

Another thing about Jennifer Graham's weird piece on millennials

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

November 12, 2013

When it comes to weirdly argued crankiness, tsk-tsk-ing about lazy, entitled millennials is a pretty competitive field. But [Jennifer Graham's piece last week](#) stands out from the pack:

In colonial times, nine out of 10 people worked on food production, hence John Smith's famous edict at Jamestown: "He who works not, eats not." (There was no enabling 99-cent value menu then.) The millennials, alas, are trophy kids, a generation spawned not for their usefulness at harvest but because they look so precious in those matching pajamas from Hanna Andersson.

No need to respond to most of this, because in the millennial retort category—another tough bracket—we already have a winner. From Derek Thompson's post "[How to Write the Worst Possible Column About Millennials](#)":

Millennials can't hoe their own grain, or fix a proper meat pudding, and God help them around a common stew pot. These are real and urgent shortcomings, and they deserve greater attention in future columns.

Third, and this is really key, pretend that every member of this 85-million-person generation grew up in a fabricated life-size playhouse on the set of *Hannah Montana*. "Matching pajamas from Hanna Andersson" was a nice start, but you can go so much deeper. "Four-car garages, master suites, and cathedral ceilings"—that is a good description of everybody's house now. Blame today's high youth unemployment on "their parents' success" and suggest they're not actually *trying* to find work because "they're already livin' the dream." ....

In sum, there is only one type of young person, her parents are super-rich, and they reside in a great big house with expensive PJs and an awesome couch to live on forever.

My borderline millennial wife is actually pretty good with both the grain hoeing and the common stew potting, but whatever: [read Thompson's whole post](#). It's great

fun. The only unsatisfying thing is that he doesn't take a swing at the weirdest part of Graham's piece: the end. First she retells the story

about the old fisherman who encounters a Harvard MBA who asks why he doesn't work hard to expand his business. Then, the businessman promises, after 20 or 30 years of hard labor, he can go public, reap millions and then sleep late, fish a little, take a nap, enjoy his family.

The fisherman smiles and says — ba da boom — “Isn't that what I'm doing right now?”

So, too, our millennials.

Except that it's the Harvard guy, not the fisherman, who looks foolish in the story. Yes, sloth is a real problem for some people, but does anyone really want to argue that it's a deadlier temptation at our cultural moment than the pride of status and success or the greed of endlessly upward mobility? The details on the old fisherman are thin, but assuming he actually keeps a roof over his and any dependents' heads and contributes to his community, his is actually a voice of much-needed wisdom.

It gets worse. Graham concludes by citing and debunking a friendlier line on the young folks:

In his new book, “Dilbert” creator Scott Adams credits his millennial assistant, adding, “If any of you are worried about the next generation, don't be. They make us look like chimps.” Chumps, too, if parents keep gathering their bananas when we'd rather be swinging from the trees.

Um, what? Adams is wrong because "chimps" sounds like "chumps" and another thing about chimps is that they swing from trees? Maybe Graham needs a young assistant to punch up her writing, add a zinger or two that actually makes sense. That is, if she can find one—I hear the 20-somethings aren't that interested in getting jobs.