

Issue analysis

Psychology



OPTING OUT (Feminism and Choice) of the Submitted: Opting Out This paper examines two opposing views on the state of feminism today with regards to how some women opt out of their careers and go back to being housewives or stay-at-home moms. The pro side of this issue is represented by feminist scholar Linda Hirshman who claimed women today are deciding to give priority to being a wife and mother over their careers. The claim is that women are making this choice based on their desire to be good parents during the growing up years of their kids and that having a good family is worth more than a successful career. Some of the strengths of this argument are motherhood is a natural role for women, that women made this decision voluntarily as feminism has given them this choice to opt out and they are availing themselves of this choice, and having a family is one form of generativity in adult development that makes them feel fulfilled as a person because they care for future generations (Noelker, Rockwood & Sprott, 2006, p. 435) while weaknesses in the argument are that women opted out because they had majored in the liberal arts while in college, that feminism did not go far enough and that women tend to choose less powerful careers (Hirshman, 2005, p 1).

The con side as expressed by sociologist Pamela Stone says that women opted out due to being forced to leave their workplaces. The strengths of this argument are that women forced to leave the workforce are not really making a free choice but a forced choice due to the gender roles imposed by social expectations of women, inflexible working environments that expect the female worker as a “superwoman” capable of juggling family and career in a perfect life balance, and there is actually a choice gap that limits the options open to women. Weaknesses are those which limits interview sample <https://assignbuster.com/issue-analysis/>

to elite women only, full anonymity and use of fictitious names. It is also wrong to have a fully integrated life due to feminism's expectations (Stone, 2007, p. 16).

Based on the contrasting statements made by the two authors as to the real reasons why women opt out from the workplace and chose instead to be wives and mothers, I tend to agree with the argument made by sociologist Pamela Stone because she made a more convincing style of arguments based on the social and cultural expectations that women are natural mothers and so the real reasons why many well-educated and well-qualified women opt out is not discussed. The real reasons are that an inflexible workplace with regards to workloads, expectations from a boss, the lower salary compared to men who perform the same kind of work, and a very rigid hierarchy precludes women from pursuing their full professional potentials. However, Hirshman also made some valid points that because feminism had raised women expectations so high, it is just inevitable some of them got disappointed and so chose to become traditionalists instead. The analysis of Stone can be considered as deeper than that of Hirshman because Stone interviewed a lot of elite women and was able to elicit the truth through their nuanced comments with regards to the real reasons why high-powered women chose to quit when everything was going well.

Other possible roles which can be acquired or pursued during early or middle adulthood (besides romantic relationships, parenthood or professional career) are entrepreneurship, political activism by joining some advocacy groups (such as those that concern with the environment, poverty alleviation, public policy reforms etc.) and social work through the charitable organizations or some non-governmental work that helps other less

fortunate people. It is one way to pay it forward, which Erik Erikson postulated as the seventh crisis stage in a person's life, which is generativity (concern for future generations) versus self-absorption. People today are more aware and more activist with the issues mentioned, compared to earlier generations; it is agentic generativity, to be as agents of change (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2009, p. 331).

Some of the psychological adjustments to be made with regards to lifestyle changes and aging are lowered life expectations regarding definitions of happiness, grief, need to wear glasses and changes in perspectives and attitudes to new roles, such as now becoming a mentor to young generation, to make better judgments based on age, wisdom and experiences, to learn new things or how to operate new devices like mobile phones, laptops, computers, etc. while still taking an active interest in people and in life, in general, to continue development (Roach, 2000, p. 78).

References

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