

# Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County: Some Facts and Thoughts for Discussion in Our Community

Draft Document Prepared for Review and Discussion

by

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Available online at:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeStructuralRacismInIthacaCityandTompkinsCounty2017.pdf>

One-page summary of main facts available at:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsCountyOnePageStructuralRacism.pdf>

The one-sheet summary is also available inside this document as Appendix II, pages 45 – 46

**See new companion essay on [What Is Structural Racism?](#) at:**

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeWhatIsStructuralRacism.pdf>

And new one-page overview in table format:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/SURJ/FrankeOnePageStructuralRacismasTable.pdf>

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“...more than four decades after the civil rights activism of the 1960s, and nearly one hundred and fifty years after the abolition of slavery, race remains the most important single variable determining opportunities and life chances in the United States.” (George Lipsitz. 2011. *How Racism Takes Place*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, page 15)

– Source: Professor Paula Ioanide, Associate Professor of Comparative Race and Ethnicity Studies at the Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, Ithaca College introducing her “Facts about the Ways Systemic Racism Persists in the Contemporary Era.”

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A single sheet summary of some of the main structural racism facts from this report can be accessed at:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsCountyOnePageStructuralRacism.pdf>

or

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/SURJ/FrankeOnePageStructuralRacismasTable.pdf>

This longer document is available online at:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeStructuralRacismInIthacaCityandTompkinsCounty2017.pdf>

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# Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County: Some Facts and Thoughts for Discussion in Our Community

## I. Introduction – What Is Structural Racism?

Virtually all people of good will in the United States recognize that racism continues to damage the lives of people of color and that it continues to poison our whole society in numerous ways. We recognize this despite the many decades of struggle to overcome racism and despite some meaningful gains in justice and dignity that resulted from the Civil Rights Movement. The recent wave of high-profile white vigilante and police killings of black people and other people of color has led in part to the creation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which has inspired the creation of a white ally sister national organization – SURJ – Showing Up for Racial Justice – in the past couple of years. SURJ currently has an active [local Ithaca Chapter](#) whose members seek ways for white people to effectively support the Black Lives Matter movement and the overall movement to overcome racism and white supremacy. One element of any strategy to overcome racism is to develop an understanding of structural racism – the most difficult form of racism to grasp and in some ways also the most significant in the sense that structural racism likely damages more lives in more ways than any other form that racism might take.

**Structural racism is a set of consequences within society that lead to racially unequal outcomes in people’s lives via the ordinary daily workings of society. These unequal outcomes are caused by the accumulated history of racist oppression from slavery through Jim Crow, as well as past and continuing discrimination in housing, health, jobs and other areas of life.**

**Structural racism** exists as an element of society, embedded in its structures or institutions. Structural racism – sometimes also called “institutional racism,” or “systemic racism” – can reside for an undetermined amount of time in a society. Structural racism is the most difficult form of racism to overcome because of at least three main factors:

I. Structural racism is the result of decades, even centuries of accumulated racist practices, beliefs and discrimination. Rooting it out therefore means undoing decades or centuries of damage. We shall see a well studied example of this in the case of household wealth in Section 4 below. The stark and significant differences in household wealth by race are the

There are many numbers and statistics in this report. Without these systematic data, we are dependent on impressions, opinions, or anecdotes. These can vary from person to person. Individual experiences can be valuable sources of information but for an overall adequate picture of structural racism numbers are needed.

## How Structural Racism Gets Started and then Institutionalized - An Example

In 1934 the government set up the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to promote homeownership throughout the nation. The FHA established "red lining," a policy that intentionally kept African American households from getting loans that were available to whites. It is estimated that from 1934 until the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (which officially banned redlining) only 2% of FHA loans went to African Americans. This simple historical fact explains much of the inequality in home ownership described in Section 5 of this report that is itself essential to understanding the vast differences in household wealth described in Section 4.2. (Source: Asante-Muhammed *et al* 2016, page 16). Another study (Sullivan *et al* 2015, pages 12 and 13) found that an equal home ownership would reduce the wealth gap between whites and blacks by 47% and for Latinos by 69%.

results of precisely those decades and centuries of racist beliefs and practices that we must now overcome and undo.

2. Structural racism can continue to damage lives simply as a by-product of the everyday workings of society. This means that structural racism can continue even without racists.

3. Just identifying structural racism requires study of our institutions and our social structure. Much of the means for identifying structural racism requires looking at statistical facts, attempting to understand how they came about, how they are connected and how they might be reversed or undone. For many whites, structural racism easily remains invisible since we whites do not ourselves normally come into contact with it unless we are involved in some way with black people's struggles. Therefore this report.

### 1.1 Purpose of this Report

**We attempt to provide Ithaca anti-racist activists and any other interested persons some of the basic information available on the internet**

**about structural racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County. In some cases, we present the parallel national or New York State data for comparison – do we see our community as more advanced or just like the larger society of which it is a part? This document is meant for discussion. Perhaps it will help guide activists towards meaningful actions to undo white supremacy and the structures of oppression it has created and maintained over time. Our intention is for the document to be placed on a website where it can easily be accessed and discussed. Changes, updates and improvements will hopefully result. We also anticipate further research to fill in areas where data from the internet are insufficient for understanding structural racism locally.**

**See new companion essay on [What Is Structural Racism?](https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeWhatIsStructuralRacism.pdf) at:**

**<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeWhatIsStructuralRacism.pdf>**

## **2. Methodological Issues**

### **2.1 Sources for Local Data:**

The main sources for the data and much of the analysis are listed at the end of this report in Section II. Additionally, some clickable sources are cited where appropriate, at the tables or narratives where particular information is presented. Much of the demographic data comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), a branch of the U.S. Census that estimates numbers and characteristics of people and households in between the once-in-10-years censuses. It is important to note that the various Census and ACS documents use various years and therefore numbers in the various tables in this report for each individual characteristic may differ slightly. Also, because Hispanics/Latinos can be of any race and because some tables include self-reported multiple races for individuals, numbers in some of the columns add to more than 100%. This results from the way the data are collected and reported by the Census and is not an error of our research. A brief description of the American Community Survey appears in Vink 2017, page 26.

Numerous secondary reports and documents – almost all of them available online – have also been used. References are placed where the specific information is cited, but the full citations appear only in the main bibliography in Section II.

### **2.2 Tompkins County and Ithaca City as Units for Comparison**

We chose to present data for both Ithaca City alone and for Tompkins County as a whole which includes the city as well as suburban and rural areas surrounding it. The racial makeup of Tompkins County is similar to the pattern in much of the U.S. outside of the South in that African Americans and some other minority groups are mostly found in the urban area whereas outside the urban area affluent whites predominate in some and low-income (rural poor) whites in others. A useful future project might be to develop a contrast between Ithaca City only and the non-city parts of the county, but this would take a lot of time and effort as the data are not available in this form directly in the ACS tables or anywhere else we could find.

Tompkins County covers 492 square miles in the Southern Tier section of Upstate New York. Geographically and administratively the county includes one city – Ithaca City – nine towns and six villages. One of the towns, Ithaca Town, surrounds Ithaca City as can be seen on Map 2.2. The Ithaca City School District covers much but not all of Tompkins County, including many areas outside the city and town of Ithaca. Map 7.1 shows the overlap and discrepancies.

The estimated total populations of the administrative units of Tompkins County, along with the percent whites are shown on Map 2.2 as follows:

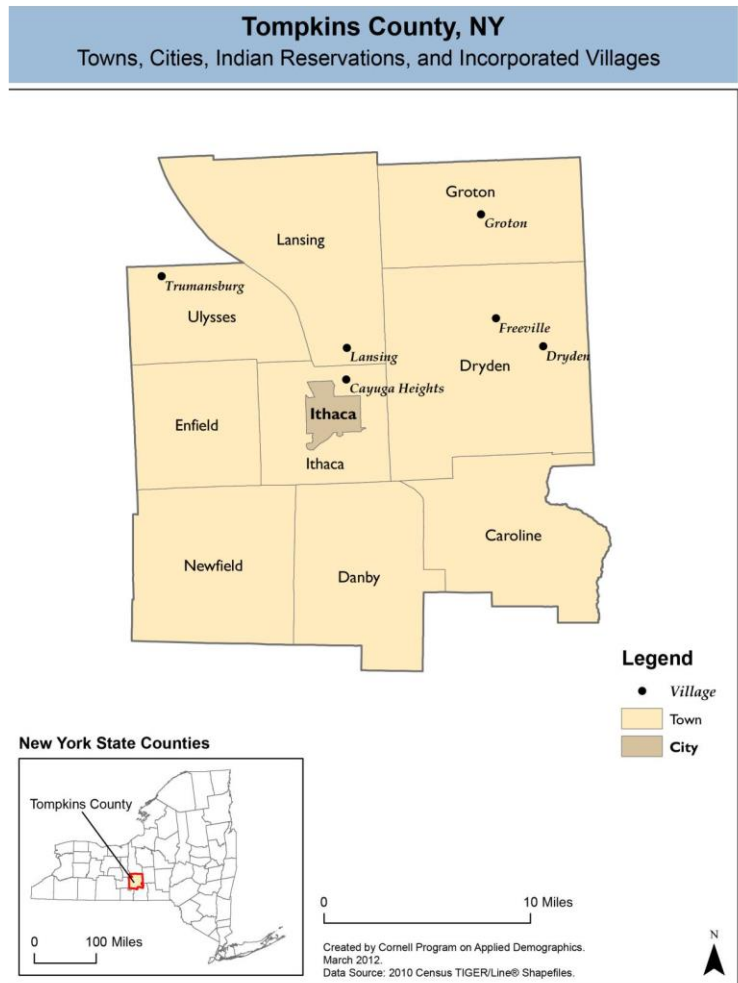
## Map 2.2

Populations and percent white population in 2010

	Pop.	Pct. White
<u>Ithaca City</u>	30,014	74.0%
<b>Towns</b>		
Town of Ithaca	19,930	84.1%
<u>Caroline</u>	3,282	92.8%
<u>Danby</u>	3,329	93.7%
<u>Dryden</u>	14,435	93.7%
<u>Enfield</u>	3,512	94.8%
<u>Groton</u>	5,950	97.4%
<u>Lansing</u>	11,033	84.1%
<u>Newfield</u>	5,179	96.1%
<u>Ulysses</u>	4,900	96.5%

Villages Populations in 2010

<u>Cayuga Heights</u>	3,729	85.7%
<u>Dryden</u>	1,890	96.2%
<u>Freeville</u>	520	97.0%
<u>Groton</u>	2,363	97.9%
<u>Lansing</u>	3,529	68.0%
<u>Trumansburg</u>	1,797	96.5%



Source for Map 2.2: Vink *et al* 2013, page 4; and Vink 2017, page 8; source for the list of units and populations: ACS and Wikipedia entries for the individual units.

As can be seen from Map 2.2 and the list of units, Ithaca City is surrounded by the Town of Ithaca, making up together close to 50% of the population of the county. The urban area of Ithaca City and Town is surrounded by a dispersed set of towns and villages, mostly with individual populations of around 3,000 to 5,000 inhabitants. Racially, we can see that even Ithaca City has an overwhelming white majority, but Ithaca City is the only location with any significant African-American population – 6.6% as shown on Table 3.1. This small black population is essentially surrounded by a sea of all-white or nearly all-white small towns, the only exception being Lansing

which has 5.1% black residents along with 22.5% Asians, making it an unusual neighbor demographically to Ithaca City and the Town of Ithaca.

The Tompkins County African-American population is more densely concentrated in Ithaca City than is the county's white population. Using ACS population estimates for 2011-2015, we find that 25.5% of the total Tompkins County population lives in the City of Ithaca, but for the black or African-American population, the figure is 52.4%. The parallel figure for Asians is 49.8% and for Hispanics it is 45.2%. Clearly, racial and ethnic diversity is mainly concentrated in Ithaca City.

Most of the Ithaca City African-American population resides in the Southside, West End and parts of the West Hill Neighborhoods (some of which are in the Town of Ithaca) mainly within Census Tract 10 where it constitutes 22% of the population (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 21).

How segregated is Ithaca? HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) measures racial and ethnic concentrations across a geographic area with an *Index of Dissimilarity* (I/D). For Ithaca, the I/D is rated as "moderate" between African Americans and Asians at 40.2%. This means that 40.2% of black people would have to move to another neighborhood to make blacks and Asians evenly distributed. The I/D for African Americans and whites is 28%, which HUD puts in the "low" range (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 23; also reported in Stein, 2015).

### **2.3 Decline of the Southside African-American Neighborhood?**

A low I/D does not necessarily capture all of the racial dynamics in Ithaca and Tompkins County housing. In recent years, the historic Southside black neighborhood in Ithaca has begun to fragment, owing to various processes that link directly or indirectly to structural racism -- connections we explain in Section 5. Apparently since the 1990s but especially from 2000 to 2010 various developments sparked a black (mini?) exodus in the area around the Southside Community Center on Plain Street, on Green Street and on Cleveland Avenue where at No. 116 stands the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, built in 1836 and where tradition has it that both Harriet Tubman and Fredrick Douglass visited (Dieckmann 1986, pages 152 – 155). This church has a plaque on the side lawn commemorating black civil war soldiers who fought on the union side.

The exodus can be quantified by the following numbers: between 2000 and 2010 the Ithaca black population actually declined by 3% while the black population of the Town of Ithaca increased by 41% (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 22).

This fragmentation of the neighborhood has been bemoaned by some residents who feel there is no longer a single, cohesive black community in Ithaca (Harmon 2014, page 162). We shall see in Section 5 that rising property values, rising rental costs and possibly "legal" discrimination by landlords may be combining to redistribute the African-American population of the City and the Town.



### 3. Basic Numbers and What They Tell Us

**Table 3.1**  
**(Estimated) Percents of the Main Racial and Ethnic**  
**Populations of Ithaca City, Tompkins County, New York State**  
**and the United States as of July 1, 2015 or 2010 or 2016**

Population Group	Ithaca City Percents for 2010	Tompkins County Percents for 2015	New York State Percents for 2015	United States Percents for 2016
<b>Total Population Number</b>	<b>30,788*</b>	<b>104,926</b>	<b>19,745,289**</b>	<b>323,127,513**</b>
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	66.7%	81.2%	56.0%	63.7%
Black or African American Alone	6.6%	4.3%	17.6%	13.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.4%	0.4%	1.0%	1.2%
Asian alone	16.2%	10.7%	8.8%	5.6%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	6.9%	4.9%	18.8%	17.6%
Other – includes two or more races	4.3%	2.4%	2.4%	2.6%

\*The Ithaca City population estimate is the ACS number for 2011-2015

\*\*The U.S. and New York State total population estimates are for July 1, 2016

Note: the total population data numbers are more recent than the racial/ethnic percents. The column headings in the table give the percents for 2011-2015 except for Ithaca City and the U.S. Totals.

Source: American Factfinder Community Facts: Ithaca City, Tompkins County and United States for 2010 and 2015 <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/3638077,00,36109>; Vink 2017, page 14 has the actual numbers along with these percents.

Source for the New York State data: <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/36>

Table 3.1 gives basic racial and ethnic population percents for Ithaca City and Tompkins County for the most recent year for which they are available. A few things stand out on this table:

- Ithaca City is 3 points “whiter” than the U.S. overall and 10.7 points whiter than NY State.

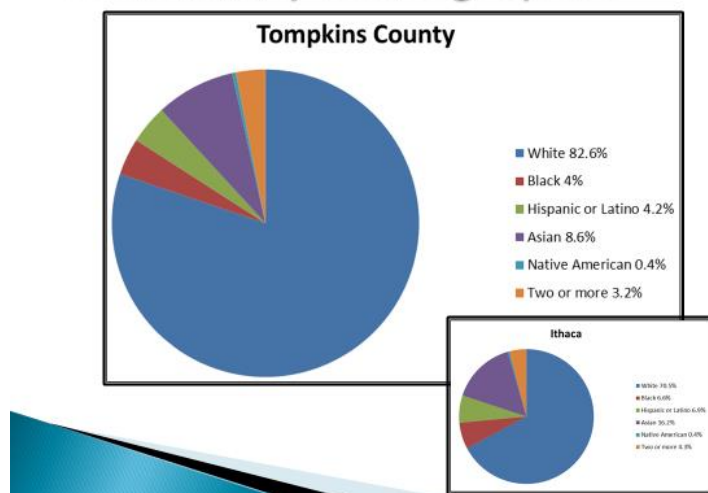
- Tompkins County is 14.5 points whiter than Ithaca City, 25.2 points whiter than NY State and is 17.5 points whiter than the U.S. overall.
- Correspondingly, the Black or African-American population is significantly lower as a percent than for the U.S. overall.
- In Ithaca City the Asian population is about three times the U.S. percent and the Tompkins County Asian population is 2½ times the African-American percent.
- The Latino population has recently equaled the African-American percentage in Ithaca City and has slightly surpassed it in Tompkins County as a whole. This population group is rapidly increasing in the Tompkins County area. The Latino population, however, in both Ithaca City and Tompkins County, remains well below the figure for the U.S. overall.

## IMPLICATIONS?

What conclusions, thoughts, or ideas for anti-racist activism emerge from Table 3.1 and the brief narrative here to the left?

What do the various percentages suggest about the voting power or other political power possibilities for people of color in Ithaca and/or Tompkins County?

### Community Demographics



Source for the pie chart: Tompkins County Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, 2012. Cornell Social Capital Consulting Group. [Social-Capital-in-Tompkins-County-2012-CIPA-](#)

[Presentation-1.pptx](#)

## 4. Income – Wealth – Unemployment – Poverty

The most commonly employed statistic to capture inequality is annual income. Most studies utilize median income rather than mean or average figures. The median is the value of which 50% of the households (or other units of measurement) are above and 50% are below. Using the median reduces the effects of extremely high or extremely low figures that might slant the overall picture. Other common indicators are wealth, unemployment, and percent of the population living below a government-created poverty line.

## 4.1 Income

**Table 4.1**  
**(Estimated) Median Annual Household Incomes of the Main Racial and Ethnic Populations of Ithaca City, Tompkins County and New York State for Various Most Recent Years**

Race or Ethnic Group as Used in the Census	Ithaca City 2011-2015	Tompkins County 2011-2015	New York State 2011-2015	Total United States 2014
All (Combined)	\$30,436	\$52,624	\$59,269	\$53,657
White alone	<b>\$42,122</b>	<b>\$58,284</b>	<b>\$68,221</b>	<b>\$60,256</b>
Black or African American Alone	<b>\$22,222</b>	<b>\$26,136</b>	<b>\$41,615</b>	<b>\$35,398</b>
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	\$12,292	\$33,264	\$36,913	\$37,408
Asian alone	\$35,236	\$24,722	\$63,018	\$74,297
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	\$18,934	\$31,069	\$40,284	\$42,491
Two or more races	\$30,324	\$31,343	\$50,751	\$48,648

Source: American Community Survey tables for, 2011-2015 (various tables, such as B19113B and B19013G)  
 Source for Tompkins County Combined data – <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/tompkins-county-puma-ny/>;  
 Source for Total U.S. (except American Indian and Two or More Races) DeNavas-Walt and Proctor. 2015.  
 Page 7. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/.../p60-252.pdf>

Table 4.1 shows that that African-American households had 53% of the income of their white counterparts in Ithaca City ( $\$22,222 \div \$42,122 \times 100$ ) and 49% as much in Tompkins County versus 61% as much in New York State and 59% as much for the U.S. overall. Asians did better

whereas American Indians did worse than African Americans. Hispanics had a mixed pattern locally. All the groups have substantially lower median incomes locally than for NY State.

#### 4.1.1. Changing Median Incomes by Race and Ethnic Group

The national data presented by the Census Bureau include comparisons with the previous year – 2013 in this case. One of the most dramatic findings has been the drop in white (not Hispanic) household income which was -1.7% between 2013 and 2014. This drop over several recent years has become the subject of much media attention concerning the parallel decline in life expectancy among less educated whites as well as the related spread of a deadly drug culture in this group nationally. With regard to this, it should be noted that the black household median income dropped 1.4% between 2013 and 2014 while the Asian – already highest group – increased by 1%. The surprisingly low Asian figure for Tompkins County -- \$24,722 – is likely a reflection of many of Ithaca and Tompkins County Asians being foreign students on fellowships. Most strikingly, at the national level the Hispanic household median income jumped 5.3 points during this period.

Parallel to the drop in white incomes has been an *increase* in the death rates for middle aged white men as widely reported in the press (e.g. Kolata 2015; Case and Deaton 2015). We should attempt to discover whether this is occurring locally in Tompkins County as it might have implications for understanding white racial attitudes. See Section 6 on health for more information about this.

#### 4.1.2 Some Local Data on Race and Wages

The American Community Survey includes data for Tompkins County in 2014 on...

- 919 white janitors and building cleaners with average annual wages of \$26,345
- 63 Black or African-American janitors and building cleaners with average of \$21,448
- 955 white secretaries making an average of \$35,364
- 14 African-American secretaries making an average of \$20,025

This comes out to a 23% advantage for the white janitors and 75% white advantage for secretaries. Factors other than race may play a role, but it is difficult not to suspect the discrepancy of being racially influenced. (Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/tompkins-county-ny/#wages>) [Scroll to third chart from top] It should also be noted that the various towns in Tompkins County display a wide range of median incomes – these towns are overwhelmingly white. The *Tompkins County Profile 2013* cites American Community Survey data for 2007-2011 indicating a high of \$65,490 for Lansing to a low of \$44,157 for Newfield (Vink et al 2013:26), a town 96% white (see Section 2.2 above).

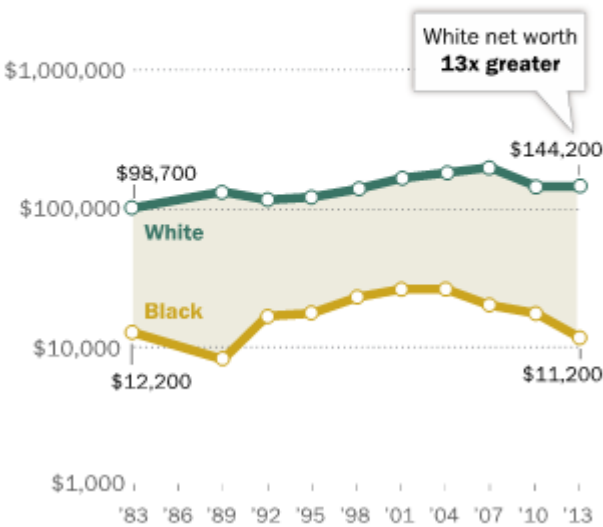
## 4.2 Wealth

One of the most striking elements of structural racism in the U.S. is the wealth gap. The total assets minus total debts equals the wealth of households. Income refers to regular payments such

as wages, alimony, child support or welfare. Wealth is assets – something one owns that has monetary value. The extreme gap where whites have up to 13 times the median net worth of African Americans is the result of decades of income, employment and educational differences growing out of slavery, the Jim Crow system, continuing discrimination, mass incarceration and is probably connected to other aspects of U.S. society in less direct ways.

**Whites have significantly higher levels of wealth than blacks**

*Median net worth of U.S. households in 2014 dollars*



One of the most significant consequences of the wealth gap – other than the quality of life gap that it causes – is that African-American households have way fewer resources to borrow against. This reduces their ability to take out a loan for a child wanting to go to college, makes it harder to purchase a home and makes the household more vulnerable to effects of unexpected illness or other threats – including unscrupulous home loan outfits. In the aftermath of the “great recession” of 2008 – 2010 wealth inequality by race actually increased, likely a result of this vulnerability of already low wealth households.

Source for this chart:  
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

It appears that the data on household wealth – while collected for racial and ethnic groups separately – are not broken down by geographical area. Thanks to Jan Vink of the Cornell Program on Applied Demographics for these two sources for the national data:  
<https://www.census.gov/people/wealth/>, and  
<https://www.census.gov/people/wealth/files/Wwealth%20distribution%202000%20to%202011.pdf>  
 for national level details on shifting patterns among different racial, ethnic and age groups.

In August of 2016 the Institute for Policy Studies and [CFED](#) (Corporation for Enterprise Development) came out with a report on “the growing wealth divide.” Looking at trends in wealth accumulation from 1983 to 2013, they found that white households increased their wealth over that 30-year period by 1.2 times that of the Latino population and by 3 times that of African Americans. The Great Recession of 2007-2010 saw average Black and Latino households losing 3 and 4 times as much wealth, respectively, as white households.

Projecting their findings to the year 2043 – when it is estimated that people of color will make up a majority of the U.S. population – they estimate that the wealth divide will have doubled from today. Even if white wealth were to remain at the current levels, for African Americans, at present rates it will require 228 years to reach wealth equality with whites, and for Latinos 84 years (Asante-Muhammed et al 2016, pages 5, 6 and 7).

One important form of wealth is the accumulated retirement benefits of a household or individual. According to an Institute for Policy Studies Inequality Report for 25 January, 2017,

“Right now, more than half of all Black families in the United States today have no retirement wealth at all, meaning they will likely be entirely dependent on Social Security, which currently pays an average benefit of just \$1,239 per month” (Bayard and Pitt).

#### **4.2.1 Blocking Black Wealth Creation – Redlining, Illness and Incarceration**

Why is African-American household wealth so far below that of whites? In Section 1, on page 5 in the sidebar we gave part of the answer: for decades Federal housing loans helped white families buy homes that then increased in value providing wealth that could be passed on to future generations. For African Americans these loans were almost impossible to get because of government and bank “redlining,” marking racial neighborhood boundaries on maps with a red pen to cancel out areas for black families to get loans.

Recent research indicates that at least two other structural factors are at work. A recent study has found that major disease events such as a heart attack or other major disease can lead to a devastating loss of family wealth. This phenomenon now even has a name: “asset cost of poor health” (Thompson and Conley 2016, page 154). The authors of the most recent study found that in households where a man suffered an “acute health shock” the white-black wealth difference nearly doubled (Thompson and Conley 2016, page 161). And because African Americans suffer generally poor health compared to whites, they are more at risk for such an acute health shock. Table 6.1 later on gives the evidence for Tompkins County of striking racial disparities for many major diseases.

Another powerful force holding down black household wealth creation has been the mass incarceration of the past 30-40 years. We describe a few aspects of mass incarceration based on national level data in Section 8 of this report.

A synergy here is that incarceration may contribute to poor health. Incarceration is associated with increased disease vulnerability, with stress, risk of infectious disease and the creation of long-term health problems. (Sykes and Moroto 2016, page 13 | citing several studies). Here we have one structural feature of racism compounding another structural feature – leading to a sort of Demon Trio (when added to the history of redlining) to stifle the best efforts of black families to build up wealth like their white counterparts.

#### **4.2.2 Demystifying the Racial Wealth Gap**

At the beginning of 2017 the public policy organization Demos along with researchers from the Brandeis University Heller School for Social Policy Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) issued a report entitled [\*The Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap\*](#) (Traub et

al 2017). Their analysis, using widely accepted data from the Survey of Consumer Finances, showed that:

- Attending college does not close the racial wealth gap;
  - People of color have to borrow more for college; white students are far more likely to receive gifts or other financial assistance;
  - This is not a critique of college education, which does benefit minority students as compared to minority members who do not attend college;
- Raising children in a two-parent household does not close the racial wealth gap
  - Research shows that family structure does not drive racial inequality;
- Working full time does not close the racial wealth gap
  - People of color generally earn less even if they work full time; and
- Spending less (and presumably saving more) does not close the racial wealth gap
  - Black households actually spend less than their white counterparts but still are not able to accumulate wealth fast enough to close the gap.

These four phenomena in the bullets are common popular explanations whose failure to explain the wealth gap leads to the only reasonable conclusion:

Racial inequality in wealth is rooted in historic discrimination and perpetuated by policy: our analyses show that individual behavior is not the driving force behind racial wealth disparities (Traub *et al* 2017, page 13).

The title of their report is significant. In the United States whiteness itself is an asset in generating wealth. In other words, the racial wealth gap is a feature of structural racism in the United States. In Section 8 we consider some of the connections that researchers have established among mass incarceration, childhood health and academic achievement.

### 4.3 Poverty

**Table 4.2: (Estimated) Percent Living Below the Poverty Line for Ithaca City as of 2010 – 2015, for Tompkins County as of 2007-2011\* or 2016 and for NY and the U.S. in 2016**

Race or Ethnic Group as Used in the Census	2011 – 2016 Households Qualifying for SNAP		Official Poverty Rates		
	Ithaca City	Tompkins County	Tompkins County 2016 Poverty Rate	New York State Poverty Rate 2016**	United States September, 2016
<b>All (Combined)</b>	10.2%	9.5%	20.4%	15.6%	13.5%
<b>White alone not Hispanic</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	<b>32.6%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	38.3%	28.3%	41.9%*	27.3%	28.3%
<b>Asian alone</b>	0.3%	1.5%	46.0%*	18.1%	11.4%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	19.0%	13.3%	34.9%	25.9%	21.4%
<b>Other – includes two or more races</b>	15.6%	9.2%	26.6%	21.5%	20.3%

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Notes and Sources for this table are extensive and continue onto the next page and until the next horizontal line. [SNAP data were updated on 31 January 2018.](#)



\*Data in these two cells are for 2007-2011 as presented in Vink *et al* 2013, page 27, Table 11.1. Actual numbers with slightly different data appear in Vink 2017, page 24, Chart 12.2.

\*\*Note: the U.S. national poverty rate for 2016 is given in the New York State Community Action Association report as 15.6%. The poverty guideline for the U.S. in 2016 for a single person household was \$11,800 and for a family of four persons it was \$24,300. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/computations-2016-poverty-guidelines>. Also: <http://federalsafetynet.com/us-poverty-threshold.html>

SNAP data for Ithaca City computed from ACS 2011-2015 data in Table S2201:

[https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/15\\_5YR/S2201/312M200US270603638077](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/15_5YR/S2201/312M200US270603638077)

[https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/16\\_5YR/S2201/312M300US270603638077](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/16_5YR/S2201/312M300US270603638077)

For SNAP, a number of procedures are used to determine eligibility, but basically a household of 4 with monthly income below \$2,025 qualifies for up to \$649 per month worth of food stamps.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility>

Sources:

For New York State and Tompkins County, 2016: New York State Community Action Association. 2016.

For U.S. overall in September, 2016: <http://federalsafetynet.com/us-poverty-statistics.html>

For considerations of the impact of students on exaggerating the poverty rate in both Ithaca City and Tompkins County: <https://ithacavoices.com/2016/04/tompkins-20-percent-poverty-rate-actually-means/>

See also the discussion in the main text regarding food stamps as an indicator.

More information on the statistical effects of off-campus students can be found in Update #5, on p. 48 of this report.

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One indirect measure of wealth is poverty. Table 4.2 shows that white poverty rates are well below those for all groups within the general rubric of “people of color,” except for Asians. All the rates for Tompkins County are significantly above the rates for New York State overall. This big discrepancy is sometimes attributed to the effect of the large student population at two of the three local colleges: Cornell and Ithaca College. Tompkins County Community College might not be having much effect since those students probably live in households within the county anyway. However, even if we take a most conservative view and use the New York State data as likely to be about correct for the non-student population, we can see that the New York State rate for African Americans is twice that of the white population (23.5% vs. 11.3%). The NYSCAA report notes that for adults over 25 years of age in Tompkins County the estimated poverty rate is 10.8%.

In order to get a more realistic picture in Ithaca City, we chose NOT to use reported poverty rates, which appear way too high, but instead to use the American Community Survey data on numbers and percents of households qualifying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) known to many as “food stamps.” SNAP’s eligibility requirements are similar to the poverty cutoff – some of the criteria and a link to the complete details are in the notes above to Table 4.3.

No matter how we organize the data, the advantage of being white is impossible to miss. Looking at the data rows for White alone and for Black or African American, we see that for New York State overall African Americans are 108% more represented in below poverty households

(23.5/11.3 - 1 x 100). For Tompkins County the official ratio comes out to 213% higher African-American representation and for the SNAP indicator for Ithaca city the figure is 191%.

### 4.3.1 Powerful Synergies for Poverty

Other data indicate that race and ethnicity interact with education, employment status and recent work experience to reinforce the powerful connections between race and poverty. Vink’s study using 2007-2011 American Community Survey data (2013, page 27) shows that those 25 years or older with a bachelor’s degree or higher in Tompkins County – 49.8% of the county population were in that age group (Vink *et al* 2013, page 19, Table 7.4) – had a 12-13% poverty rate while those with less than a high school degree (7.4% of the population in that age group) were at 22.6%. Among employed persons 16 years of age or older, the poverty rate was 12% while for the unemployed it was 27.5%. Strikingly, for members of the population 16 years and older who worked full time, year-around in the previous 12 months, the poverty rate was only 2.4% while for those who did not work it was 31% and for those who worked part-time or part-year, it was 33.5%.

## 4.4 Unemployment

For decades the African-American unemployment rate nationally has hovered at about twice that of whites and Asians and somewhat higher than Hispanics. The high unemployment rate helps to explain the high poverty percentages while helping to suppress the accumulated household wealth described for national level data in Section 4.2.

Source for the graph: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

See also Asante-Muhammed *et al* 2016, page 8.

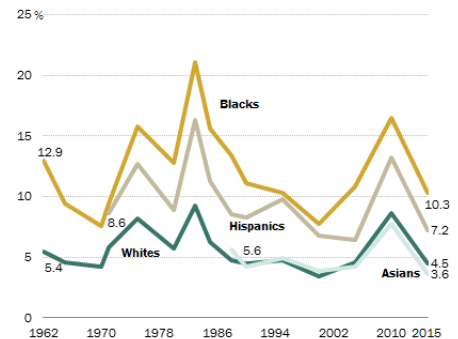
Table 4.3 (next page) gives estimated unemployment data for Ithaca City, Tompkins County and New York State spread across the most recent American Community Survey data period: 2011 to 2015. This period includes effects of the Great Recession and general unemployment rates have been coming down recently. We see that the NY rate is higher than the Ithaca and Tompkins County rates overall. But African-American unemployment has fluctuated at 2 to 3 times that of whites.

For New York State in 2016 the unemployment rate was 4.7%:  
<https://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/prlaus.shtm>.

The overall U.S. unemployment rate in November, 2016 was 4.4%. In November, 2016 the unemployment rate in Tompkins County was 3.4%, the lowest of any county in New York State.  
[http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/PressReleases/county\\_rates.pdf](http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/PressReleases/county_rates.pdf)

**The black unemployment rate today is double that of whites**

% ages 16 and older who are currently unemployed



**Table 4.3: (Estimated) Unemployment Rates for Persons over 16 Years of Age for Ithaca City, Tompkins County and New York State over the Period 2011-2015 and for New York State in December, 2016**

Race or Ethnic Group as Used in the Census	Ithaca City 2011 – 2015	Tompkins County 2011 – 2015	New York State 2011 – 2015	NY State December 2016
<b>All (Combined)</b>	7.8%	5.9%	8.2%	4.7%
<b>White alone</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	--	--	13.7%	--
<b>Asian alone</b>	0.9%	2.1%	6.8%	3.8%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	8.3%	8.8%	10.6%	6.5%

Source: American Community Survey data for 2011-2015 also appears in Vink 2017, page 19, Table 10.1 For older data, Vink *et al* 2013, page 20, Table 9.1. For December 2016 U.S. numbers: Jones, 2017.

We see that the most recent African-American unemployment rate for New York State overall is 1.62 times that of whites ( $6.8 \div 4.2$ ), a little lower than the 2x approximate average over the years. This suggests that African-Americans benefit when unemployment overall goes down but the earlier data show an expansion of the gap when unemployment goes up. For the period 2011 to 2015, the African-American rate was 2.8 times that of whites ( $23.3 \div 8.2$ ). The interplay of economic downturns and exceptionally high African-American unemployment is a feature of structural racism that seems to “just occur.” For more details, see Janelle Jones, 2017a and Kitroeff and Casselman 2018 – [Check the update list at the end of this document.](#)

#### **4.5 Transportation and Unemployment**

In sections 2.3 and section 5 we noted the apparent ongoing fragmentation of the historic African-American neighborhood next to and around the Southside Community Center. With African Americans generally having lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment compared

with whites, some of the dispersal of African Americans could be generating or reinforcing problems getting jobs. A recent non-random survey found that 65 of 91 respondents reported needing a car of their own to have access to an adequate range of jobs (Beers 2016:3) while getting to health care and to buy groceries came in second and third place. The report also notes the synergy between the two: getting a job requires having a car – or adequate alternative transportation – while getting a car requires having a decent paying job. Meanwhile a 2014 study by the Ithaca-Tompkins-County Transportation Policy Committee (Chapter 2, page 43) indicates that 33% of Ithaca’s minority community drives alone to work compared with 61% of whites. Only 6% of whites use public transit compared with 16% of minority commuters. Ability to drive alone also corresponded closely with household income (page 43).

## 5. Housing

**Table 5.1: (Estimated) Home Ownership Percents for Ithaca City, Tompkins County, New York State and the U. S. over the Period 2011-2015**

Race or Ethnic Group as Used in the Census	Ithaca City	Tompkins County	New York State	United States
<b>Total Number of Housing Units</b>	9,477	38,460	7,262,279	116,926,305
<b>All (Combined)</b>	26.4%	55.5%	53.6%	63.9%
<b>White alone – not Hispanic</b>	<b>36.6%</b>	<b>63.2%</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>30.9%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	38.3%	53.3%	40.4%	53.8*
<b>Asian alone</b>	1.5%	14.2%	45.9%	57.9%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	5.8%	24.9%	24.1%	45%
<b>Other – includes two or more races</b>	32.6%	41.2%	35.5%	48.8%

Source: computed from American Community Survey, 2011-2015, 5-year estimates. Table S2502, B25003C and others.

See Update #7 here on page 49 for the White and Black ownership data for Ithaca City.

Source for U.S. White, Black and Hispanic: Asante-Muhammed *et al* 2016, page 7.  
See 05 June, 2018 national housing rates update #4 on page 47 of this report.

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Table 5.1 shows that African-American home ownership in Ithaca City is 54% that of whites ( $19.7 \div 36.6 \times 100$ ). For Tompkins County (the data include Ithaca City) the rate is 44%. These rates contrast with 47% for New York State and 58% nationally. In Section 3 of this report we noted the movement of many African-American residents from the Southwest Ithaca area of census tract 10 into the Town of Ithaca, mainly on West Hill. Even so, census tract 10 has a 22% African-American population as compared with 6.6% of the City as a whole.

Overall, 73.6% of City of Ithaca housing is rentals (100 – 26.4 from above). This contrasts with the U.S. total of 36.1% (100 – 63.9). According to a 2015 report on housing from the Tompkins County Office of Human Rights, this high dependence of the population of the city on rental housing creates “a strong need for housing providers to be sufficiently aware of their fair housing responsibilities” (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 46). The high dependence on rentals is reinforced by the spread of students who compete with families with children “in favor of single students for housing” (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 14). According to an article in *The Ithaca Voice* of January 10, 2015, over the period 2012 to 2018 Cornell will add 1,779 students but construct only 1,244 rooms – a possible addition of up to 535 students who might be looking for lodging in downtown Ithaca. The T. C. Human Rights Office report emphasizes that a lack of affordable housing creates market conditions “that are conducive to discriminatory practices” (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 47). One such market condition outcome is that rentals in Ithaca City housing costs “are greater than 30% of income for...69% of renters” (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 48).

The report considers two possible main solutions to this problem:

### I. Public Housing Projects

Tompkins County currently has approximately 2,029 project-based housing representing about 5% of all units, of which 926 are in Ithaca City. In 2014 within these units, 20% of the renters were African American, more than 3 times the African-American percentage of the population. On the waiting lists for this housing – which variously run from 3 months to 3 years, 30% were African American. It is difficult not to see these numbers as indicators of structural racism – low incomes and higher unemployment render African Americans less able to compete in the private housing market and more dependent on public housing – which is never enough to prevent them from being overrepresented on the waiting lists.

### 2. Subsidies for privately-owned rental units – Section 8 Housing

Section 8 of the 1937 Housing Act as amended several times currently authorizes HUD to pay rental subsidies for certain approved housing units for rent costs above 30% of the renting

household's income.

[https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/housing\\_choice\\_voucher\\_program\\_section\\_8](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8)

Very low income households are the intended beneficiaries. Tompkins County in 2014 was allocated 1,839 “Housing Choice Vouchers” (HCVs) to apply to the Section 8 program (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 51). According to the T.C. Human Rights Office report, fair housing tests where pairs of investigators go out to look for housing, Section 8 applicants were routinely rejected. Landlord rejections for Section 8 are legal, as being low income is not protected by any anti-discrimination laws (Baer and Douglas 2015, page 52). However, because of the overrepresentation of people of color in the lowest income groups, the effect is to reinforce racism even without practicing it directly. This is a classic case of structural racism. The online *Ithaca Voice* highlighted the Human Rights Office findings in a lengthy report published on September 23, 2015 (Stein 2015). It's not clear if anything has been done to try to deal with this legal form of discrimination. It should also be noted that people with disabilities, female-headed households (of all races) and Latinos are also overrepresented in the pool of Section 8 applicants.

Finally, what does Ithaca City's particular housing configuration and history possibly have to do with the fragmentation of the African-American neighborhood that was noted in Section 2.3 of this report? According to an article by Josh Brokaw in *Ithaca.com* of February 24, 2016, the historic black neighborhood is succumbing – perhaps ironically – to improvements in the quality of housing that were partly initiated and carried forth by renovations financed by Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, which was not seeking to expel black families but to improve their conditions. However, as the quality of the houses, streets and yards increased, so did the value of the houses. White families began moving in. Brokaw reports that one house that changed racial ownership was bought for about \$5,000 in the early 1980s, sold for \$85,000 in 1990 and is now assessed at \$150,000. A house near the St. James church on Cleveland Avenue (See Section 2.3 above) was sold to the city for \$0 in 1998 then assessed at \$67,500 and is now valued at \$170,000. With vastly greater financial resources, white families are better positioned to purchase these homes and benefit from their substantial increase in value. This would seem to be another case of structural racism reproducing and reinforcing itself although it is also possible that some black families have benefited from the transformation of the neighborhood as well.

**5.1 Housing, Segregation, Toxic Wastes and Environmental Justice: One problem not present in Ithaca?**

Environmental racism has elements of both structural and other forms of racism. Direct policies choosing to site toxic waste dumps near African-American neighborhoods nationally have resulted in a chain of consequences that have become structural.

In 1987 the United Church of Christ (UCC) Commission for Racial Justice shocked many environmentalists when it published *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*. The report demonstrated the close connections between housing segregation and the fact that African Americans were vulnerable to much higher risks of exposure to toxic wastes. In 2007 the UCC came out with a 20-year update, which concluded in part that “Racial disparities are more prevalent and extensive than socioeconomic disparities, suggesting that race has more to do with

the current distribution of the nation’s hazardous waste facilities than poverty,” (page 60) and that (page 62) “...race continues to be a significant and robust predictor of commercial hazardous waste facility locations when socioeconomic and other nonracial factors are taken into account.” (UCC 2007, pages 60 and 62).

Additional research strongly suggests that pollution-induced asthma has been underestimated and that much more needs to be learned. Other recent studies have found links between air pollution and autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia and other cognitive impairments. These are tentatively explained by exposure to neurotoxins (including lead (Boyce et al. 2014, especially page 10).

Are there any examples of environmental racism in Ithaca or Tompkins County? At the time of preparing this paper, we are not aware of any, but racial justice activists should always be on the lookout for this silent – structural – racism instance especially because of its long-lasting harm to children. One area to look into might be the relation between the Southside neighborhood where much of the Tompkins County African-American population lives and the South Hill former factory area that might have sent effluents down the hill to that neighborhood.

## 6. Health

**Table 6.1**  
**Selected Health, Mortality and Illness Indicators**  
for Tompkins County: 2012 – 2014

Race or Ethnic Group as Used in the Census	Percentage of Premature Deaths <75 Years*	Percentage of Low Birth Weight Births	Asthma Hospitalizations per 10,000 Age-adjusted	Diabetes Hospitalizations per 10,000 Age-adjusted	Drug-related Hospitalizations per 10,000 Age-adjusted
Total Population	38.2%	6.6%	3.2	112	19.4
White Alone	<b>36.9%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>101.7</b>	<b>18.5</b>
Black or African American Alone	<b>69.4%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>211.3</b>	<b>38.6</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	46.7%	6.8%	na	17.5	s
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	71.4%	6.0%	na	32.6	s

\* Premature deaths: What percentage of deaths occurred before the person reached the age of 75. It is thought by many demographers and epidemiologists that in the U.S. up to 50% of deaths before age 75 could be prevented. This indicator appears to replace life expectancy that was used in earlier tables.

na = not a sufficient number of events to create a reliable entry in the table.

s = “data do not meet the criteria for confidentiality”

Sources: <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/minority/county/tompkins>

[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf)

See also: [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/indicators/2013/tompkins.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/indicators/2013/tompkins.htm)

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Table 6.1 provides information on selected health, mortality and disease indicators. As can be seen, the category “White Alone” has significantly better health outcomes than do the other groups. We have highlighted in red bold font the white versus black indicators that are among the starkest. Recently the life expectancy number has apparently been replaced with the percentage of deaths that occur before the age 75. It is widely thought among experts in the U.S. that up to ½ of those deaths could be prevented – meaning they could live to an age greater than 75. It can be computed from the values in Table 6.1 that African Americans have 88% greater premature deaths than whites (69.4 / 36.9 – 1 x 100). Hispanics have a slightly higher rate than African Americans (93% higher than whites), but Asian/Pacific Islanders are closer to whites with a 27% higher rate. In its 2013 *Community Health Assessment 2013–2017*, the Tompkins County Health Department summarized the rates for slightly older data – just for black versus white. These data are shown on Table 6.1.1. The county assessment document does not appear to consider possible causes for these striking differences nor does it suggest any possible policies or approaches to overcoming them.

**Would it be useful to ask for an appointment with Tompkins County health officials to discuss their reactions to the findings from their study – as well as educating ourselves about what the local government is or is not doing to reduce and eventually eliminate the racial and ethnic disparities in health?**

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### Table 6.1.1

#### Changes in Black-White Differences in Selected Health Indicators In Tompkins County: 2008 – 2010 to 2012 – 2014

Blacks in Tompkins County have...

- 63% higher percentage of premature deaths (<age 75) [88% higher in Table 6.1]
- 48% more years of potential life lost per 100,000 [16% more in 2012-14]
- 29% lower rate of adequate prenatal care [19% in 2012-14]
- 178% higher asthma hospitalization rate [159% in Table 6.1]
- 47% higher diseases of the heart hospitalization rate [28% greater in 2012-14]
- 59% higher congestive heart failure hospitalizations per 10,000 [150% in 2012-14]
- 96% higher diabetes hospitalizations [108% in Table 6.1]
- 240% higher drug-related hospitalizations [109% in Table 6.1]



Note: These figures differ somewhat from those one gets computing from the data in Table 6.1 above. Some of the trends got more equal, others more unequal. See the contrasts in the [bracketed calculations to the right of each entry where data are available.]

Source: Tompkins County Health Department Community Health Assessment 2013 – 2017. Pages 10 and 14. [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf)

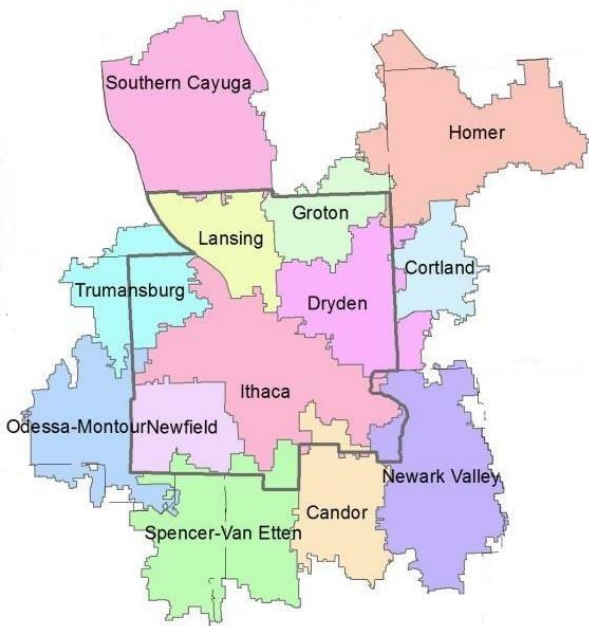
### 6.1 Dangerous Health and Mortality Synergies – Especially for Infants

The small absolute numbers of births to African-Americans in Tompkins County makes it difficult to calculate a reliable infant mortality rate. But the African-American percentage of low birth rate babies which is 2.2 times that of whites (13.6 ÷ 6.3) combined with the 14 points gap in receiving first trimester prenatal care (63.1% versus 77.2% for whites – not shown on the tables) and the similar 14 points gap in adequate prenatal care overall (62.1% versus 76.5%) may connect with and exacerbate the recently discovered multi-factor nature of the African-American overall infant mortality rate nationally which at 14 per 1,000 live births is slightly more than double that of the U.S. white population which is at about 6. In Section 10 below we consider these findings more in depth in light of recent studies. In Section 8 – we summarize another synergy – asthma and other diseases, their effects on children’s academic success and causation in part from mass incarceration.

## 7. Education

Neither Ithaca City nor Tompkins County overlaps precisely with a single school district as can be seen on Map 7.1. This makes data comparisons on education not exactly parallel to the other data being presented in this Report. However, we can look into possible educational disparities within the Ithaca City School District which includes all of Ithaca City and significant portions of the overall Tompkins County population. All of the ICSD is within Tompkins County. (More about the school district and overt interpersonal racism in Section 9.1.1 below.)

School Districts



Map 7.1 School districts in and around Tompkins County. Source: Vink *et al* 2013, page 5.

Table 7.1 shows the graduation rates for selected categories of students in the Ithaca City School District versus the national U.S. data. In terms of structural racism, graduation rates are probably the most significant education statistics to consider because the credentials of a diploma or degree have been shown to influence income. As noted in section 4 on wealth, however, even with comparable education levels, people of color – especially African Americans – tend to get lower pay. Even so, there are economic and other benefits to achieving educational credentials.

**Table 7.1**  
**Graduation Rates for Selected Groups in the Ithaca City School District and for National U.S. Rates for the Same or Similar Groups**

Race -Ethnic or Income Group as Used by the Village at Ithaca or U. S. Dept. of Education	Ithaca			National U. S.		
	Graduation Rate for School Year Ending in June of			Graduation Rate for School Year Ending in June of		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
<b>All (Combined)</b>	78%	82	87	80	81.4	82.3
<b>White</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>87.2</b>
<b>Students of Color (Ithaca)/Black (U.S. Ed. Dept.)</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70.7</b>	<b>72.5</b>
<b>Asian</b>	93%	82	92	88	88.7	89.4
<b>Free or Reduced Price Lunch/Low Income</b>	75%	80	74	72	73.3	74.6

Sources: Village at Ithaca 2013, 2014 and 2015; U.S. Dept. of Education 2015.

Notes: The U.S. Dept. of Education maintains separate data for Hispanics, Native Americans and African Americans, whereas the Village at Ithaca lumps these groups into a category called “AA\_Lat\_NA.” We are labeling that as “Students of Color on the table. The U.S. Dept. of Education has an economic category called “Low Income,” which we have made parallel to the Village at Ithaca category of “Free or Reduced Price Lunch.”

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Table 7.1 provides the most recent published data we could find on graduation rates in Ithaca and in the U.S. A few observations might include the following:

- High School graduation rates are generally increasing in Ithaca and in the U. S. overall;
- The Ithaca rate went from a little below (78 vs. 89) to somewhat above (87 vs. 82.3) the national rate;

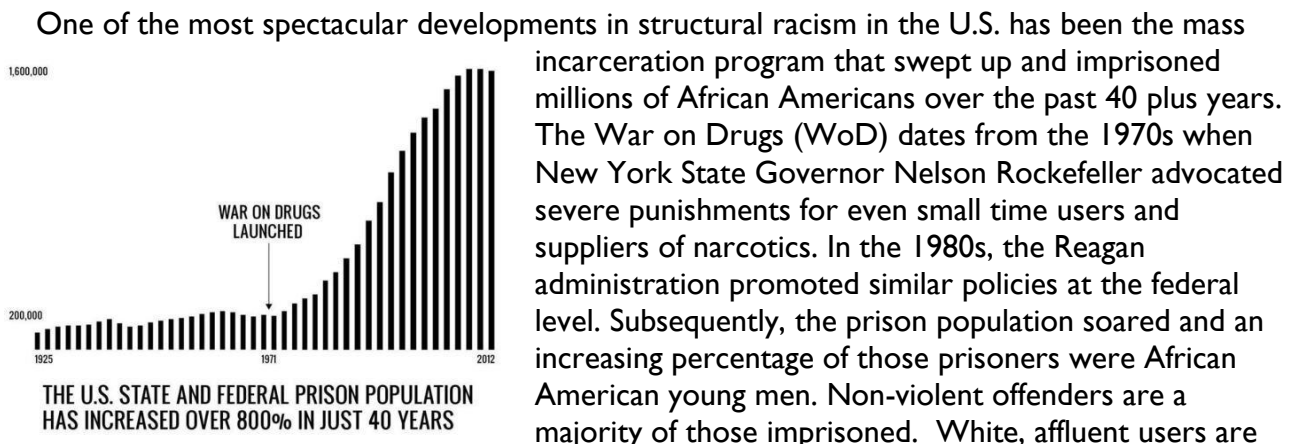
- The white-black graduation gap in Ithaca has decreased from 23 points in 2012 (82-59) to 13 points in 2014 (89-76), but much room for further decrease exists;
- The Ithaca gap decreased much faster than the national gap decrease;
- The white-black gap decreased while both groups increased their rate but the black rate increased faster;
- Students whose family income qualifies them for free or reduced price lunches have an uneven rate across the three years and are about at par with low-income students nationally.

Why has the Ithaca gap dropped so much? And why did the Ithaca overall rate increase so much? It appears that local activists in Ithaca and Tompkins County have worked hard over the past few years to upgrade the activities in the schools to help children achieve better outcomes. A lot of work has gone into providing healthy snacks. An intense effort was undertaken by several community members to elect progressive activists to the Board of Education. These activists then sought out and hired a school chancellor – Dr. Luvelle Brown – who many feel has brought in a number of policies and practices that have led to the recent improvements. In 2016 Brown was selected as New York State schools superintendent of the year.

[http://www.newyorkupstate.com/news/2016/10/ithacas\\_luvelle\\_brown\\_named\\_new\\_yorks\\_superintendent\\_of\\_the\\_year.html](http://www.newyorkupstate.com/news/2016/10/ithacas_luvelle_brown_named_new_yorks_superintendent_of_the_year.html)

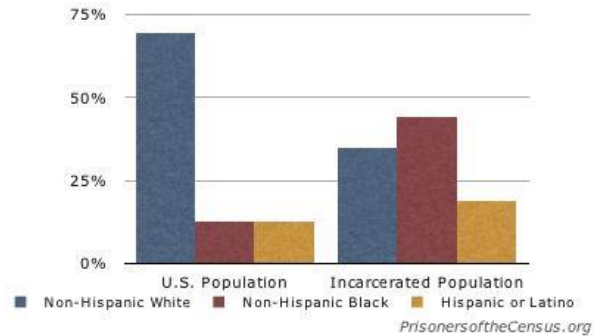
The formation of the Village at Ithaca – a local community-based group that works towards equity in educational outcomes – has possibly also played a role in monitoring and bringing community attention to the race gap and to the need for energetic and sustained interventions to overcome it. Reducing the gap constitutes one of the few cases of reducing at least one aspect of structural racism and indicates that powerful community action can have some impact. But the forces of structural racism have assaulted the attempts to improve academic performance by African-American school children in a set of cruel by-products of mass incarceration as we shall see in the next section.

## 8. Mass Incarceration and Structural Racism in the U.S.



far more likely to be immune from arrest and prosecution. There is little controversy over the basic facts that are shown on Figure 8.1 which was retrieved from a Google search on “Mass incarceration graphs.” The War on Drugs accounts for much of the public acceptance of this mass roundup which attracted remarkably little organized white opposition until the publication of Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The racial disparity is shown in Figure 8.2.

### Racial disparity between U.S. and incarcerated populations



The war on drugs and the mass incarceration phenomenon are subjects worthy of detailed attention. In particular was the creation of separate and unequal drug offense punishments whereby crack cocaine possession was for several years worth 100 times the sentencing power as for powdered cocaine. Because of drug use practices widely known to law enforcement and the courts, this led willy nilly to more and longer sentences for blacks, especially for black men (e.g. Alexander 2012, pages 112 – 114). This was racism by decree and was hardly hidden in the deep structures of society. The NAACP Criminal Justice Fact Sheet (post 2008) estimates that by 2001 one in six black men had been incarcerated and that if the trend continued, one in three black males born in that year would experience incarceration (see also The Sentencing Project Fact Sheet). With a current black male population of about 21 million, this means 7 million black men could experience incarceration.

Figure 8.2. Source: The Prison Policy Initiative

The mass incarceration program itself could perhaps best be labeled as “organizational racism.” There was nothing subtle and the mass roundups were hardly hidden from view. From the perspective of structural racism however, it seems that the direct and indirect secondary consequences of mass incarceration are perhaps as significant as the injustice and undeserved suffering of millions of African Americans during their imprisonment. And while some reductions in mass incarceration have recently occurred (See The Sentencing Project for details), the post-incarceration consequences are likely to last for a long time.

Among the essentially permanent consequences for ex-felons individually are – ineligibility for...

- many federal health and welfare benefits;
- food stamps;
- public housing (including Section 8 vouchers – see Section 5 of this report);
- various federally funded education programs;
- a driver’s license (in many cases);
- some kinds of professional licenses;
- a federal security clearance;
- the right to join the military;
- the right to vote;
- the right to serve on juries

- if not a U.S. citizen, can be immediately deported (Alexander 2010, especially chapter 4 and pages 192 – 194).

At the community level, the disproportionate removal of males led to various pressures on families, marriages, romantic relationships and children as well as economic pressures on mostly low-income families to find money to arrange transportation to visit the prisoners while in prison and loss of substantial amounts of money in some cases to various fees imposed in the imprisonment process (Roberts 2004, page 1282). Since about 70% of offenders and ex-offenders were high school dropouts, they already were at the bottom rung of the income-earning ladder (Alexander 2012, page 150), so it is reasonable to argue that mass incarceration created a near total block on their families' ability ever to become home owners. Here we see yet another example of intersectionality: mass incarceration interacting synergistically with existing educational and income structures disproportionately skewed by race.

Instead of home ownership and neighborhood development, as Dorothy Roberts argues (pages 1281 – 1285), massive long-term imprisonment functioned to break up the neighborhood bonds and relationships that make up the phenomenon of “social capital.” Neighborhoods with higher social capital are thought to be safer, cleaner, better managed and – usually lower in crime. In Section 10 below we consider the findings on social capital by race in Tompkins County, although we have no direct evidence linking local social capital to recent mass incarceration.

## **8.1 Mass Incarceration, Childhood Health and the Achievement Gap**

A December 2016 report from the Economic Policy Institute describes the substantial recent research showing impacts of mass incarceration on the academic performance of the children of inmates. Controlling for several variables, a number of studies have found that having an incarcerated or even formerly incarcerated adult parent interferes with the child's academic success in at least 8 major ways:

1. More stammering and stuttering
2. Lower grade point averages
3. More likely to drop out
4. Complete fewer years
5. Display more learning disabilities
6. More likely to display ADHD symptoms
7. More developmental delays
8. More likely to have behavioral problems (Morsy and Rothstein 2016, pages 9 – 10)

Other parts of the report demonstrate that poverty and homelessness often result from losing a major earner who is in prison. Stress leads to higher rates of childhood asthma, anxiety, depression and PTSD manifestations, less access to medical attention – in other words a whole synergistic set of assaults on the child's ability to learn and to develop a healthy social life (Morsy and Rothstein 2016, pages 14 – 15). At any given time, up to 10% of black school children have at least one adult parent in prison. The authors note that many of the problems listed above continue into adulthood, leading in present circumstances to a greater likelihood of being arrested, and thus the syndrome passes on to the next generation – a classic case of structural racism becoming embedded in the social structure.

## 8.2 Mass Incarceration in Ithaca and Tompkins County?

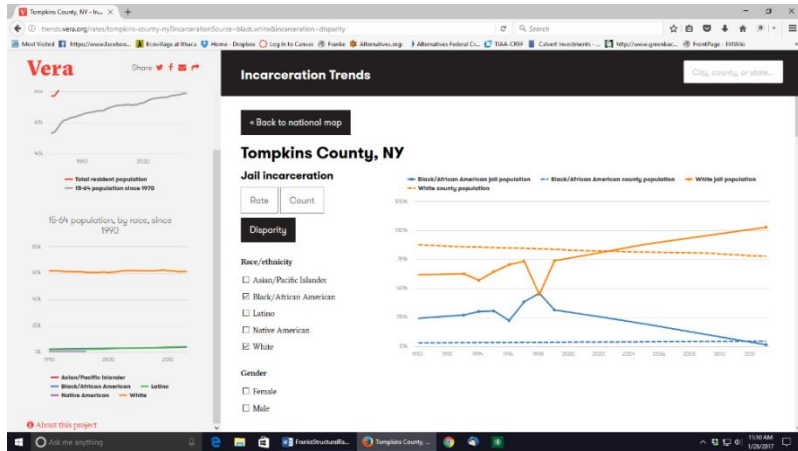


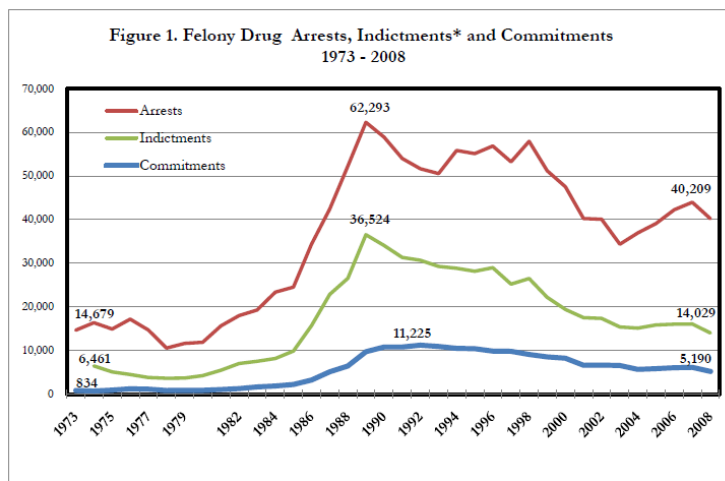
Figure 8.3: Incarceration Rates by Race in Tompkins County:1990 – 2012. Source: screenshot from

<http://trends.vera.org/rates/tompkins-county-ny?incarcerationSource=black,white&incarceration=disparity>

Figure 8.3 suggests that the Tompkins County jail may have briefly participated in mass incarceration around 1998 when the African-American percent of prisoners spikes to almost 50% before declining to about the percent in the county population. However, since the graphic does not indicate what portion of the incarcerated were there while being processed for felony drug charges, we cannot draw any conclusions: the graph is merely suggestive.

For New York State, a 2010 study on *Felony Drug Arrest, Indictment and Commitment Trends 1973 – 2008* shows that the state participated significantly in mass incarceration based on drug arrests and convictions. Figure 8.4 covers the period from the enactment of the severe Rockefeller drug laws in 1973 to the 2009 reforms of those laws. Among the facts associated with the graph:

- The total inmate population peaked in 1990 at 71,472
- There were 60,081 offenders under custody in 2008 compared to 13,437 in 1973 Drug offenders made up 11% of the prison population in 1973, and peaked at 35% of the population in 1994 (close to the time of the Tompkins County African American highest proportion in the county jail) (Report 2010, page 5).



Source: DCJS Felony Processing file, Computerized Criminal History file, DOCS Admission file and Crime and Justice Report  
 \*Note: Indictments only available since 1974.

Figure 8.4. Source for the graph: NY State Criminal Justice Department Report, page 5

The report identifies three separate trends in drug arrests as the five boroughs of NYC, 17 so-called IMPACT counties that accounted for more than 80% of the non NYC crimes and a group of 40 counties simply listed as “other.” Tompkins is in this latter category. For the year 2008, the most recent of this report, 36 arrests and 10 commitments (imprisonments) are indicated out of a statewide total commitments that year of 5,190 (NY State 2010, page 15). Tompkins had a high of 18 commitments in 2000 and a low of 2 in 2002 (NY State 2010, page 21). Data for 1973 to 1998 are not given in the table. These numbers do not suggest a major impact of mass incarceration for felony drug cases – the main impact of the war on drugs – in Tompkins County. Nor is the racial makeup of the inmates given.

However, 115 Tompkins County commitments in the period of 1999 through 2008 – in a population as small as that of Tompkins County – and particularly if many of the inmates were African American – could have a greater effect than the small absolute numbers suggest. One way to study this question would be for local research to be undertaken at the county level, interviews with police, prosecutors, prisoners, former prisoners and family members of prisoners and former prisoners. A high-profile police killing of an alleged drug dealer in Ithaca – Shawn Greenwood on February 23, 2010 – remains a subject of suspicion among many. (See Section 9.1.2 for more on this case). <http://cnycentral.com/news/local/ithaca-police-shooting-victim-officer-named>

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/shawn-greenwood-obituary?pid=1000000140059814>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSOJ3R5xj6o>

We also need to look into whether and how many Tompkins County residents were incarcerated in federal prisons during this period – and the racial composition of those incarcerated.

**08 March, 2019 – See Update 06 on page 48 for info on race and the criminal justice system in Tompkins County.**

## 9. Race and Social Capital – The 2010 Ithaca Study

In recent years social scientists have extensively discussed and debated the concept of “social capital.” The concept derives in part from Robert Putnam’s influential book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), which itself was an expansion of a 1995 essay he published under the title *Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital*.

Briefly, social capital refers to any relationships, networks, norms of reciprocity, levels of trust, instruments for cooperation or other connections between people that are thought to help them or communities achieve their goals. We saw in Section 4.2.2 that white college students end up with less debt than blacks partly because white students are more likely to receive gifts from family members. This is an example of structural racism since the ability of the white family to provide more assistance to the white students is related to the whole history of redlining, housing discrimination, and wage discrimination favoring the white family’s ability to accumulate some wealth while the black student is more likely to have family members with very low incomes and her/his network of relatives is interrupted by many who have suffered long prison sentences –

unable to develop the kinds of affectionate relationships that might lead to sharing. We can say that white students probably have more social capital than do black students.

Evaluating neighborhoods, towns or other geographical spaces for the levels of social capital expanded greatly after a 1997–2000 series of seminars led to the creation of [the Harvard Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/measurement/2006sccs.htm). This survey allows for comparison of communities and has been employed in dozens of locations in the U.S. (e.g. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/measurement/2006sccs.htm>).

In 2010 the Community Foundation of Tompkins County helped sponsor a Harvard Benchmark Survey of the local population. A total of 641 respondents filled in forms. The sample was not scientifically drawn but SUNY Binghamton student Shannon David found that the general age distribution and median incomes were fairly close between the sample and the general county population. African Americans had been oversampled to avoid possible undue statistical influence from a small number of respondents (David 2011, page 14).

A selected few of the Tompkins County survey's findings:

- People of color have lower levels of interracial trust than do whites
- People of color have lower levels of trust in general than do whites
- People of color give blood more often than whites
- People of color interact more with people of a different race than do whites
- Higher income households interact less with different races than do lower income households
- Levels of interracial trust were lower than general levels of trust
- 40% of people of color were not registered to vote compared with 8.1% of whites
- People of color were less likely to be in the home of another or have another over
- 15% of people of color had never been in the home of a friend from a different race over the past twelve months, compared with 26.7% of whites
- Ithaca City residents participated in more meetings, volunteer activities and socialized more with people of a different race than did non-Ithaca – that is, rural Tompkins County (and possibly Ithaca Town) – residents

Assuming this study had a fairly representative sample, can we draw any conclusions relevant for understanding structural racism in our community? The greater percentage of people of color having been in the home of whites versus the opposite might be an artifice of the county population dynamics (that were described in Section 2.2): given the relatively small numbers of people of color in the county, the chances they will meet and develop a relationship with whites is statistically greater than the opposite. The simple fact is that with so many whites, they are more likely to meet and befriend other whites, but not necessarily because they are racist.

It appears that a “2012 Cornell University Social Capital Consulting Group” produced a powerpoint show from this social capital data bank, but it provides much less information than can be found in Shannon David’s dissertation. The Cornell presentation includes the sentence that



“white and black racial relations need attention” (Slide 12). [Social-Capital-in-Tompkins-County-2012-CIPA-Presentation-1.pptx](#).

## **9.1 Racial Incidents in Ithaca: The Recent Kearney and Greenwood Cases**

In this report we have described mostly examples of structural racism. Structural racism burrows into the social structure and essentially hides from view. We have to actively search for it; it requires research. But anti-racist activists – especially those new to the Ithaca and Tompkins County area in the past few years – should be aware of at least two major race-related cases that may play a role in the level of trust between African Americans and whites that showed up in the social capital survey described in the first part of section 9 just above.

### **9.1.1 The Harassment of Epiphany Kearney**

From 2006 to 2008 a battle ensued between Amelia Kearney, mother of (then) 7th grade school student Epi, and the Ithaca City School District. On ICSD school bus 57, daughter Epi was being routinely taunted, harassed and threatened by white male students. Repeatedly over many months called “chocolate,” “cunt,” and “nigger,” she was tripped and even threatened with being killed at least once. She became fearful, depressed and unable to study effectively. The ICSD seems to have been unable to control the behavior of the white male students on the bus. As summarized in the findings of Administrative Law Judge Christine Marbach Kellett,

“The record established that the Respondent’s (ie. ICSD) administrators repeatedly chose a course of action which both put the interests of the white male perpetrators ahead of the interest of the black female student, and was repeatedly shown to be, and acknowledge to be, ineffective in stopping the discriminatory conduct” (NY State Division of Human Rights 2008, page 9). [https://dhr.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Commissioners-Orders/kearney\\_v\\_ithaca\\_city\\_school\\_district.pdf](https://dhr.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Commissioners-Orders/kearney_v_ithaca_city_school_district.pdf)

The judge’s conclusion in the case brought by Epi’s mother included instructions that all ICSD “teachers, administrators, school bus drivers, cleaning staff and all other employees be trained in the recognition of discrimination and the effects of discrimination on children...” Several training events and public meetings took place around this issue, but it is not clear if any substantial evaluation has been undertaken as to how effective these all have been.

### **9.1.2 The Shawn Greenwood Killing**

The facts in the Kearney harassment case are not much in dispute in Tompkins County. But on February 23, 2010, white police officer Bryan Bangs shot and killed a local 29-year-old African-American man named Shawn Greenwood. The shooting took place during an attempted drug related arrest in the parking lot of Pete’s gas station and liquor and convenience store. The incident divided the community along the lines familiar nationally in police shootings where the officer is white and the victim is black. <http://cnycentral.com/news/local/ithaca-police-shooting-victim-officer-named> Many of the facts are in dispute and a significant part of the community continues to doubt the police version of the events. In July of 2010 Chemung County (nearby) District Attorney Weeden A. Wetmore issued a [15-pages long report](#) of his independent investigation, concluding that the officer fatally shot Greenwood in accordance with New York State law governing the

situation. The Grand Jury declined to indict.

<http://www.chemungcounty.com/usr/DA/Statement%20of%20Weeden%20A.%20Wetmore%207.I.10%5B1%5D.pdf>

For many, the official account leaves more questions than answers. In March of 2010 an emotional community meeting was held at Southside Community Center where a lot of racial anger and anguish was shared. A local Ithaca “Shawn Greenwood Working Group” formed itself and conducted numerous public actions questioning the police account and that of the independent investigation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSOJ3R5xj6o> Some local citizens have renamed DeWitt Park in downtown Ithaca as “Shawn Greenwood Memorial Park.” On local newspaper obituary pages and op-eds, pro- and anti-police statements were posted in connection with the incident. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/shawn-greenwood-obituary?pid=1000000140059814> ; <http://www.weny.com/news/All/community-remembers-man-killed-by-ithaca-police-2-23-15> ; <http://www.topix.com/forum/city/dryden-ny/TO207JJS7D4PG9KBL>; [http://www.ithaca.com/opinion/a-human-response-to-shawn-greenwood-s-death/article\\_0dbccb68-a122-519e-adb2-2cae8575323b.html](http://www.ithaca.com/opinion/a-human-response-to-shawn-greenwood-s-death/article_0dbccb68-a122-519e-adb2-2cae8575323b.html)

In July of 2010, shortly after the Chemung D.A. report, police officer Bryan Bang’s house burned down in the early morning hours in what investigators have designated as “arson.” This arson case has not been solved. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/ithaca-cop-house-burned-arson-fatal-shooting/story?id=11161809>

Over the past few years several other less dramatic incidents have occurred pitting the local police and the African-American community at odds. These include one other police killing and at least one case of intimidation of black teenagers by white officers. Despite much community activity, it seems that the record shows Ithaca has a general pattern of police and black community relations pretty similar to the rest of the country.

## **10. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research**

In Section 2.3 we described the geography of race in Tompkins County as essentially a small minority population – especially of African Americans – surrounded by a sea of whites in the form of 90% + white towns around a couple of African-American enclaves around the Southside Community Center in Ithaca City and on West Hill in the Town of Ithaca.

In trying to understand structural racism, we think this metaphor of the surrounded enclave might be useful. As we moved through the various statistics on quality of life, we saw structural racism as a set of barriers from essentially all directions limiting the ability of people of color to break out of the conditions laid down decades – even centuries – ago and transformed over time into new barricades rather than being removed or broken down. Thus, slavery has been replaced by mass incarceration that maintains low incomes and high unemployment while promoting childhood stress-related ill health leading to poor educational outcomes. Jim Crow has been supplanted by low home ownership and dependence on food stamps. The harsh conditions of rural slave life in the 19th Century are seen now instead in greater amounts of suffering from asthma and diabetes in far greater proportion than their white counterparts. The struggle to maintain community against so many outside pressures has gone on all along. In all these instances, the statistics describe hidden structures underneath people’s daily lives that keep reproducing unequal outcomes. This is structural racism.

## **10.1 The Intersectional Synergies Impacting a “Surrounded” Population**

The March 5, 2017 issue of *The Nation* magazine contains a report summarizing detailed recent research into the racial inequalities surrounding black infant deaths. Race turns out to be a factor all on its own even when other factors are controlled for – contributing to the two-to-one greater infant death rate between blacks and whites. Recent public health and epidemiological studies have come up with the concept of “allostatic load,” “the cumulative wear and tear on the body’s systems owing to repeated adaptation to stressors” (cited in Carpenter 2017, page 15). The author translates this into a metaphor of “a thicket of thorny plants,” through which African-Americans must negotiate their lives constantly pricked by the racist structures around them. In other words, from the perspective of structural (or institutional as in Carpenter’s article) racism, the practices of the everyday society generate and more or less constantly reinforce the conditions that deprive people of physical health and a lower rate of ability to maintain life for their babies. The new research confirms and expands on studies done in the 1990s demonstrating close connections among race, discrimination, high blood pressure, and other “cardiovascular risk factors” (Chasin 2004, pages 164 – 166 citing research by Krieger and Sidney, Clark *et al* and others). It is at once each particular cause and yet simultaneously the whole system of white supremacy and its reinforcing and interconnected nature that generates the results we see in the various statistics contained in this report.

## **10.2 Where Do We Go from Here?**

As per the request from SURJ about preparing this report, we have not attempted to summarize the literature on possible solutions to structural racism – merely to reveal its presence and its approximate dimensions in our local Ithaca and Tompkins County community. Perhaps the first step in combatting structural racism is for those of us who consider ourselves to be white allies of genuine equality and meaningful social justice to study and attempt to understand the incredible breadth, depth and persistence of structural racism. We have a long way to go.

## **10.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

In the research for this Report, we were not able to locate city or county level data for three important areas: household wealth (Section 4.2), environmental racism (which can be considered a form of structural racism) (Section 5.1) and the scope of the mass incarceration (Section 8) – three phenomena now well documented at the national level. Finding out more about these phenomena locally could be a goal of future research. In addition, as we worked through the information a few other possible topics have come to mind as show on the list below. This list will also be made available online as a separate document where it can be updated at:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsStructuralRacismResearchSuggestions.pdf>

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Things a SURJ research committee – or any group dedicated to understanding local structural racism – could do:

1. Prepare a brief history of the African-American population of Ithaca/Tompkins County
  2. Prepare brief histories of other ethnic/racial groups of Ithaca/Tompkins County
  3. Prepare a direct data contrast between Ithaca City and the rest of Tompkins County (ie. not including Ithaca City) on any to all of the characteristics/variables in the structural racism report.
  4. Draft a set of suggestions about how to talk about structural racism.
  5. Research the history and nature of segregation in Tompkins County (not necessarily the same as suggestion #1)
  6. Connect with the local History Center to see what kinds of information are available about any of the topics above in 1-5.
  7. Follow up the social capital survey and try to find out who has the data and whether we can look over them again. Is another social capital survey planned?
  8. Work with Paula Ioanide *et al* about effects of incarceration and extent of mass incarceration in Tompkins County. Look into what kinds of local data or records exist.
  9. Look into the 2010 TC social capital study and see if we can look at the original data – especially the answers about the police..
  10. Redo the 2010 TC social capital study and compare/contrast the results and discuss how to interpret similarities and differences we might find.
  11. Is there evidence of “steering” by real estate agents?
  12. Does concentration of low-income and minority households result in stigmas which in turn could result in stereotyping and decline in people’s self image?
  13. Create a “racial justice” indicator, scale or statistical index or other device by which we can evaluate our community.
  14. Find out: are there any toxic waste sites or other locations where the possibility for environmental racism might exist in this area? For the general issue and a little background, see Section 5.1 of the Structural Racism draft.
  15. Interview a representative at Village at Ithaca or other appropriate person(s) to get insight into how the Ithaca City School District graduation rate was so substantially increased and the race gap so substantially decreased as shown in section 7. What continuing problems does the ICSD face in this regard?
- 

For the most updated version of the one-page version of this overall document – with selected main statistics, click on:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsCountyOnePageStructuralRacism.pdf>

For the document with suggestions for further research, click on:

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsStructuralRacismResearchSuggestions.pdf>

## 11. Sources

The American Community Survey (ACS) provides the most accurate and up-to-date information in many cases. For local Ithaca and/or Tompkins County – the following sources provide quick access to a lot of information already compiled from the ACS or other surveys.

Baer, Karen W. and James Douglas. 2015. *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*. City of Ithaca and Tompkins County Office of Human Rights. <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/humanrights/AI>

New York State Community Action Association. 2016. *New York State Poverty Report*, pages 5 and 62. <http://nyscommunityaction.org/poverty-in-new-york/povertydata/>

New York State Department of Health. Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention 2016. *Minority Health Data and Statistics. New York State Health Equity Report. County Edition*. January, 2016. <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/community/minority/county/tompkins>

Tompkins County Health Department Community Health Assessment 2013 – 2017. [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/health/pnc/cha/CHA-Tomp-2013-2017.pdf)

Vink, Jan. 2017. *Tompkins County Profile. 2017. A Collection of Recent Demographic, Social and Economic Data. Ithaca: Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics*. <https://pad.human.cornell.edu/profiles/Tompkins.pdf>

Vink, Jan *et al* (Assisted by Joe Francis, Sutee Anantsuksomsri, Nij Tontisirin, and Johannes Plambeck). 2013. *Tompkins County Profile 2013: A collection of recent demographic, social, economic and agricultural data*. Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics, Cornell University Cooperative Extension and Community and Regional Development Institute of the Department of Development Sociology. <https://pad.human.cornell.edu/profiles/2013/Tompkins.pdf>

A basic introductory page for the U.S. Census:

[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk)

General and Nationwide Sources: Paula Ioanide, Associate Professor of Comparative Race and Ethnicity Studies at the Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, Ithaca College has developed a 7-page handout of significant and specific information with sources in her “Facts about the Ways Systemic Racism Persists in the Contemporary Era.” The handout is packed with information.

Two other valuable resources for basic national structural racism facts are:

United for a Fair Economy: (Annual) State of the Dream. UFE publishes an annual overview of structural racism facts, usually with a particular focus. The 2014 Report, for example, is titled *Health Care for Whom? Enduring Racial Disparities*, while the report for 2015 is called *Underbanked and Overcharged*. For 2013, the subject was *A Long Way from Home: Housing, Asset Policy and the Racial Divide*. The 2017 Report is entitled *Mourning in America*. [ A snapshot of where we are as nation on the topics of wages, wealth, housing, immigration, and LGBT inclusion]. <http://www.faireconomy.org/>.

– and –

Pew Research Center’s *Social and Demographic Trends* report issued on June 27, 2016 documents the continuing – even – expanding wealth and quality of life gap between whites and other racial and ethnic groups,

particularly African Americans. We have added some of the dramatic charts from that study into this report. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

Additional, if slightly older, details appear in the Pew report of December 12, 2014, entitled *Wealth Inequality Has Widened Along Racial, Ethnic Lines Since End of Great Recession*. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/12/racial-wealth-gaps-great-recession/>

[http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Ever-Growing-Gap-CFED\\_IPS-Final-2.pdf](http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Ever-Growing-Gap-CFED_IPS-Final-2.pdf)

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## 11.1 Other Sources Cited:

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**See new companion essay on *What Is Structural Racism?* at:**

## **I2. Appendix I:**

### **Structural Racism: A Short Narrative**

Draft by Barbara H. Chasin, Ph. D.

Understanding structural racism caused by the routine workings of social organizations and institutions, is an important corrective to “blaming the victim” for the problems she or he confronts. In the United States it is common to think we are responsible for the conditions of our life. It is true we all make choices. But these choices are made from a menu that we *don't* create. We all find ourselves in circumstances not of our choosing and for people of color these “menus” have been created by hundreds of years of racism. The detailed report prepared by a local group of SURJ (Standing Up for Racial Justice) researchers working with anthropologist Dick Franke shows in great detail the local impact of structural racism. Here we want to present more of a narrative around this data. We urge you to read the full report but hope this shorter narrative version will be of use as well. Where it is relevant we have put the section and/or table where you can find the supporting statistics and further discussion in the longer document.

### **The Development of Structural Racism**

Over the decades numerous organizations have created policies that have today a measurable negative impact on people of color. Many of these policies were created because of explicitly racist ideas and policies. [Section 1]. For example, educational institutions use biased evaluation instruments, whose history goes back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to allegedly measure intelligence. African American students often do worse as a group on these tests. This is not because they are less intelligent but because the items often test certain cultural knowledge. The testing situation itself can affect scores. If those taking the tests are hungry, are under stress, or have a negative self-conception they can do worse. Those administering the test are probably not racist but they are using a biased instrument in a situation almost guaranteed to produce differential results by race.

### **Structural Racism Locally – Some Aspects**

When Cornell University does not provide sufficient on-campus housing of its students, the students subsidized by parents, loans and/or financial assistance from CU create a demand for housing in Ithaca. In our market-driven economy this drives up the cost of rents and causes lower-income people – disproportionately people of color – to have to look elsewhere for housing [Section 5]. There is also evidence nationally of long-standing housing discrimination sometimes using income as a stand-in for race. Is this the case in Ithaca [Sections 2.3 and 5]?

If you work in Ithaca but live in another community numerous problems can arise depending on your income. There is a significant income disparity between whites and blacks in Tompkins County [Table 4.1]. Lower income individuals are less likely to own a car and if they do own one it may not be in the best of condition. If your car breaks down or the bus doesn't come on time you can be late for work. This can make you vulnerable to being fired or otherwise disciplined. Are you as able as those with a car to enjoy the cultural and recreational activities in this area? Is it harder to get to health services? How does the stress of not having a reliable way to get around impact your health?

What these examples show is that only a conscious awareness of and a committed desire to reduce and eliminate racial inequalities will produce a truly post-racial society.

We also recognize that many whites suffer from a number of the policies described in the report but the effects on African Americans have been and continue to be more severe. That. said there are obvious reasons for all those who suffer from decisions not in our interest to work together to create a fairer and more just society. Many of us would benefit from more affordable housing, reliable and inexpensive public transportation and from money spent on social needs not militarism. Can you add to this list?

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The next two pages are the one-sheet intro version of the report. Other formatted versions are being prepared, including a Powerpoint.

#### **Appendix 2: The Single Sheet Version of the report – next page**

**For a revised single sheet version with graphs and additional information, go to:**

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/TompkinsCountyOnePageStructuralRacism.pdf>

**See new companion essay on *What Is Structural Racism?* at:**

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeVWhatIsStructuralRacism.pdf>

# Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County: Selected Indicators

**Structural racism is a set of consequences within society that lead to racist outcomes in people's lives via the ordinary daily workings of society. These consequences are caused by the accumulated history of racist oppression from slavery through Jim Crow, as well as past and continuing discrimination in housing, jobs and other areas of life.** (All sources and details are in the longer document.at

<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeStructuralRacismInIthacaCityandTompkinsCounty2017.pdf>

## Ithaca City and Tompkins County – Basic Numbers

African Americans (AA) are 6.6% of Ithaca City and 4.3% of Tompkins County vs. 15.2% for New York State and 13.3% of the U.S. overall.

Hispanics are 6.9% of Ithaca City and 4.9% of Tompkins County vs. 18.2% of New York State and 17.6% of the U.S.

The Ithaca City population is 3 percentage points “whiter” than the U.S.

Tompkins County is 17.5 percentage points whiter than the U.S.

## Health and Life Expectancy

The premature death rate (before age 75 years) in Tompkins County for AA is 69%; for Hispanics it is 71% and for whites, 37%.

Percent of low birth-weight babies in Tompkins County: whites – 6% (7% nationally), AA – 14% (13% nationally) and Hispanics – 6% (7% nationally).

Tompkins County asthma hospitalizations for whites were 4 per 10,000; 7 for AA

Tompkins County diabetes hospitalizations for whites were 108 per 10,000; for AA – 211 (Hispanic data not available).

## Income—Wealth—Poverty—Unemployment

The median African-American (AA) income recently in Ithaca City is \$22,222 = 53% that of whites vs. a 61% rate for New York State overall; for Hispanics it is \$18,934, 45% of white income vs. 59% for New York State overall.

Nationally, white household (accumulated) wealth is 7 to 13 times that of African Americans. This gap has recently been widening.

In Ithaca City, 33% of AA households qualify for food stamps vs. 19% for Hispanics and 11% for whites. For New York State, the poverty rate is 11% for whites, 24% for AA and 26% of Hispanics.

### How Structural Racism Gets Started and then Institutionalized - An Example

In 1934 the government set up the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to promote homeownership throughout the nation. The FHA established "red lining," a policy that intentionally kept African-American households from getting loans that were available to whites. From 1934 until the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (which officially banned redlining) only 2% of FHA loans went to African Americans. This simple historical fact explains much of the inequality in home ownership. A recent study found that an equal home ownership would reduce the wealth gap between whites and blacks by 47% and for Latinos by 69%. (See the longer document for complete references.)

In recent years, the AA unemployment rate in Ithaca City was as high as 23% vs 8% for whites and 8% for Hispanics – In November 2016 the unemployment rate for Tompkins County had dropped to 3.4%, the lowest county rate in New York. For New York State the white rate in fall 2016 was 4.2% vs 6.8% for African Americans and 6.5% for Latinos.

### Home Ownership and Neighborhood Composition

The home ownership rate for AA in Ithaca was 20% vs. 37% for whites and 6% for Hispanics. Nationally, 71% of whites own their homes vs. 41% of African Americans and 45% of Hispanics. Overall, 73.6% of Ithaca City housing is rentals, v. 36.1% of the U.S. national

rate. Housing costs are greater than 30% of income for 69% of renters; African Americans are more than 3 times as dependent on project-based housing as their population percentage and almost 5 times as likely to be on a waiting list. Sluggish construction of student housing by Cornell may be exacerbating the competition between students and local residents in finding affordable housing in Ithaca City.

The main historic African-American neighborhood in Ithaca – near Southside Community Center – appears to be fragmenting, due in part to rising property values (and taxes) and possibly to landlord "legal discrimination" by denying Section 8 renters.

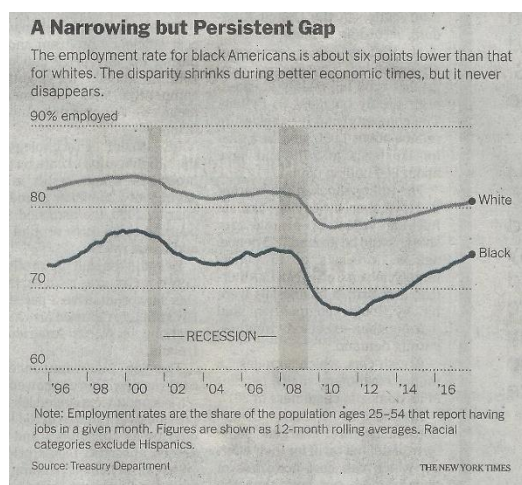
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**Most data are for the years 2011-2015** and derive from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census). Health and poverty data are from NY State statistical surveys or county reports. Household wealth data might be available only at the national level – I'm looking into it. Details, sources and additional information are available in the longer document entitled *Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County: Some Thoughts for Discussion in Our Community*.

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## 13. Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County: Some Facts and Thoughts for Discussion in Our Community **Updates** for the Original June, 2017 Version

1. Table 4.3, page 16 was altered on 31 January, 2018 to reflect one-year newer data from the American Community Survey. The values in Table 4.3 changed very slightly.
2. On 5 February, 2018, at 11:43 am we posted a 26-page companion essay to accompany this report. It is entitled *What Is Structural Racism: Some Thoughts for Anti-Racist Activists*, by Richard W. Franke. <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~franker/FrankeWhatIsStructuralRacism.pdf>
3. On 25 February, 2018 we posted a link to a *New York Times Business Day* article by Natalie Kitroeff and Ben Casselman entitled “The Limitations of a Rising Tide: Lowest Ever Black Jobless Rate is Still Twice That of Whites.” *The New York Times*, February 23, 2018, pages B1 and B-5. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/23/business/economy/black-unemployment.html>



This article updates and supplements the materials on unemployment in Section 4.4, Table 4.3. The national data parallel that of Ithaca City and Tompkins County. The black rate is generally about twice that of the white rate, but when the black rate got down around 6.8% it began to slightly close the gap with the white rate. However, subsequently the black rate went back up to 7.7% in January of 2018. The article goes on to discuss efforts by Minnesota activists to push open opportunities for full time better paying jobs for African Americans.

4. On 5 June, 2018 we added information from [\*The State of the Nation's Housing – 2017\*](#), published by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, concerning national home ownership by race and ethnic group. The following two paragraphs are from page 4 of the document:

Over the past 12 years, the black homeownership rate fell sharply to just 42.2 percent, slightly below the 1994 level...With white rates increasing to 71.9 percent over this period, the black-white homeownership gap widened by 2.3 percentage points to 29.7 percentage points in 2016 – the largest disparity since World War II.

At the same time, the homeownership rates were up nearly 5 percentage points among Asians (to 55.5 percent) and Hispanics (to 46.0 percent), narrowing the gap with white homeownership rates by 2.8 percentage points. Together with growth in their populations,

these gains lifted the combined Asian and Hispanic share of homebuying activity from one out of seven sales in 2001 to nearly one out of five in 2015.

Source: <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/publications/state-nations-housing-2017>

5. Update of 06 June, 2018. The Census Blog of 07 December, 2017 includes a discussion of the statistical effects of off-campus college students on the reported poverty rates in selected areas of the U. S. Based on this report, it can be estimated that the Tompkins County and Ithaca City poverty rates change as follows:

Ithaca (all): 44.8%

Ithaca (excluding off-campus students): 23.2%

Tompkins County (all): 20.1%

Tompkins County (excluding off-campus students): 11.7%

This puts Ithaca's poverty rate well above the national rate for 2012-2016 of 12.7%, but Tompkins County below it.

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/12/off-campus.html>

Thanks to Ani Mukherji who shared this link and information on the Poor People's Campaign listserve: [tompkinspoorpeoplescampaign@lists.riseup.net](mailto:tompkinspoorpeoplescampaign@lists.riseup.net)

6. Update of 08 March, 2019. **RACIAL INEQUALITY AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN TOMPKINS COUNTY**. In July of 2017, the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) in Rochester released a 191-page report: "An Assessment of the Future of the Tompkins County Jail" that had been commissioned by the county government in connection with debates going on about whether the county jail should be expanded to cover cases of boarding out of prisoners that was costing the county high fees. Though race was not a focus of the report, the following findings appeared nonetheless:

- Consistently for the past 10 years, "Blacks comprise only 4% of the total county 16+ population, but account for about 14.5% of female jail admissions and 24% of all male admissions". (Pryor 2017:37-38)
- The "black proportion of felony arrests is higher than for misdemeanors (about 27% vs. 20%)."
- "Blacks were somewhat more likely to have been booked more than once prior to their 2016 admission to the jail." (Pryor 2017:40). [The specific numbers were not presented in this instance.]
- "There appear to have been no significant differences by race, gender or age between those who have and have not been re-admitted within a year." (Pryor 2017:58).
- "Of all cases under active probation supervision, 15% were identified in active case files as black and 4.4% as Hispanic." (Pryor 2017:75)
- The discrepancy between the black arrest rate and the black probation rate suggests that "blacks are less likely proportionately to be sentenced to probation than they are to be remanded to jail." (Pryor 2017:75)

<https://www.cgr.org/TompkinsCrimJust/docs/CGR-TompkinsCJStudy-FullReport.pdf>



7. Update links for Table 5.I 24 February, 2021. These links provide connection to the American Community Survey data. The ACS itself has been decommissioned but existing data collected earlier are still available.

White Householder Rental or Owner for Ithaca City in 2015-2019 via American Community Survey

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0600000US3610938077&tid=ACSDT5Y2016.B25003H&q=ACSDT5Y2016.B25003H>

Black Householder

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0600000US3610938077&tid=ACSDT5Y2015.B25003B&q=ACSDT5Y2015.B25003B>