



Classroom Supplement for One Recession, Disparate Recoveries: Assessing Change and Stability Following the Great Recession

Discussion Questions

Definitions of “working class” vary across research paradigms and projects. What does “working class” mean to you? How do you think people who consider themselves working class (this might be you), researchers, or even politicians might define it? How do income, occupation, and culture matter for these different definitions and do you think the way people define “working class” has changed over time?

Language around race and social class position has evolved through the 19th and 20th centuries and into the 2000s. How do terms such as racialized, minoritized, subaltern, Indigenous, etc. add nuance (or obfuscation) to the complex relationships between majority/minority populations in the United States? Which groups of people have expressed agency to advocating for different names or labels for themselves or others? Why might other groups be resistant to such changes?

Compared to a narrower focus on income or income + education as basic measures of poverty and prosperity, how do wealth-based measures “widen the aperture” of discourse and evaluation around inequality and race in the 21st century?

The United States has relatively large swaths of its geography mired in “deep disadvantage.” How does geography intersect with race and social class position to create conditions of deep disadvantage for some groups but less so for others? How does intergenerational wealth transfer (or lack thereof) affect the ability of households to decrease economic hardship over time?

IRP Resources

IRP *Fast Focus Poverty Brief*: “Making the U.S. safety net more responsive to economic downturns.” Robert A. Moffitt and James P. Ziliak. April 2021. <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/making-the-u-s-safety-net-more-responsive-to-economic-downturns/>

IRP *Focus on Poverty* article: “Modernizing the unemployment insurance system to better respond to economic downturns.” Till von Wachter. June 2021. <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/modernizing-the-unemployment-insurance-system-to-better-respond-to-economic-downturns/>

IRP webinar: “How have the working poor and working class fared since the Great Recession?” Erica Groshen, Timothy Smeeding, Fenaba Addo, William Darity, Jr., Jasmine Simington, and Jeff Smith. October 2021. <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/how-have-the-working-poor-and-working-class-fared-since-the-great-recession/>

IRP webinar: “Structural and cultural barriers to employment for the working class.” Victor Tan Chen and Brian Halpin. June 2018. <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/cultural-and-structural-barriers-to-employment-for-the-working-class/>

General Resources

Akee, R., Stockly, S.K., Darity, Jr., W., Hamilton, D., & Ong, P. (2016). The role of race, ethnicity and tribal enrolment on asset accumulation: An examination of American Indian tribal nations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 44(15). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1216141>

Dhongde, S. & Dong, X. (2022). Analyzing racial and ethnic differences in the USA through the lens of multidimensional poverty. *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*. January. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41996-021-00093-2>

Parolin, Z. & Lee, E.K. (2022). The role of poverty and racial discrimination in exacerbating the health consequences of COVID-19. *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas*, 7(100178). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2021.100178>

Smeeding, T., Romich, J. & Strain, M.R. (Eds.). (2021, May). What has happened to the American working class since the Great Recession? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 695(1). <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/anna/695/1>