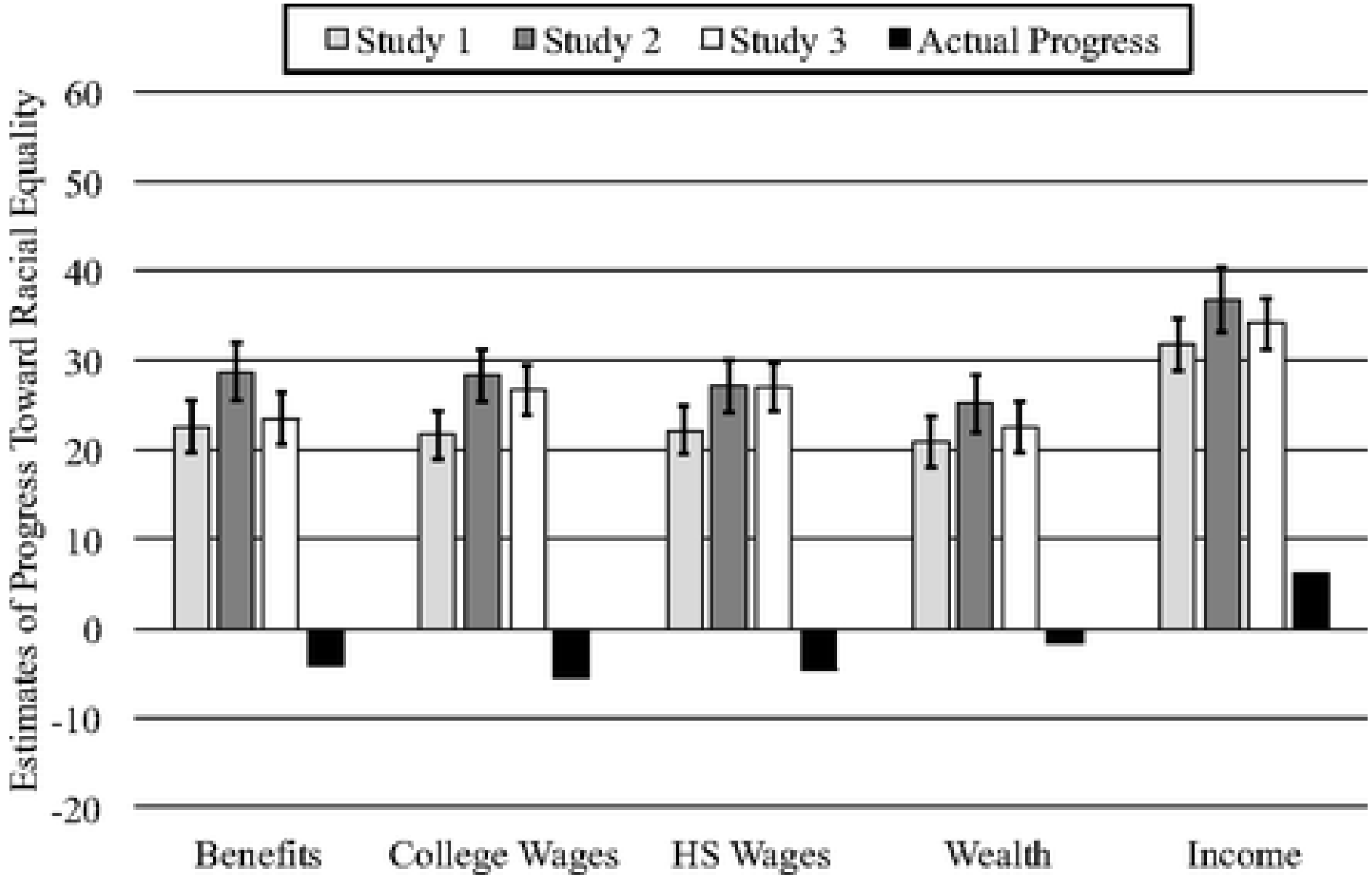
Notes: Research Methods Overview

Sociology and Common Sense

- True or False:
- **The gap in socioeconomic inequality between African Americans and White Americans has narrowed significantly in recent years.**
- Inequality has risen in terms of benefits, wages for people with college degrees, wages for people with high school diplomas, and wealth. Overall income has made progress. (Kraus, Rucker, and Richeson 2017)



http://www.pnas.org/content/114/39/10324

Sociology and Common Sense

- True or False:
- **Most bankruptcies in the US are due to medical issues.**
- 66.5 percent of all bankruptcies in the US were tied to medical issues —either because of high costs for care or time out of work. An estimated 530,000 families turn to bankruptcy each year because of medical issues and bills (Himmelstein, et al. 2019)
- https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304901

Sociology and Common Sense

- True or False:
- **On average, men have a higher tolerance for both pain and temperature extremes than women do.**
- On average, women tolerate pain, heat, and cold better than men do when physiological tests are performed. However, U.S. culture socializes men to be “tough” more than it does women–so women may often act sensitive (Bartley and Fillingim 2011)

Sociology and Common Sense

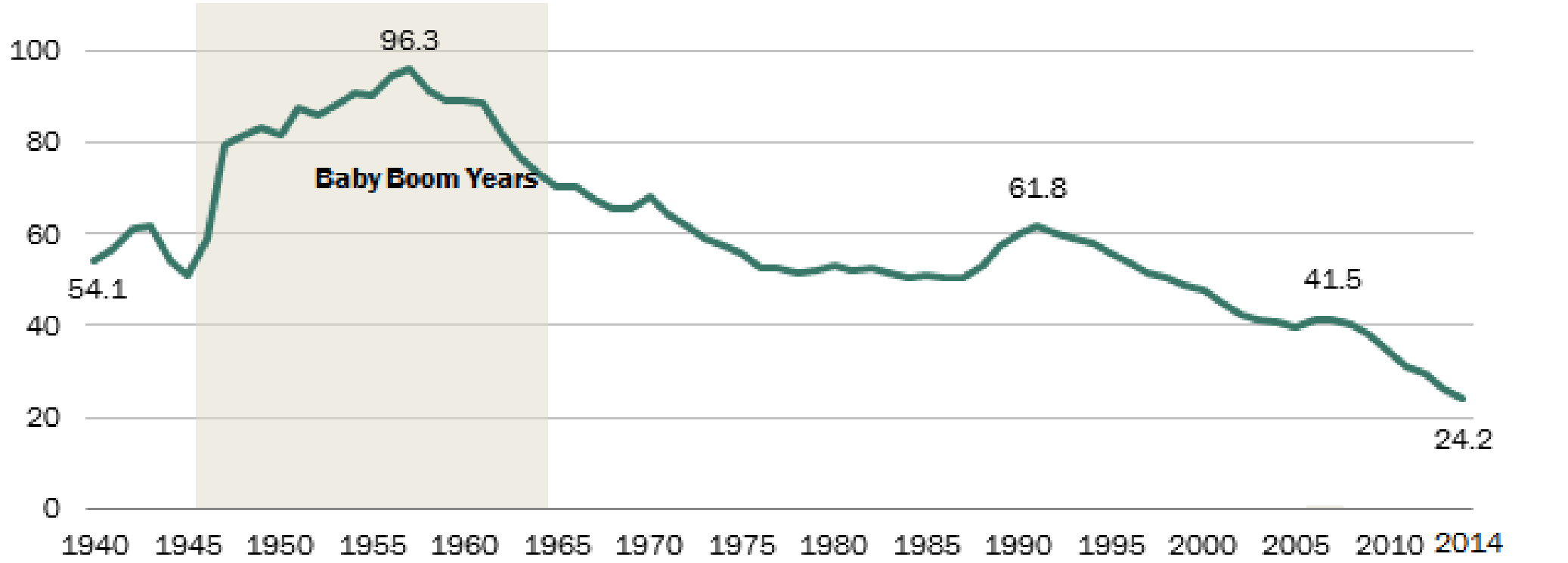
- True or False:
- **Most homeless people choose to be homeless.**
- Only ~ 6% of homeless people are that way by choice (Kendall 2000). 40+% of homeless adults are actually employed. (Population Review Bureau supplement). Over 1/4 of homeless women get that way fleeing domestic violence.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wCHtOTxQak

Sociology and Common Sense

- True or False:
- **Teenage pregnancies have increased dramatically since the 1950s.**
- Actually, they decreased over past half century; teens less likely to marry/start family. Percentage of teen pregnancies involving ***unmarried*** teens increased dramatically (but even that has been dropping since the early 1990s). (Kendall 1996)

U.S. teen birth rate has fallen dramatically over time

Births per 1,000 females ages 15-19, 1940-2014



Note: Data labels shown are for 1940, 1957, 1991, 2007 and 2014. Teens younger than 15 not included. These data only account for live births and do not include miscarriages, stillbirths or abortions.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics published data.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Unit 2: Research Methods

An Overview of Research Methods (cont'd)

- Most sociological research uses the ***scientific method***, which is the standard for acquiring and verifying empirical (scientific) knowledge.
- Why is the use of the scientific method so important?
  - What is the alternative?

Scientific Method

1. Question
2. Hypothesis
3. Experiment
4. Collect Data
5. Analyze Data
6. Conclusion

The Research Process

Define the Problem

- The researcher selects a topic for study and develops operational definitions of key concepts

The Research Process

Review the Literature

- The researcher reviews existing literature on the topic
- To determine how others have approached a research problem and what conclusions they have reached
- Prevents unnecessary duplication

The Research Process

Form a Hypothesis

- The researcher develops a testable hypothesis on the research topic
- Based on established theory
- Must have the possibility of failing

The Research Process

Choose a Research Design

- The researcher develops a plan for collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data
- Ethical Standards
- Surveys, experiments, observational studies, and analysis of existing sources
- Making sense of the data
  - Qualitative and Quantitative

The Research Process

Collect the Data

- The researcher gathers and carefully records data

The Research Process

Analyze the Data

- The researcher objectively analyzes the data to determine whether it supports the research hypothesis
- Reject or Fail to Reject the Hypothersis

The Research Process

Present Conclusions

- The researcher presents the research findings to other sociologists
- Peer Review

Correlation and Causation

- Correlation exists when a change in one variable is regularly associated with a change in another variable
  - Positive Correlation: higher rate of poverty, higher rate of obesity
  - Negative Correlation: Higher education, lower rate of poverty
- Correlation does not always mean causation
- When two variables are correlated but are unrelated it is known as a spurious correlation.