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3. Motherhood: Benefit or Burden to Business?

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In recent decades, the Catholic Church has come to share the widespread social consensus about the urgent need for the insights of the feminine genius in all sectors of society—in the home, surely, but also in our halls of government, our schools and universities, and our businesses.¹ The specific contribution of women may lie in some unique and particular genius, gift, or aptitude. Or it could be, as suggested by Sr. Prudence Allen in her writings on integral complementarity, that it is the synergetic effect of men and women working *together* that is necessary to generate the most creative and fruitful approaches to contemporary challenges.² A growing body of evidence from multiple disciplines demonstrates that men and women working together on almost any sort of project tend to reach different, and better, results than either men working alone or women working alone.³

Many of the women who help bring about creative and fruitful work into being are also mothers. And motherhood—like all kinds of caregiving—comes with some undeniable costs. Should employers assume the costs and inconveniences of accommodating the demands of caregiving? If so, why? Why should employers not simply hire more women who do not have children or discourage women with children from staying on the job by not accommodating the demands of caregiving?

¹ Saint John Paul II recognized that, “[w]omen will increasingly play a part in the solution of the serious problems of the future: leisure time, the quality of life, migration, social services, euthanasia, drugs, health care, the ecology” (Pope John

² For a more in-depth discussion of Sr. Allen’s theory of integral complementarity, see Elizabeth R. Schiltz, *The Promise and the Threat of the “Three” in Integral Complementarity*, in PROMISE AND CHALLENGE: CATHOLIC WOMEN REFLECT ON FEMINISM, COMPLEMENTARITY AND THE CHURCH, Mary Hasson, ed., Our Sunday Visitor (2015) [hereinafter *Promise and Threat*]; Elizabeth R. Schiltz, *A Contemporary Catholic Theory of Complementarity*, in FEMINISM, LAW AND RELIGION (Eds. Marie Failinger, Elizabeth R. Schiltz and Susan J. Stabile), Ashgate Press (2013).

³ See *Promise and Threat*, at 77-79.

An argument for *women* in the workplace does not, in itself, furnish a compelling business case for *mothers* in the workplace. Is there something unique about the gifts, talents, and perspectives of women who are mothers, or something unique about what women who are mothers add to the dynamic of men and women working together? This is a harder case to make. Yet we need to attempt to make such a case for two very important reasons.

First, without solid arguments for accommodating mothers in workplaces, even employers who are convinced of the value of women in the workplace have little incentive to accommodate parenting.

Second, we have an urgent need for the voices of mothers in workplaces because they have the most at stake in many of the critical concerns that workplaces and our society face. They have the most at stake in pushing for policies that enable parents to balance their work and their caregiving responsibilities. We need the voices of mothers in national and international governing bodies because they have the most at stake in continuing to remind their nations and the world of the reality that the overwhelming proportion of the world's poverty population is composed of women and children—across the globe, in countries of all stages of development.⁴

So why should workplaces make generous accommodations to mothers? I will consider four arguments.

1. Businesses want women workers, and most women workers want to be mothers.

The most obvious, and likely the most compelling, argument for accommodating mothers is that most women do become mothers, and most mothers also perform some sort of paid labor in addition to their caregiving.⁵ This simple reality underlies the very important, equality-based arguments for workplace accommodation of caregiving that have convinced most countries in the world to enact some forms of guaranty of maternity protections for women workers.⁶ Indeed, the Catholic Church has long recognized that the “true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family.”⁷ However important those equality-based arguments are, though, my focus in this essay is on making the business case for accommodating mothers in the workplace. In that regard, these same basic facts provide equally powerful arguments.

2. Businesses benefit long term from the caregiving work of mothers and should thus shoulder some of its cost.

⁴ Mary Ann Glendon, *Address to the Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women* (March 7, 2005).

⁵In 2014 in the United States, the labor force participation rate for mothers with children under the age of eighteen was 70.1%. U.S. Dept of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES —2014* (April 23, 2015), available at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf>. See also Elizabeth R. Schiltz, *West, MacIntyre and Wojtyla: Pope John Paul II's Contribution to the Development of a Dependency-Based Theory of Justice*, 45 *J. Cath. Legal Stud.* 369, 372 - 373 (2007) [hereinafter “Dependency”].

⁶ *Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and Practice Across the World*, International Labour Organization (2014) [hereinafter “ILO Report”].

⁷ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Laborem Exercens* ¶ 19 (1981). See also John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* ¶ 23 (1981); John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Evangelium Vitae*, ¶ 90 (1995).

Some American feminist legal scholars have been developing arguments that caregiving should be accorded a higher social value than it currently is, and should thus be more robustly supported, because raising children benefits the whole of society.⁸ It is essential to ensuring future generations of healthy, capable citizens and workers. Mothers pay the disproportionate cost of this benefit, allowing our businesses and social institutions, as well as men and childless women, to be “‘free-riders’ appropriating the labor of the caretaker for their own purposes.”⁹ One such scholar argues: “instead of viewing accommodations for parenting as only benefitting the parents, [we should] understand that we all benefit from parents’ choice to procreate; after all, society needs procreation to continue and employers need procreation to continue to have employees in the future.”¹⁰ Scholars note that children who grow into responsible adults become the new generation of workers supporting us through their labor and their taxes as we age.¹¹

These communitarian arguments are likely to be more persuasive in shaping general social policy, however, than in convincing individual employers to accommodate mothers.

So what more direct arguments might we make to business in countries like the United States which do not impose on their businesses the costs of the long-term benefit of caregiving? Let us consider two.

3. Accommodating motherhood is not, in fact, as much of a burden on businesses as is commonly suggested.

Countless careful studies, across industries and across the globe, demonstrate the reality of the “motherhood wage penalty.”¹² Women who are mothers earn less than women who have no children,

⁸ These groups include the “care feminists” or “dependency feminists” (see generally “Dependency”), and “communitarians” (see generally, Nicole Buonocore Porter, *Why Care About Caregivers? Using Communitarian Theory to Justify Protection of ‘Real’ Workers*, 58 KAN. L. REV. 355 (2010) [hereinafter “Why Care?”]).

⁹ Maxine Eichner, *Dependency and the Liberal Polity: On Martha Fineman’s THE AUTONOMY MYTH*, 93 CAL. L. REV. 1285, 1312 (2005).

¹⁰ Why Care, at 396.

¹¹ Mary Becker, *Care and Feminists*, 17 WIS. WOMEN’S L.J. 57, 74 (2002), quoting Paula England & Nancy Folbre, *The Silent Crisis in U.S. Child Care: Who Should Pay for the Kids?* 563 ANNALS AM. ACAD. POL & SOC. SCI. 194, 195 (1999). In addition to the economic value of caregiving in ensuring future cadres of productive workers, scholars have noted that mothering “provides special value to a democratic society that relies on civic participation.” Rona Kaufman Kitchen, *Eradicating the Mothering Effect: Women as Workers and Mothers, Successfully and Simultaneously*, 26 WIS. J. OF LAW, GENDER & SOC. 167, 209 (2011). Deborah Stone, *Why We Need a Care Movement*, THE NATION, 13, 15 (Mar. 13, 2000); See also, Linda C. McClain, *Care as a Public Value: Linking Responsibility, Resources, and Republicanism*, 76 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 1673 (2001). “Caring is the essential democratic act, the prerequisite to voting, joining associations, attending meetings, holding office and all the other ways we sustain democracy.” Deborah Stone, *Why We Need a Care Movement*, THE NATION, 13, 15 (Mar. 13, 2000). See also, Linda C. McClain, *Care as a Public Value: Linking Responsibility, Resources, and Republicanism*, 76 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 1673 (2001). Caregiving is described as being “crucial to developing human moral potential, to instilling and reinforcing in an individual a sense of positive connection to others. And it is this sense of connection that makes possible the whole range of mutual responsibilities that allow the people of a society to respect and work toward common goals.” Mona Harrington, *CARE AND EQUALITY: INVENTING A NEW FAMILY* Politics 49 (1999).

¹² See the collection of such research cited in Stephen Benard and Shelley J. Correll, *Normative Discrimination and the Motherhood Penalty*, 24 GENDER & SOCIETY 616, 616-617 (2010), and in Julie A. Kmec, *Are Motherhood Penalties and Fatherhood Bonuses Warranted? Comparing Pro-Work Behaviors and Conditions of Mothers, Fathers, and Non-Parents*, 40 SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH 444, 445 - 446 (2011).

and less than men, whether or not the men have children. This motherhood wage penalty persists in research that controls for reduced work hours and reduced productivity.¹³ Research shows that employers “stereotyp[e] mothers as less competent and committed than otherwise identical workers who are not mothers.”¹⁴

The findings from several studies call into question workplace stereotypes against mothers. Data from the US Department of Labor, for example, shows that work absences for illness, injury, or medical problems (which affect *all* workers) are “often twice to three times as high as absence from childcare problems; other family or personal obligations; civic or military duty; and maternity or paternity leave.”¹⁵ Another very interesting study compares the “pro-work” activity of mothers to that of fathers and nonparents, using data from a National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (a random pool of 4963 adults ages 35-86).¹⁶ This study analyzed responses to questions like: How much thought and effort do you put into your work situation these days? How often do you get so involved in your work that you forget about everything else, including the time? How often do activities and chores at home prevent you from getting the needed amount of sleep to do your job well? The author found that mothers’ and fathers’ pro-work behaviors were more similar than they were different, and that neither were, in fact, different from non-parents’ behaviors. ¹⁷

Because the survey did reveal (as many studies have established) that mothers, in fact, spend more time doing household chores than fathers, the author of this study was led to speculate on exactly *how* the mothers were managing to do all of this. She offered a couple of possible explanations. Perhaps mothers, aware of the biases against mothers discussed above, were overcompensating at work to overcome the negative stereotypes. Or perhaps mothers were behaving differently than fathers and nonparents on the job and at home, to maintain high levels of energy and effort at work. At home, mothers may be reducing their standards for housework compared to their standards before parenthood, or giving up leisure time. At work, mothers may be delegating more tasks, or, “[k]nowing their family and home demands their attention, mothers may work wisely, staying on task and wasting little time on the job so they can complete job tasks while at home.”¹⁸ Indeed, the study found that mothers reported with greater frequency than fathers that they are often so involved at work they forget about everything else, even the time. The third possible explanation from this author was that “mothers’ parenting skills at home may cross over into the workplace. The multitasking, task prioritizing, creativity, and interpersonal skills needed to raise a family and run a household promote efficiency, focus, and organization—skills highly prized in the workplace. ... Women may be drawing on the skills they use at home to help, rather than hurt, them at work.”¹⁹ Which brings us to my last argument.

¹³ Ariane Hegewisch and Janet C. Gornick, *The Impact of Work-Family Policies on Women’s Employment: A Review of Research from OECD Countries*, 14 COMMUNITY, WORK & FAMILY 119, 125 (2010).

¹⁴ Benard & Correll, *supra* note 17, at 618 (citing a survey of such research in Stephen Benard, In Paik, and Shelley J. Correll, *Cognitive Bias and the Motherhood Penalty*, 59 HASTINGS L. J. 101 (2008).

¹⁵ Victoria Pynchon, *Working Mothers Pose Fewer Burdens for Employers than Their Co-Workers*, Forbes on line (Feb. 13, 2012), available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/shenegotiates/2012/02/13/working-mothers-pose-fewer-burdens-on-employers-than-do-their-co-workers/2/> .

¹⁶ Kmec, *supra* note 17, at 449.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 456.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

3. Mothers offer some unique and valuable skills to the workplace.

The skills identified above that are honed by parenting—organization, the ability to multitask, the ability to prioritize and to focus intently on the current priority, emotional intelligence—are all qualities of the most successful workers. Of course, “Fatherhood likely provides a training ground for men, but since they engage in less childcare and housework, on average, than mothers . . . , mothers gain more ‘experience’ from home than fathers.”²⁰ Ann Crittenden’s 2004 book *If You’ve Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything: Leadership Begins at Home* surveyed sixty professional women leaders and concluded that motherhood made them better executives.²¹ As one executive who manages a team of twelve, five of whom are mothers with children under five, put it: “Moms know better than anyone how to squeeze twice the output into half the time.”²² One entrepreneur argues that these qualities are particularly valuable for entrepreneurs, whose success depends on their ability to prioritize, multitask, deal with people of different backgrounds and needs. She explains that “The way that everything changes when you have a child is the same as how everything changes when you start a company.” The lack of sleep, the constant craving for information to steer you in the right direction, learning what your parenting style is—all of this is the same process entrepreneurs go through in the early stages of the company.²³

It is crucially important for us to identify and to draw attention to these particular skills that can be honed by motherhood, not just because we want to find ways to put them on our resumes and CVs so that employers will hire and promote us. It is also important because forging social consensus around the idea that parenting develops crucial work skills could help combat our modern culture’s false and harmful insistence on the incompatibility of work and family. The skills of a good worker should not be seen as diametrically opposed to the skills of a good mother. If we succeed in weakening the cultural barrier between “what makes a good worker” and “what makes a good mother,” we will not only help women succeed at work, but we may also foster a work culture that is more open to the view of work held by the Catholic Church.

As Saint John Paul II taught us in *Laborem Exercens*, “however true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place, work is ‘for man’ and not man ‘for work.’”²⁴ “Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that man is called to. These two spheres of values—one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life—must be properly unified and must properly permeate each other.”²⁵ In an address at the General Audience on August 12, 2015, Pope Francis spoke of the need to celebrate, even in the work environment. He said, “sometimes in the work environment also – and without failing in duties – we are able to ‘infiltrate’ a burst of celebration: a birthday, a marriage, a new birth . . . It’s important to celebrate. They are moments of familiarity in the gears of the productive machine: it does us good! However, a true time of celebration halts professional work and is sacred, because it

²⁰ Kmec, *supra* note 17, at 456.

²¹ Ann Crittenden, *IF YOU’VE RAISED KIDS, YOU CAN MANAGE ANYTHING: LEADERSHIP BEGINS AT HOME* (2004).

²² Stacy Epstein, *Five Reasons Your Company Needs More Moms*, (June 7, 2012), available at: <http://www.inc.com/stacey-epstein/why-you-should-hire-more-moms.html> .

²³ Lisa Evans, *How Motherhood Prepares You for Entrepreneurship*, May 7, 2015, available at: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/245782> (quoting Julie Pezzino).

²⁴ *Laborem Exercens*, *supra* note 12, ¶ 17.

²⁵ *Id.* at ¶ 10.

reminds man and woman that they are made in the image of God, who is not a slave of work, but Lord; therefore, we also must never be slaves of work, but “lords.” ... The obsession of economic profit and the efficiency of technology put at risk the human rhythms of life, because life has its human rhythms.”²⁶ In this address, the Holy Father was focusing on the rhythm of the preserving the Sunday as a weekly day of rest, but I think we could extrapolate on that.

One of the greatest benefits mothers offer a business is the very fact that, from time to time, they do impose burdens, burdens that offer a powerful witness to the rhythms of human life. These are the rhythms of the beginning of the day, and the end of the day, when children, the sick, and elderly parents need to be held, fed, bathed, comforted, and loved. They are the rhythms of the beginning of life and the end of life, when children, the sick and the elderly need to be held, fed, bathed, comforted, and loved. These reminders of the rhythms of life might be the most significant benefits mothers can offer to businesses, as constant reminders that, in the first place, work is “for man” and not man “for work.”

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²⁶ Pope Francis, General Audience: On Family Life (August 12, 2015), available at: <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/general-audience-on-family-life--2> .