

Argument Paper

“Are you hot?
Are you cold?
Are you wearing that?
Where’s your books and your lunch and your homework at?
Grab your coat and your gloves and your scarf and hat.
Don’t forget; you got to feed the cat!” (1)

Anita Renfroe wrote these catchy words for the song “Momisms”, sung to the familiar tune of the William Tell Overture. Her words best describe a typical day of mayhem through the eyes of a mother. Mothers who stay at home know that at times, their lives can be discombobulating. Despite the chaos, stay-at-home mothers get the tremendous responsibility of only having one chance of raising their children in such a way that makes a difference in their children’s lives and in society.

Throughout history, society has looked upon the male as the breadwinner: the one expected to work and support the family. The mother has been viewed as the nurturer: the one to stay home and raise the children. During the 1960’s, women wanted more rights, power, and the ability to get higher paying jobs. Women were given this right so they expressed this new found freedom by going to work outside of the home. As women sought employment, their children were left to the care of babysitters and day care workers. Because society has redefined the role of a mother to be one who is an important element in the workforce, the loss of the mother in the home has led to the decline of the family unit, and thus, to society. This forfeiture has created a generation for whom social morals and values are not as important as they once were. Perhaps this is due to a working mother being absent from the home where she is unable to personally instill these ethical standards in her children, thus leaving her children to receive their value system from strangers. “Society truly does begin at home”, asserts Sibyl Niemann, so, in order to return to a culture with better morals and values, the importance of the role of the stay at home mother should be restored. (2) In this way, stay at home mothers can improve society.

It is disappointing when mothers are devalued for staying at home to raise their children. Richard Lowry states, “There is something valuable in a mother’s caring for her own child.” (4) In general, no one can take care of your child in the same way his or her mother would. A mother’s care is usually superior to daycare since she naturally wants what is best for her child. “According to a non-partisan Public Agenda survey in 2000, roughly 80 percent of parents with children five and younger say a stay-at-home

parent is best able to give children the “affection and attention they need.”” (qtd. in Lowry 4)

A mother’s individual care can also curb the aggression that is evident in day care centers. “A study done by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), reports that, kids in non-maternal care tend to be associated with qualities such as “gets in lots of fights,” “cruelty,” “explosive behavior,” “talking too much,” “argues a lot,” and “demands a lot of attention.”” (qtd. in Lowry 1) Teachers who work in a preschool environment, like my daughter, are frustrated with how badly the children usually behave. Workers in day care are governed by strict rules which prevent disciplining children the way one can do at home. This causes a disregard and loss of respect for others because many children grow up thinking they can do what they want. Today, many of the younger generation act like they are owed something. In the workplace, it is shocking to see the way they treat others with their degrading manners and think there is nothing wrong with their behavior. They also tend to have lazy work ethics and “cop an attitude” when asked to do anything extra. This makes it difficult for many employers to find hard working and respectful employees.

It is important to note that not all children in daycare grow up to be aggressive and unproductive adults. Even though many women in the work force find raising children to be a very difficult task which leaves them feeling lonely and bored, they do a fine job of balancing their jobs with raising successful children. These women enjoy being able to show their children the advantages of working outside of the home. They are able to “teach their children how to be independent, inquisitive, and ambitious”, as well as “learn the value of personal fulfillment and goal setting.” (Karaim 1) Reed Karaim also proclaims that, “successful working mothers give their children one of the best gifts any parent can: the example of a life lived to its potential.” (3) I think that all of these examples are helpful in raising successful children, however, I believe a stay at home mom can also teach these same qualities in the home. I know this to be true because I was fortunate to remain at home and raise my children. I was the one who was the nurturer and demonstrated love and compassion to my children by hugging, cuddling, and kissing them. I was personally involved in teaching them throughout all the stages of development and shared in the joy of my children’s accomplishments. There is something special about hearing your child’s first word and watching them take their first step as they giggle with glee. I was able to mold my children’s character by instilling good values and morals that taught them to be independent and set goals for themselves, such as being on time for work and appointments. These attributes have helped to contribute to society in a positive way and leave me feeling as if I have done a good job.

Despite the seemingly successful results of a stay at home mom’s efforts, “our culture no longer values the household supported by a sole breadwinner.” (Niemann 3)

This is demonstrated by the many women who currently do work outside of the home because they feel the need to contribute to their families' wellbeing. According to Niemann, "everything—from buying a house to applying for a college loan for one's son or daughter—seems structured around the two income family." (3) A household that has a dual income helps "boost many families into middle class.", says Karaim. (2) This allows their children to experience the comforts, options for education and opportunities that they might otherwise not have had.

As tempting as this extra income may be, couples should be careful that this does not impact their relationship as husband and wife. When spouses compete for power in the workforce and then return home too tired to deal with the many needs of their children, the harmony of the family unit can suffer. This is because husbands often feel threatened by the success of their wives. Steven Rhoads claims that "men are more likely to divorce women who are ambitious." (5) Lowry explains that "just the specter of divorce creates a kind of intra-marital arms race. The wife works to hedge against getting abandoned, but her very act of working, research shows, makes it more likely that the marriage will fail—a dismaying downward spiral." (3) Since divorces negatively impact society, we should refocus on preserving marriage and on strengthening the family unit. When men and women are happy and comfortable in their roles as the father-breadwinner, and mother-caregiver, marriages can thrive.

Women who do remain at home should not hide behind their children or husbands but instead should be proud of their role. They should be vocal about how productive they are with their children and family. This allows working women and men to see and appreciate the importance of the role of a stay at home mom. Perhaps they will see for themselves the advantages of remaining at home and raising their children. According to Lowry, "most women would like to stay home and care for their children, but society pressures them into believing that a career is more important than family." (1) Unless some changes are made, the family unit will continue to decline. Less time spent with children building character increases the risk for disregarding and disrespecting others. The current attitudes of "you owe me", "I deserve it", as well as "it is all about me" will probably continue to get worse.

Even though being a stay-at-home mom may have periods of loneliness, boredom, frustration, and feelings of futility, the rewards of being personally involved with raising one's own children greatly outweigh the negatives. One of the greatest accomplishments in life is being a stay-at-home mom where one can teach and model good behavior and moral fortitude. By emulating these morals and values, children enter into adulthood with the necessary tools needed to produce a successful society. As tough as this unpaid task may be, this self-sacrifice of staying at home to raise ones' children can be the most society enhancing job a woman can do.

Works Cited

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