

- The quality of a parenting partnership and its impact on parenting success
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Baby Project Reflection

Everything about being a parent revolves around responsibility. Unfortunately, I'm not one to say that I'm on top of every issue right as they come up, and that disqualifies me as being a great parent. I almost left the baby behind when switching classes once, and although I learned from that and don't think I will repeat my mistake, any little error like that could be frightening, dangerous, or even fatal. Or when we learned about shaking baby syndrome, just shaking a baby — out of frustration or perhaps joy — can end in a brainless baby. Unfortunately, teens are generally more irresponsible than adults in their twenties or thirties, and I'm sure the rate of accident or negligence with teenage parents is relatively high or higher compared to that of more mature parents. A parent also is necessarily caring and empathetic towards their child, realizing and tending to the baby's needs over their own. A baby is inherently vulnerable, and this initial level of intensive care is necessary to raise the baby.

I'm not sure of my expectations of having a baby before the baby project, but the project set a reference point of expectations. We did not have diapers, but learning that a baby goes through approximately six diapers a day is astonishing. I thought previously to the experiment that a baby had only to be diapered once or twice a day, but apparently I was very wrong. I would assume that one expectation of an innocent teenage parent would be that a baby would only truly require love and some patience, in turn rewarding the parent with unimaginable cuteness and success, but we learned through the baby project that this idealized concept of a baby is not practical at all, what with diapering and feeding and soothing. To be able to set aside so much time to calm a baby who just pooped or peed and feels uncomfortable, or even to carry around diapers if the parents were away from home for an extended period of time, and to deal with the stench of changing a diaper and getting their hands dirty between work sessions, seems highly undesirable if not almost impossible to handle. The baby did not cry or need to be fed, but a parent would have to deal with him or her many times a day, interrupting or quitting school or work to attend to the baby. Otherwise, the parent would need to hire a babysitter — which would be expensive, live on government aid — which would make the family feel dependent and lose confidence, or give up the baby to adoption. Therefore, an older age, especially an age at which a person is already financially stable and grown into an intimate relationship with his or her

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partner, is essential to raising a healthy and happy baby. In addition, being older than a teenager means a more stable emotional state and better reasoning — the same reason why underage drinking or driving is not permitted by law. Unfortunately, human reproduction is a primordial part of human existence and cannot totally be governed by law, thus allowing the high rate of teenage pregnancies.

In my case, I know that my partner, Mackenzie, was very responsible and very essential for the progress of this project: I had an afterschool activity almost every day this entire week what with bowling and the science research project and the AP Lang project, and was very busy with a project this weekend. On my busiest days she took the baby, and she had the baby over the (extended) weekend, greatly conveniencing my time. It was a busy week, but considering that life will get much more complicated as we enter college and then the workforce, having a partner there is an immense help with raising a child. Needless to say there's much more to having a partner staying in a relationship than simply watching over the baby; the partner increases the confidence and security of both the other parent and the baby, and he or she provides a strong member of the familial support system. Therefore a second parent, especially as a teenager, is very helpful in raising a child happily and independently (i.e., without dependence on government support) if not necessary. We learned in class how much a baby costs over time, and all of the single parents quickly went broke.

I wouldn't rank my performance during the baby project too highly. I am not really qualified to be a parent, without an income source, the responsibility to drop anything I'm doing at the moment to take care of the moment, nor the mentality to deal with diapers and crying and baby food all day. I don't have a car nor vocational skills, and a baby would likely drag down my grades. Frankly, I'm not too excited about ever having a baby (but that sentiment may change in the future depending on who I meet). While I did everything that was required of me in this project, it was the bare minimum: I contacted Mackenzie only once each day over the weekend, kept baby Lincoln with me but did not give him much attention — this would not be enough to raise a real baby. A real baby would require all the love and attention a parent could give, and I don't think I have that capacity for affection. But I feel that this is a problem all parents have to achieve, no matter at what age: there is probably some initial awkwardness for anyone who's had no experience with a baby.

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