Bringing Up Baby: Becoming a Single Mother by Choice

I have spent a lot of time carefully considering my options, and I have decided to raise my baby as a single mother. I know that you, Mom and Dad, might be disappointed by this decision. Both of you have high expectations for me. You wanted me to get a degree, get a job in my field, and establish a successful career before having children. I wanted this for myself, but my circumstances and life choices have now put me on an entirely different path. I am being faced with an unplanned pregnancy and have to make decisions regarding the future of my life as well as the future of my unborn child. I have looked at adoption, abortion, and parenting as a single mother in depth. Abortion was my first choice. After researching it thoroughly, I believe that my baby is a human being and for this reason I cannot allow the baby’s life to be terminated. Adoption is a beautiful thing for couples looking to welcome a child into their family. After some thought, I realized that I could never carry my child for nine months only to give him or her up to someone else to raise and love. Life as a single mother, raising my child without the support of a partner and husband, will not be easy or ideal. I am confident, however, that my commitment to my unborn child will convince you that I am making the right choice. I know this is not what you envisioned for me, Mom and Dad, but I hope that by the end of this essay that you will understand why I have chosen this path.
Abortion is the first option that came to my mind when I discovered I was pregnant. I began to do some reading, and my research led me to the Vancouver Island Women’s Clinic website. It offers clear and in-depth information on both medical and surgical abortions. Initially, I was worried about how long the procedure would take and the length of time I would have to stay in the hospital. The website says that the surgical abortion would take place at Victoria General Hospital, and the procedure takes “5-10 minutes and recovery is about 35-40 minutes” (“Abortion Options”). Abortions have been legal in Canada since 1969, and the cost is covered under medical coverage in British Columbia (Norman 185). I could easily have my pregnancy terminated without too much disruption to my school and work schedule. The challenges and stigma that come with being a single mother could disappear with this safe procedure. It isn’t an uncommon choice for women in Canada, either. Norman says that “1 in 3 Canadian women will have an abortion during her life-time.” (Norman qtd. in Dunn and Cook 13). These optimal circumstances make abortion a very valid option. However, I have chosen not to have one and proceed with my pregnancy for one reason: I want to be a mother.

After abortion and parenting, my third option is adoption. If anything happened to change my mind on becoming a single parent, I would choose adoption. British Columbia has excellent adoption policies. You, Mom and Dad, could even adopt my baby if I chose to put it up for adoption. Choices Adoption and Counselling agency is located in Victoria. They offer counselling and support groups for pregnant mothers and birth mothers. As the birth mother, I am allowed to be as involved in the adoption process as I choose. The Choices website says the birth mother can “make the decision as to which profile represents the adoptive parents that will be the best match for them” (“Domestic”). I can request that the adoptive parents allow me to visit my child as frequently as I like. Birth grandparents can opt to be involved in their
grandchild’s life as well. While all of this is positive, adoption isn’t without its flaws. Adoption, like abortion, has effects on future relationships. Even though adoption can be a wonderful thing for couples who are looking to adopt, I think that in my own case it would cause more heartache than good. I would find it extremely difficult to go about my life knowing that I am missing out on important milestones in my child’s life. I think that this pain would increase if I had children in the future. It could also cause a rift in my relationship with the child I placed for adoption. Kathryn Patricelli says that adopted children “may struggle with the knowledge that they may have a whole other family ‘out there’ including half-siblings or extended family members that they may never meet” (“Long-Term Issues for the Adopted”). I believe I would be able to overcome these obstacles but not without going through extreme pain and heartache.

The monetary cost of raising a child is the greatest stress a single mother must face. I was shocked to learn how much money parents spend on basic necessities throughout their child’s life. For the first five years of a child’s life, Camilla Cornell says it costs an “average of $9,000 per year” (“The Real Cost of Raising Kids”). To start, my baby will need a car seat, a stroller, and a bassinet. This alone comes to a grand total of $619.94 before tax (“Nursery”). This is before factoring in the cost of baby clothes, diapers, wipes, blankets, or toys. There are also postpartum things I will need to purchase for myself such as nursing bras or a breast pump. Thankfully, Nanaimo offers a solution for single mothers facing financial difficulty. There is a non-profit organization called Crossroads Crisis Pregnancy Centre. They offer free car seats, strollers, cribs, bassinets, diapers, and clothes for babies (“Home”). The Centre also offers free peer-counselling for pregnant women and mothers (“Home”). I plan to utilize their services as much as I possibly can. I believe that speaking to the counsellors will help relieve some of the
stress surrounding my pregnancy and becoming a mother. I know that I cannot depend entirely on the Centre to meet all my needs, but I believe that it is a good place to start.

I am fully aware that my decision is not only affecting me but it is also affecting the child that I am bringing into the world. At this time, the baby’s father is not in the picture, and I do not see myself pursuing a serious romantic relationship in the near future. For those reasons, my child will most likely have only one parent for several years. I realize that there are a few negative implications surrounding children raised by single parents. Firstly, as a single mother, I will not be able to focus all of my efforts on my child. I will need to work full time to cover expenses such as rent, food, daycare, and car payments. There will be times when I have to miss birthdays or school trips because I am filling the role of both provider and nurturer. Paul Amato points out that because of this, “children living with single parents are exposed to more stressful experiences and circumstances than...children living with continuously married parents” (84). Secondly, because I am a single mother, my child will not grow up experiencing the strength that comes from a healthy two-parent relationship. The lack of a relationship model could potentially have some detrimental effects on my child’s own future relationships. Lastly, research has found that high school students raised by single parents “have lower grade point averages, [and] lower college aspirations” than those raised by two parents (Mclanahan, n. pag.). I am presenting these negative correlations between single parenting and a child’s quality of life to show you that I am taking my decision very seriously.

To combat these negatives, I will first and foremost instill the importance of education in my child. I plan to pass on this value system to my child. If he or she struggles with school, I am fully committed to getting them tutors and finding effective and creative ways to help them learn. Because I have had such a positive post-secondary experience, I will encourage my child to take
his or her high school education seriously. High school taught me to work hard, manage my time responsibly, and take pride in my work. These skills are essential to a successful post-secondary experience. One study suggests that getting kids interested in university early can raise “[their] expectations about attending college” (Kezar 56). I want them to have every opportunity for their future, and I believe the foundation for a good future is a good education. Second, as hard as it may be, I will try my best not to vocalize my concerns regarding finances around my child. I would be devastated if I caused unnecessary stress in my child’s life because of my lack of self-control. Thirdly, I will be sure to surround myself and my child with healthy couples and families so that my child can have role models and people to look up to. Doherty and Craft say that the responsibility falls on the single mother to “socialize [her] children for future roles and relationships” (68). I will especially make an effort to find good male role models for my child. My life has been positively impacted by men that are very dear to me, and I want my own child to have the same favourable relationships.

As a single mother, I will be more susceptible to risks than partnered mothers. I will have to carry the burden of making money and paying bills as well as raising a child and maintaining my personal health. One particular study showed that “fulfilling multiple roles may lead to role overload, increased stress, and a variety of mental health problems” (Gucciardi, Celasun, and Stewart 71). This is a concern for me because I have struggled with my mental health in the past. I am worried about how I will respond to the high amounts of pressure and stress that I will inevitably have to face. It is even more serious because I have my baby to think about as well. My greatest fear is that my inability to cope will result in harm coming to my child. The Canadian Mental Health Association website says that the stigma surrounding mental illness “presents a serious barrier, not only to diagnosis and treatment but also to acceptance in the
community” (“Fast Facts”). Thankfully, mental health awareness is on the rise, and there are resources available to people who struggle with anxiety, depression, and stress. Public awareness is lessening the stigma surrounding mental illness and making it easier for people to get treatment. I was encouraged when I learnt that “single mothers…seek professional help for mental health problems and use mental health care services more often than married mothers” (Gucciardi, Celasun, and Stewart 71).

In conclusion, I am making the biggest decision of my life. I have thoroughly researched all of my options and have decided the best path for me is motherhood. I am choosing to forfeit my plans for the future in order to make room for someone else. Popular culture celebrates independent women who take control of their lives and make their own decisions. I like to consider myself one of these women. Choosing to become a single mother requires great sacrifice and yields great rewards. I am putting aside my dreams of getting a degree, traveling, and establishing a career in order to raise my child. I know I will lose my friends, my social life, and some of my sanity. That being said, I consider myself privileged to be blessed with a child. I can’t wait to meet my baby and watch him or her grow up. There is no telling where my life will lead me, and for that reason I am to seizing the opportunity I have been given to become a mother. Right now, my future is scary and uncertain. For this reason, I need you, Mom and Dad. I need your unconditional support and love. I need your wisdom and your strength. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I want you in my village.
Works Cited

“Abortion Options (Medical or Surgical).” Vancouver Island Women’s Clinic. Vancouver Island Women’s Clinic, 2016. Web. 10 March 2016.


Dunn, Sheila, and Rebecca Cook. "Medical Abortion in Canada: Behind the Times."


