

INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIORS AND THE HOME REMODELING PROCESS

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Abstract

This study examines relationships between information-seeking behaviors of households and the home remodeling process. Data collected through a mail survey of a random sample of 135 households are used in analyses that focus on sources of and satisfaction with remodeling information. Future information needs are examined in the context of different household types, respondent age, and respondent occupation.

Numerous home remodeling information sources were consulted by survey respondents. Friends and relatives comprise important information sources, especially for middle-aged heads of households. One-person and single parent households consult fewer information sources and also report less satisfaction with their remodeling activities. Information needs vary by household type, age, and occupation. Satisfaction with information received varies considerably among household types, as did expressed needs for remodeling information.

Introduction

In the twenty-two year period from 1967 to 1989, remodeling and repair activities in the United States increased almost steadily, at both the aggregate and individual household levels. As reported by Ahluwalia (1990b), total annual expenditures for remodeling and repairs increased from \$11.7 billion in 1967 to \$100.9 billion in 1989, for an annual nominal rate of 10.3 percent, or a real (inflation-adjusted) rate of 4.4 percent. At the individual household level, expenditures for remodeling and repairs grew in nominal terms from \$177 in 1967 to \$1,021 in 1989. In real terms, however, this is equal to an annual increase of 1.9 percent for the entire period, with an annual increase of 16 percent observed from 1982 to 1987. Although some leveling off in this rate occurred between 1987 and 1989, overall stability in the residential remodeling industry is expected through at least 1995 (Ahluwalia, 1990a and 1990b). Factors contributing to the growth of the remodeling industry in the U.S. have included a 50 percent increase in the total housing stock, a 12 percent increase in housing turnover, and a 9 percent increase in median household real income. In addition, property value increases as well as consumer preferences for amenities and convenience features in their homes encouraged home maintenance and improvement activities (Ahluwalia, 1990b).

The extent of home remodeling activity is important for its effects on the quality of housing (Mendelsohn, 1977). From the perspective of home owners, increased satisfaction from the correction of residential deficits occurs through housing adjustment behavior (Morris and Winter, 1975 and 1978). Different aspects of this behavior have been examined by investigating value-based causal factors (Meeks and Firebaugh, 1974), relationships between household characteristics and housing adjustment (Mendelsohn, 1977; Parrott, 1988; Parrott and Lodl, 1991), and factors related to housing decisions (Tremblay, Sweaney, and Walls, 1985).

The importance of home remodeling activities to households and the extent to which they are undertaken raises questions regarding the information-seeking process as remodeling is planned and conducted. While some aspects of housing-related information needs are known, a better understanding of information needs as they apply to the home remodeling process would be useful for planners and implementers of educational programs on

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this topic. The purpose of this study is to examine issues related to information needs of households who have remodeled their homes or who plan to remodel.

Review of Literature

Meeks and Firebaugh (1974) described home maintenance and remodeling activities in the context of morphostatic and morphogenic behavior. Whereas the morphostatic system function refers to the process through which a household will maintain equilibrium in its environment and take corrective action after noting that current needs are not being met, the morphogenic function refers to the series of actions undertaken that result in the development of a new environment. Within this framework, these authors analyzed the morphostatic and morphogenic behaviors of male heads of households in small towns. They observed a higher frequency of these home owners undertaking maintenance (morphostatic) than remodeling (morphogenic) activities, with variables of influences including skills and available time. They concluded that most of the individuals in their sample desired to meet family needs by adapting their homes as necessary, and that families constantly assess their environments and react with appropriate morphostatic or morphogenic behaviors.

Mendelsohn (1977) developed a home improvement model using Census data on residential alterations and repairs. He observed that higher income influences both the frequency and magnitude of household expenditures on home improvements. In addition, middle-age and older home owners with high incomes were less likely to perform their own home improvement work than were younger, lower income owners.

Parrott (1988) analyzed relationships of household characteristics with the home remodeling process, and found important variables to be staged in the family life cycle, length of marriage, occupation, and education. Households at early stages of the family life cycle are more likely than older households to remodel and consult interior design information sources. The longer couples are married, the less likely they are to consult planning sources. Multiple income households were more likely to consult professionals before remodeling than were retired households. Parrott (1988) also examined the extent of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) activities, and observed that higher incidences of such activities are associated with younger stages in the family life cycle, lower educational levels, and lower occupational status.

Parrott and Lodl (1991) compared results of their two separate remodeling studies and concluded that households in these samples were remodeling not to correct housing deficits but to meet housing aspirations through adaptation. They noted that residential adaptation is a form of housing adjustment, but is influenced by distinctive elements that warrant continued research in this area, which would contribute to further theory development.

In a study of households in the Southern region of the United States, Tremblay, Sweaney, and Walls (1985) analyzed types of information families need when housing decisions are made and the roles of family members, friends, and housing professionals in the search for this information. Heads of households were generally found to be the main decision-makers in matters related to housing. Other household members, friends, and housing professionals were not observed to be of much importance in this regard. These authors concluded that more research on sources of information used by households is necessary to develop a better understanding of processes involved in housing decisions. Implications of this conclusion are especially important for those who plan and implement housing education programs related to home remodeling. Improvements in program content, delivery, and targeting strategies are possible through a better understanding of household use of and satisfaction with various home remodeling information sources.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine a specific aspect of the home remodeling process: information-seeking behavior. This is an important issue for several reasons. The provision of remodeling information is undertaken by numerous parties, including trade associations, building material producers and suppliers, homeowner magazines, nonprofit organizations, and the Cooperative Extension Service. A better understanding of informa-

tion-seeking behavior as remodeling is contemplated or undertaken by household members will facilitate enhanced targeting of efforts, the development of more meaningful materials, and, hopefully, a greater degree of satisfaction with the remodeling process. In addition, knowledge of household satisfaction with different types of remodeling information would enable program improvements where necessary. Also, remodeling information needs as expressed by households could provide focus for providers of remodeling information. Finally, household information-seeking in the area of remodeling is an important component of housing adjustment behavior, and may yield insights relevant to further theory development.

The Data

In contrast to remodeling studies that derived samples from property tax rolls (Tremblay, Sweaney and Walls, 1985), building permit applications (Parrott, 1988), or Census data (Mendelsohn, 1977), the sample for this study was obtained through random selection from telephone directories. A two-stage selection process was employed by first choosing ten New York State counties at random: Clinton, Delaware, Madison, Monroe, Montgomery, Putnam, Rockland, Saratoga, Seneca, and Wayne. In each of these ten counties, forty households were randomly selected from telephone directories. Sampling was conducted by Survey Sampling, Inc. of Fairfield, Connecticut. While this method overcomes the disadvantage of omitting households who remodel without obtaining building permits, the following limitations are recognized: 1) the selection of renters who generally are not remodelers and do not respond to such surveys cannot be controlled; 2) people who have not remodeled their homes and will not respond to a remodeling survey will be included in the sample; and 3) only households with listed telephone numbers will be included in the sample.

In the early months of 1991, the 400 households were mailed a self-administered questionnaire with a letter explaining the purposes of the study, a stamped and addressed return envelope, and a complimentary mechanical pencil. Two weeks after the survey was mailed, a reminder post card was sent to those households who had not yet responded. A total of 188 surveys were returned; ten were returned by addressees with statements of refusal to participate; three were returned because the addressee was deceased or too ill to participate; 34 of these were returned because of incorrect addresses, which rendered them as ineligible for the sample. Of the 188 returned surveys, 140 were completed, and 135 of these 140 were usable. When ineligible addresses are removed from the total sample, the response rate is 38 percent. A likely reason for this relatively low response rate is the inclusion of a large number of renters in the sample. In the ten counties included in the study area, renters comprise 28 percent of the total number of households (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). It is therefore probable that 112 surveys were sent to renters, who would have little incentive to complete and return them, and even if they had, would have contributed little to the study. If this number is added to the ineligible addresses, the response rate is 53 percent.

Of the 135 respondents included in this study and used in the analysis, 110 (82 percent) had remodeled their homes. Table 1 compares characteristics of this sample with those of the general population in the study area. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents were home owners, as compared with 72 percent of the general population; 98 percent were white, with the corresponding figure for the general population being 96 percent; 76 percent were married, as compared with 60 percent of the general population. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents reported that they were working full time; and 68 percent also indicated their spouses worked. Although a current and comparable figure is not available for the general population, 95 percent of the labor force in the study area is employed in either full- or part-time work (New York State Department of Labor, 1991). The average age of respondents was 49; for the general population, the average age is 47. Their average household size was 2.96 persons; the corresponding size for the general population is 2.89. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents lived in single family detached homes, as compared with 63 percent of the general population (see Table 1).

Representation of household types in the sample was as follows: 12.6 percent one-person (n=17); 26.7 percent husband-wife (n=36); 46.7 percent husband-wife with children (n=63); 5.2 percent single-parent with children (n=7); 3 percent husband-wife, children and relatives (n=4); 5.1 percent other types (n=7).

Respondents were asked questions about remodeling activities they had engaged in; future plans for remodeling; the importance of and satisfaction with various aspects of their homes and neighborhoods; sources of housing information and reasons for using these sources as well as satisfaction with the information sources; the likelihood of using various information sources in the future; and the types of information they would be likely to need.

Table 1. Sample and population characteristics.

	Percentage of Survey Respondents	General Population of Study Area
Homeowners	92	72
White	98	96
Married	76	60
Working Full-Time	68	60
Spouse Also Works	68	--- ¹
Age of Household Head*	49	--- ¹
Household Size*	2.96	2.89
Single Family Detached	79	63

¹Data not available

*These figures are not percentages

Findings

General

Eighty-two percent of respondents indicated that they had remodeled their homes after moving into them. Responses to a checklist of categories indicated that the range of these activities included remodeled kitchens and bathrooms, replacement of heating and cooling equipment, re-roofing, insulating, painting, and replacement of draperies and carpeting. In addition to the checklist, an open-ended question about remodeling activities indicated that respondents had added screened porches, sunspaces, decks, garages, and utility rooms to their homes, as well as replaced electrical and plumbing systems and siding. Reasons given for remodeling included old or run down looking homes, worn out or broken fixtures and appliances, desire for more comfort or convenience, a need to increase energy efficiency, and changes in family size or composition.

Since moving into their homes, average spending by respondents involved \$7,004 for remodeling (range: \$0 - \$75,000; median = \$4,000), \$13,045 for additions (range: \$0-\$51,000; median = \$8,000), and \$2,947 for changes to mechanical systems (range: \$0-\$30,000; median = \$1,450). A significant aspect of remodeling expenditures observed in this survey is that, for the most part, these expenditures increase with increases in household income. As shown in Figure 1, average remodeling expenditures ranged from \$1362 for households with incomes of up to \$15,000, to \$15,450 for households with incomes between \$65,001 and \$75,000. Some leveling off in expenditures occurs for households with incomes over \$75,000, possibly because these households are occupying higher quality housing and have fewer remodeling needs. Higher expenditures were observed for those with incomes between \$15,001 and \$25,000 than for those with incomes of up to \$55,000, which may be an indication of more housing deficits among those with lower incomes.

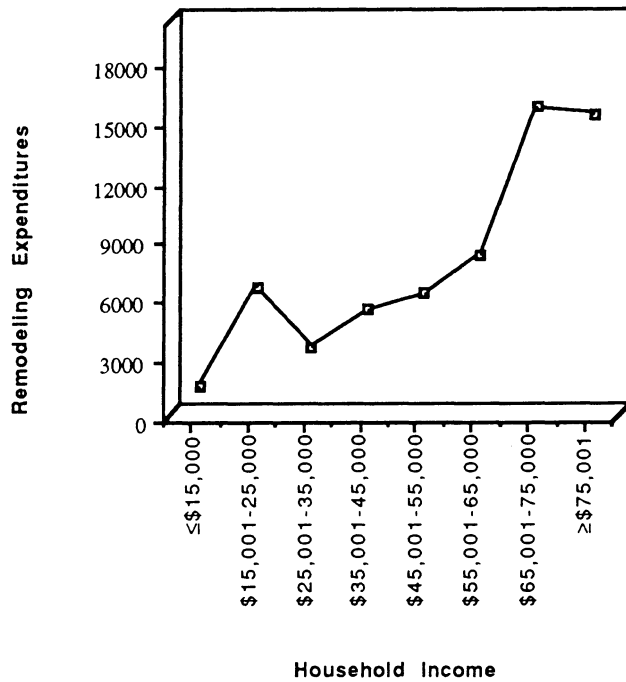
One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test whether the remodeling expenditures for the various income groups were significantly different from each other. Results, presented in Figure 1, were significant ($F=2.36$; $p=.03$), and may be indicative of the point made by Parrott and Lodl (1991) regarding remodeling to meet housing aspirations even when no deficits exist. This may explain the general trend of higher remodeling expenditures with higher income levels.

The general pattern of higher expenditures for changes to mechanical systems (heating, plumbing, electrical) among higher income households is shown in Figure 2. One-way ANOVA results indicated that the income groups differed significantly in their expenditures for mechanical systems. Average expenditures in this category ranged from \$1,780 for

households with incomes between \$25,001 and \$35,000, to \$9,562 for households with incomes between \$65,001 and \$75,000. As with overall remodeling expenditures, a decrease for spending in this category is seen for households with incomes over \$75,000, possibly because of higher quality housing and less of a need for spending to change or repair mechanical systems. The spike depicted in Figure 2 for the households with incomes between \$65,001 and \$75,000 is the result of one household in this group that spent a much higher amount than the others in the same category.

Figure 1. Remodeling expenditures and household income

ANOVA: F=2.36; df=7; p=.03; n=86



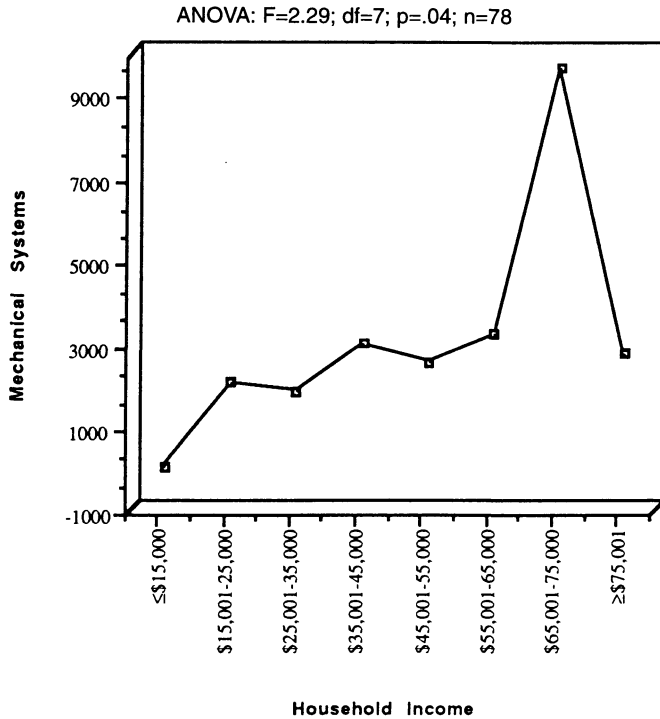
Remodeling expenditures were also examined for potential differences among households when they are grouped according to their plans to move or not. As shown in Table 2, significant differences were observed: households with no plans to move spent the most, followed by those who do plan to move and those who don't know (F=5.45; p=.006).

Table 2. Household remodeling expenditures and moving plans (ANOVA).

Moving Plans	Mean Remodeling Expenditures
No plans to move	\$12,512
Plan to move	5,284
Don't know	4,340

F=5.45; df=2; p=.006; n=88

Figure 2. Expenditures for mechanical systems and household income.



Information Sources

Respondents who remodeled their homes were asked to indicate whether they had sought and obtained information regarding specific aspects of remodeling from various sources. Although 42 percent indicated that they had consulted no one, those who did seek information did so from more than one source: 36 percent of this group consulted friends or relatives; 34 percent consulted building contractors; ten percent visited model show rooms; and the remainder sought information from architects, interior designers, home shows, real estate agents, and specialists from the Cooperative Extension Service. Table 3 shows that when respondents are grouped according to occupation, significant differences are observed in the frequency of consulting friends or relatives ($\chi^2=21.90$; df=8; p=.005). Professionals and laborers rely on friends and relatives for remodeling information to a greater extent than other groups do. Over half of administrators, supervisors, and skilled craftspersons also rely on friends or relatives in this regard. Less than half of respondents who are clerical workers, service workers, or homemakers consult friends or relatives for this purpose. Farmers are evenly split in their reliance on friends or relatives for remodeling information.

The frequency of consulting friends and relatives for remodeling information among different age groups was also examined. Table 3 shows that middle-aged respondents consult friends and relatives for remodeling information to a greater extent than other groups do ($\chi^2=21.40$; df=5; p=.001). Note that almost 86 percent of respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 report that they consult friends and relatives. This may be explained by Parrott's (1988) finding that households at younger or expanding stages consult more sources for housing information. These respondents may be relying on friends and relatives as one of many sources of information.

Table 3. Friends and relatives as sources of remodeling information by occupation and age.

Occupation (%)*	Never used	Used	N
Farmer	50.0	50.0	2
Professional	18.8	81.3	32
Administrator	36.8	63.2	19
Supervisor	40.0	60.0	10
Skilled Craftsperson	33.3	66.7	12
Laborer	14.3	85.7	7
Clerical Worker	53.3	46.7	15
Service Worker	100.0	---	6
Homemaker	62.5	37.5	16
N			119
Age (%)**			
≤29	66.7	33.3	3
30-39	14.3	85.7	35
40-49	41.9	58.1	31
50-59	36.8	63.2	19
60-69	80.0	20.0	15
≥70	50.0	50.0	16
N			119

* $\chi^2=21.90$; $df=8$; $p=.005$ ** $\chi^2=21.40$; $df=5$; $p=.001$

The use of information sources other than friends and relatives was examined for various types of households. Table 4 shows that larger households--those consisting of husband, wife, children, and relatives--indicated a higher use of many information sources, including magazines, catalogs, show rooms, events (fairs and home shows), the Cooperative Extension Service, and architects, as compared with other household types. But because the number of these households in the sample is small ($n=4$), this result should be interpreted cautiously. This table also shows that a majority of one-person households and those consisting of single parents with children do not use the remodeling information sources listed.

Satisfaction With Information Sources

Respondents who indicated that they had consulted at least one source for remodeling information were asked to rate their satisfaction with the information they received about various items on a seven-point scale (1=extremely dissatisfied - 7=extremely satisfied). The satisfaction question for each item was of a general nature to elicit information about the acceptability of information obtained for remodeling purposes, which would include purchase cost, warranties, ease of maintenance, finishes, color, expected lifetime, etc. One-way ANOVA was used to examine the ratings assigned by different household types for satisfaction with information received about insulation, appliances and mechanical systems (i.e. kitchen and bathroom appliances, heating and air conditioning), building materials, and ease of home maintenance after potential remodeling. Results are shown in Table 5. Significant differences are seen among the ratings assigned. Single-parent households assigned the lowest mean ratings for satisfaction with information received about each topic. The next lowest ratings, with the exception of those assigned to information about building materials, were assigned by one-person households. These results are interesting, especially in light of observations noted in Table 4, where these two household groups were seen to consult the fewest remodeling information sources. Households consisting of a husband, wife, children, and relatives as well as other households assigned relatively high satisfaction ratings. These households also indicated that they sought information from numerous sources. Whether satisfaction with remodeling information received is a cause or effect of the number of information sources consulted would be an interesting subject for further research.

Table 4. Sources of remodeling information and use by household types (%).

Household Type	Magazines		Catalogs		Show Room		Events		Cooperative Extension		Architect	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
one-person	13.3	86.7	13.3	86.7	6.7	93.3	6.7	93.3	---	100	6.7	93.3
husband, wife	55.9	44.1	45.5	54.5	46.9	53.1	31.3	68.8	15.6	84.4	37.5	62.5
husband, wife children	69.5	30.5	62.5	37.5	50.9	49.1	49.1	50.9	17.3	82.7	38.9	61.1
single parent, children	42.9	57.1	28.6	71.4	---	100	14.3	85.7	---	100	28.6	71.4
husband, wife children, relatives	100	---	100	---	100	---	66.7	33.3	50.0	50.0	100	---
other	85.7	14.3	85.7	14.3	85.7	14.3	71.4	28.6	57.1	42.9	42.9	57.1
N	125		120		121		119		114		118	
χ^2	20.68		18.58		23.86		15.66		21.40		11.52	
df	5		5		5		5		5		5	
p	.001		.002		.0002		.007		.001		.04	

Table 6. Remodeling information needs by age of respondents (%).

Information Needs	≤29 (4)		30-39 (39)		40-49 (33)		50-59 (24)		60-69 (16)		≥70 (18)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1) Landscaping and Exterior Appearance	25.0	75.0	59.0	41.0	48.5	51.5	45.8	54.2	25.0	75.0	16.7	83.3
2) Decision Guides for Selecting Materials	---	100	46.2	53.8	45.5	54.5	54.2	45.8	18.8	81.3	22.2	77.8
3) Cost, Loans Contracts	75.0	25.0	51.3	48.7	39.4	60.6	20.8	79.2	37.5	62.5	16.7	83.3
4) Guidelines for Selecting Products	25.0	75.0	46.2	53.8	48.5	51.5	45.8	54.2	12.5	87.5	16.7	83.3
5) Housing for the Elderly	---	100	2.6	97.4	---	100	20.8	79.2	25.0	75.0	16.7	83.3

1) $\chi^2 = 12.26$, $df = 5$; 2) $\chi^2 = 11.11$, $df = 5$; 3) $\chi^2 = 11.81$, $df = 5$; 4) $\chi^2 = 11.44$, $df = 5$; 5) $\chi^2 = 14.91$, $df = 5$; $p = .01$

Future Information Needs

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of remodeling information they would be likely to need in the future by circling items in a list of topics. Responses were analyzed with Chi-square tests in contingency tables organized by household type, occupation, and plans for moving. Table 6 (page 18) shows results of the analysis of selected items by respondent age. Generally, older respondents have fewer needs for remodeling information. Those in their 30s, 40s, and 50s express more interest in the items listed. The youngest respondents indicated few information needs, with the exception of information on cost, loans, and contracts. These results are in agreement with findings of Parrott (1988), who noted that older households consult with fewer information sources when remodeling work is undertaken. In addition, these older homeowners are likely to reside in units that are not below expectations, and hence, have fewer remodeling needs. The middle-aged respondents are likely to be in expanding stages of the family life cycle, when more remodeling is undertaken and their information needs are greatest (Parrott, 1988).

Future information needs of various household types were also analyzed with Chi-square tests. Significant differences were observed with regard to information on landscap-

Table 5. Satisfaction with remodeling information by household type (ANOVA).

Household	Insulation	Mean Ratings		
		Appliances and Mech. Systems	Building Materials	Home Maintenance
1	5.25	5.00	6.00	4.00
2	5.76	5.95	5.79	5.70
3	5.45	5.81	5.76	5.78
4	3.50	4.20	3.75	4.00
5	6.00	5.67	6.00	5.67
6	6.20	6.43	5.83	5.86
N	78	88	81	73
F	3.00	3.50	4.42	4.93
df	5	5	5	5
p	.02	.01	.001	.001

Household types: 1=one-person; 2=husband, wife; 3=husband, wife, children; 4=single parent, children; 5=husband, wife, relatives; 6=other.

Ratings: 1=Extremely dissatisfied; 7=Extremely satisfied.

ing and exterior appearance, home maintenance, and housing for the elderly. Table 7 shows that among the categories indicated, more household types express a need for information on home maintenance, particularly single parents with children and larger households consisting of a husband, wife, children, and relatives. Interestingly, these two household types express only moderate or little interest in information on landscaping and exterior appearance. One-person households indicate little need for information on any of the topics. None of the husband, wife, and children households, single parent with children households, and other households indicated a need for information on elderly housing. Those household types with a need for this information were husband and wife households, who may be thinking of this option; and husband, wife, children, and relative households, where the relative may be an elderly person.

Respondents were also grouped according to their occupations for Chi-square tests of future remodeling information needs. Table 8 shows responses to indications of information needs for home maintenance; decision guides for selecting materials, appliances, and equipment; available products and selection guidelines; and assistance with locating remodeling information sources.

Table 8 shows that a majority of professionals, supervisors, and laborers stated needs for information on home maintenance. Farmers and service workers indicated no need for

this information, and a majority of homemakers indicated that they do not anticipate needs for information in this area ($\chi^2=23.11$; $p=.003$). A majority of professionals and skilled craftspersons indicated information needs for decision guides for selecting materials information ($\chi^2=19.32$; $p=.01$).

Table 7. Remodeling information needs by household type (%).

Household type	Landscaping Exterior Appearance		Home Maintenance		Housing for the Elderly	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	29.4	70.6	11.8	88.2	17.6	82.4
2	27.8	72.2	41.7	58.3	25.0	75.0
3	51.6	48.4	48.4	51.6	---	100
4	42.9	57.1	71.4	28.6	---	100
5	25.0	75.0	75.0	25.0	25.0	75.0
6	85.7	14.3	42.9	57.1	---	100
N	133		133		133	
χ^2	12.31		11.45		19.94	
df	5		5		5	
p	.001		.04		.001	

Household types: 1=one person; 2=husband, wife; 3=husband, wife children; 4=single parent, children; 5=husband, wife, children, relatives; 6=other

Regarding available products and selection guidelines, the only occupation category from which over 50 percent indicated an information need was that of skilled craftspersons. Supervisors, laborers, and clerical workers were evenly split, and a majority of those in the remaining categories indicated no need for information in this area ($\chi^2=20.02$; $p=.01$).

In the areas of locating information, skilled craftspersons comprised the only group for which a majority indicated a need. Clerical workers were evenly split, and a majority of those in the remaining categories indicated no need for information in this area ($\chi^2=18.67$; $p=.02$).

Table 8. Percentage seeking remodeling information by occupation.

Occupation	Home Maintenance		Decision Guides		Available Products & Selection Guidelines		Locating Information	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Farmer	---	100	---	100	20.0	80.0	40.0	60.0
Professional	63.9	36.1	52.8	47.2	38.9	61.1	33.3	66.7
Administrator	30.0	70.0	40.0	60.0	40.0	60.0	33.3	66.7
Supervisor	66.7	33.3	41.7	58.3	50.0	50.0	16.7	83.3
Skilled Craftsperson	46.2	53.8	61.5	38.5	69.2	30.8	61.5	38.5
Laborer	62.5	37.5	37.5	62.5	50.0	50.0	12.5	87.5
Clerical Worker	43.8	56.3	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0
Service Worker	---	100	16.7	83.3	---	100	16.7	83.3
Homemaker	22.2	77.8	5.6	94.4	5.6	94.4	5.6	94.4
N	134		134		134		134	
χ^2	23.11		19.32		20.02		18.67	
df	8		8		8		8	
p	.003		.01		.01		.02	

Conclusions

This study differed from other remodeling studies in that the focus was on information-related activities and needs of households who have remodeled their homes since moving in or who have plans to remodel in the future. The majority of households in the random sample used for this study had engaged in some home remodeling activities.

Of the survey respondents who had consulted others for remodeling information, 36 percent had consulted friends or relatives for this purpose. Higher percentages of professionals, laborers, and other skilled workers were observed to consult friends or relatives in this regard, as compared with half or less of farmers, clerical workers, and homemakers. When this aspect of information-seeking was examined on the basis of respondent age, more middle-aged respondents were seen to consult friends or relatives for remodeling information than were other age groups.

Remodeling information sources other than friends or relatives were also reported to be used by survey respondents. The greatest use of sources that include magazines, catalogs, show rooms, home shows, and architects was among larger households -- those consisting of a husband, wife, children, and relatives. Households of one-person or single parents with children gave strong indications of not using remodeling information sources.

When satisfaction with remodeling information that households received was examined, one-person households and single parent households indicated less satisfaction than other groups did. Whether there is a relationship between satisfaction and number of sources consulted would be an interesting topic for further research, since these groups consulted fewer information sources than did other household types.

When future remodeling information needs were examined, middle-aged respondents indicated more information needs than other age groups. Among household types, one-person households indicated little need for remodeling information. Single parents with children, and households of a husband, wife, children, and relatives indicated a strong interest in home maintenance information and moderate or little interest for information on landscaping or exterior appearance.

Remodeling information needs also varied by occupations of respondents. Service workers expressed the fewest information needs; and professionals, supervisors, and laborers expressed more needs, especially for information on home maintenance. Skilled craftspersons indicated needs for information on decision guides for selecting materials, appliances, and equipment; available products and selection guidelines; and locating information.

Implications

Findings from this study are useful for those who design and implement remodeling information and education programs. Improvements in the scope and reach of such programs may be possible by focusing on specific topics for targeted groups. Single parents with children, and households of a husband, wife, children, and relatives, for example, indicate interest in home maintenance information. The composition of these households suggests that the subject appeal may be based on limited time available for such activities. While workshops may not be a suitable approach to reach these groups, video tapes and monthly home maintenance schedules with appropriate fact sheets may be. Such an approach may work well with the larger households, who indicated use of many remodeling information sources. But other types of efforts may be required to reach single parents with children, as these households indicated a low frequency of using remodeling information sources. Special efforts could include distributing information to or developing training programs for those who provide services to these households.

The reliance on friends and relatives for remodeling information that was reported by respondents in this study suggests the potential for greater use of multipliers in remodeling education programs. Recruitment of people who have remodeled their homes to serve as educators in a formal or informal sense--"Master Remodelers," for example--may be effective at reaching large numbers of people.

Application of these findings may also be useful for housing professionals involved directly or indirectly with home remodeling. Processors and distributors of home improvement loan funds, for example, could distribute information at the time a loan is processed. Design and remodeling consultants, real estate brokers, and suppliers of building materials could also be stakeholders in home remodeling education programs. Input from these sources would be useful, not only in the delivery of information, but also in its development.

Finally, efforts continue toward an integrated and comprehensive understanding of theory related to residential adaptation in the field of housing adjustment behavior. As described by Morris and Winter (1975), residential adaptation signifies the different actions households can undertake as they change their homes to meet their changing needs. These actions "... include additions, alterations, remodeling, and changing the function of rooms" (p.84). information-seeking behaviors of households as they contemplate or are in the process of remodeling represent an important step in the chain of events leading to the eventual achievement of residential adaptation. As such, a better understanding of these information-seeking behaviors may yield insights useful to advancing theories related to residential adaptation and housing adjustment.

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