Interracial Housing—

Three articles on a study financed by the Marshall Field Foundation on racial relationships in public housing.

by

MORTON DEUTSCH

and

MARY EVANS COLLINS

Research Centre for Human Relations, New York University

Reprinted from
The JOURNAL OF HOUSING
for
January, March, and April, 1950
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING OFFICIALS
1313 East Sixtieth Street
Chicago 37, Illinois
Interracial Housing

Three articles on a study financed by the Marshall Field Foundation on racial relationships in public housing.

ARTICLE 1

What Factors Influence Tenant-Racial Group Relations? A Survey of opinion among housing officials

MORTON DEUTSCH

and MARY EVANS COLLINS

Research Center for Human Relations, New York University

The authors acknowledge great con-

tributions to the study by Dr. Stuart W. Cook and Dr. Reuven J. Movard through advice and suggestions.

A brief word about each of these questions of policy.

Site Selection. After having ful-

filled the requirements with reference to slum clearance, etc., a housing authority in most cases has a choice in the selection of a site for a new project. If the potential project remains will include Negroes, it was felt that the site choice is either an inter-racial neighborhood or a "white" neighborhood in an inter-racial or Negro neighborhood. The reasons advanced for this opinion are:

1. It is unpalatable to hope that large shifts of either the Negro or the white group into a previously homogeneous neighborhood can be accomplished without difficulty—and perhaps opposition—on the "line".

2. An inter-racial neighborhood re-

sults in an easier adjustment for project residents from both ethnic groups. Neither group need feel isolated as the outcast and neighborhood facilities (such as barber shops, drugstores, banks, and churches), which are usu-

ally not immediately available to the Negro or white group in a predominantly homogeneous neighborhood, are accessible. It was also pointed out that the schools in an inter-racial neighborhood are usually inter-racial, which lessens the burden for either Negro or white children and contributes to a new environment.

3. The residents from an inter-

racial neighborhood frequently form the nucleus of the population in the new project. Neighbors and friends of both racial groups carry the inter-racial tradition of the neighborhood.

4. Discrimination against those of the "open side" is equi-


distant from the centers of concentra-

tion. This discrimination was not men-

tioned by some housing officials in order to avoid many site selection problems.

Tenant Selection. Assigning tenants to public housing projects is a controversial question. It was felt, however, that the problems of assigning Negroes to a project must be made at an early stage in the project's planning. Furthermore, the selection of tenants must be made in order to create the most stable and harmonious neighborhood which will be possible.
article ii

attitudes of housewives surveyed in four interracial projects: two integrated, two segregated

new york, new york: campbell

we obtained the cooperation of two large housing authorities.

new york and new york, which differ in policy with respect to the type of occupancy pattern in interracial public housing projects. in new york, the projects which house both negro and white families, have a segregated occupancy pattern; the pattern in new york is essentially the same as that in the other projects surveyed for study. a study of the negro-white ratio in each project was made in an attempt to determine the cause of such segregation. whether or not the "whites in the family," she is the key person in nearly all cases interested about the place of residence.

the results of the occupancy patterns in new york are as follows:

3. more than described discussion of this study will be found in the full report to be published by the university of minnesota, "the negro-white ratio in four interracial projects: a study of a social department.

4. with the express permission to both the new york and new york housing authorities for this investigation, "the negro-white ratio in four interracial projects: a study of a social department."
The Research Results: Part 1

Getting to Know Each Other. In the interview, we asked the housewives to indicate whether they thought that a person who moved into the project would be "likely to get to know any Negro people in the project". The differences in responses of the housewives in the two types of projects are striking. More than 95 per cent of the women in each of the two integrated projects assert that a person will get to know some Negro people in the project; the few dissenters voice the opinion that it "depends upon you." In contrast, only a minority (30 per cent in one and 21 per cent in the other) of the housewives in the segregated bi-racial projects feel that there is any chance of getting to know Negro people; the majority are quite convinced that no such likelihood exists.

Clearly, then, the opportunity to get to know Negro people is considerably greater in the integrated, than in the segregated, interracial project. Table 1 helps to explain why there is such a striking difference in respect to the two types of projects. The most frequently mentioned place of contact with Negro people for white residents in the integrated projects is the building in which they live, and their laundry facilities located in or near their building or in a building on their property. (People in all types, but perhaps the most part, customarily tend to sit during the warmer season on benches located near their buildings.) It seems evident that the major source of Negro-white contact (outside home and living in the same building) is not available to residents of a segregated bi-racial project.

Several of our questions in the interview of the housewives had the purpose of discovering whether the contacts were with Negro women in the two types of projects. This is, the differences we are reporting cannot be explained by differences in the two types of projects other than occupancy preference — which is not as assertive as the data presented in the two types of projects are equally the same with respect to, for example, political attitudes, education, religious affiliation. Rather it is to assert that even Negro women in the two types of projects are eliminated by statistical control in the analysis of the data, the differences due to occupancy preference are still marked and statistically significant.

Table 1: Table of Percent of Housewives Indicating Places Where They are Most Likely to Meet Negro People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Place</th>
<th>Integrated Interracial</th>
<th>Segregated Bi-racial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nazareth, etc. in building</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through laundry facilities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside home, etc.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In offices, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes, meetings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping, etc. in general area</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the children's schools</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evidence strongly indicates that the housewives in the integrated project expect more approval than disapproval from Negro people in friendly contact with the Negro people. She thinks it's better, rather than not better, for her to "be friendly with Negro people." In contrast, the housewife in the segregated area would expect to be socially ostracized by the other white women in her neighborhood with Negro people and asserts that it is better not to have much to do with them. The Negro people in the segregated project indicated: "They think you're crazy if you had a colored woman in your house. You'd have to be a damn fool."

Table 2: Table of Percent of Persons Known Best Who are Negro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range with Housewives with Negro Friends</th>
<th>Integrated Interracial</th>
<th>Segregated Bi-racial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-25%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-49%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, the housewife in the integrated project indicated that she has a Negro friend and does not wish to have contact with her. She is very friendly with the Negro people and does not wish to have close interracial contact.

In the integrated project, the reaction of the broader community presents a problem: she doesn't have much contact with the Negro people, the standard for behavior implicit in the project setting Negro and white families do not wish to have close interracial contact.

It should be recognized that a housing project does not exist in isolation; it exists in a community and the attitude toward Negro people in the project is reflected in the broader community. This is especially true in the integrated project, where Negro-white contacts are frequent, and Negro-white friendships are more common.

The results of our study are not discredited; they reflect the fact that the Negro-white contact is important in the development of friendship and trust, which is essential in the integration of the communities.
problem comes up when my relatives, especially my mother-in-law, visit. They don't like the idea of me living next-door to Negroes. You know my friends sometimes get upset too. Well, I don't want to hurt my friend—I had to get along with my mother-in-law—it's a problem all right.

Several successes appear to directly result from the cross-purposes that face the housewife in the integrated project. Viewed in this light, she is more aware of the interacial aspects of the project than her counterpart in the segregated project. She spontaneously mentions this aspect of the project more frequently. Whether her attitude toward it is positive or negative, the interacial composition of the project is more prominent in her thinking. Secondly, some rather unexpected effects occur on the general social life in the project. These effects are discussed below.

Social Life in the Project. Here we have space only to summarize the effect of occupancy pattern upon the development of friendships within the project. Our results indicate that the housewives in the integrated projects are generally more friendly with each other . . . they do a lot more thing together, they like each other better, and they have more close friends with each other in the project. Table 3, for example, indicates a higher percentage of housewives in each of the projects with diffusely.

numbers of close friends within the project. Table 4 indicates that the white housewives in the integrated projects not only have more neighbors within projects with Negro roommates but also that the general level of neighborliness in the integrated projects is considerably higher. It seems likely that the greater friendliness that characterizes the relationships of housewives in the integrated projects, in some measure results from the cross-purposes in which they are exposed. Partly in defense, partly as a means of solidifying themselves in face of outside discrimination, the housewives have been drawn closer together, with the resulting social gain of increased project cohesiveness. A complementary loss of some friends outside the project might be expected but actually does not occur. It is true that housewives in the integrated projects report losing some former friends who are prejudiced but they report gaining new friends.

The results indicate no differences between the housewives in the two types of projects in number of close friends outside the projects.

It has been suggested that the lesser friendliness among housewives in the segregated projects reflect the loss experienced as a result of isolating oneself from contact with the Negro people. Citing oneself off from spontaneous human relationships with one group may inhibit relationships with other people. Such an explanation appears to have some validity. For example, in the segregated projects, these are central social facilities open to both Negro and whites. Many white tenants, in the atmosphere of segregation, shun these facilities and thus generally limit the possibilities of making friends within the project, even with members of their own race.

To Sum Up . . .

To sum up, the integrated projects are characterized by a friendliness, more coherent social atmosphere. These differences between the two types of projects in part reflect a defense by housewives in the integrated projects against social disapproval of close interacial contacts in the broader community and, in part, the loss in the segregated projects that results from limiting spontaneous, human relationships with another group.

In this article we have indicated the effects of the two occupancy patterns upon interacial contact, upon social standards with respect to interacial associations, and upon social relations within the projects. In a following article we shall discuss what impact these differences due to occupancy patterns have upon upon upon the residential attitudes toward Negroes in general, toward other minority groups, and toward interacial housing.

Housewives’ Relations

But let us look at the nature of the housewives’ relations with the Negro people in the projects. Table 3 indicates that the relationships between Negro people and the white tenants in the integrated projects are preponderantly friendly, while in the segregated projects most housewives do not have any relationships with the Negro people in the project.

Many women in the integrated projects made statements of this nature (friendly relations): "We get along beautifully. They’re really wonderful. When I was sick, Mrs. Jones across the hall waited on me and the came in and helped. She used to bring food in and go shopping for me. A lot of white people wouldn’t do that for you." Or, "They’re nice to get along with. They treat me fine. They’re the same as everybody else.

The accommodation relationship is characterized by such remarks as: "I’ve had no trouble. They mind their own business and I pay my rent on time in the morning." But with me it’s 'hello and good-bye' but a lot mush with the people here.

The mixed transition is evidenced by such phrases as: "some are nice, but some are really nasty."

None of the instances of bad relations were characterized by physical violence, they took the form of an intense discomfort or dislike. Thus, one housewife in an integrated project, who was rated as having bad relations with the Negro tenants, said, "I’ve never liked them. I guess they know it and have told their kids. They call me white trash’ whenever they see one. I have to keep careful watch on my kids or else the colored kids will gang up on them."

Though there are instances of dislike and discomfort in both types of projects, the "provoking" that opponents of interacial housing expect to arise simply does not occur in well-managed projects. Neither the segregated nor the integrated interacial projects that we have studied are characterized by any interacial strife. To be sure, there are instances of bad relations among Negro and white tenants but they are not as frequent, as much, study of our indicates, than one finds between members of different nationalities in an all-white project.

Before, After

So far, the results have indicated that the integrated occupancy pattern causes more opportunities for close contact with members of the other race, an atmosphere more favorable to friendly interacial associations. But these housewives report a desire to be friendly with the Negro people with the number who wish to avoid relationships. There are approximately two housewives who wish to be friendly as many housewives who wish to avoid contact with Negroes in the integrated projects; in the segregated developments, there is approximately only one who wishes to do this.

Another striking difference in attitudes resulting from the two occupancy patterns is revealed by comparison of the percentage of housewives who report a desire to be friendly with the Negro people with the number who wish to avoid relationships. There are approximately two housewives who wish to be friendly as many housewives who wish to avoid contact with Negroes in the integrated projects; in the segregated developments, there is approximately only one who wishes to do this.

Table 6 indicates that the overwhelming majority of women in the integrated projects report the Negro people in the projects; in contrast, there are in the segregated projects almost as many housewives who feel that the Negro people are inferior as there are who feel that they are equal to the white housewives.

Another striking difference in attitudes resulting from the two occupancy patterns is revealed by comparison of the percentage of housewives who report a desire to be friendly with the Negro people with the number who wish to avoid relationships. There are approximately two housewives who wish to be friendly as many housewives who wish to avoid contact with Negroes in the integrated projects; in the segregated developments, there is approximately only one who wishes to do this. That marked differences, taken together with our initial
assumptions, give evidence of a conti-

nually increasing interest in the Negro

problem. In general, however, the atti-
dudes Toward Negroes in general are

generally well known.

1. The main factor limiting the gen-

eralization of the favorable experiences with

them is the fact that the results are

based on a limited number of cases.

2. The Negro is generally less

reliable in his speech than the white

person.

3. The Negro is less intelligent

than the white person.

4. The Negro is less likely to

obey the law than the white person.

5. The Negro is less likely to

be honest than the white person.

6. The Negro is less likely to

be polite than the white person.

7. The Negro is less likely to

be industrious than the white person.

8. The Negro is less likely to

be hard working than the white person.

9. The Negro is less likely to

be trustworthy than the white person.

10. The Negro is less likely to

be dependable than the white person.

11. The Negro is less likely to

be reliable than the white person.

12. The Negro is less likely to

be trustworthy than the white person.

13. The Negro is less likely to

be industrious than the white person.

14. The Negro is less likely to

be hard working than the white person.

15. The Negro is less likely to

be dependable than the white person.

16. The Negro is less likely to

be reliable than the white person.

17. The Negro is less likely to

be trustworthy than the white person.

18. The Negro is less likely to

be industrious than the white person.

19. The Negro is less likely to

be hard working than the white person.

20. The Negro is less likely to

be dependable than the white person.

21. The Negro is less likely to

be reliable than the white person.

22. The Negro is less likely to

be trustworthy than the white person.
housewives in the segregated projects react as though they are not living in an integrated project. Otherwise, their attitudes are more likely to be negative than positive toward interracial living.

Of the women who report changing their attitudes toward living in an integrated project in the integrated projects, most indicate that they have come to like it better; in the segregated projects, most indicate that they have come to like it less. There is, in other words, a large net gain in the integrated projects and a net loss in the segregated projects in this respect. It has already been suggested, one of the more important factors determining negative attitudes appears to be the fact that the interracial projects are located in neighborhoods that are predominantly Negro and that are also deteriorated and high in delinquency. It is likely that such neighborhoods work in an opposite direction to whatever positive changes occur as a result of experiences with interracial living.

Policy for New Projects

Table 9 presents the responses of the housewives to the following question: "On the basis of your experience of living in a project where there are colored and white families, what plan do you think the city should follow in new projects? Do you think that colored and white families should be given apartments anywhere in the project, no matter what their race is; or do you think colored and white families should only be allowed to live in separate buildings in the project or do you think projects should be only all-white or all-colored?"

The opinions of the housewives in the integrated projects are in sharp contrast to those in the segregated projects. The majority of respondents in the former favor the integrated pattern; the housewives in the latter, on the other hand, would overwhelmingly prefer to have completely separate projects for Negro and white families. However, there are a number of housewives who feel satisfied with living in an integrated inter-racial project who would not recommend it as a policy for their city to follow in new projects. One gets the impression from the interviews that a number of people who are positive in their attitudes toward living in an integrated inter-racial project find it a strain to buck the prejudices of the larger community. Others, who would just as soon have Negroes as neighbors, feel that many other white people are prejudiced and these people might cause trouble.

In any case, the considerable percentage of housewives even in the integrated projects, who still favor a policy of segregation is a warning against complacency. To be sure, much can be achieved, as our results have indicated, by an integrated occupancy pattern. But this fact alone, particularly when prejudice characterizes the broader community, will not completely eradicate prejudice and discriminations in the minds of all tenants in integrated projects. Full opportunity for the development of new friendly attitudes to replace the old prejudices can be aided by the stimulation of cooperation between Negro and white families in tenant activities and organizations. Further, the breaking down of residential segregation in the broader community (which is facilitated by the policy of integration in the public housing project) will reduce the uniqueness of the experiences for the tenant population in the integrated project.

Summary of the Major Findings

The integrated, in comparison with the segregated, interracial housing project creates:

1. More opportunities for close intimate contacts between members of the different races.

2. A social atmosphere that is more favorable to friendly interracial associations.

3. A more closely knit project community.

4. More frequent and more extensive favorable attitudinal change toward the Negro people in the project and also toward Negro people in general.

5. A small extent, these changes are accompanied by changes in attitudes toward the Chinese.

6. More favorable attitudes toward living in an integrated project.

From the point of view of reducing prejudice and of creating harmonious democratic inter-group relations, the net gain resulting from the integrated projects, is considerable; from the same point of view, the gain created by the segregated bi-racial projects is slight.