Chinese

They live in state's highest-valued houses, says Louisiana Tech prof

By MIKE MONTGOMERY

Although whites have attained home ownership on a far wider scale than other races in Louisiana, they don't necessarily live in the highest-valued houses.

In 1980, Caucasians fall behind several minorities, according to a report prepared by Edward J. Boyle, research associate and associate professor of economics at Louisiana Tech University.

Using 1980 Census Bureau statistics, Boyle found that the median value of white owner-occupied housing in Louisiana at $47,800, $4,800 more than the state's overall median value of $43,000.

But living in the highest median value houses were Chinese, the report says.

Based on 434 housing units, Chinese in Louisiana reside in houses with a $74,300 median value, $26,600 greater than that of Caucasians.

The figures for Caucasian whites, however, is based on a tremendously larger number of housing units — 543,703.

In a median measurement, there is an equal number of houses with lower values as higher ones; the median value is at the center of all the values.

The average, average value would be reached by adding all of the values and dividing that amount by the number of values.

In his report, "Homeownership in Louisiana: Some Intercultural Comparisons," O'Boyle says:

"Owning your own home is a central aspect of the American Dream which in Louisiana has been realized much more widely by whites than by blacks, who, in turn, are closer to this goal than the state's Vietnamese population.

"Specifically, three out of four whites (76 percent), slightly more than one out of two blacks (54.3 percent) and one out of three Vietnamese (33 percent) live in owner-occupied housing."

According to the Census figures, nearly seven out of 10 Louisianans live in their own houses.

"Clearly," O'Boyle said of the report's findings, "white owner-occupied housing is not the statistical pacemaker in terms of market value," as opposed to the percentage of whites living in their own homes.

"Indeed, it is exceeded by several minority groups," including the Vietnamese.

"Based on 434 housing units, Vietnamese registered a median value of $46,900, edging whites' $47,300 median value and ranking them seventh in a field of 12. Caucasians placed eighth.

Listing median values followed by the number of units, the rankings for all 12 racial categories in the report are:

1. Chinese ($74,300), (434);
2. Asian Indian ($70,200), (433);
3. Cuban ($58,600), (1,013);
4. Puerto Rican ($53,500), (446);
5. Filipino ($51,600), (330);
6. White of Spanish origin ($49,900), (924);
7. Vietnamese ($48,900), (434);
8. White of non-Spanish origin ($47,800), (543,703);
9. Mexican ($36,000), (3,076);
10. American Indian ($34,100), (1,472);
11. Black of non-Spanish origin ($25,500), (144,707);
12. Black of Spanish origin ($24,090), (1,547).

Chinese also statistically lead the state in the median number of rooms per owner-occupied housing unit with a rating of 5.2 rooms.

Conversely, the Chinese account for the lowest number of rooms in renter-occupied housing, ranking 12th with 3.2 rooms.

O'Boyle said he did not write the report with any particular objective in mind and was mostly an academic research project.

Besides casting a different light on stereotypes, the report could also be useful to mortgage lenders, real estate brokers and developers, said O'Boyle.

The report, he said, shows that for whatever reason Far Easterners "likely are going to spend money on housing, more so than whites and blacks."

He added, "If you're a broker, for instance, perhaps you should begin marketing more directly to them."

"O'Boyle touched on one possible reason why minorities such as Chinese rate so highly in the median value of their homes.

"Minority race groups live disproportionately in the New Orleans area where housing is more expensive," he said.

Thus, if there's only a small number of a minority living in the state and most of them reside in the New Orleans area, it's logical the median value of their houses would be high.

One surprise, O'Boyle says, is that Vietnamese, who are a relatively new minority in the state, did not rank as low as he expected since they would seem to be a highly disadvantaged group.

The researcher believes this can be explained in large part to what happens when people move to another country.

Rather than starting new lives alone in a strange land, immigrant families tend to band together under a single roof, he said.

Expanded families representing several generations and including numerous wage earners emerge.

Immigrants place strong emphasis on housing to shelter these expanded families, O'Boyle said.

Houses also permit the immigrants to practice in private the customs of their native lands.

Eventually, however, these expanded families will contract, as they did after the European immigration to the United States, O'Boyle said.

THE REPORT, he said, shows that for whatever reason Far Easterners..."