagree	65	24,890.91	23,110.717	2866.532
Total	822	20,103.35	20,131.234	702.157

P<0.05 (P=0.037 and is significant)

However, observed real income means between the groups seemed to be more significant than a value of 0.037 so the data was taken and the four categories were accumulated into only two, agree and disagree. Looking at only these two categories we were able to see better percentages of who was in favor and who wasn't, as seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Independent sample T-Test of Aggregated Groups for Favor of Spanking Children

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Agree	581	18,899.77	18,836.863	781.485
Disagree	241	23,004.94	22,735.118	1464.502

P<0.05 (P=0.002)

After this process was completed, in order to further analyze the data, an Individual Sample T-test was run to compare the average incomes of those who agreed with using spanking to discipline children to those who disagreed. When those aggregated group means are compared we find that the observed average income for agrees was found to be $18,899.77 with the average for disagrees was $23,004.94. The P value found here was 0.002 showing much greater significance between the categories of data. Both statistical tests seen in Table 2. And Table 3. supported our research hypothesis that mean income was different among groups on favor of spanking children for discipline, and it further supported the negative correlation that as income for individuals raises the favor of using spanking decreases and vice versa.

Conclusion:

We interpreted this to mean that as a general social trend found in the GSS survey the more income an individual makes the more likely they, as parents, would disagree with using spanking. This not only supports themes found in the literature review such as how different income jobs might pass onto their children different skills, such as obedience taught with spanking or critical thinking taught with scolding; but it shows the sociological significance for how children themselves might be exposed to the idea of spanking. If a child grows up in a neighborhood where everyone has higher average income, then he or she would be less familiarized with spanking and perhaps be less likely to spank his or her children as well. The Assertion could be made using this data, that if the rate of social mobility across socioeconomic class could increase, movements to stop spanking as a discipline movement would become more successful. Perhaps children, who are abused physically through extreme corporal punishment, or spanking at high strengths, would be less likely exposed to this if awareness of this trend were made publicly known. This trend also shows that families with low income are more likely to

strongly agree with spanking as a method of punishment and therefore increase the possibility for abuse to occur or just unnecessary forms of discipline. Many lower income families could be helped with income programs that would perhaps lower overall rates of child abuse in the United States. Further research could include children views or teenage views on if they understand the purpose of spanking, this would be hard research to achieve but it would make better understanding of whether spanking is effective and perhaps change attitudes on whether it should be used during child discipline.

References:

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CODE BOOK

Realrinc	Respondents real income in constant $
	0= IAP
	999998= Don't know
	999999= NA
Spanking	Favor using spanking as a type of discipline for children
	0= IAP
	1= Strongly Agree
	2= Agree
	3= Disagree
	4= Strongly Disagree
	8= DK
	9= NA
Spank1	Recode for Favor of using spanking
	1=Agree
	2=Disagree

Univariate Analysis

Statistics

RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $

N	Valid	1202
	Missing	842
Mean		20696.68
Median		14245.00
Mode		23310
Std. Deviation		19944.815
Skewness		2.040
Std. Error of Skewness		.071
Minimum		259
Maximum		109525

Statistics

FAVOR SPANKING TO DISCIPLI

N	Valid	1417
	Missing	627
Mode		2

FAVOR SPANKING TO DISCIPLINE CHILD

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	336	16.4	23.7	23.7
	AGREE	647	31.7	45.7	69.4
	DISAGREE	324	15.9	22.9	92.2
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	110	5.4	7.8	100.0
	Total	1417	69.3	100.0	
Missing	IAP	614	30.0		
	DK	10	.5		
	NA	3	.1		
	Total	627	30.7		
Total		2044	100.0		

Statistics

Spanking recode

N	Valid	1417
	Missing	627
Mode		1.00

Spanking recode

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	983	48.1	69.4	69.4
	Disagree	434	21.2	30.6	100.0
	Total	1417	69.3	100.0	
Missing	System	627	30.7		
Total		2044	100.0		

Bivariate Analysis

ANOVA

RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3436426475	3	1145475492	2.846	.037
Within Groups	3.293E+11	818	402551884.0		
Total	3.327E+11	821			

Descriptives

RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $

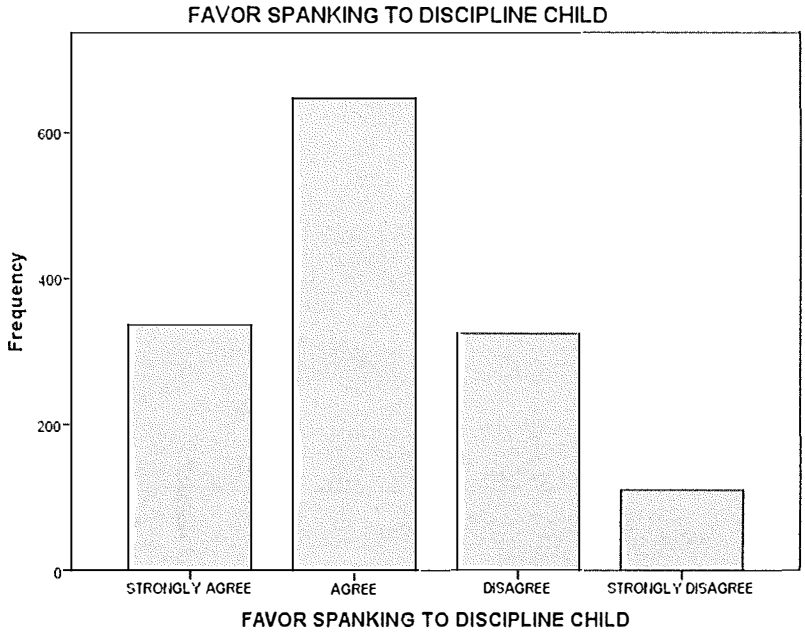
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
STRONGLY AGREE	192	17967.63	18430.043	1330.074	15344.11	20591.15	259	109525
AGREE	389	19359.84	19041.086	965.421	17461.73	21257.96	259	109525
DISAGREE	176	22308.41	22621.606	1705.168	18943.07	25673.75	259	109525
STRONGLY DISAGREE	65	24890.91	23110.717	2866.532	19164.36	30617.47	259	109525
Total	822	20103.35	20131.234	702.157	18725.11	21481.59	259	109525

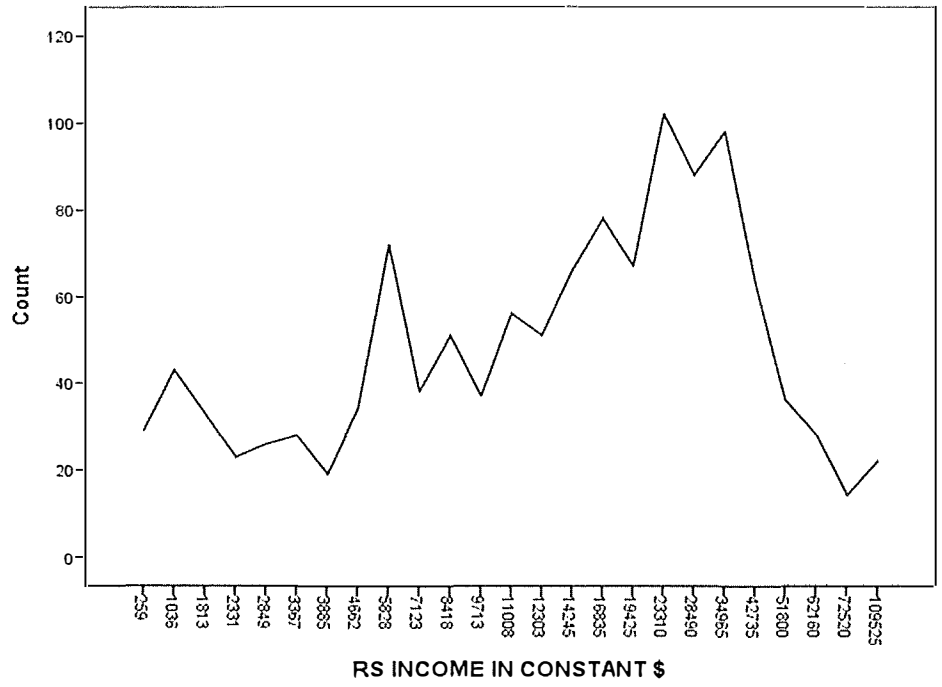
Group Statistics

	Spanking recode	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $	Agree	581	18899.77	18836.863	781.485
	Disagree	241	23004.94	22735.188	1464.502

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $	Equal variances assumed	9.819	.002	-2.671	820	.008	-4105.173	1536.713	-7121.527	-1088.819
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.473	383.279	.014	-4105.173	1659.965	-7368.952	-841.394


FAVOR SPANKING TO DISCIPLINE CHILD
Frequency
600
400
200
0
STRONGLY AGREE
AGREE
DISAGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE
FAVOR SPANKING TO DISCIPLINE CHILD


Count
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100
80
60
40
20
0
259
1036
1813
2331
2849
3367
3885
4662
5828
7123
8418
9713
11008
12303
14245
16835
19425
23310
28490
34965
42735
51800
62160
75520
109525
RS INCOME IN CONSTANT $