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A Reply To:

Flaming and Griffith on THE STRENGTH OF HOUSING NORMS

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I read with interest the comment by Flaming and Griffith on the Tremblay (1981) article. I cannot disagree with their suggestions for further research, particularly with reference to the Jahoda material.

There are some fairly important points that Flaming and Griffith seem to have missed, however. Probably most important is that, in their criticism of Tremblay, they fail to note that the application of normative theory to housing is in itself a major theoretical advance. At the risk of sounding somewhat defensive, it has been almost ten years since "A Theory of Family Housing Adjustment" appeared in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Morris and Winter, 1975) and five years since the publication of *Housing, Family, and Society* (Morris and Winter, 1978). Because Flaming and Griffith do not list either of these in their references one may conclude that they are not familiar with the work that has been done. That they seem to simply accept the basic ideas is flattering but the point that it is significant that sociologists who study housing have begun to apply cultural sociology to their work is important to make.

Flaming and Griffith do not appear to dispute the existence of the norms mentioned by Tremblay nor that they are important forces in the behavior of families. Their discussion asks us to delve into the structure of housing norms and the force of the norms--points I do not disagree with. They do seem unaware of the theoretical (and empirical) nexus between norms and preferences (Morris and Winter, 1981). Preferences are not just imperfect reflections of the norms, they are in a sense revised versions of the norms. The revision is based on the perceived constraining factors in the situation.

I have some difficulty with their discussion of statistical norms. I always thought statistical norms had to do with the existence of some condition or state prescribed by norms. Obviously, typical behavior or typical conditions ought not to be taken as indicators of the norms. Williams (1971) indicates that one of the ways to discover what the norms are is to ask people. Hence, a question in a survey that asks, in essence, what are the norms is not merely a "statistical norm." This is particularly true when resource constraints and other factors are taken into account.

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Unless I do not understand path analysis there must be data available for testing path models of these ideas. How does one gather information about age, sex, family composition, and housing choice except through surveys? Path analysis and structural equations are analytic techniques, not data gathering techniques. Those techniques have been used a great deal in housing research (e.g. Morris, Crull, and Winter, 1976; Winter and Morris, forthcoming).

Finally, the discussion of experimental techniques is too vague for me to understand the intent. Putting people in residential settings to test their reactions? Simulating the setting? Doing "let's pretend?" I tend to think that the former cannot be accomplished because of the magnitude of housing choice. Try-our-toothpaste-for-a-week-techniques may be effective, but I think the problems in try-our-townhouse-for-a-week are obvious. And simulation would seem even more difficult to arrange realistically.

I do not suggest that the theoretical development and research techniques that have been employed to date cannot be improve, expanded, broadened, and clarified. What I am suggesting is that Flaming and Griffith would have served themselves well to have reviewed the literature somewhat more thoroughly. Nevertheless, this kind of interchange about the work in the field of housing is most welcome.

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