

CHAPTER IV

HOUSING

It will be readily acknowledged that housing is a problem today for a great many people, because there are not enough houses to go around. To the majority of white home-seekers, this problem is relatively new, since the war. To the Negro-American, this is an ever-present problem. Next to jobs, according to this survey, housing is the greatest potential tension point in the field of inter-cultural relations. In the present crisis, many sociologists place housing before even jobs, because apparently it is easier to get people to work together than it is to get them to live next door to one another.

Grand Rapids has been proud of the fact that it has no formal slum area. It is true it has none. It is also true that within these ten areas studied, several sections form the nucleus for an actual slum area. It is hard to stop the spread of slums, once they get started. Like a disease, they cannot be confined to any one particular area for long, and soon they contaminate the entire city. It is wise for property owners and for others in authority to act at once to stem the deterioration.

In general, Grand Rapids is a city of home owners. According to Table IX, 46% of the Negro-Americans in these areas own their homes, while the same is true of 60% of the white families. This analysis indicates that about 50% of the people in the areas studied either own or are buying their homes. Of those who are renters, the rent paid is from \$15.00 to \$29.00 per month for a five to seven room house. (Table X.) There occurs the usual disparity in rents due to the fact that Negro families must pay the same rents as whites for the same size house, but are forced to live in the most undesirable and unattractive residences.

The general physical condition of the houses in these areas is found to be good or fair (Table XI), which condition is to be expected in an area where about 50% of the group own their homes. But the figure indicating the number of poor or unfit homes is still too large.

The size of the Negro-American family occupying a five to seven room house is from six to nine persons, as compared with the white families whose size is from three to five persons for a comparable house (Table XIII). This indicates that overcrowding in the homes exists more noticeably among Negro-American families than among white

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TABLE IX

MONTHLY RENTAL PAID

AREA	\$5-\$9		\$10-\$14		\$15-\$19		\$20-\$24		\$25-\$29		\$30-\$34		\$35-\$39		\$40-\$44		\$45 or More		Owned		Not Given	Total
	N*	W*	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W		
A SE	0	0	0	3	0	6	0	11	0	14	0	9	0	4	1	1	0	1	12	16	16	239
B SE	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	21	70	3	105
C SE	0	1	2	1	4	0	2	3	0	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	37	9	106
D SE	2	0	7	2	20	8	26	4	12	7	4	3	0	4	1	2	1	5	93	55	20	276
F SE	0	2	3	4	25	11	13	9	1	3	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	10	33	8	128
G SW	0	3	4	5	9	11	2	5	4	4	1	1	0	1	0	5	0	1	34	42	12	144
H SW	0	2	9	10	33	11	37	15	24	10	13	6	0	3	6	1	0	1	84	29	6	300
J SW	0	7	1	23	6	31	0	27	1	11	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	89	3	207
K SW	10	0	9	3	19	1	27	0	2	2	5	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	27	5	19	132
L SW	0	1	4	2	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	19
TOTAL	13	17	39	53	121	80	109	74	48	54	29	27	0	13	10	14	3	8	323	521	100	1,656

*N denotes Negro

*W denotes White

TABLE X
SIZE OF DWELLING UNITS
(No. of Rooms per
Family Unit)

AREA	1 Room		2 Rooms		3 Rooms		4 Rooms		5 Rooms		6 Rooms		7 Rooms		8 Rooms	
	N*	W*	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W
A SE	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	11	2	3	9	52	1	53	5	18
B SE	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	24	7	23	7	16	6	6
C SE	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	6	8	8	6	20	17	9	9
D SE	1	0	5	2	11	6	17	3	38	21	33	24	30	20	20	15
F SE	2	0	0	2	2	1	8	7	20	14	14	12	8	12	1	9
G SW	0	0	0	0	3	10	7	16	20	27	12	13	4	13	7	7
H SW	8	0	2	4	21	12	17	12	20	20	35	17	46	12	38	8
J SW	0	0	0	4	0	13	2	28	2	57	2	24	2	36	0	15
K SW	4	1	4	0	5	0	15	3	16	2	18	2	18	1	14	0
L SW	0	1	1	1	6	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	15	2	12	13	48	52	67	87	126	226	141	173	136	180	100	87

*N Denotes Negro

*W Denotes White

TABLE X (Continued)

SIZE OF DWELLING UNITS
(No. of Rooms per
Family Unit)

AREA	9 Rooms		10 Rooms		11 Rooms		12 Rooms		13 Rooms		14 Rooms		Not Given	Total
	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W		
A SE	0	17	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	239
B SE	0	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	105
C SE	4	3	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	106
D SE	8	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	13	276
F SE	0	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	7	128
G SW	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	144
H SW	3	1	6	5	2	0	6	0	0	0	1	1	3	300
J SW	0	12	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	207
K SW	2	2	12	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	1	0	5	132
L SW	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	19
TOTAL	17	52	24	16	9	5	12	2	3	0	4	2	45	1,656

TABLE XI
CONDITION OF DWELLING UNITS

AREA	GOOD		FAIR		POOR		UNFIT		NOT GIVEN	TOTAL
	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White		
A SE	7	163	5	56	1	4	0	0	3	239
B SE	10	44	15	25	0	6	0	0	5	105
C SE	20	26	20	22	11	3	0	0	4	106
D SE	71	63	85	27	18	3	0	0	9	276
F SE	12	26	37	30	12	4	1	0	6	128
G SW	21	55	21	28	9	3	0	1	6	144
H SW	29	19	111	40	50	19	9	4	19	300
J SW	3	75	5	70	1	31	0	12	10	207
K SW	29	4	56	4	23	3	5	0	8	132
L SW	0	3	9	0	3	0	0	0	4	19
TOTAL	202	478	364	302	128	76	15	17	74	1,656

TABLE XII

SIZE OF FAMILY OCCUPYING DWELLING UNIT

AREA	1-3		4-5		6-7		8-9		10-11		12-13		14-15		16 Or More		Not Given	Total
	N*	W*	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W		
A SE	7	87	4	95	3	32	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1		239
B SE	2	33	7	23	7	5	4	13	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	105
C SE	11	22	10	13	12	10	13	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	106
D SE	25	56	22	30	34	12	58	1	17	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	16	276
F SE	6	36	11	16	11	7	15	1	9	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	10	128
G SW	5	36	21	34	10	9	14	7	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	144
H SW	35	32	35	29	47	13	54	4	19	9	10	1	0	0	7	0	5	300
J SW	0	69	6	51	1	46	0	12	1	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	12	207
K SW	34	7	18	3	30	1	13	0	7	0	3	0	3	0	2	0	11	132
L SW	4	2	1	1	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	19
TOTAL	129	380	135	295	155	136	174	55	66	22	22	3	4	0	9	1	70	1,656

*N denotes Negro

*W denotes White

families. The existence of greater overcrowding on the part of Negro families can be traced to the following causes: (1) the inability of the Negro family to exercise freedom of movement or choice in type of home; (2) the crowding of more people into an inflexible area because of the influx from the South; and (3) the increased application of "restrictive covenants" or of comparable action. While it is true that in the present housing crisis, overcrowding exists among both white and Negro families, it must be kept in mind that the condition is a temporary one for white families but is likely to be permanent for the Negro family. Among human beings, when there has been an unnatural massing together without the necessary freedom of motion, it seems certain that racial conflict, eventually, will occur.

The average number of bedrooms in houses occupied by Negro families is two and one-half, while three and one-half is average among white families (Table XIII.) The statistics indicate that the larger Negro family has fewer bedrooms than has the same sized white family. Such a condition not only affects the health of the families involved, but also has a direct influence on their moral and cultural development. In many homes, children of adolescent age have been found sleeping in the same room

TABLE XIII

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS IN DWELLING UNIT
(No. of Bedrooms per Family)

AREA	1 Bed- room		2 Bed- rooms		3 Bed- rooms		4 Bed- rooms		5 Bed- rooms		6 Bed- rooms		7 Bed- rooms		Not Given	Total
	N*	W*	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W		
A SE	0	18	3	68	9	90	5	33	0	3	0	2	0	0	8	239
B SE	0	7	4	26	13	28	2	10	8	1	0	0	0	0	6	105
C SE	0	4	9	9	28	27	10	10	2	0	1	0	0	0	6	106
D SE	20	10	58	26	62	42	25	17	3	1	1	0	0	0	11	276
F SE	5	11	20	13	33	21	1	12	1	3	0	0	0	0	8	128
G SW	4	22	20	38	22	20	5	10	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	144
H SW	20	22	42	38	60	20	46	8	22	0	8	0	2	0	12	300
J SW	0	30	4	78	4	56	0	20	0	9	0	1	0	0	5	207
K SW	22	4	30	3	21	1	19	3	11	0	3	0	7	0	8	132
L SW	1	0	5	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6	19
TOTAL	72	128	195	299	254	306	115	123	47	18	14	4	10	0	71	1,656

*N denotes Negro

*W denotes White

TABLE XIV

NUMBER OF DWELLINGS HAVING A BATHROOM

AREA	Number having Individual Bathroom per Family Unit		Number Sharing Bathroom		Number Without Bathroom		Not Given	Total
	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White		
A SE	7	210	8	2	2	5	5	239
B SE	15	75	5	0	4	1	5	105
C SE	48	40	0	0	4	10	4	106
D SE	140	95	6	0	19	4	12	276
F SE	40	47	6	0	11	6	18	128
G SW	47	81	0	0	7	8	1	144
H SW	173	76	23	8	8	3	9	300
J SW	9	129	0	0	2	62	5	207
K SW	34	3	47	3	29	5	11	132
L SW	8	1	0	0	3	4	3	19
TOTAL	521	757	95	13	89	108	73	1,656

with their parents, and in some cases, several adult couples are occupying one room.

In this study, a full bathroom is defined as having a bathtub, bowl, and wash basin. According to Table XIV, 73% of the Negro homes have full bathrooms, while 86% of the white families have the same; sharing the bathroom with one or more other families are 12% of the Negro group, and 1.9% of the white group.

Eighteen per cent of the Negro families have a bowl and wash basin but no bathtub, while the same condition was found to exist among only 12% of the white families. In both groups, the percentage not having inside toilet facilities was negligible.

It is interesting to note that twenty-seven Negro and white families were occupying the same duplex, living one over the other or side by side.

SUMMARY: A housing crisis exists that is affecting all groups of people. For the majority of white families, it is a temporary problem. But for the majority of Negro families, it is a permanent problem unless a change occurs in the present pattern, so that Negro-American families

TABLE XV

NUMBER OF DWELLINGS HAVING A BATHTUB

AREA	Number having Individual Bathtub per Family Unit		Number Sharing Bathtub		Number Without Bathtub		Not Given	Total
	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White		
A SE	13	213	0	0	0	3	10	239
B SE	20	70	0	0	4	6	5	105
C SE	48	43	0	0	4	7	4	106
D SE	136	93	0	0	26	5	16	276
F SE	54	55	0	0	7	5	7	128
G SW	30	70	0	0	23	19	2	144
H SW	184	80	0	0	20	4	12	300
J SW	9	129	0	0	1	58	10	207
K SW	26	4	39	1	43	5	14	132
L SW	10	5	0	0	4	0	0	19
TOTAL	530	762	39	1	132	112	80	1,656

TABLE XVI

NUMBER OF DWELLINGS HAVING INSIDE TOILETS

AREA	Number having Individual Toilets per Family Unit		Number Sharing Toilet		Number Without Toilet		Not Given	Total
	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White		
A _{SE}	10	214	0	0	0	0	15	239
B _{SE}	26	70	0	0	0	0	9	105
C _{SE}	50	45	1	1	0	1	8	106
D _{SE}	168	93	0	0	1	1	13	276
E _{SE}	49	58	0	0	5	2	14	128
G _{SW}	52	84	0	0	0	1	7	144
H _{SW}	200	83	0	1	1	0	15	300
J _{SW}	8	181	0	0	2	7	9	207
K _{SW}	16	6	91	4	9	1	5	132
L _{SW}	13	4	0	0	0	0	2	19
TOTAL	592	838	92	6	18	13	97	1,656

obtain the opportunity for movement and expansion,

Of the majority of houses, the general physical conditions are good, but there is a potential threat of slum development in several areas.

And let it be remembered that overcrowding in living conditions tends to affect the health and the cultural and moral development of the family.

CHAPTER V

WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY

It is of interest and of value to know what the "man on the street" thinks about current problems. The information in this chapter has been obtained through comments volunteered by the interviewee, or from statements drawn from individuals by the researcher in his roving tour of the areas. The question was asked: "What do you think about race relations in Grand Rapids?" (The term "inter-cultural" was eliminated, as it is a rather new scientific term in the field of Human Relations and is probably not familiar to the general public.) Answers are grouped below according to subject matter.

QUESTION: "What do you think about race relations in Grand Rapids?"

THE ANSWERS

CONCERNING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

"I think there are too many Southerners coming here. They all ought to stay in the South, then we won't have any trouble up here."

"I don't have anything against or for Negroes. They're just like everyone else; some good, and some bad."

"The trouble with the Negro is that if you give him equality, he wants to live next door to you or marry outside his own group."

"There are a lot of foreigners coming in from the Old Country. America ought to be kept for Americans."

"I just don't like Negroes. Don't have a special reason. Just grew up with the idea."

"White folks don't like it because they can't kick us around up here like they do in the South. I lost my boy in the war, and we still have no freedom."

"This was a good town until these white folks from the South started coming here. If we aren't careful, Grand Rapids will be as bad as Mississippi."

"Freedom, Democracy, huh. There isn't any such word for Negroes. That means only white folks. Democracy - that's a laugh."

"I believe that people generally are pretty decent. I don't think we'll have any riots or disturbances here."

CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT

"I work with some colored men every day. We get along fine; no trouble."

"There are a lot of places in this town that won't hire colored folks. What good is it to go to school and get education if you can't use it when you get out?"

"They talk about Negroes not being able to keep up their houses. How are you going to keep up your place if you can't get a decent job?"

"I've never worked with a Negro and don't think I'd like to. No special reason, must have inherited my feeling from my parents."

"I look at it this way. Some white folks are good workers and some white folks are bad workers. It's the same in the colored group."

"Things are getting better now. If a Negro is qualified, he can get some pretty decent jobs. This is going to be a good town for everybody."

"The only thing about Negroes is that they won't

come to work on time, and they lay off after payday. Oh, I know it isn't true of all Negroes, and a lot of white folks do the same thing, but you just notice it more when colored people do it."

CONCERNING HOUSES

"Folks talk about Negroes buying these big fine cars instead of a house. We would like to buy a house, but where can a Negro find a decent house to buy? You can buy only in certain areas. So instead of them buying what they need and can't get, they just buy a car that they want."

"My neighbors for the last twenty-five years have been colored people. They keep their property in good shape and they are fine neighbors."

"I'd like to sell a house to a Negro in this neighborhood, but my white clients would either move out or boycott my business."

"People ought to be free to move wherever they please as long as they have the money and can act decent. They weren't so choosy when they were all scared during the war. They didn't mind having Negroes die to keep them

safe, but they can't live next door to them in peace.
White folks and me - - we just aren't!"

"We don't mind Negroes living in our block.
They don't bother us any."

"There are too many Negroes coming. They're
going to ruin this neighborhood."

"If they try to make all the Negroes live in
one district, this town will be sorry at the results.
You can't herd people like cattle."