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ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING THE POOR AND THE SYSTEMS THAT SERVE THE POOR

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Poverty 101

Research | Training | Policy | Practice



What is Ethnography?

“The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people’s views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews.” (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges, 2008)

Key Components of the Research Methodology: **participant observation, key informant interviewing, and fieldnotes.**

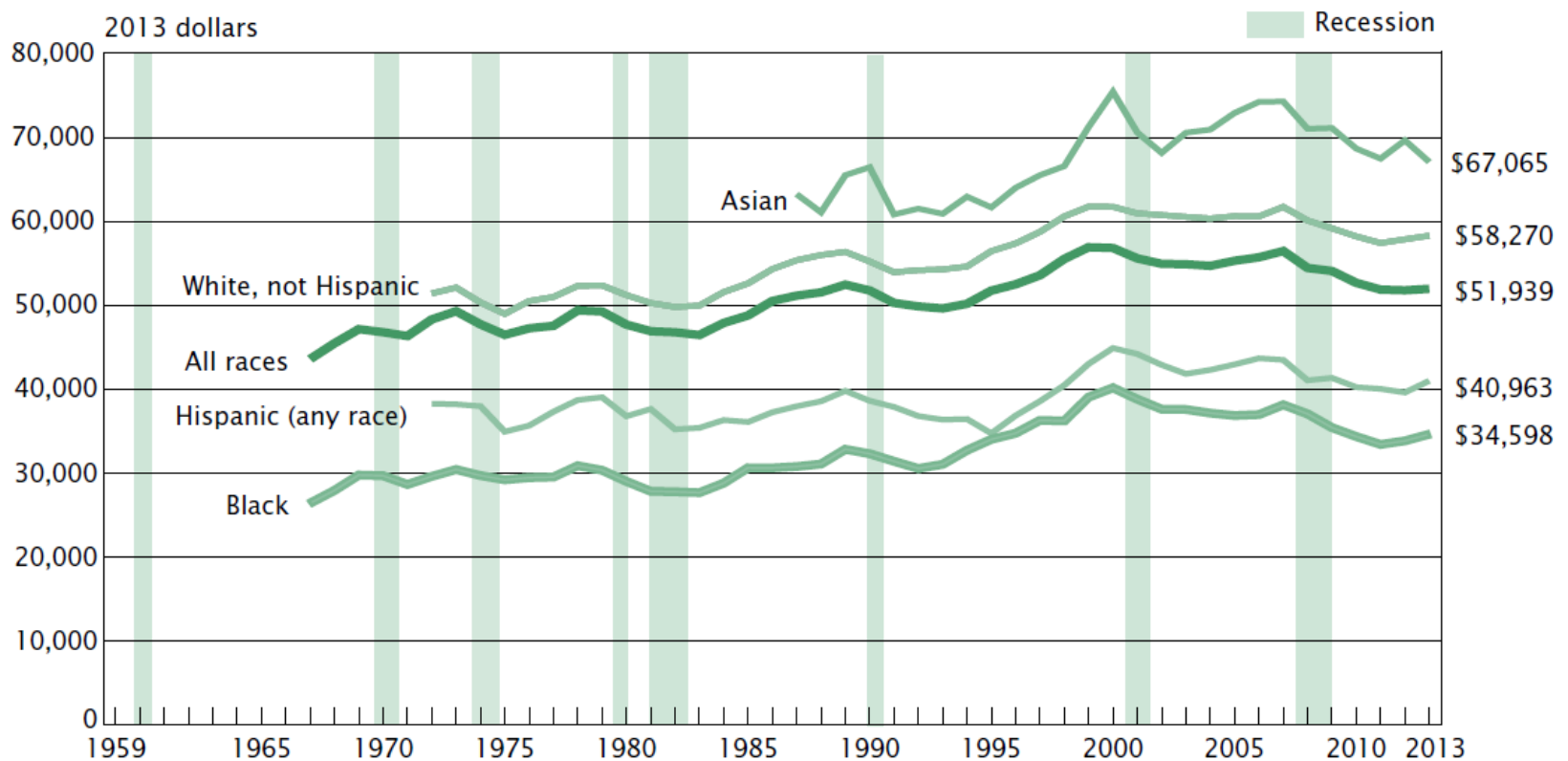
Phenomena

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Median Income

Figure 1.
Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2013



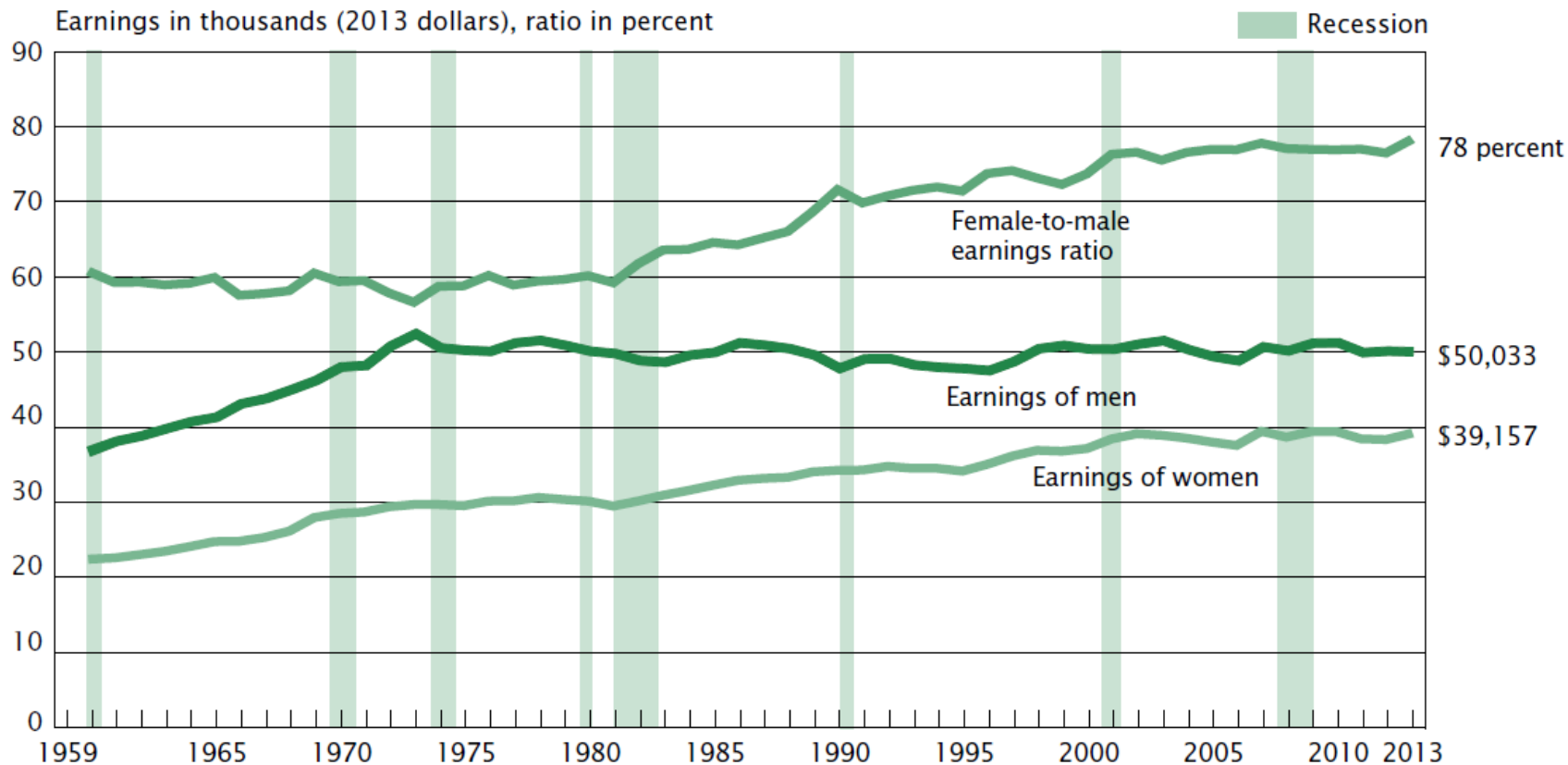
Note: Median household income data are not available prior to 1967. For more information on recessions, see Appendix A. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <ftp://ftp2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar14.pdf>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1968 to 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Wages

Figure 2.

Female-to-Male Earnings Ratio and Median Earnings of Full-Time, Year-Round Workers 15 Years and Older by Sex: 1960 to 2013



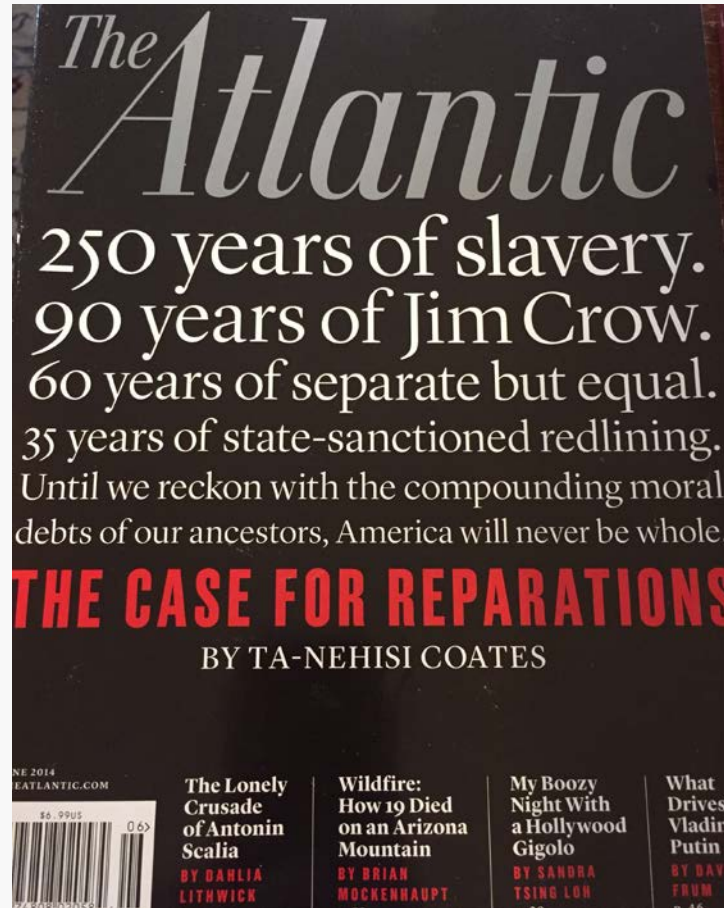
Note: Data on earnings of full-time, year-round workers are not readily available before 1960. For more information on recessions, see Appendix A. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <ftp://ftp2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar14.pdf>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1961 to 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

THEORETICAL PREMISE

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Conservative Views on Poverty

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BUSINESS

30 Million in Poverty Aren't as Poor as You Think, Says Heritage Foundation

The 30 million Americans living in poverty are not as poor as you'd think, the Heritage Foundation claims, because they have access to air conditioning, television, and a car.

DEREK THOMPSON | JUL 19, 2011

Many of the 30 million Americans living in poverty "are not poor in any ordinary sense of the term," the Heritage Foundation [claims](#), because they have access to air conditioning, television, and a car.





Arizona legislature votes to cut off welfare benefits after 12 months

At least 2,700 children to be hit by new restriction that will save \$4m-\$9m and make Arizona the least generous state for welfare families



The Opinion Pages | OP-ED COLUMNIST

Those Lazy Jobless

SEPT. 21, 2014



Paul Krugman

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Last week John Boehner, the speaker of the House, [explained](#) to an audience at the American Enterprise Institute what's holding back employment in America: laziness. People, he said, have "this idea" that "I really don't have to work. I don't really want to do this. I think I'd rather just sit around." Holy 47 percent, Batman!

It's hardly the first time a prominent conservative has said something along these lines. Ever since a financial crisis plunged us into recession it has been a nonstop refrain on the right that the unemployed aren't trying hard enough, that they are taking it easy thanks to generous unemployment benefits, which are constantly characterized as "paying people not to work." And the urge to blame the victims of a depressed economy has proved impervious to logic and evidence.

Paul LePage Wants to Ex-Cons Off Of Food Stamps, Drug Test Everybody



Republican Gov. Paul LePage wants to kick poor people off food stamps and welfare if they have drug-related felony convictions and also to expand a recently enacted drug testing program. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty) | ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Maine Gov. Paul LePage (R) wants to kick poor people off food stamps and welfare if they have drug-related felony convictions and also to expand a recently enacted drug testing program.

The 1996 welfare reform law banned drug felons from receiving food stamps or benefits from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The law let states waive the restriction, and Maine is among the majority of states that have either modified the ban or removed it altogether, [according to The Sentencing Project](#), a

Hearings and Poverty Policy

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HUMAN RESOURCES

SWITCH SUBCOMMITTEE: HUMAN RESOURCES -

Drug testing of welfare applicants yields few positives

Anita Wadhvani, awadhvani@tennessean.com 3:21 p.m. CST February 8, 2015

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(Photo: File/ Shelley Mays / The Tennessean)

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Six months after the rollout of a controversial law to drug-test people applying for public benefits, only a small fraction of low-income Tennesseans seeking financial assistance have tested positive for illegal drugs.

Thirty-seven of 16,017 applicants for the Families First cash assistance program between July and December tested positive for illegal substances, according to the Department of Human Services.

Another 81 lost their chance to receive benefits because they discontinued the

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The 67% of African Americans in Ferguson account for 93% of arrests made from 2012-2014.

The disproportionate number of arrests, tickets and use of force stemmed from “unlawful bias,” rather than black people committing more crime.

Arrest warrants are “almost exclusively” used as threats to push for payments.

The city’s practices are shaped by revenue rather than by public safety needs.

Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department



United States Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

March 4, 2015

Immigration and Social Security

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Thursday, March 28, 2013

Immigration: A Solution for Social Security Insolvency?

Madhulika Vulimiri

"As a result of globalization, labor markets are no longer defined by our borders." When Lisa Lynch of the Heller School of Social Policy and Management made this statement in the [opening keynote](#) of the National Academy of Social Insurance's 25th annual policy conference, [Medicare and Social Security in a Time of Budget Austerity](#), she was alluding to the increasing role that immigration plays both in our



The New York Times

U.S.

Skip Child Support. Go to Jail. Lose Job. Repeat.

By FRANCES ROBLES and SHAILA DEWAN APRIL 19, 2015



Jahmal Holmes is behind on payments. "They are threatening to suspend my driver's license — and I'm a truck driver," he said. Travis Dove for The New York Times



Georgetown University Summit on Poverty

The Poverty Preening of Professor Obama

The president once again suggests the moral inferiority of those who disagree with him.



The Washington Post

tions ≡ The Washington Post



A father's initiative

Paul Gayle had no job, no money, a new baby and 16 lessons from the Obama administration to teach him what to do next

Poverty and Inequality Knowledge

MISPERCEIVING INEQUALITY

Vladimir Gimpelson
Daniel Treisman

Working Paper 21174
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w21174>

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May 2015



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