Gender roles in parenting discussions during the Covid-19 pandemic on Reddit

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Disclaimer

- Ongoing project on the use of reddit data to study societal effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

- Based on research proposal by

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Background

- Division of labor in Western societies influenced by traditional gender roles that are rooted in industrial revolution

  - Fathers: breadwinners
  - Mothers: domestic labor and childcare

- From the second half of the 20th century, mothers increasingly entered the labor market but continued to do most domestic labor ("second shift")

Background

▶ Concerns about re-traditionalization of gender roles during the pandemic (Allemendinger, 2020; Lewis, 2020; Wenham et al., 2020)

▶ Men more likely to take up domestic labor during lockdown or remote work (e.g., Farré et al., 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020)

▶ Women more likely to take up domestic labor regardless of their partner's situation (e.g., Collins et al., 2020; Farré et al., 2020)

▶ Women more likely to be affected by job and income loss (e.g., Alon et al., 2020; Hupkau & Petrongolo, 2020)

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Background

▶ Why might traditional gender roles be reinforced during crises? (Fisher & Ryan, 2021)

    ▶ Gender roles offer clear behavioral "guidelines"

Research Questions

▶ Do we observe gendered parenting discussions on reddit?

▶ Did the Covid-19 pandemic affect mothers' and fathers' parenting discussions differently?

Data

Why reddit?

- ▶ Social media platforms are used to seek information and social support (e.g., Lopez, 2009; Ammari & Schoenebeck, 2015)
- ▶ Non-reactive method of data collection, anonymous, sensitive contents
- ▶ Exploratory analysis: identify issues we didn't think of before
- ▶ Supplement traditional survey data
- ▶ Easy access

Limitations

- ▶ LGBTIQ+ parents excluded
- ▶ No guarantee that we have only parents
- ▶ Mostly U.S. based English-speaking users
- ▶ No individual characteristics

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Data

r/Mommit

Über diese Community

We are moms mucking through the ickier parts of child raising. It may not always be pretty, fun and awesome, but we do it. We want to be here for other moms who are going through the same experiences and offer a helping hand.

Erstellt am 4. Sept. 2010

683k
Mitglieder

● **445**
Online

Oberste 1%
Sortiert nach Größe

r/Daddit

Über diese Community

This is a subreddit for Dads. Single Dads, new Dads, Step-Dads, tall Dads, short Dads, and any other kind of Dad. If you've got kids in your life that you love and provide for, come join us as we discuss everything from birth announcements to code browns in the shower.

Erstellt am 17. Juli 2010

512k
Mitglieder

● **337**
Online

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Data

Four data sets: All submissions and discussions

- **Pre-pandemic** (January 21, 2019 to November 30, 2019)
    - r/Mommit: 6,162 discussion items by 3,602 unique users
    - r/Daddit: 12,926 discussion items by 7,491 unique users

- **Pandemic** (January 21, 2020 to November 30, 2020)
    - r/Mommit: 8,556 discussion items by 3,602 unique users
    - r/Daddit: 12,743 discussion items by 4,738 unique users

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Methods

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) Topic Modelling

- ▶ Key idea
    - ▶ Topics form building blocks of a corpus
    - ▶ Topics are probability distributions over words
    - ▶ Often shown as probability-ranked list of words
    - ▶ Do not know (number of) topics a priori
    - ▶ Goal is to discover (number of) topics
- ▶ Each document in a corpus can be explained by a number of topics: each document has an allocation over latent topics governed by a Dirichlet distribution

Methods

Our goal

- ▶ Detect topics discussed in subreddits in pre- and pandemic times
- ▶ LDA allows us to summarize text
- ▶ Do we find differences in topics discussed, e.g., more domestic labor in mommit, etc.?
- ▶ Do these differences become more pronounced during the pandemic?
- ▶ Qualitative interpretation, no statistical hypothesis testing

Methods

Selected topics and words with highest probabilities per topic

Topic titles	Keywords
Potty training	Sit, clean, hand, walk, potty, diaper, poop,bath, change, pee
(Breast-)feeding	Eat, feed,bottle, food, fee, milk, moth,formula, water, breast
Child diet	Eat, food, toddler,weight, dinner, snack, meal, lunch, gain, offer
Mental health	Feel, bad, harm, mom, anxiety, make, sad, guilty, break, depression
Sleeping	Sleep, night, bed, cry, wake, hour, minute, fall, nap, asleep
Playing games and watching videos	Play, watch, game, video, toy, enjoy, love, idea, tv, activity
School	School, read, talk, hear, book, learn, word, teacher, teach, class
Housekeeping	Diaper, clean, house, sit, toddler, floor, potty, cook, pee, dinner

Methods

"My house is a mess and I feel guilty I can't clean it (baby is a 10 mo napper), I will be eating a brownie for lunch (. . .) and I feel so drained and melancholic Which makes me feel guilty in front of my son, because I don't have the energy to interact with him. (. . .) I should be teaching him words,skills, showing him around. (. . .) Great. What a great mom I am". (*Mental health*, r/Mommit, 2020)

Methods

"Guys it finally happened. My baby was born today. Weighed in at 9.75. Got meaby linebacker born. I just want to celebrate." (*Welcoming new dads on Reddit*, r/Daddit, 2019)

Results

Sleeping	Pregnancy	Purchase recommendations
Welcoming new dads on Reddit	Child health	Online classes
Playing games & watching videos	Child diet	Housekeeping
Mental health issues	Daycare and school during COVID	Finances and maintenances

Results

RQ1: Do we observe gendered parenting discussions on reddit?
r/Daddit 2019

Sleeping	Pregnancy	
Welcoming new dads on Reddit		
Playing games & watching videos	Child diet	
		Finances and maintenances

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Results

r/Mommit 2019

Sleeping	Pregnancy	Purchase recommendations
	Child health	
Playing games & watching videos	Child diet	Housekeeping

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Results

RQ2: Did the Covid-19 pandemic affect mothers' and fathers' parenting discussions differently?

r/Daddit 2020

Sleeping	Pregnancy	Purchase recommendations
Welcoming new dads on Reddit		
Playing games & watching videos		
		Finances and maintenances

Results

r/Mommit 2020

Sleeping	Pregnancy	Purchase recommendations
		Online classes
Playing games & watching videos	Kid's diet	Housekeeping
Mental health issues	Daycare and school during COVID	

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Discussion

- Topics discussed on r/Mommit and r/Daddit differ according to gender norms

    - Mothers more often discuss daily aspects of life (e.g., domestic labor, childcare)
    - Fathers more often discuss unique events (e.g., celebration of becoming a parent)

- Gender differences more pronounced during the pandemic

    - Mothers focus more on how to cope with the effects of the pandemic (e.g., schooling, day care for children)

- Feelings seemed to be openly discussed in both subreddits

- More quantitative analysis?

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