

Field Observation Notes

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Overview:

The community I will be observing over the next week is a parenting community on reddit with about 8.1 million members. The page is usually about how parents have to deal with the problems found with being a parent, which isn't talked about as much as it could be these days. The people of this group mostly want to talk about how to be a good parent and how childhood works. The fact-based research I will be conducting outside will show the difference between the difficulties and experiences of raising a child, and what actually means "good parenting."

Day One - March 13th, 2025, 1:00 PM

My first day analyzing this reddit parenting community was quite intriguing. Right off the bat I clearly notice the vibes of this community. Unlike other groups that just share their interests and hobbies, the parenting community is more of a place where one can call for help and seek advice. For example there is this woman who goes by the name Sarah or (u/zarya2) on reddit that is taking care of a 3.5 year old and a 2 year old with her mother in law. Her mother in law is only there to help temporarily and will be heading back on to her own life. Sarah expresses the fact she is not quite ready and feels that she will be "outnumbered". Sarah seems fearful, her post in only two sentences but it creates this feeling of urgency and lack of confidence in herself. The comments to her post show more suggestive ideas from people who also have experience with kids suggesting her to give the 3.5 year old tasks to keep him or herself engaged to make it easier to watch over both children. While watching the comments I notice they are also short and straight to the point addressing their feelings of "oh I've been there before" which creates this support function between the people.

Another post I see comes from a single mother who goes under the reddit name No Leader 3877. She seeks help from the community after she once caught her 16 year old son with a vape but he claimed it wasn't his so she dismissed it. Later she finds him with another one and concludes he must be vaping. When I go to her comments it is mostly filled with parents and just regular adults explaining to her the fact that she can't force him to stop but she can inform him on the dangers of vaping in hopes he will break out of his habit so it doesn't become an addiction. It seems like this community is a place where parents can find help to their problems of understanding children too. This mother doesn't know how to deal with her child for vaping, she wants to be connected to her son while not causing a distance in their relationship.

Day Two - March 14th, 2025, 4:00 PM

Aside from just advice the parenting community is also a place where parents could just talk about what they have going on with their kids. Sometimes people even just dump their problems and how they feel about certain things in this reddit page. I was recently reading this post from a person on reddit who goes under the name Sufficient_Radish811 who expresses a conflict she came across with friends over a dinner plan. So this reddit user has a 6 month old daughter who is normally well behaved according to him or herself. Since the user didn't have any family to watch over the child they wanted to bring the child with them to a dinner plan that was made for a specific occasion. A good thing to point out is that none of the friends has or had kids. The group of nine friends then changed reservations when being informed the 6 month old is coming. The friends commented on the restaurant being too tight for strollers to fit. The group of friends drop the reddit user, their partner and the 6 month old from attending. The user just uses this experience to express their feelings of being hurt and seeks anyone who can relate to their experience of this scenario. A lot of the responses are understanding but also encouraging

reddit users to find new friends and people going through similar situations as those who don't have children won't understand what the user is going through. The people in the users comments want to reassure that whatever he or she is going through is quite normal and friends will come and go whereas family sticks. This reddit page is very open mainly to how parents have to struggle not because they have kids but how the world around them plays a part in this new lie they have around them. This page is a place that's almost like a guide to living with this new life you have created for yourself and those around you.

Day Three - March 15th, 2025, 10:00 AM

Now this time I decided to check out the parenting community earlier than usual to see the difference in posts impacted by the time of the day. What I noticed (unrelated to the time of the day) is that people tend to use this parenting community to ask questions that they are genuinely lost on. Now it could be that some people don't know how to research properly making it hard to get factual answers but I mostly see this parenting community as a very accessible and simple way for parents to communicate without getting lost on the internet. Also it's very clear that a lot of the people in this community are new to parenthood. When I view posts it's mainly about people who have newborns or very young children ranging from 1-8 year olds. These people come here for support on how to raise a child properly while not failing to educate them of what life truly will be like for them in the near future. There is this one post I see where a family lost their 5 week old daughter to SID's and the older brother who is 3.5 years old is concerned about death. Since he is young he doesn't understand the way life necessarily works so it's hard for the family to educate him when he is this young. The reddit user of this post

seems genuinely worried for their child's fear of death and seeks support from the community to lessen this concern.

Day Four- March 16th, 2025, 6:00 PM

Today I noticed a very interesting story. A mother of an 8 year old struggles to control her son due to the fact that he doubles down on whenever he is in trouble. The mother in this reddit post goes by the username u/PlainLikeJane and tells a story about her eight only deciding to put himself in more trouble even after being caught. The mother starts off by explaining a recent tragedy that just happened, which is her father passing away so she gets this giant stuffed teddy bear as a reminder of him. One night she asks her son if he brushed his teeth in which he said yes but she knows he's had a problem with lying over the years. She eventually gets him to fess up so she goes to tell her partner about the progress she's making with getting her son to tell the truth. As she is on her way she notices that a coffee table in her house is etched up with drawings. The mother knows her son has drawing books, paper and utensils so she goes back to ask him why he did this. Her son claims he made that drawing for grandpa which the mother knew was a lie. She tells him he is going to help her fix it but right after that her son goes to their cats litter box and then starts urinating on it. The son tells his mother he had to go to the bathroom really badly in which she is just in awe. The mother is just confused on what to do so she goes towards the comments.

The people who comment on her post seem to have knowledge and maybe even experience with these situations as one person suggests the child get tested for ADHD, autism, or any other behavioral issues. u/PlainLikeJane responds by saying she will be looking to take her son to a psychiatrist while noting her son doesn't have any learning issues and does well in school. A person by the name of u/IAmATelekinetic informs the mother that instead she should

do neuropsych testing for her son to evaluate if her son has any conditions she is not aware of. The mother later responds confirming she has gotten an appointment for her evaluation and is now waiting.

It honestly seems to me that the mother is trying not to think of the worst because it's clear her son has behavioral issues which are probably caused by many things but these thoughts don't occur to her at first. I noticed a few people are calling this out as a sign of undiagnosed ADHD because these impulses cause more trouble even understanding the situation they are in. For the most part the comments take an interaction of concern where the mother quickly tries to see what's really going on in her son's world.

Day Five- March 18th, 2025, 2:00 PM

My analysis over these past few days is that this online parenting community is made to seek refuge from the horrors of parenting. A lot of people seem scared and worried they won't raise a child right. Sometimes people are strict on their kids, sometimes there are those who are very lenient, and then there are those who are right smack in the middle. What stays consistent is the struggle of understanding how children work. A lot of the time parents over think things and fear they are doing enough for their kids growing up. Parents are afraid of their kids being spoiled, doing drugs/smoking, being abusive, messing up their sleep schedule, messing up their work hours etc. What I am seeing here is that parents forget that this is an experience new to them so don't stress but relax, they are also forgetting that you can only protect kids from so much. As these kids grow up they are going to get more curious and try new things, look at the world from a different perspective and even cause you some trouble at times. All they can do as parents is their best and that is to teach their kid about the world we live in so that they are prepared to live their life.