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How Much Is a Mom Worth?

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Carl Bialik, “The Numbers Guy” columnist at *The Wall Street Journal*, looks at how some researchers try to project what a mom should be paid if mothers were paid as “domestic professionals.” By any measure, the executive, administrative, medical, nutritional, therapeutic, and instructional dimensions alone would count for a major executive salary.

A consulting firm known as Salary.com Inc. estimates that the average mom deserves an annual salary of \$85,876 if she works outside the home and \$134,121 if she is a stay-at-home mom.

The study is a gimmick of sorts, dismissed as “silly” by Harvard economist Claudia Goldin. Who could really estimate the value of motherhood? The calling is far more than a profession.

The fact that the consulting firm added value to the stay-at-home moms was interesting, to say the least — bucking the trend toward political correctness.

One academic proposed an alternative method of measuring a mother’s worth:

If a price tag needs to be put on mothers’ work, Massachusetts Institute of Technology economics professor Jonathan Gruber suggested a more logical method: “The right way to do this, in theory, would be to assess how price-sensitive parental work is to costs of home care — [for instance,] if cost of cleaning services doubled, how many more moms would stay home.”

Prof. Gruber has conducted research about the effect of Quebec’s introduction of universal child care on mothers’ decisions whether to stay at home. “Even when child care was made essentially free in Quebec, only 7.7% more moms went to work,” he said.

That last statement really ought to tell us something. In its own way, it is an eloquent testimony to the call of motherhood.

How much is a mom worth? Consider the fact that the book of Proverbs describes the faithful wife and mother as “far more precious than jewels:”

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” Proverbs 31:25-29, English Standard Version.

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