



What Does the Cost of a Child Really Tell You?

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James Dorn of the Cato Institute emphasizes the costs of raising a child and its culpability for declining birthrates (Letters, Aug. 31). Specifically, he writes that the financial burden of raising children is “a major factor in reducing the U.S. birthrate.”

Raw finances alone may not be the proper focus of a discussion on birthrates. For instance, Mr. Dorn’s own institution published an excellent study explaining the limited societal benefits of government family-leave programs, which aim to alleviate financial burdens placed on parents. The Cato study cited data from Norway, where enhanced compensation had little impact on fertility.

It is also well-established that birthrate and family income in the U.S. have an inverse correlation. Those who are best able to afford child rearing are choosing not to have children. Perhaps something has changed culturally, whereby potential parents are less interested in spending their time and money raising future generations.

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My wife died suddenly when our children were ages 9 and 11. They came down the hall the next day wanting to know what was for breakfast. In that simple act, they saved my life. I had to get up. I raised them as a single, working dad for eight years before remarrying, having found a woman who had been a single, working, widowed mom of three. We have lived and loved every minute of the last 19 years raising our five children. It may not have been free, but there has been no “cost.” No one should try to perform a cost-benefit analysis for having children.

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