

# ***PERSONALLY SPEAKING***

***Special Issue***

***August 15, 2013***

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## **MARRIED-COUPLE FAMILIES ESSENTIAL TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY**

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*Permission to quote is granted when the source is acknowledged.*

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Nearly 50 years ago Daniel Patrick Moynihan called attention to a problem among African-Americans regarding children born to single mothers. Moynihan reported that unmarried women at that time accounted for 24 percent of all African-American births and asserted that the African-American family was disintegrating in America's urban ghettos. He was severely attacked and scorned for misrepresenting the African-American matriarchal family and its fundamental strengths.

In his report Moynihan contrasted the 24 percent of babies born to unmarried African-American women to the 3 percent born to unmarried white women. Today unmarried mothers account for 72 percent of all African-American babies born and 36 percent of all white babies. While the Census Bureau's detailed annual report on U.S. income, poverty, and health insurance does not publish the poverty rate for families by marital status and race, it does tell us that for all married-couple families the poverty rate in 2011 was 6.2 percent. For all other families, it was 27.1 percent. Data for 2012 should be released shortly.

Median household income for all married-couple families in 2011 was \$74,130. For all other family households with no spouse present, median household income was much lower. For male-headed households with no wife present, median income was \$49,567. For female-headed households with no husband present the median was \$33,637. These data are not available for married-couple families by race.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics also falls short when it comes to reporting the employment and unemployment status of persons who are married spouse present (MSP) compared to all other persons. To illustrate, the BLS monthly report on the household survey does not reveal that there were 78.5 million persons MSP employed in July 2013 and that since July 2001 their numbers have increased by only 311,000. Among all other persons, there were 65.8 million employed in July but their numbers mushroomed by 6.9 million since July 2001. We are not aware of any comment that the BLS has made on this significant socio-economic development.

The data on MSP employment, along with other data on their unemployment status and civilian labor force status, are retrieved only from the BLS website with software that inexplicably provides only partial access to the household survey database. The same data for all other persons is arrived at by removing the MSP numbers from the data for all persons. The BLS website supplies no

information on the civilian noninstitutional population; consequently there is no way to arrive at labor force participation rates for all MSP persons and everyone else.

The monthly household survey directly supplies information on the jobless rate for MSP; the rate for all other persons is arrived at by subtraction from the data for all persons. In July 2013, the rate for MSP was reported at 4.4 percent. Throughout the entire Great Recession, the MSP rate never climbed above 6.6 percent. For all other persons, however, the July rate was 10.7 percent which is higher than the jobless rate for all persons, married or not, that during the Great Recession peaked at 10 percent.

Notice how much more is revealed about U.S. labor force dynamics by the July unemployment data on MSP and all other persons (4.4 percent vs. 10.7 percent) than by the widely publicized and apparently less troubling data on male and female joblessness (7.7 percent vs. 7.0 percent). We have already achieved the Federal Reserve's QE3 target of 6.5 percent for MSP but we have a very long way to go to achieve that target for the tens of millions of other persons.

The BLS published a report in April 2013 on the employment characteristics of families but it provides little to fill in the pieces missing in the monthly household survey. There is, however, one metric that is truly astonishing. **In 16 million American families -- 20 percent of all families -- no one was working in 2012. Among all African-American families 25 percent had no one holding down a job. At the same time, in 96 percent of all married-couple families with children under 18 years of age, the mother, father, or both were employed in 2012. In 33 percent of the families maintained by the mother with children under 18 and no husband present the mother was not employed. These data were not available by race.**

More than one million babies are legally aborted every year in the United States. African-American women account for approximately 37 of all legal abortions performed. A recent study published by the National Center for Health Statistics indicates that the cohort of women born in 1960, whose childbearing occurred largely after Roe v. Wade made abortion legal across the United States and who had completed their childbearing, had on average 2 births over their entire childbearing years. It follows that without immigration, the U.S. population will decline in the future, and with life expectancy increasing, there will be proportionately fewer working age adults to support a growing elderly population through Social Security retirement, Medicare, and Medicaid. Thus, the demographic logic behind the various mandates in Obamacare that in effect further compel the young to support the elderly.

We need more data more conveniently available. Ideally that data should be published in the BLS monthly household-survey report. Specifically, we need published data on the civilian noninstitutional population and the civilian labor force status for persons who are married spouse present and for all other persons by race. Further, we need a special report from the BLS on the huge differences over time between the employment total for MSP and for all other persons. In addition we need annual data on the work experience of family members by family type and race.

From the Census Bureau we need readily accessible information on the poverty rate and median household income for families by marital status and race.

**Years ago Moynihan alerted America to the profoundly important issues surrounding marriage, childbearing, family, and economic well-being. It is up to us to pay heed. The married-couple family with children is the foundation of a stable and prosperous nation. Without it America is unable to support its elderly and dependent population. There will not be enough wealth or caregivers to go around.**

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