Working Mothers are Benefiting the Family—NOTES

Thesis

Major supporting details:

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Working Mothers Are Benefiting the Family
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The basic unit of every society is the family. Families make up the fabric of every community and should be valued for the important role they hold in keeping people together. The heads of each familial unit have a duty, a duty that I feel is unique to each family and can change over time. Traditionally, the father has been the breadwinner—working several days a week to provide for his family financially. The mother has traditionally been the homemaker—taking care of the children and the house. In recent years, our society has seen a rather dramatic shift in the expectations of both the father and mother. We now expect the father to play a more active role in the lives of his children and in the running of the household. We also expect the mother to be more active outside of the home, often by working. There has been a division amongst people as to the benefits and consequences of having women work outside of the home. While some believe that working women are harming the family, I feel that working women are a benefit to their families.

Working parents and nonworking parents alike have a common goal in mind for their family: that their children are well taken care of and provided with everything that they might need. In “Working Mothers are Harming the Family,” Richard Lowry argues that when given the choice, most mothers would choose to stay home with their children. I disagree with Lowry. In today’s competitive society, in order for a family to do well, it is often necessary for both parents to work. Parents work because of the undeniable financial benefits that come with having both parents work. Two-parent families in which both parents work make an average of $26,000 more than families in which only one parent works (Karaim). I have seen many examples of this in my own life. My family and many of my relatives live in households in which both parents work. For my family, having my mother work has had enormous financial benefits. My father is self-employed and we are dependent on my mother’s job for our health and dental insurance, without which life would be much more difficult for us. Having the second income also enabled my family to afford a nice home in a safe part of town, and allowed for my parents to send me to good schools. My parents both work because they believe that it is in their children’s best interest. Like other working parents, they are simply doing what they believe is right for their children.

Working parents often set a good work ethic for their children, helping to make them productive members of society. For instance, in “Working Mothers are Benefiting the Family,” Reed Karaim states that working mothers set an example for their children by showing a “willingness to work” and the positive outcomes of working: namely a sense of independence, pride, and fulfillment. Karaim also believes that working mothers help to break the stereotype of women being in the home, concerned with nothing more than their physical appearance. Rather, they are successful independent women who value and use their intelligence as much as possible. I agree with Karaim and believe that working mothers set an example for their children to live life to its full potential. My mother has always encouraged me to be active in various aspects of my life. She believes that all children need to be provided with the opportunity to do anything and everything that they may want. My mother developed this sense of independence because she has been working for several years. She knows well how fulfilling a sense of accomplishment can be. She has always encouraged her daughters to work and play sports, roles that some would argue are for “boys only.” By encouraging me in this way, my mother has gifted me with a strong will. I know that I am no less than any man and can be just as successful, if not more so, than my male
counterpart. Children from families in which both parents work are very lucky because they receive a more dynamic view of the importance of working and the happiness it can bring to a person’s life.

Despite some of the obvious benefits of having both parents work, there are several common arguments against having mothers work. As Michael Noer states in “Don’t Marry Career Women,” relationships in which both members work have a higher divorce rate, a higher likelihood of cheating, and the couple is less likely to have children. I do not believe that this is a valid argument against working mothers. A relationship with problems like Noer describes does not result directly from having both members work; rather they are deep-seeded problems that build over a long period of time. It is not fair to blame one member of the relationship for a problem that occurs between both members. And while I am sure that there are some couples that cannot handle having both members work, there are also many couples that work full time and are able to maintain a loving healthy relationship. In “Don’t Marry a Lazy Man,” Elizabeth Corcoran talks about how marriage is a two-way street, and both members have a responsibility to maintain their relationship. She also gives a personal example by talking about how she and her husband have been able to maintain their relationship despite both working full-time jobs. My own parents have been married for twenty-two years, nineteen of which both my mother and father have worked. I am happy to say that they still maintain a happy and healthy relationship.

Another common argument against having both parents work is that the children end up in daycare centers. I do not feel that a daycare center harms a child in any way; rather I feel that the children learn how to be social with children their own age. Lowry argues that being away from the mother results in more “aggressive and defiant” children, as reported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. And while there are some daycare centers where children are neglected and not treated well, it is always the parents’ responsibility to find the best daycare center they can afford. When placed in a good daycare, children learn how to interact with other kids their age. Furthermore, children in daycare are provided with many resources that they often do not have at home. It is a parent’s responsibility to make sure that children are being adequately cared for. I was placed in a very good daycare center at a young age and believe that it was much more beneficial than harmful. Coming from a family in which English was not the primary language, I lacked communication skills and self-confidence. In a daycare center at a young age, I learned many of the skills necessary to thrive both in school and with my peers. Daycare gave me a head start in school and helped me learn how to communicate with children my own age.

The arguments for and against working mothers are valid in many ways. However, I feel that mothers who work bring more to their families and their relationships than mothers who stay at home. In both cases mothers are doing only what they feel is best for themselves and their families, but when talking about the overall benefits, working mothers bring a lot to the family. Not only do they bring an extra income to the family but they help to instill in their children a good work ethic. Working mothers are forced to go against the long held stereotype of the typical family to do what is best for their family in today’s times. Mothers should never be discriminated against for choosing to enter the workforce. Rather, they should be held in high esteem for making a positive contribution to the community.