

Who Pays for Raising the Next Generation of Americans -- Women, Men, or the State?*

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Abstract

Children are the future of any nation, but it is expensive to raise and educate them. The costs include direct expenditures on health, housing, food, and education. They also include opportunity-costs -- the wages foregone by parents who care for children without pay, or workers who do so for low wages. In the United States, increasing single motherhood has led mothers to bear more of the direct costs than previously. Because women do most of the paid and unpaid work of rearing children, they bear most of the opportunity costs as well. Evidence of the relatively low wages of mothers and of the wage penalty for working in an occupation involving caring for or educating children is presented for the United States. When the state pays some costs of rearing children, this redistributes these costs more equally between men and women than when they are borne privately. The fact that benefits of well-reared children diffuse broadly throughout society is an argument for collectivizing more of

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these costs. However, the United States lags behind most industrial nations in state support of child care, health care, and family allowances.

Key Words: children, education, childcare, gender, human capital

Children are the future of any nation. Both the economic wealth of nations and the social fabric of societies depend on whether each generation of children grow up to be competent, responsible, and caring adults. But there are large costs of developing children's capabilities. In this paper, we examine who pays these costs in the U.S.. We are particularly interested in the distributional questions of how these costs are divided between men and women, and how this is affected by the degree of government funding of these costs. We conclude by discussing the policy question of what is an equitable and efficient way of distributing these costs.

I. The Direct ("Out-of-Pocket") Costs of Rearing Children

The direct costs of rearing children and developing their capabilities include the costs of purchasing food, clothes, shelter, medical care, child care, and education for children. Many of these costs are paid by parents. When children are raised by a married couple that pools income, regardless of who earned the income, then these costs are equally shared by the mother and the father. When children are reared by single mothers, and the absent father provides little money, then women bear most or all these costs, unless they are borne by the state. Single motherhood results either from divorces or from nonmarital births. U.S. law obligates fathers (or mothers) who do not live with their children to make child support payments to the parent who has custody of the child, provided that the custodial parent has obtained a child support award from a court. This legal obligation exists whether the parents were married when the child was born or not. However, although the federal government and the 50 states have made a great effort to increase compliance with child support in the last two decades, it is still badly enforced, and many men do not make any or all of their payments (Garfinkel et al., 1998). Most

European nations do better in collection and distribution of child support money.

Given the bad enforcement in the U.S., combined with the relatively high rate of single motherhood in the U.S. (Casper et al., 1994), more of the costs of rearing children are borne by women in the U.S. than in other nations. For example, Table 1 shows the percentage of women who are single mothers in a number of modern nations. At 13.7%, the U.S. has the highest percentage. As a point of contrast, in Taiwan, 3.2% of women are single mothers.

Table 1
Percent of Women in Selected Modern Nations Who Were Lone Mothers in the Mid-1990s

Australia	6.1%
Canada	7.7%
France	12.9%
Finland	6.5%
Germany	6.1%
Netherlands	5.2%
Sweden	10.4%
United Kingdom	10.4%
United States	13.7%
Taiwan	3.2%

Note: Figures for Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and the U.S. are for 1994, and for other nations 1995. Mothers who are not married but are cohabiting with a man are not considered lone mothers in this calculation. Computed from Luxembourg Income Survey data (see <http://www.lis.ceps.lu/>).

Some of the costs of rearing children are borne by the state in most modern societies. For example, a hallmark of a modern societies is having a public education system, financed through taxation. This means that all children can attend approximately 12 years of schooling regardless of their parents' willingness or ability to pay. Nations differ in how much of the cost of child care the

state pays (for children below school age whose parents are both employed). They also differ in how much the state finances higher education and health care. Of course, when we say “the state” finances something, we have to inquire where it gets the money.

When programs are provided universally, or for those in the lower income groups, and financed through progressive taxes (where higher rates are paid by those with higher incomes), this shifts some of the costs of raising children from parents to nonparents, from single women to men and married women (since single women have the lowest incomes), and from the poor to the rich. The U.S. is an outlier among affluent western nations in how few of these direct costs of rearing children are paid for collectively, through the state.

In the U.S., except for the elderly, veterans of past wars, and the very poor, health care comes through private insurance (OECD, 1994). Such insurance is extremely expensive for an individual to buy on the open market, and few individuals make such a purchase. Rather, those working full-time for medium and large organizations in the private or public sector generally get health insurance as a fringe benefit of their jobs, provided that they work full-time (most workers are not covered if they work part-time). This makes the U.S. the only Western industrialized nation (other than Switzerland) without a universal publicly financed health care system (OECD, 1994). The U.S. also has no universal child allowance; such cash payments to families with children to help with the costs of raising them are common in Europe.

II. The Opportunity Costs of Raising Children

Economists often distinguish between the direct costs discussed above and opportunity costs. Direct costs are those where someone pays money for the good or service that is used to meet children’s needs; these costs are sometimes called “out-of-pocket costs,” invoking the metaphor of someone taking

money out of his or her pocket to pay for something. But an equally important kind of cost is an “opportunity cost.” This refers to a benefit that someone would have gotten had they not made the choice under analysis. That is, anytime an actor has two or more options and chooses one, he or she foregoes the benefit of the best option not chosen. The foregone benefits of the option not chosen are the opportunity costs of the option chosen.

The type of opportunity cost relevant to our discussion here is the wage that a parent foregoes when she or he spends some years at home taking care of children, or reduces full-time paid work in favor of part-time for a period. The earnings foregone are an opportunity cost of spending time and effort caring for children. Nonemployment (or part-time employment) of mothers is the major mechanism through which opportunity costs of rearing children are experienced. As general wage levels rise with economic development, women’s wages tend to rise too, and the opportunity cost of being a stay-at-home mother increases. If we take the long historical sweep, this is clearly the factor of the costs of child rearing that has increased the most. But even among women who are employed full-time, having children lowers women’s earnings.

As women’s employment increases, more of the care of children is done for pay in child care centers or in the homes of women who take children in for pay. But, men or women who work in jobs involving caring labor earn less, net of human capital and a number of other variables, than those doing other kinds of work. Thus, all those who take care of children bear part of the cost of rearing children experienced as a lower wage. We discuss the evidence for both of these kinds of opportunity costs of rearing the next generation in more detail below.

The Wage Penalty for Motherhood. Mothers often reduce their employment to provide care to their children, and fathers occasionally do the same. This lowers these parents’ lifetime earnings, most directly through creating a period when they have no earnings. But, even if we look at periods when they are

employed, several recent studies find that mothers earn less than other women in the U.S. and elsewhere (Budig & England, 2001; Lundberg & Rose, 2000; Waldfogel, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). The penalty occurs for married and single women, but is larger for the married (Budig & England, 2001). Men suffer no such penalty; indeed their earnings are either unaffected (Loh, 1996: 580) or go up after having a child (Lundberg & Rose, 2000).

Several explanations have been offered for this motherhood penalty. One explanation is that some mothers take months or years out of employment for children rearing, and thus, when they return to employment, they earn lower wages as a result of their lower experience or seniority. A recent study estimated that this explains about one third of the motherhood penalty (Budig & England, 2001). Other explanations are more speculative, and have less clear evidence to confirm or disconfirm them. Some suggest that mothers are less productive even when they have as much experience, because they have less energy to expend on the job given the energy demands of mothering when they are at home (Becker, 1991). Still others suggest that the penalty may result from mothers trading off high wages for “mother-friendly” jobs, such as working part-time or flexible hours. Being in part-time work was the only job characteristic that Budig and England (2001) found to contribute to this penalty for mothers; all other job characteristics they could measure did nothing to explain the motherhood penalty. Finally, employers may discriminate against mothers. Whatever the mechanism, the motherhood penalty lowers the earnings of those who do unpaid caring labor. Where mothers are single, this is especially likely to lead to poverty (although Budig and England found that single mothers have a slightly smaller wage penalty per child than married mothers, probably because they have to prioritize earnings more).

Table 2 summarizes the major findings of Budig and England’s (2001) recent study on the pay penalty for motherhood in the U.S.. The study examines the wages of young women between 17 and 35 in the U.S. and uses fixed-effects modeling to

attempt to remove omitted variable bias from estimates of the causal impact of having children on women's wages. The conclusion is that women earn 6.8% less for each child. After controlling for human capital, the penalty is 4.7% per child (a 31% reduction). The difference between the gross and human capital-adjusted estimate comes largely from the smaller amount of employment experience and seniority of those with (more) children.

Table 2 Percent Reduction in Wage Per Child for U.S. Women

Control Variables in Model	% Reduction in Wage Per Child
Gross (no controls)	6.8%*
Controlling for Human Capital	4.7%*

Source: Adapted from Table 2, Budig and England 2001. Calculated from employed female respondents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, pooled cross-section time-series for 1982-1993. The table gives effect as 100 times the coefficient from a regression of the natural logarithm of hourly earnings on number of children. Fixed-effects models include person and year fixed effects. Models controlling for human capital include years of education, full-time seniority, part-time seniority, full-time experience, part-time experience, total number of breaks in employment since one's first job, whether the woman is currently enrolled in school, and marital status.

* Statistically significant at .05 level (two-tailed test).

When women forego earnings to raise children (whether through foregoing employment or earning less in the hours they are employed because of children), they are the direct bearers of the opportunity costs of rearing children. However, in the case of married or cohabiting women who pool their money with the men they live with, these costs are shared by men. But even when the costs are shared between women and their male partners, women's lower earnings may still affect them adversely. Exchange theory in sociology and bargaining models from game theory in economics suggest that women's lower earnings (relative to their husbands') reduce their power in marriage (Lundberg & Pollak, 1996; Lundberg et al., 1997; England & Kilbourne, 1990). The opportunity costs of caring for children are shared more equitably

between mothers and fathers when men share in child care and when couples use more child care services by paid workers to allow more continuous and committed employment by the mother.

Bearing Opportunity Costs of Childrearing through Paid Employment Caring for Children. As economic development proceeds and more mothers are employed, more of the care and education of children is done outside of the home in what we might think of as the “care” sector of the economy. As the number of years of schooling that is typical increases, teaching expands as a profession. As more women are employed outside the home, parents increasingly pay for child care services from individuals or child care centers, so many more employed women do this as their paid work. Some women are self-employed as child care workers, taking a few children into their home for pay. These jobs are done disproportionately by women.

There is an opportunity cost to contributing to the development of children by working in these jobs. This is because jobs involving the human capital development of children have lower wages than other jobs, *ceteris paribus*. As evidence for this, Table 3 shows results from an analysis using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data. It gives the percentage difference between wages in secondary school teaching, primary school teaching, and child care, and those in all other occupations combined. These estimates are after controlling for workers’ human capital and a number of characteristics of jobs found in past work to predict wages. The controlled characteristics include education, experience and seniority (both part-time and full-time), cognitive skill requirements of the occupation, hazards faced in the occupation, physical strength required in the occupation, whether the occupation involves management or supervision, sex composition of the occupation / industry combination, whether the job is unionized, whether the individual is self-employed, and 12 dummy variables for industry. Because a fixed-effect analysis is being used, unchanging individual characteristics such as sex and

Table 3
Percent Reduction in Wage for Working in Occupations of
Child Care, Primary School Teaching, or Secondary Teaching, from
Models with Fixed Effects

	Women	Men
Child Care	41.6%*	20.0%*
Primary School Teaching	14.1%*	2.8%
Secondary School Teaching	8.4%*	5.8%*

Note: Calculated from employed respondents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, pooled cross-section time-series for 1982-1993. The table gives effect as 100 times the coefficient from a regression of the natural logarithm of hourly earnings on dummies for these three occupational categories. Effects are relative to being in any other occupation, net of person and time-fixed effects and controlled human capital and job characteristics. Models include person and year fixed effects. Models control for human capital (years of education, full-time seniority, part-time seniority, full-time experience, part-time experience, total number of breaks in employment since one's first job). Models also control for a range of job or occupational characteristics: whether wages in the job are set by collective bargaining; whether respondent is self-employed; the percent female in the cell cross-classifying respondent's detailed occupation and detailed industry code, using 1990 Census classifications; 12 dummies representing 13 industry categories; physical strength required for the occupation (from Dictionary of Occupational Titles); hazards involved in occupation (from Dictionary of Occupational Titles), scale for cognitive demands of occupation (most variables in scale from Dictionary of Occupational Titles). (Last three variables are described in England 1992, Chapter 3.)

* Statistically significant at .05 level (two-tailed test).

race or ethnicity are controlled. The fixed-effect analysis also nets out any additive effects of unchanging but unobserved characteristics of individuals. The analysis shows that, compared to workers in all other occupations, and adjusted for individual human capital and the measured job characteristics, working in child care lowers women's hourly wage by 41.6%, and the "penalty" for primary school teaching is 14.1% and 8.3% for secondary school teaching. The analogous penalties for men are 20.0%, 2.8%, and 5.8%. All are statistically significant except the

primary school teaching penalty for men.¹ While the effects are significant for women and generally significant for men, in the aggregate they affect women's earnings much more since many more women than men hold these jobs. For example, in these data 3% of women but only .1% of men were child care workers; 3% of women but .4% of men were primary school teachers, and 2% of women but 1% of men were secondary school teachers.

Our conclusion is that working in jobs that involve caring for and developing the human capabilities of children leads to lower pay than the same worker could make elsewhere, given his or her qualifications. The pay is also low relative to the skills demanded by the jobs. Thus, workers in the growing "care sector" of industrial economies pay opportunity costs of raising the next generation in the lower wages they receive for this work relative to what people of their human capital level could make in other jobs. Desegregation of occupations would shift some of these costs from women to men. The cost burden on women would also be reduced by better pay in the care sector through more state subsidization of this sector.

As these jobs are held mostly by women, these opportunity costs of working to develop children's capabilities are generally paid directly by women, although to the extent that they pool

¹ Tam (1997, 2000) has warned against the inclusion of too many measures of job characteristics, arguing that the combination of measurement error and collinearity can create bias in effect estimates, particularly in the context of fixed effects models. To see if our results would be changed if we used a very simple model, we removed the scale (from England, 1992) measuring cognitive skill and replaced it with a variable used by Tam, the years of specific vocational preparation typically required in the occupation (from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles). We also removed the measures of requirements for authority (management or supervision), strength, and hazards, as well as the employment number of breaks the individual has had in his or her career. Otherwise, the models were identical to those in Table 3. The analogous effects for women were -40.5% for child care, -10.1% for primary school teaching, and -4.5% for secondary school teaching. For men, coefficients were -20.2%, -3%, and -2.1%. All were statistically significant except the two teaching coefficients for men.

income with men, the costs are shared with men.

But why does work involving children pay less than we would expect, given the human capital of the workers, their sex, and the job characteristics past studies have found to affect wages? We can only offer speculations as to the reason. (These are explored in England & Folbre, 1999a; Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Nelson, 1999.) One possibility is that caring for or educating children produces a “public good.” As defined by economists and other rational choice theorists, such goods have the property that it is impossible to keep those who don’t pay for the good from using it; this is called “nonexcludability.” Nonexcludable diffuse benefits from caring for and educating children include a lower crime rate, the availability of well-behaved friends, and spouses, neighborhood social capital, and so forth. Being willing and able to withhold one’s services unless the beneficiaries pay for them is a recipe for being well paid within a market system containing actors trying to optimize their consumption. By contrast, how can the teacher or child care worker (or mother) collect from the fellow citizens or neighbors who later benefit from her labors? Thus, because the work of rearing children produces diffuse nonexcludable benefits, unless the state subsidizes the wages of care workers, most of us are “free riders” on those who do this work. This makes it harder to earn a profit from enterprises offering care work on the market, and may contribute to a lower wage unless the state organizes these enterprises and pays a wage commensurate with the credentials of the workers.

Another reason that caring for and educating children pays badly is that children have no money to pay for these services. When those with few resources need care, and the care is provided by paid workers, some third party pays for the care – typically family members or the state. (In this, children are in the same situation as the elderly.) In the case of state provision, how much is made available to pay the caring workers is a political decision within the state and depends, among other things, upon the level of altruism or solidarity that voters feel for families with children,

especially for families in which the parents can ill afford care services without state subsidy. Again, this may limit the wage offered to care workers, making it lower than the wage for comparably skilled jobs in the corporate sector, particularly in a nation, like the U.S., with a small public sector.

A third reason for the low wages of paid care work may be its association with women. These tasks are services that women were traditionally expected to offer to their family members out of love and duty. These functions, first education and, later, early child care, have, through processes of social differentiation, moved out of the family into other state- and market-governed institutions. Cultural schemas about gender may heavily influence how much people think such work should be paid. Such cultural schemas may lead to lower pay seen as appropriate for care work. "Devaluation theory" has argued that our culture devalues women relative to men, and in something akin to guilt by association, any activity done largely by women is valued less than that it otherwise would be. Proponents of this view believe the devaluation of jobs because they are filled with and associated with women explains the negative association between the percent female in an occupation and its wage level in the U.S., net of a host of controls (England, 1992; Kilbourne et al., 1994; Sorensen, 1989; England et al., 2000). (For arguments against the empirical validity of the claim of devaluation, see Tam 1997, 2000.) The pay penalties for jobs involving children in Table 3 were estimated from a model that controlled for the sex composition of the jobs. However, the cultural association of these nurturant functions with women may make these jobs vulnerable to being seen as even less pay-worthy than other predominantly female jobs that are not linked to functions like mothering. (Examples of predominantly female jobs that are less like mothering are clerical work or manufacturing jobs in the electronics industry.) The difficulties in measuring either the inputs or outputs of caring labor may exacerbate the tendency to overlook the value of this work.

A final possible reason for the pay penalty for jobs involving

the development of children comes from their inherent labor intensity. Over three decades ago, Baumol (1967) warned that the service sector would have slower growth in productivity than manufacturing because, to the extent that giving a service is inherently labor intensive, productivity cannot be increased through the usual method of capital investment. In retrospect, he may have been wrong about business services. For example, accounting and law have been strongly affected by capital investments in computers, computer software, and searchable electronic databases. It may be the care sector, particularly the jobs where the human touch is most important, where such gains are impossible, making it ever harder for workers in these sectors to keep pace with the wage gains in other jobs. Of course, the increased productivity in other sectors also raises the stakes of investing well in the next generation of children.

When neoclassical economists are exposed to evidence of the penalty for caring labor, especially if they have been reminded that this work is sometimes done out of altruism, they generally suggest that the correct explanation lies in the theory of “compensating differentials.” This theory calls attention to differences between jobs in their intrinsic rewards or penalties. Nonpecuniary “amenities” or “disamenities” will affect how many people are willing to work in a job. Theoretically, employers will have to increase the wage to compensate for nonpecuniary disamenities of jobs, and they will be able to pay less than they otherwise would in jobs with nonpecuniary amenities. Of course, there is variation in tastes among workers; the theory says that whether the intrinsic properties of the work will require the employer to pay a higher wage (than predicted by other variables) or permit payment of a lower wage depends on whether the *marginal* worker sees the characteristics of the job as more amenity or disamenity. This gives rise to the possibility that, if the marginal worker to caring occupations finds satisfaction in helping people, this will allow employers to fill the jobs with lower pay than in comparable jobs without the helping component. More simply put, the low pay

may be made up for by the intrinsic fulfillment of the jobs. This may be a factor in the low pay of caring labor, but we strongly suspect that it is not the whole story. Every job disproportionately self-selects workers who find the kind of work offered to be fulfilling or enjoyable. Thus, the fact that we can point to one type of preference (altruism) that favors choosing this kind of work even if the pay is lower does not mean that the observed lower pay is explained by such preferences. Indeed, for almost every kind of work there is a set of preferences held by some people that make the work intrinsically satisfying. The greater tendency to invoke such explanations when the work is linked to work that has historically emanated from women's work at home may be more explained by gender bias than anything else.

III. Who *Should* Pay for the Kids?

When children grow up to be competent, responsible, caring adults, many members of society benefit. The skills and capabilities of the next generation provide what economists call "public goods" and "positive externalities." If we raise this generation well, then employers have more productive workers, there is less crime, neighborhoods are rich in social capital, more of us are able to find loving spouses and friends, and the following generation receives better care. All these beneficiaries are "free riders" on those who paid the out-of-pocket costs of rearing children. They are also free riders on those who did the unpaid or underpaid work of caring for children and in this way bore opportunity costs of rearing children. Market mechanisms do not work well to get beneficiaries to pay those who bore the costs. This is an efficiency argument for greater state involvement in the costs of children; because the benefits are public, when the costs are private, investments in children may be undersupplied. Such expenditures also help ensure a supply of caring labor because they reduce the penalties for caring.

There are also equity reasons for favoring more state

involvement in the costs of rearing children. Traditional societies ensured a supply of caring by women through patriarchal norms and discrimination against women who ventured out of the home or who tried to work for pay in jobs other than those involving caring. This may have provided care, but it was grossly unfair and is inconsistent with modern notions of equality of opportunity. Without state involvement, as we have discussed, women disproportionately bear the out-of-pocket and opportunity costs of raising children. Where these are money costs, it is single women that bear them more than married men or married women. But where the costs take the form of lower earnings reducing one's welfare through reducing bargaining power within the family, the gender division of labor within families combined with the opportunity costs of care mean that married women also pay the costs of children more than men. More state subsidy of child rearing costs through progressive taxes serves to redistribute income from more to less affluent households and from men to women. Thus, it redresses the tendency of women, especially single women, to bear so many of these costs.

Since more state subsidy of child rearing costs through progressive taxes also redistributes from more affluent to less affluent families, then, to the extent that money enhances children's opportunities, such changes will also increase the equality of opportunity among children in households of different income levels, which is consistent with modern values of equality of opportunity.

Thus, we believe there are both efficiency and equity arguments for greater state involvement in paying the costs of rearing the next generation. State subsidization of costs of investing in children can be done through progressive taxation that raises revenue for child care, health care, and education, for cash or tax credit family allowances to parents, and through regulations that make employers accommodate to parents' need to spend time with children.

Of course, there is substantial political opposition to

increasing social welfare spending in the U.S. and Europe today. In a climate where state expenditures are contested, any argument for increasing them will have to face serious questions about the consequences of making or not making these expenditures for raising children. As part of such a consideration, we should acknowledge possible negative consequences of increased child allowances or tax credits, public subsidy of the wages of care workers, and provision of universal health and child care. Such policies could possibly be pro-natalist, raising fertility. Especially if the incremental increase in fertility that resulted from reducing private costs of childrearing occurred among least-capable parents, this could lower the quality of human capital. Government programs delivering child care, health care, and family allowances could suffer from bureaucratic inefficiencies that some critics claim to disproportionately characterize the public sector, and they could encourage political rent seeking (Olson, 1984). These problems, if serious, would mean that a dollar of taxes raised would lead to much less than a dollar in benefits. Finally, it is also possible that increased government support for child rearing could replace or “crowd out” some private provision of money and services to children (Becker, 1991).

However, we believe that these potentially negative side effects are outweighed by the positive effects. Whether we make collective investments in rearing children is likely to have important implications for the well-being of the entire population. In the United States, there is considerable evidence of negative child outcomes among low income families, some of which could be improved by greater public provisioning of money or services (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Failure to address these problems contributes to a number of social costs, including expenditures on child protection programs, foster care, remedial education, and incarceration. Many studies suggest that the rate of social return on investments in human capital is relatively high (Children’s Defense Fund, 1994).

Failure to increase public support for child rearing also

affects the size of a nation's population, with economic effects. The high share of the costs of children that are borne privately and the rising opportunity costs of women we have discussed above have undoubtedly contributed to the dramatic decline in fertility in many affluent nations. U.S. fertility is at about replacement, but many European nations, as well as Japan, have moved below replacement fertility (McDonald, 2000). Governments are worried about declines in population size and about the economic consequences of an age structure containing many elderly persons who are no longer able to or expected to work to contribute to their own support. Nations will differ in how politically and practically viable they think it is to solve this problem by permitting increased immigration. But greater public support for rearing children might well help abate this decline.

Distinct from these efficiency concerns, the legitimacy of political institutions in capitalist democracies hinges on the belief that, despite substantial inequalities, the state provides a framework for equal opportunity. Failure to conform to minimal standards of social provision for children threatens that vision in ways that may undermine political solidarity and the stability of democratic institutions. As women recognize the extent to which they bear more of the costs of children, their perception of gender inequity may also threaten political legitimacy absent state policies that contribute to more equitable distribution of the costs of rearing the next generation.

Expenditures on social programs such as health care, child care, and education are often seen as consumption, and as somehow indulgent or wasteful. However, it makes more sense to conceptualize expenditures on children as investments rather than consumption; we can see these investment expenditures as "loans" to children that they (collectively) pay back through paying taxes when they are adults. We predict that how much is collectively invested in children will prove to be an important determinant of the fate of nations in the next century.

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該由誰來負擔美國下一代的撫育費用 婦女、男人、還是國家？

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摘 要

兒童是國家的未來，但是撫育和教育兒童需要很高的成本，這些成本包括為兒童的健康、居住、食物和教育的直接支出，也包括父母為了照顧孩子而放棄或減少的工作所得。在美國，由於單親媽媽愈來愈多，使母親負擔的直接成本也比以前更重。因為女性為了撫養孩子所做的許多有給和無給的工作最多，所以她們負擔的機會成本也最多。本文提出證據顯示美國媽媽的薪資比別人低，而且照顧或教育兒童的職業薪資也較其他工作低。如果國家能負擔一些兒童的撫養成本，就可以更公平地由兩性來分擔這些成本。有良好教養的兒童對整個社會有很多好處，因此由社會集體來承擔更多教養的成本是合理的。然而，在國家補助兒童的照顧、健康和家庭津貼這方面，美國都落後大多數的工業國家。

關鍵詞：兒童、教育、兒童照顧、性別、人力資本