

Discrimination and Housing Quality

GORDON SCOTT BONHAM

DISCRIMINATION occurs when some persons pay more than others for a dwelling unit of given quality, or when some receive poorer quality housing than others who pay the same.¹ It is the latter definition of discrimination which will be explored in this article, as the qualities of housing occupied by nonwhite renters and white renters living within U.S. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) in 1960 are compared.²

It has been observed that nonwhites occupied poorer quality housing than did whites even when the two color groups had similar characteristics.³ A number of economists, however, have argued that there is no real difference in the quality of nonwhite and white housing if all relevant factors are held constant.⁴ It is found in this study that when important differences between nonwhite and white households are simultaneously controlled, there remains a large color difference in housing quality which can be considered a quantitative measure of discrimination in renter-occupied housing.
