



The Motherhood Manifesto Study Guide



Maternity/Paternity Leave

Manifesto Point “M”: Mothers need time to have babies. Giving a mother no choice but to come back to work mere days after the birth of a child or face financial ruin is bad social policy. Society needs to share the cost of bringing new life into the world.



Open Flexible Work

Manifesto Point “O”: Mothers need flexibility at work so they can continue to work effectively while raising a family. And they need the ability to exit and enter the workforce without the huge pay cuts given to those considered on “the mommy track.”



TV We Choose and Other After-School Programs

Manifesto Point “T”: Mothers are outraged by poor quality television programming because it’s harming our children. Mothers need help guarding our kids from exploitive television. It’s time for society to get serious about giving better options to kids who come home to an empty house after school. Moreover, mothers need after school programs to engage our kids in healthy and productive activities.



Healthcare for All Children

Manifesto Point “H”: More and more families and children in our country have inadequate healthcare coverage and forty-six million Americans are completely uninsured. As a result, far too many families are either foregoing needed care or ending up in bankruptcy. Many mothers find themselves nursing a gravely ill child and facing financial ruin, all at the same time. This should never happen in America.



Excellent Childcare

Manifesto Point “E”: It is a reality of modern life that most mothers need to reenter the workforce before their children are in elementary school. Moreover, many mothers cannot depend on relatives to help. Mothers need high-quality, nurturing childcare to ensure that children are safe, well cared for, and ready for school. America must invest in early care, not just because it’s necessary for mothers and kids, but because each child is precious to society as a whole—they represent the future productive engine of our economy.



Realistic and Fair Wages

Manifesto Point “R”: Mothers need to be able to support their families. Equal pay should be given for equal work. Full-time jobs that pay wages so low that parents must use public programs to feed, house, or look after the medical needs of their children are not the kind of jobs that are good for America. A strong economy requires jobs that pay a living wage.

Guaranteed Paid Maternity Or Parental Leave	
SWEDEN	15 weeks
CANADA	12 weeks
UK	6 weeks
USA	0 weeks

Guide Overview

This guide is designed primarily for high school and college classes. The film shares the heartfelt stories of mothers in America who dream of jobs with flexibility and benefits, mothers who can't afford their children's health and childcare expenses, and mothers who, time and time again, are penalized for raising a new generation.

From professional women who hit the maternal wall, to childcare workers who can't afford quality care for their own children, this film captures what it means to be a mother in America today.

This ground breaking film also celebrates the successes of companies that have discovered the value of good family policies, families who are making it work, model childcare programs, and legislation that supports families.

Learning Objectives

Students will better understand:

- the connection between work and family
- challenges mothers and families face in the United States
- the diversity of family policies among industrialized countries
- ways to remedy challenges facing American mothers
- ways workplaces have responded to work-family issues
- policies and programs available in some U.S. cities and workplaces

Discussion Questions Before Viewing the Film

- How did your family deal with work and family when you were growing up?
What would you do the same or differently?
- How have these issues changed over time?
- What comes to mind when you think of the phrase “the work-family balance”?
- Do you know people who struggle to balance work and family responsibilities?
How about those who have an easy time balancing work and family?
- How do you think you will balance work and family?
- Do you think society has any responsibility to share the cost of bringing new life into the world?
Please state why or why not.
- How do “family values” currently translate into government policies?
- Can you give any examples of other “values” that translate into government policies right now?
- In what ways is the United States a pro-family culture?

Quick Facts from the Film

- Mothers in the United States are only half as likely as non-mothers to be hired for the same job and the average college graduate who becomes a mother will sacrifice a million dollars over her lifetime.
- The average childless woman earns 90% of what men do, but for mothers, it's 73% and for single mothers, about 60%.
- If the U.S. minimum wage had kept pace with inflation it would now be \$9 an hour.
- The average cost of childcare is higher than the tuition at state universities.
- Both the U.S. Senate and House once passed a bill to provide quality, low-cost universal childcare to all Americans (it was vetoed by Richard Nixon).
- The United States is the only industrial country that doesn't provide paid sick days for all workers.
- In Europe, employees are allowed to shift to part-time work while retaining the same hourly salary, full health care, and pro-rated benefits.
- Nine million American children have no health insurance at all.



Selena Allen



Jim Johnson



Angenita Tanner

THE MOTHERHOOD MANIFESTO travels from Washington State to Washington DC, from Oakland to Denver to Indianapolis and Chicago, from small-town Vermont and Pennsylvania to big city New York, to introduce viewers to people like:

- Selena Allen, who had to return to work four days after she gave birth prematurely.
- Sharon Dorsett, whose son's illness bankrupted her family even though the Dorsett's had health insurance.
- Jim Johnson, a conservative Republican businessman who found that flexible hours and family-friendly policies can increase a company's profits and success.
- Republican pollster Frank Luntz who says that "lack of free time" is the most important issue for women with children.
- Dr. Deborah Richter, who has seen patients die because they didn't have health insurance.
- Angenita Tanner, a childcare provider who takes in children from families too poor to afford childcare.

Narrated by Academy Award-winning actress Mary Steenburgen, **THE MOTHERHOOD MANIFESTO** is a film that shows not only what's wrong, but what Americans can and are doing to improve the lives of American mothers.

M – Maternity/Paternity Leave

Manifesto Point “M”: Mothers need time to have babies. Giving a mother no choice but to come back to work mere days after the birth of a child or face financial ruin is bad social policy. Society needs to share the cost of bringing new life into the world.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with Manifesto Point “M”?
2. Were you aware that most other countries offer better paid parental leave than the U.S.? Why do you think the U.S. ranks so low on paid parental leave? What are the possible long-term repercussions if the U.S. continues to rank lowest in family leave?
3. What are the costs of parents quickly returning to work after their child is born? To the parents, to the child, and to society?
4. Should the federal government offer a paid family leave program in the U.S.? Why or why not? What would be the possible societal benefits of paid family leave to families? To children? To employers? What are the costs?
5. Is paid family leave important for fathers also?
6. Knowing that the US is the only industrialized country that does not offer paid maternity leave to working women, should international standards and programs inform American standards and programs?
7. What is our society's obligation to protect our families with policies like paid parental leave?
8. Were you aware that employers often discriminate against mothers in making hiring decisions? What are the costs of this kind of employment discrimination to businesses? What are the costs of discrimination for families?

Quick Facts:

- The United States is the only industrialized country in the world that doesn't have paid leave for new moms. [1] The U.S. is just one of four countries out of 168 studied that doesn't have some form of paid family leave for new moms. That puts the US – one of the wealthiest nations on the planet—in the company of Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland.
- Research reveals that a full 25 percent of “poverty spells,” or times when a family's income slips below what is needed for basic living expenses, begin with the birth of a baby.[2]
- There is a strong correlation between parental leave and thriving children—one study found that a year of job-protected paid leave is tied to 25 percent fewer post-neonatal deaths and those benefits continued forward in the child's life.[3] Our lack of paid leave shows in our infant mortality rates. In terms of infant mortality rates, the U.S. tied for thirty-eighth in the world with Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, and the United Arab Emirates in 2003.[4]
- 164 countries give women paid leave with the birth of a child.

- “Studies show that parental leave results in better prenatal and postnatal care, more intense parental bonding over a child's lifetime, and lower accident rates in the first year of life. Parental leave policies also increase the likelihood that children will be immunized and, as a result, are associated with lower death rates for infants.” 2005 report published by National Partnership for Women and Families.

- 12% of companies offered paid maternity leave according to a survey in 2000 by the National Partnership of Women and Families.
- Paid family leave is shown to benefit employers by saving them costs of recruitment and training due to high employee turnover, and leading to greater job satisfaction which then translates to higher worker productivity.

O – Open Flexible Work

Manifesto Point “O”: Mothers need flexibility at work so they can continue to work effectively while raising a family. And they need the ability to exit and enter the workforce without the huge pay cuts given to those considered on “the mommy track.”

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Manifesto Point “O”?
2. Can you identify ways in which inflexible working conditions harm families?
3. How might work enrich parental effectiveness?
4. Do you think the experience of parenting can bring new skills in the workplace?
5. Businessman Jim Johnson says that flexible work schedules benefited his business by attracting talent and reducing turnover. Can other businesses do well by doing right?
6. How can flexible work schedules benefit both families and businesses? In what ways is flexible work good and in what ways is it bad for business?
7. What different types of work flexibility can you think of? Make a list.
8. Have you personally observed that employers do “the right thing” in terms of allowing employees work flexibility without government intervention? Do you think we should rely on the market or the government to provide flexible work options for families?
9. What kinds of laws would help provide flexible work options to working parents?
10. Do you think employers should be encouraged to provide flexibility? Why or why not?
11. Are there any laws that would promote flexible work options and also directly benefit businesses?
12. What are the advantages and disadvantages of paid sick leave for all workers (parents and non-parents)? What are the benefits and costs to businesses who don't offer paid sick leave?

Quick Facts:

- Widespread implementation of workplace flex-time policies will go a long way towards helping women maintain viable careers and remain economically stable while having families. Businesses also benefit with higher employee retention, higher employee productivity, lower training and recruiting costs, and better employee performance. [5]

- A survey of working women reported in the Harvard Business Review found the majority of women surveyed (64 percent) reported flexible work arrangements as “either extremely or very important to them.” The survey also found that, “by a considerable margin, highly qualified women find flexibility more important than compensation; only 42 percent say that ‘earning a lot of money’ is an important motivator.” [6]

- Highly qualified and generally fairly well paid women are the most likely to find or demand flexible schedules.

- Almost three-fourths of working adults state they don’t control their work schedules. [7] In fact, the top reason noted by highly educated and trained women for leaving the “fast track” is the lack of family time. [7] The lack of flexible work options often leads women to quit needed jobs.

- When women take time out of the workforce they face huge wage hits, or pay cuts, when they later return (as 74 percent do within two years). These wage hits take a life-long toll: On average, women take an 18 percent cut in their pay, a significant wage hit, for an average of 2.2 years out of the labor force—with women in business sectors taking an increased hit of 28 percent. For those women who stay out of the labor force for three or more years, the news is even bleaker: A 37 percent loss of earning power. [7]

43% of highly qualified working women who have children took time out of the workforce to care for family members. Of these women, 93% want to return to their careers. [6]

Workplace flexibility may include flextime, taking time off during the work day to address family matters, taking a few days off to care for a sick child without losing pay or vacation time, telecommuting, part time work, compressed work week, part-year work schedule.

47% of the companies that offer work life initiatives including flexible work schedules, family leave, and childcare, do so not because they want to altruistically support employees, but because it makes better business sense given efforts to recruit and retain employees. [8]

25% of businesses reported they offer flexible work schedules to increase productivity and job commitment. [8]

The proportion of mothers of infants in the workforce declined from a record high of 59% in 1998 to 55% in 2000. This was the first significant decline since the U.S. Census Bureau began publishing this statistic in 1976. 72% of all mothers with children over one year old were in the labor force in 2002. More women are leaving their jobs to stay home with babies for the first year of their child’s life, but they are going back to work when their children are older. US Census Bureau

T – TV We Choose and Other After-School Programs

Manifesto Point “T”: Mothers are outraged by poor quality television programming because it’s harming our children. Mothers need help guarding our kids from exploitive television. It’s time for society to get serious about giving better options to kids who come home to an empty house after school. Moreover, mothers need after school programs to engage our kids in healthy and productive activities

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Manifesto Point “T”?
2. Does the Seattle levy which subsidized after-school programs and transportation to and from those programs provide compelling evidence for passing similar programs in other American cities?
3. How much time did you spend connected to electronic media (TV, computers, video games, radio) as a child? Does the fact that children are connected to the media an average of 8 hours each day surprise you? What do you think are the consequences of children spending so much time watching TV and playing video games?
4. What kinds of programs and services should be available to children after school?
5. What are the consequences of not having enough after-school programs?
6. What ways can after-school programs benefit children?

Quick Facts:

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that children see an average of 40,000 commercials per year.

A 2005 Kaiser Family foundation report found that in the last five years the time young people spend exposed to media content each day has increased by more than an hour, to a total of eight hours and thirty-three minutes.

By the time the average child gets to elementary school they will have viewed 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television. [9]

More than 40,000 kindergartners are home alone after school, with a total of more than 14,000,000 kindergartners through twelfth grade children on their own after school without supervision. [10]

A study of the effects of the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002 found that every dollar spent on an at-risk youth in an after school program brings a return of \$8.92-\$12.90, mainly due to the amount saved by channeling the at-risk youth away from a life of crime. [11]

The peak time for juvenile crime is right after school gets out, [12] makes a compelling case for after school care options

H – Healthcare for All Children

Manifesto Point “H”: More and more families and children in our country have inadequate healthcare coverage and forty-six million Americans are completely uninsured. As a result, far too many families are either foregoing needed care or ending up in bankruptcy. Many mothers find themselves nursing a gravely ill child and facing financial ruin, all at the same time. This should never happen in America.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Manifesto Point “H”?
2. In the film, Dr. Johnson says it is fairly inexpensive to ensure all children. Why do you think the U.S. doesn't offer universal healthcare for all children? What are the drawbacks of providing universal health care for all children?
3. Every other industrialized nation has some sort of universal health insurance coverage. What do you think accounts for the U.S. standing apart in this way?
4. Sharon Dorsett says all families are “one accident away from living the same kind of life we're living.” Do you believe she's right?
5. Dr. Richter suggests the US health care system is broken. How would you describe the U.S. health care system? Would you change it and if so, how?
6. What is your experience with healthcare? What works well for you and what would you want to improve?

Quick Facts:

Of the over seventy-seven million children in the United States, 12 percent don't have insurance coverage at all. At least nine million children have no health insurance. [1]

There's been a twenty-threefold (2,300 percent) increase in medical related bankruptcy filings between 1981 and 2001. [3]

Most of those who went bankrupt had health insurance (a full 76 percent had insurance when their illness started), [4] and those filing for bankruptcy are “predominantly in the middle or working classes.” [5] - In fact, working families make up 81 percent of uninsured people. [14]

The truth is that according to the World Health Organization, the United States spends more on healthcare per person than any other nation in the world,[10] yet still was only tied for the twenty-eighth highest life expectancy,[11] and ranked in at a low thirty-seventh for our mortality rate of children under five years old. [12]

There were forty-six million uninsured Americans in 2004. [21]

“The United States remains the only Western nation without universal health insurance coverage,” writes Rick Mayes in his book, *Universal Coverage: The Elusive Quest for National Health Insurance*. Two-thirds of the 191 countries tracked by the World Health Organization pay a higher percentage of their citizen's total healthcare costs than the U.S. does. [23]

E – Excellent Childcare

Manifesto Point “E”: It is a reality of modern life that most mothers need to reenter the workforce before their children are in elementary school. Moreover, many mothers cannot depend on relatives to help. Mothers need high-quality, nurturing childcare to ensure that children are safe, well cared for, and ready for school. America must invest in early care, not just because it's necessary for mothers and kids, but because each child is precious to society as a whole—they represent the future productive engine of our economy.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Manifesto Point “E”?
2. What are the obstacles to quality child care in this country?
3. Do you think it would be a good idea for our society to provide quality pre-school for all 4 year olds? Should this be a priority for the U.S.? Why or why not?
4. What are the consequences of not providing publicly funded childcare or childcare at low cost?
5. What are the effects of low salaries and poor benefits for child care workers? How does this impact children?
6. Many other nations offer publicly funded preschool childcare. Is this a missed opportunity in our country? Why or why not?

Quick Facts:

The Children's Defense Fund estimates that each day twelve million children under five years old spend time being cared for by someone other than a parent.

One quarter of families with children under age six earned less than \$25,000 in 2001.

Only one out of seven children that are federally eligible for childcare assistance actually gets any help. [1]

A Wisconsin study that looked at the impacts of extending their Kindergarten through twelfth grade education system to include free preschool for four year olds found that such programs save money in the long run. The study found early education reduces later crime rates and welfare needs, while increasing the total educational cost-benefit by 68 percent—partly through lowering the need for special education (saving \$42 million) and students needing to repeat grades less often.[29]

In many other nations, working families can count on publicly guaranteed parental leave; and in many, preschool child-care or early childhood education is already publicly provided. [1]

The U.S. tied for ninety-first of 151 countries in preprimary student-to-staff ratios. [5]

Children in higher quality care for the first four-and-a-half years of life scored higher on tests of cognitive skills, language ability, vocabulary, and short-term memory and attention than children in lower quality care. Schulman, Children's Defense Fund, 2003

A study found that “after 27 years, each \$1 invested saved over \$7 by increasing the likelihood that children would be literate, employed, and enrolled in postsecondary education, and making them less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity or delinquency.” [16]

Childcare providers earn a salary of \$18,060 a year on average. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [19]

A Children’s Defense Fund study (2000) found childcare in the United States costs between \$4,000 and \$10,000 a year for each child, with costs rising for babies and younger children, special-needs children, and children living in parts of the country where the cost of living is higher. [16]

The Children’s Defense Fund reports that a study (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers) examining childcare in four states found, “child care at most centers in the United States is poor to mediocre,” with 12 percent of centers providing less than minimal quality care—defined as care that could harm “children’s health, safety, and development.” As for the centers that rated well for good quality care, those comprised only 14 percent. [16]

R – Realistic and Fair Wages

Manifesto Point “R”: Mothers need to be able to support their families. Equal pay should be given for equal work. Full-time jobs that pay wages so low that parents must use public programs to feed, house, or look after the medical needs of their children are not the kind of jobs that are good for America. A strong economy requires jobs that pay a living wage.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Manifesto Point “R”?
2. What do you think is the relationship between family policies such as paid family leave, subsidized childcare, and universal healthcare and the mommy wage gap?
3. Does the tax structure in the US discriminate against working mothers?
4. Were you aware that there is a substantial wage gap between women who are mothers and women who aren’t mothers? What accounts for the “mommy wage gap?” Do you think the gap is due to individual choice or discrimination?
5. What are the obstacles to raising the minimum wage?
6. Is the minimum wage a family issue? If so, how?
7. What are the potential positive business results from increased wages? What’s the downside?
8. The federal government is considering raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour. Is this enough? Too much?

Quick Facts:

A 2005 study found that mothers were 44 percent less likely to be hired than non-mothers for the same job given the exact same resume and experience for the two groups of women (mothers and non-mothers). And non-mothers were offered an average of \$11,000 more than mothers for that same high-salaried job. [20]

In 1991, non-mothers with an average age of thirty made 90 cents to a man’s dollar, while moms made only 73 cents to the dollar, and single moms made 56 to 66 cents to a man’s dollar. [21]

Other industrialized countries that have implemented family policies have better success at narrowing the maternal gap. [21]

The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy reported that 54% of minimum wage workers contribute to their family’s weekly earnings. 58% of minimum wage workers are women and 71% are twenty or over.

One million single mothers would benefit from a minimum wage increase. [22]

Amy Caiazza, from The Institute for Women’s Policy Research, notes, “We did a study that found if there wasn’t a wage gap, the poverty rates for single moms would be cut in half, and the poverty rates for dual earner families would be cut by about 25 percent.”

A close look at the numbers shows that the reason the wage gap is so large for all women is that the vast majority of women become mothers (82 percent). [23] This majority of American women—mothers—are actually making less than the current average reported by the U.S. Census of 76 cents to a man’s dollar, [24] since the wages of non-mothers bring up the overall average.

General questions for discussion after viewing the film:

1. Do you believe, as Kiki Peppard suggests, that each voter can make a difference? How can you make a difference? What can we do as individual citizens to influence change?
2. Why do you think the U.S. lags behind most other countries in terms of family-friendly policies and programs?
3. Geoff Boehm, from *A Better Balance*, says we shouldn't have to choose between putting dinner on the table and being at the table. What does he mean?
4. Have your views about work and family changed after watching the film? If so, how?
5. Do you think we need to make changes in the U.S. in order to better support our mothers and families? If so, do you think we should rely on the market, the government, or a combination of the two to provide support such as flexible work schedules, universal healthcare, and subsidized child care to families?
6. What are the possible long term impacts if we continue to rank "at the bottom of the totem pole" compared to other countries?
7. Do the issues covered in the film affect your family? If so, which ones?
8. Which issue in the film surprised you the most?
9. What action to support mothers/parents do you think has the most potential at this time?
10. Do you think of the US as a "pro-family" nation? Why? Why not?

Student Educational Projects

- Interview a business owner and/or a working mother and gather as much information as you can about their issues, concerns, and hopes related to maternity/paternity leave, flexible work schedules, healthcare, and/or wages.
- Interview a working mother and/or a stay-at-home mother about their work history, their concerns, their choices and their hopes.
- Look at parenting magazines, television shows and commercials, and newspapers over a one month period. How is motherhood portrayed? What kinds of messages are conveyed about mothers? What may have been left out of the media coverage? Is the coverage about mothers, fathers, and families biased? If so, how?
- Pick a partner and interview each other about your career aspirations and family aspirations and how each might affect the other.
- Describe your mothers' and grandmothers' work history. How did being a mother affect their careers?
- Imagine that you are a mother interviewing for a job and your employer asks you how you plan to balance work and family. How do you respond? What questions do you ask your employer to ensure that they provide support for you and your family responsibilities? What are your legal rights in this situation in your state?
- Imagine that you have five minutes with a local legislator. Pick one work-family issue and plan how you would describe the problem as well as make a specific recommendation to address the problem. Write a script for that conversation.
- Analyze the faculty personnel policies at your college/university. Interview a female professor who has children about their benefits, compensation, and tenure process. How do they balance their work and family responsibilities?

Student Engagement Projects – Ways to get involved

- Organize a screening of the film and discussion for the college campus community, or for the PTA or the senior class at high schools, or via a house party/local community center;
- Hold a meeting of students who are mothers—for college level classes—and hold a discussion about what it would mean for the campus to be more family-friendly to parenting students; etc. What's needed in your community?
- Go to any number of web sites on mother issues [we could provide a list] and get inspired to take action based on what you find there.

Footnotes

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Film Fact Sheet

Program Length: 57:30

Based on the Book: **THE MOTHERHOOD MANIFESTO** by Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner

Presented by: The National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA)

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