

Prosperity Through Timeless Values

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse • Your Coach for the Culture Wars



LOVE AND ECONOMICS: IT TAKES A FAMILY TO RAISE A VILLAGE

It takes a family to raise a village. Without the family, the village itself can not function. If the family breaks down, or fails to form in the first place, the “village” can not possibly provide adequate help to repair the damage. The family does something the “village” can not do for itself, namely bring the next generation into being, and socialize them into the kind of people who can participate in a free society. Without the family doing its job, the state will necessarily grow larger, more expensive and more intrusive.

These are some of the themes of the new paperback edition of *Love and Economics: It Takes a Family to Raise a Village*. When I originally published *Love and Economics* in 2001, I had intended it as a loving critique of the Chicago School of Economics, which is my intellectual fatherland. My experience of raising a birth daughter at the same time as a badly neglected adopted orphan son, convinced me that we economists and libertarians had taken the family far too much for granted. Before I had children, I had tried to argue from libertarian political theory and free market economics to a full-fledged personal philosophy of life. *Love and Economics* is an extended argument about why that analogy does not work.

Mothers and fathers lay the groundwork for the development of the conscience, simply by being in loving relationship with their children. Children without consciences become sociopaths, who are extremely expensive and not only to the taxpayer. The sociopath does not care about the impact he has on others, and will do anything he thinks he

can get away with. Trying to monitor and control the behavior of a person like that strains the resources of his immediate family, his neighborhood, and his school.

In the course of doing the research for *Love and Economics*, I became aware of the vast body of research showing the importance of the married couple, two parent family for the well-being of children. Ordinary children all across America, not just severely neglected orphans and foster children, face extraordinary risks. The children of unmarried mothers, the children of divorced parents, all face elevated risks for physical and mental health problems, substance abuse, educational problems and of course, juvenile delinquency, crime and incarceration. There simply is no substitute for the married couple, two-parent family.

For all these reasons, I believe that fiscal conservatives and libertarians can not afford to be indifferent to the fate of the family. When families fall apart, the Hillary Clintons of the world are standing by, ready to promote more intrusive and expensive government to pick up the pieces. Unfortunately, many of my economist friends appeared to be uninterested in the topic. Perhaps they were put off by my original subtitle for the book, *Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work*.

I have devised a new subtitle for the book, *It Takes a Family to Raise a Village*, and commissioned a new, more contemporary cover. I do not attack Mrs. Clinton by name. Nor do I offer arguments against specific policies under consideration in the current election cycle. We need to do better than scampering around, responding to the latest presumptuous proposal calling itself familyfriendly. Instead, we need to understand the general prin-

ciples involved, so we have a framework for evaluating such proposals.

In that spirit, *Love and Economics* makes a foundational argument that the family is an irreplaceable social institution. We can not replace married couples with a series of contracts among adults, as some libertarians and economists might argue. Nor can we replace the family with a series of government programs. Mrs. Clinton is a symbol of the view that we can.

The government is no substitute for the family. In fact, the government can frequently make things much more difficult for families, by undermining family relationships. In any good society, the government must do what only the government can do: keep order internally and externally, enforce agreements and defend property rights. The market must do what only the market can do: create wealth and provide employment by combining goods and services that satisfy consumers. But only the family can create the next generation of human beings who will become citizens and consumers.

I do hope my libertarian friends will come to see the connection between their indifference to the family, and the progress of welfare state advocates such as Mrs. Clinton. And I hope that everyone who values the personal over the political and the family over the bureaucratic, will take seriously the arguments of *Love and Economics: It Takes a Family to Raise a Village*.

— *Jennifer Roback Morse is the author of Smart Sex: Finding Life-long Love in a Hook-up World.*

First appeared in the Mercatornet.com