Half Sigma

A contrarian blog, because the majority is wrong about a lot of stuff.

March 07, 2011

HBD, abortion, and Malthus

Jewamongvou writes:

If all black women ceased having abortions, the downfall of Western civilization would be greatly hastened. Our world would rapidly become a miserable place, even for blacks – as they would lose the crutch of white society and have to fend for themselves.

I couldn't agree more. The anti-abortion fight is a Christian thing, and people such as myself and Jewamong you, not brainwashed by weekly sermons at right-wing churches, just don't get what the fuss is about.

It's hard to mention abortion and HBD without thinking about Steve Sailer's many anti-abortion blog posts in response to the book Freakonomics. If you recall, the authors of Freakonomics argued that legalized abortion cut crime because fewer "unwanted" babies were born. I have to agree with the authors of Freakonomics that abortion led to less crime, but it's not because the babies were "unwanted," but because women who have unwanted pregnancies in the first place have lower IQs, so abortion has a eugenic effect. It's too bad that the authors were afraid (or too ignorant) to write about the real reason that abortion causes less crime. (While it's true that women with higher IQ are more likely to have an abortion in response to an unwanted pregnancy, because high IQ women are so unlikely to become accidentally pregnant in the first place, abortion primarily reduces the number of low-IQ births.)

Abortion seems to be the only liberal policy which has a eugenic effect, so it ought to be cheered rather than chastised. How can liberals support such a good policy? Liberals support abortion because they believe it makes women more equal to men. It's only a coincidence that it has good side effects.

I also agree with the liberals that we need to do more to control the population throughout the world. I believe that the population of the world is increasing faster than the technology needed to maintain such a large population in a sustainable manner. I normally hate the word "sustainable" because liberals overuse it, but I believe that before the end of the current century there will be a shortage of non-renewable resources such as petroleum, and this will result in mass starvation among the poorer people of the world. (Luckily for my blog readers, middle class people in the United States won't starve to death.) With planning, we could avert this tragedy, but the Christian Right is opposed to this because they believe that God told man to be fruitful and multiply.

* * *

In response to some comments:

From my <u>previous post</u> about abortion statistics:

In 2004, there were 10.5 abortions per 1,000 white women ages 15 to 44, compared with 28 per 1,000 Hispanic women of that age and 50 per 1,000 black women.

So does abortion cut crime? Duh! Of course it does, when you consider which race is having the most abortions per capita and which race commits the most crime per capita.

March 07, 2011 | Permalink

Comments

And if you live up North you also have the benefit of a net loss of blacks due to the reverse migration of blacks returning to Southern states like GA, FL, VA, TX and NC again:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1357493/U-S-census-shows-black-population-returning-South.html

This is also one of the reasons that the South is now dominating college football.

Posted by: Camlost | March 07, 2011 at 10:43 AM

Sailer's critique of Levitt's abortion hypothesis was not moralistic, but rather centered on the fact that the thesis was not empirically supported -- crime rates did not fall as the hypothesis predicted they would. Pregnancy and abortion rates skyrocketed when abortion was legalized, but the overall birth rate did not budge. There's no evidence that abortion reduced low-IQ births (in the 1970s at least).

Posted by: JL | March 07, 2011 at 11:13 AM

Theocracies don't come about when people are fat and happy though.

Posted by: bluto | March 07, 2011 at 11:14 AM

My impression is that anti-abortion is more specifically an American-Christian thing or an Anglo-Christian thing. That's because unwanted/teen pregnancies seem to be a lot more common in the Anglosphere, for some reason.

Religious Jews don't like abortion much, but the need for it is rare enough that it's not worth launching moral crusades against.

Posted by: IHTG | March 07, 2011 at 11:24 AM

"women who have unwanted pregnancies in the first place have lower IOs, so abortion has a eugenic affect"

One might suspect that women with lower IQs are more likely to keep the baby regardless of their inability to raise and support it properly, and thus abortion would have a net dysgenic effect (i.e., only "responsible" women are pulling the plug on kids they can't afford). But I admit this is only my suspicion, I don't know that it's actually the case.

[HS: Sure, responsible women are more likely to have an abortion, but responsible women usually don't get pregnant in the first place. Thus abortion is eugenic. This can be seen in the statistics which show that black women have more abortions, per capita, than white women.]

Posted by: JP | March 07, 2011 at 12:12 PM

I would trust Steve Sailer on the numbers before I would trust anyone else.

I think the reason abortion is so hated by lower-class traditionalists is that unplanned pregnancy leading to marriage- the shotgun marriage- has long been a major source of family formation among them.

For religious conservatives opposition to abortion overrides everything else. During the welfare reform debate, liberals suggested it would lead to more abortions, and this upset them a great deal, delaying and jeopardizing the legislation.

Posted by: Thrasymachus | March 07, 2011 at 12:33 PM

"The anti-abortion fight is a Christian thing, and people such as myself and Jewamong you, not brainwashed by weekly sermons at right-wing churches, just don't get what the fuss is about."

The brainwashing is most effective for their own followers, in as much as some adherents go for having more kids and traditional families. Regardless of intent, the effect is greatest on those in the pews, not those in the streets or in politics.

Orthodox religionists are most supportive of large families and the conditions that support them. These are the folks who are actually conscientious enough to show up and support the religious institutions. So, I am not too worried about their popping out more kids. Ghetto ho's aren't listening to those sermons.

Posted by: not too late | March 07, 2011 at 12:42 PM

"Sure, responsible women are more likely to have an abortion, but responsible women usually don't get pregnant in the first place."

Talk about dysgenic. Responsible = no kids

Maybe female over education is dysgenic.

Posted by: not too late | March 07, 2011 at 12:53 PM

HS: You neglected to mention that, as Steve explained, while live births may have declined by 6% post-Roe, pregnancies increased by 30%. It would appear that legalized abortion caused most of the problem it pretended to solve. This increase argues powerfully that the dysgenic effect (more low IQ pregnancies that result in live births) outweighs the eugenic effect (unwanted pregnancies are ipso facto low IQ).

the Christian Right is opposed to this because they believe that God told man to be fruitful and multiply.

The Christian Right is opposed to murder. But I will allow that taking population control off the table has been a bipartisan enterprise.

Posted by: $\Phi \mid March 07, 2011 at 01:24 PM$

HS,

Perhaps there was an anti-abortion subtext to Sailer's critique of Levitt et al, but there was also a hell of a lot of data. Have you commented previously on how, in your view, he got it wrong?

Posted by: Chip Smith | March 07, 2011 at 01:44 PM

Problem is, that while your belief that abortions for what are likely to be low IQ babies argues for a society with fewer problems, the cavalier attitude toward the taking of the life of an innocent (even those in the last trimester that would survive outside mother's womb with today's medical advances) erodes the moral fibre of the society.

It was a slippery slope we were on then, and it's become an avalanche bearing down on us now, with some crazy liberal groups treating third trimester, healthy babies only a few inches from life outside the womb as if they were simply parasites feeding off hosts, parasites which have to be eradicated.

No country can survive if its moral code allows that to be acceptable behavior. A healthy democratic society has to value life and has to believe that some actions and some people are worthy of being shamed, shamed, shamed.

Posted by: tina | March 07, 2011 at 02:10 PM

"Liberals support abortion because they believe it makes women more equal to men."

Any time you write something reasonably intelligent and intuitive like this blog post, you mar it with completely idiotic and ideological statements like the above. It is as if you can't quite reconcile your agreement with liberals on an issue without also spitefully misrepresenting them at the same time.

Liberals and many libertarians support abortion rights in the vein of *individual* rights, not some gender-based "equalization" scheme that you're claiming.

If women were somehow, on balance, superior to men (they're not), they'd still wish to have the legal right to terminate a pregnancy because the autonomy and utility of doing so are directly related to individual self-determination.

Why this is lost on you speaks greatly to your ongoing failure with women.

Women are on average objectively less intelligent and generally less capable than men in most capacities but that doesn't mean that they still don't value their ability to make their own decisions about reproduction.

These two concepts aren't mutually exclusive.

Posted by: Patrick | March 07, 2011 at 02:17 PM

Levitt's 2001 paper on the issue mentioned the race disparity.

"Far more interesting from our perspective is the possibility that abortion has a disproportionate effect on the births of those who are most at risk of engaging in criminal behavior...

Levine et al. [1996] found that the drop in births associated with abortion legalization was not uniform across all groups. They estimated that the drop in births was roughly twice as great for teenage and nonwhite mothers as it was for the nonteen, white population...

Fertility declines for black women are three times greater than for whites (12 percent compared with 4 percent). Given that homicide

rates of black youths are roughly nine times higher than those of white youths, racial differences in the fertility effects of abortion are likely to translate into greater homicide reductions...

Under the assumption that those black and white births eliminated by legalized abortion would have experienced the average criminal propensities of their respective races, then the predicted reduction in homicide is 8.9 percent. In other words, taking into account differential abortion rates by race raises the predicted impact of abortion legalization on homicide from 5.4 percent to 8.9 percent."

"The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime." Quarterly Journal of Economics, 2001, 116(2), pp. 379-420. (with Donohue, John J., III).

http://pricetheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/DonohueLevittTheImpactOfLegalized2001.pdf

Posted by: Kiwiguy | March 07, 2011 at 02:48 PM

"No country can survive if its moral code allows that to be acceptable behavior."

I don't know. Rome lasted over 1000 years as a political entity, China has been a strong civilization for 6000 years. Even the Aztecs collapsed only because they were unprepared for the intervention of the Spanish. I don't see evidence that infanticide is necessarily incompatible with a strong state, or even a strong moral order. Anti-abortion rhetoric is arguably the conservative counterpart of the "special snowflake" rhetoric we get from liberals - every single life is special and sacred and of infinite value. Ask yourself if you sincerely believe that deep in your heart. A strong society would maybe put less value on every individual life and more value on truly exceptional individuals.

Posted by: Peter A | March 07, 2011 at 03:08 PM

"I don't know. Rome lasted over 1000 years as a political entity, China has been a strong civilization for 6000 years"

Yeah, but I wouldn't want to have lived in Rome unless I was an elite male, and I don't want to live the life of the average Chinese male or female.

I should have said, "No country that has prized democracy and individual liberty" can survive. It's a very short path from aborting viable babies to cutting short the lives of the old and infirm. We already do that culturally anyway, don't we? We have constructed a society in which relatively healthy parents, who are in their 6os-8os and need occasional help from their children and grandchildren are treated like weights on their offspring.

Posted by: tina | March 07, 2011 at 04:07 PM

The mainstream view on abortion for leading Republican politicians like former President Bush, McCain, and Romney is that they might prefer a constitutional amendment banning it, but they will not pursue it. Instead, they want to change the courts to be less activist and overturn Roe vs. Wade. Since there is clearly no reference to abortion in the Constitution, favoring Roe vs. Wade means seeing the abortion issue as more important than the Constitution and rule of law. Overturning Roe vs. Wade would make abortion an issue at the state level, and some states already have state constitutional protections for abortion. It is hypocritical for liberals to want to force their social views on conservative states but not care about abortion in Africa and Latin America, and, indeed, to want to import large numbers of anti-abortion Hispanics. Someday America will have a pro-life Democratic one-party government.

Also, I disagree that only Christians would oppose abortion rights. Christopher Hitchens is as atheist as they come, and he opposes abortion. A Mormon once told me that children who die before the age of 4 automatically go to heaven. I joked that a good Mormon should sacrifice their own soul to have as many abortions as possible. On the other hand, an atheist should see life as precious because the meaning of death is more strange and less comforting. Then again, spontaneous abortions (miscarriages) are more likely in chromosomal abnormalities, so abortion is natural and can be eugenic. I just think that an advanced society should effectively minimize abortion by preventing pregnancy, which can be easily done in increasingly diverse and convenient ways.

Posted by: <u>nooffensebut</u> | <u>March 07, 2011 at 05:42 PM</u> @Patrick:

"Liberals and many libertarians support abortion rights in the vein of *individual* rights, not some gender-based "equalization" scheme that you're claiming."

That's half-true. There are definitely arguments for legal abortion along the line of individual rights, but it's a sign of obliviousness to political realities to claim that feminists, for instance, don't advocate for legal abortion because of the rights it confers upon women.

While they don't think according to the caricature that Half Sigma presents, the status of women in particular is not absent from the thinking of the pro-choice side of the debate.

@tina

"No country [that has prized democracy and individual liberty] can survive if its moral code allows that to be acceptable behavior. A healthy democratic society has to value life and has to believe that some actions and some people are worthy of being shamed, shamed, shamed."

I really don't see any evidence whatsoever for this position. Indeed, as Patrick pointed out above, many of the arguments for legal abortion hinge on individual liberty. If you have a good explanation for why a rigid, doctrinal attitude toward the handling of life is fundamental to the survival of liberal democracy, I'd be open to hearing it, but so far, all I've seen is a series of a priori assertions.

Posted by: The Reluctant Apsotate | March 07, 2011 at 07:54 PM

Abortion is a form of "anti-dysgenics," to use a term from Chris Lagan. Hilarious.

http://suckfist.blogspot.com/2010/12/why-im-pro-choice-mostly.html

Posted by: Syncretism | March 07, 2011 at 09:44 PM

Just an anecdotal observation, unsupported by statistics, but I worked at a health department for a couple of years, interviewing newly pregnant women for medicaid. They younger and more immature the girl was, like a teenager, the most likely she was to keep the baby. The only women who planned to get abortions were working women who realized the responsibility and just didn't want it.

I can't translate that into High/Low IQ's, but those most able to properly care for a baby were the ones who didn't want to. The teens who had no idea what they were getting into were excited about it and couldn't wait.

Posted by: lil mike | March 07, 2011 at 09:54 PM

We all know of bets between libertarians and malthusians. Trounce-city. Humans will not run out of fertilizer or oil. We're on the cusp of several giant tech-driven solutions right now.

http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=60528105

Posted by: Secret of NAM | March 07, 2011 at 09:55 PM

I still don't understand Sailer's logic that abortion didn't reduce black crime.

I think he's too focused on percentages and not on absolute crimes committed by blacks (which is more important than the "crime rate" percentages because ultimately it is the number of crimes black commit that makes an area unlivable, not just the percent of blacks who commit crimes).

Let's get away from a statistical debate over percentages and look at the ABSOLUTE number of crimes black commit.

Does anyone who supports Sailer want to seriously argue that the ABSOLUTE number of black crimes would be far higher today had abortion never been legalized and there were at least 15 million more black Americans alive today?

If the absolute number of crimes would be higher then doesn't that mean the Freakonomics guys are right and Sailer is wrong, even if their numbers about the actual black crime rate percentages are a bit off?

Posted by: The Undiscovered Jew | March 07, 2011 at 11:05 PM

"Talk about dysgenic. Responsible = no kids

Maybe female over education is dysgenic."

Maybe so. I don't see any way to turn the clock back on this though, do you?

Having kids is very popular with the uneducated. Smart people with options are going to put it off because they've got other things to do.

Posted by: DJYella | March 07, 2011 at 11:57 PM

As JL points out, Sailer's arguments are not moralistic in nature. His argument is primarily statistical. If abortion-rights contributed to sexual behavior that resulted in more unwanted and irresponsible pregnancies than were occurring before they were granted, then it backfired. Sailer makes a solid statistical case that this is so. A more solid case than Sigma's speculation, at any rate.

Posted by: Trumwill | March 08, 2011 at 12:22 AM

"You neglected to mention that, as Steve explained, while live births may have declined by 6% post-Roe, pregnancies increased by 30%. It would appear that legalized abortion caused most of the problem it pretended to solve."

His numbers may be correct on paper but his logic is ludicrous.

If there were more than 15 million black Americans then the absolute number of crimes committed by blacks would be higher.

Sailer's argument over the percentage rate or whether the decline in black crime correlates with the increase in black abortion is just a pro-life statistical smoke and mirror show.

So, yes, (unless someone wants to argue that none of those 15 million aborted black people would have grown up to commit crimes...) abortion reduced the ABSOLUTE number of crimes committed by blacks because there are 15 million fewer blacks alive today.

Posted by: The Undiscovered Jew | March 08, 2011 at 12:28 AM

"Does anyone who supports Sailer want to seriously argue that the ABSOLUTE number of black crimes would be far higher today had abortion never been legalized and there were at least 15 million more black Americans alive today?"

There wouldn't be 15 million more blacks; the availability of abortion increased irresponsible sexual behaviors. Hence pregnancies increasing 30% while overall birth rates fell only 6%. *You* might never say "Oh, I wasn't planning on having [unprotected] sex, but since abortion is legal, I guess I will", but *you are not the marginal case*.

Furthermore, abortion has changed the sexual marketplace in the same way that contraception and the sexual revolution did. Women, even women who would never have abortions, have gotten sluttier just to keep up.

Finally, since this discussion is supposedly motivated by black crime: blacks have always been more criminal than whites. But back when American blacks were civilized, their crime rate was much much lower (especially the big category, violent crime against whites). Since the destruction of the black family, they've reverted back to jungle behavior. Instead of celebrating the number of black babies killed off by abortion, you should be more concerned about getting blacks to act civilized again.

Posted by: Rast | March 08, 2011 at 03:11 AM

"But back when American blacks were civilized, their crime rate was much much lower"

I kinda doubt it. More likely, they had less opportunity to commit crimes against whites since segregation and racism were much more accepted. At the same time, reporting of black on black crimes was probably pretty spotty.

Posted by: sabril | March 08, 2011 at 05:29 PM

"the availability of abortion increased irresponsible sexual behaviors."

Surely the increase in casual sex was greater among whites than among blacks.

Consider the issue in reverse: If abortion were banned tomorrow, white girls would be more likely than black girls to take the more prudent course of being cautious about sex.

Posted by: sabril | March 08, 2011 at 05:53 PM

"There wouldn't be 15 million more blacks; the availability of abortion increased irresponsible sexual behaviors. Hence pregnancies increasing 30% while overall birth rates fell only 6%."

Sailer is still ultimately wrong.

The availability of abortion - which didn't *help* to restrain black sexual irresponsibility - wasn't the ONLY reason black sexual morality imploded.

There were many other factors that would have raised the number of black pregnancies in the absence of legalized abortion. Affirmative action for black women, Great Society welfare payments to single mothers, contraception and improved treatments for STDs would all have guaranteed an increase in the number of black pregnancies in a hypothetical, abortion free America. But in this scenario black births (as opposed to pregnancies) would certainly have increased because abortion wouldn't have been available.

And if just a fraction of those the 15 million black embyros had been born then the ABSOLUTE number of black crimes would be higher

today than it actually is.

Additionally, black sexual mores were already in decline years before SCOTUS ruled on Roe. Senator Moynihan for one sounded the alarm about the collapse of the black nuclear families back in the 1960s.

Unless you want to argue the absence of abortion would have prevented ANY increase in the number of black pregnancies, then Sailer's argument is ultimately just a last gasp pro-life statistical light show to draw attention away from the statistic that matters most: The ABSOLUTE number of crimes committed by blacks.

The absolute number of crimes is more important than the crime rate percentages/rates because the absolute number of crimes is more important in determining a region's livability than the crime rate percentages are.

For example, if there were 100 black Americans living in Hong Kong who had a crime rate DOUBLE the black American crime rate in Newark, you would STILL be statistically more at risk of being attacked by blacks at night in Newark than you would in Hong Kong because the ABSOLUTE number of black crimes would much higher than Newark than Hong Kong even the black Americans in Hong Kong would have a higher rate.

Posted by: The Undiscovered Jew | March 08, 2011 at 08:20 PM TUJ,

Did legalized abortion lower black fertility? If you say yes, where's the evidence?

I've read claims that abortion just replaced other means of contraception and that women just used the knowledge that abortion is available to become more impulsive. Have I been misinformed?

HS,

Even if you think that Steve was motivated by opposition to abortion that does not make his argument wrong.

Posted by: Randall Parker | March 08, 2011 at 09:28 PM

"Did legalized abortion lower black fertility? If you say yes, where's the evidence?"

The black fertility rate isn't too important in this discussion. The absolute number of blacks in their peak crime committing years is.

Fertility rate is not the same as the absolute number of births because TFR is calculated by comparing the absolute number of births relative to the number of women of child bearing age.

And even if legalized abortion didn't reduce the black total fertility rate, it's almost certain it reduced the absolute number of crimes committed by blacks because the ABSOLUTE number of black babies would be higher today sans abortion.

To illustrate, according to the CDC in 1990 there were \sim 2.65 million births to white non-Hispanic mothers in America and the overall white birth rate was 1.865.

By the mid 2000's, the ABSOLUTE number of white babies was down to the ~2.3 million range but the TFR was down to about 1.83 babies per white woman.

So while the ABSOLUTE number of white births decreased by 13% (because there were fewer white women of child bearing age) the white TFR only decreased by 1.88% or so over a decade later.

So, let's say that abortion had never been legalized and that there were 800,000 blacks born in 2006 (compared to the actual number of about 600,000) and blacks had a TFR of 1.8, compared to their actual TFR of 2.1 in 2006.

EVEN in this hypothetical scenario where the black TFR is LOWER in abortion free America, you would STILL have more black crime coming down the pipeline because there is a higher ABSOLUTE number of young blacks who will be growing up to commit crimes.

Posted by: The Undiscovered Jew | March 08, 2011 at 10:27 PM TUJ,

Your response is full of contradictions.

To argue that abortion did not lower fertility while it did lower crime one would need to argue that the aborted babies were more

criminal than the babies brought to term. But if the presence of abortion increased the rate of new pregnancies then the new pregnancies would need to be for babies that were not aborted and were less criminally minded than the ones that were aborted. Where's the evidence to support that?

Your discussion of dropping fertility rates is all besides the point if the introduction of legalized abortion did not alter the rate of the decline in fertility.

Posted by: Randall Parker | March 09, 2011 at 12:23 AM

"The absolute number of crimes is more important than the crime rate percentages/rates because the absolute number of crimes is more important in determining a region's livability than the crime rate percentages are."

I disagree with this. What matters most is your chances of being a crime victim. If there are 1000 violent blacks in a town of 3000 people, it will be a much worse place to live than a city of 15,000,000 which has 5000 violent blacks.

So it seems to me the most important number for gauging the effect of legalized abortion is the resulting ratio of blacks to whites.

Common sense says that legalized abortion will have a bigger impact on the fertility of stupider people. Getting an abortion is like cashing your paycheck at a check cashing center, it's for people who can't get their \$(*& together. And indeed, the number of blacks who get abortions is very much disproportionate to their numbers in the general population just like their use of check cashing centers.

While it's possible that legalized abortion has had little or no effect on general fertility rates, that's not the critical question. The key question is the difference in how legalized abortion can be expected to affect black versus white fertility.

And the bottom line is that giving people an option which requires relatively less advanced thought and planning can be expected to have a disproportionate impact on blacks.

Posted by: sabril | March 09, 2011 at 04:26 AM

TUJ is right in every way.

Another issue with black crime is population density. Blacks in very close proximity to each other start to commit crimes at rates that are high even for them.

For instance, the Northeastern and Midwestern states imprison their black citizens at much higher rates than Southern states, despite all of the talk of "racism" in the justice system down South. This is because Southern blacks are distributed throughout metro areas, rather than clustered into "crime factories" like Cabrini Green or other high-density housing projects.

Posted by: Camlost | March 09, 2011 at 12:11 PM

And the bottom line is that giving people an option which requires relatively less advanced thought and planning can be expected to have a disproportionate impact on blacks.

Yes, well just to repeat from the Levitt paper I linked above:

"Levine et al. [1996] found that the drop in births associated with abortion legalization was not uniform across all groups. They estimated that the drop in births was roughly twice as great for teenage and nonwhite mothers as it was for the nonteen, white population...

Fertility declines for black women are three times greater than for whites (12 percent compared with 4 percent). Given that homicide rates of black youths are roughly nine times higher than those of white youths, racial differences in the fertility effects of abortion are likely to translate into greater homicide reductions..."

Posted by: Kiwiguy | March 09, 2011 at 02:22 PM

Liberals support abortion because it is currently the only avenue they have for population control. Marxist-leaning Liberals are very big on the idea that humans are killing the planet. They are salivating for the day when they can FORCE abortions on US women, like they do in China.

Liberals use equality as the EXCUSE or the unassailable moral argument for their pro-abortion stance. It is how they overcome the conservative-based arguments in America. But, in reality, they care nothing for womens' rights in the US any more than they care for

human rights in general in any Marxist dominated countries.

What liberals WANT is enforced population control. And it will come, now that we have Obamacare in progress. Mark my words. It will come. Either overtly, or covertly.

Posted by: Jonathan | March 30, 2011 at 06:48 AM

The comments to this entry are closed.