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HOMEMAKERS' USE OF AVAILABLE
HOUSE FURNISHINGS INFORMATION

by

ANNE MARIE BROWN

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Madeline B. Stued
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The furnishings of the home represent one of the largest total investments the average family makes in a lifetime. This fact alone makes home furnishings an important area for investigation. In addition, or perhaps fundamental to this, is the matter of the psychological impact which home surroundings have upon the development of the individual.

Green¹ gives as a conservative estimate of the annual expenditure on new housing in North Carolina, the figure \$150,000,000. He predicts as of 1953, and again using conservative figures, that North Carolinians would build 25,000 new houses every year for ten years.

Many of the furnishings going into these new homes will be new or refurbished and in either event will represent a considerable investment. In many other instances families will be increasing the value of existing homes through additional purchases or renovation of furnishings. The United States Department of Agriculture² reports that 21 per cent of rural family income and 28 per cent of urban family income is spent on housing upkeep, operation, furnishings and equipment.

¹James W. Green, "Implications for Educators in a Research Study Entitled The Farmhouse Building Process in North Carolina", North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, Raleigh, N.C., March, 1954, pp. 1-2.

²Agricultural Outlook Charts - 1959, Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, U.S.A., Washington, D. C., 1958, p. 29.

The psychological implications of home furnishings may be said to be as important as the financial aspect. "Houses and furniture are objective things in our world that are meaningless apart from the ways in which they are used."³

Homemakers reflect this opinion to a great extent. In Vann's⁴ study of problems of the home decorator, 99 per cent of the homemakers reported that they believed there was a definite relationship between home decoration and better family living. Most of them thought that better home surroundings aided in building a more satisfactory home life and in the development of desirable traits in children.

Koppe⁵ reports on a study of sixty families conducted by the Department of Family Life and Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota. In this study the families were asked to give reasons why they wished to change housing or furnishings and of the sixty families, only one family reported an economic reason. Other reasons for remodeling, improving, or otherwise changing the furnishings were related to behavior and to the effect on family members of the atmosphere and facilities of the home.

Since housing and furnishings seem to have such an effect on family members, it becomes important that decisions regarding home furnishings be well considered. These decisions should be made with

³William A. Koppe, "The Psychological Meaning of Housing and Furnishings," Marriage and Family Living, Vol. XVII, No. 2, May, 1955, p. 129.

⁴Helen Wick Vann, "Home Decoration Problems of the Homemaker," unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1951, p. 52.

⁵Koppe, op. cit., p. 130.

full consideration of a family's goals and their values if they are to bring satisfaction in terms of better family living. The basic steps in decision making--seeking alternatives, thinking through the consequences of alternatives, and selecting one alternative as a source of action--are involved here.

What home furnishings information is available which will help families to understand and evaluate possible alternatives? Do families seek such information upon which they may base their decisions? Do they use this information to reach their family goals? These are the important questions with which this study is concerned.

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

With the above questions in mind, the present study was undertaken to determine the use and effectiveness of available house furnishings information in helping families to reach their goals for furnishing their homes.

The living room was selected for study since, as Kennedy says, "The spaces used for living . . . are inevitably the most important expressions of the owner's taste and status."⁶

Specifically, the purposes of the study were:

1. To determine the immediate and long term family goals for furnishing the living room.
2. To determine what sources of house furnishings information have been available to these families.
3. To determine what information received was applied toward attaining these goals.

⁶Robert Woods Kennedy, The House and the Art of Its Design. New York: Reinhold Publishing Company, 1953, p. 191.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Living Room. For the purposes of this study, the living room is the room which the family itself uses primarily for leisure and social activities. It may be the "company" room in the house which has two major living areas, or it may be for both company and general use if the house has only one major living area. It may include some dining room furniture, if it is still essentially a living area.

House Furnishings. House furnishings, for the purpose of this study, are those factors which contribute to the interior decor of a room. In this study the terms "house furnishings" and "home furnishings" are used interchangeably, and the following elements of living room furnishings are considered: (1) wall and ceiling finishes, (2) floor finishes, (3) floor coverings, (4) window treatment, (5) furniture, (6) lighting, and (7) accessories.

III. THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of twenty-four homemakers in the Sumner community of Guilford County, North Carolina.

Eligibility requirements were that each participant:

1. Be a resident of the Sumner community.
2. Have made some improvement in the living room within the three years prior to the study.

Families were selected from the same community in order that all would have had the following resources available: (1) access to the educational and commercial facilities of Greensboro, North Carolina, and (2) the opportunity of attending house furnishings classes or demonstrations within the Sumner community, through its vocational home

economics program at Sumner High School or one of its three active home demonstration clubs. Both the adult classes and the home demonstration clubs had offered house furnishings programs within the period considered in the study.

A list of families who met these eligibility requirements was secured from the Home Economics Agents of the Guilford County Extension Service. In drawing up the list, an effort was made to maintain a balance between those who were members of home demonstration clubs and those who were not.

The families were first contacted by telephone by the interviewer. Upon their agreement to participate in the study, an appointment was made to visit the home and to interview the homemaker. This process was continued until twenty-four interviews were obtained.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample was limited to twenty-four families in a selected community, and results of the study would be applicable in a similar community.

In making the decision to use a small sample it was interesting to note that Green stated:

Exploratory studies should be confined to small areasOn the basis of the experiences in the present study, it is believed that research effort will be used more efficiently on samples within small areas.⁷

⁷James W. Green, House Building by Farm Owners in North Carolina. Bulletin 391, Agricultural Experiment Station, Raleigh, N. C., 1954, p. 101.

V. COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

An interview guide was developed which was designed to reveal: (1) the family's stated goals, (2) the sources of information which were available to them, and (3) the ways in which information was applied.

The interview guide was pre-tested with five homemakers, revisions were made, and the final guide was prepared. A copy appears in the appendix.

Data were collected in March, 1959, summarized, and analyzed in light of the purpose of the study as stated above.

A brief review of research and other pertinent information related to the thesis problem is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A limited amount of research directly related to the homemakers' use of available house furnishings information has been undertaken. However, studies have been done which reveal interesting data regarding homemakers' sources of ideas for home improvements, and the homemakers' expressed need for further information.

In a study of the home furnishings of families in Kansas in 1952, Starkey found that families turned to a variety of sources for information.

By far the most important source of decorating ideas was magazines in 1952. The families then turned to the Extension Service, their friends, local stores and mail order catalogs. . . . Sixty-five per cent of the families reported using Better Homes and Gardens and the Farm Journal was reported in second place with 30 per cent of the families using it.⁸

Calla Van Syckle studied the purchase of furniture in Flint, Michigan. This study also revealed the importance of magazines as one of the conveyers of information.

The chief sources of ideas mentioned were periodicals, stores, and either other homes or conversations with others. About the same proportion at each age level mentioned stores and the same proportion at each level of schooling did not differ significantly on this point. However, there were significant differences in the reported use of periodicals. At successive age levels smaller proportions of homemakers mentioned them. As the years of schooling rose to twelve, a higher proportion at each level referred to periodicals, but those with over twelve years reversed the trend. At this highest educational

⁸Winona M. Starkey, "Home Furnishings of a Selected Group of Women in Home Demonstration Units in Kansas in 1952," unpublished Master's Thesis, Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas, 1954, p. 53.

level, significantly more respondents than at any of the lower levels mentioned sources other than stores and periodicals.⁹

The same study brought out further interesting data. Conclusions of the study showed:

That sellers (manufacturers and retailers) have the major responsibility for influencing the level of taste characterizing the furnishings of the majority of homes is an inescapable conclusion . . . The local market and periodicals are the great shapers of consumers' ideas about furniture. Most consumers are limited in their knowledge of possibilities, and certainly in their choices, to what is commonly displayed in the market within the town or nearby boundaries.
 . . . The study also indicates that enough people are aware of label information as to make it important that the manufacturer use this means to tell consumers (a) about materials, (b) how to care for them, and (c) what may be expected of them under conditions of use.¹⁰

Vann¹¹ also inquired into homemakers' sources of information. The source of assistance reported highest by these women was the study of pictures in magazines. When they sought outside help from a professional they preferred a decoration consultant. The home economics college graduates reported substantially higher use of community resources such as books from the library, and assistance from the home demonstration agent and the homemaking teacher. The magazines used most often according to this study were Better Homes and Gardens, McCall's and Good Housekeeping, in the order named.

These studies indicate that women may realize the need for infor-

⁹Calla Van Syckle, Consumer Use and Purchase of Furniture in Flint, Michigan, 1951, Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, 1952.

¹⁰Van Syckle, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

¹¹Vann, op. cit., pp. 43-49.

mation in order to solve their home furnishings problems. Van Syckle¹² found that homemakers experienced dissatisfaction with some furniture purchases. Ten per cent of the items purchased were thought unsatisfactory. The main reasons for dissatisfaction had to do with poor materials, poor construction, or with uncomfortable or unsuitable pieces.

Furthermore, a study by Miller¹³ of factors influencing the purchase of upholstered furniture and the resulting satisfactions indicated that 18 per cent of the homemakers had stated definite dissatisfactions having to do with construction, unsuitability to other pieces, and poor performance of fabric coverings.

These studies suggest that numerous poor decisions were made, possibly due in part to inadequate information regarding the criteria to be used in selecting furniture.

Vann¹⁴ concluded from her study that homemakers, regardless of their educational background, experience some problems in home decoration. It is not surprising then to note that she found that women were interested in studying topics relating to home furnishings in adult study groups. Their interest in study topics reflected their greatest needs. These were found to be the application of basic art principles, selection of furniture, and the selection and application of interior background finishes. Most of the homemakers reported having had experiences such as planning

¹²Van Syckle, op. cit., p. 16.

¹³Mary Carlton Miller, "A Study of the Factors Influencing the Purchase of Upholstered Furniture and the Resulting Satisfactions as Expressed by Fifty Homemakers," unpublished Master's Thesis, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, N. C., 1949, p. 61.

¹⁴Vann, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

a color scheme, painting a room, making curtains or draperies, and arranging furniture within a room. Those experiences less frequently encountered--and those with which they had the greatest difficulty--were making slipcovers, reupholstering, and selecting furniture.

As a Home Demonstration Agent and an Extension Specialist in the field of home furnishings, the writer observed on many occasions that requests for certain information were not always indicative of the real need. Starkey also found this to be true. She states:

Requests for information indicate areas of interests but not necessarily real needs. This statement is substantiated by information . . . dealing with unsatisfactory furniture. Homemakers most frequently failed to recognize qualities of comfort and durability and yet requests for information in these particular areas rated in negative positions in the request for information chart.¹⁵

What information do homemakers request? Starkey¹⁶ reports that use of color ranked first among requests for further information, and furniture arrangement placed second. This was followed by selection of accessories, and selection of good design.

Decisions made concerning home furnishings by any family will depend not only upon their knowledge of alternatives, but also upon their unique pattern of individual and family values.

In discussing the psychology of home furnishings, Koppe brings out the importance of personal values and attitudes.

As we survey the behavior patterns and behavior settings of the home and then in turn try to reorganize so that we can use our furnishings and housing more effectively, we will be faced immediately with the problem of our personal values and attitudes. Is the fear of public censure by guests more

¹⁵Starkey, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁶Starkey, op. cit., p. 48.

important than free play space for children? Before we can even consider shifts in the home setting, we must know values that are weighed in the balance and the attitudes and habit patterns that may have to be changed.¹⁷

Each family operates according to its own set of values and standards. Their requests for home furnishings information then can be effectively met only when the information can be used in such a manner that the results will be in keeping with the real values of the family.

Dr. Lawrence K. Frank, in an address to home economists, presents an interesting challenge:

What then, we should ask, can we offer people as helpful guides and advisory services in establishing and furnishing their homes? Perhaps the most significant and valuable contribution is to help them to discover what they basically want and hope for as individuals.¹⁸

The value approach to research would seem to be one means of helping families to gain this self knowledge.

In the values test for family members developed by Virginia Cutler,¹⁹ a comparison was made between the families' considered values and their satisfaction with their present homes. The data in this case showed beyond question that if a home is so arranged that it makes adequate provisions for the three values which are most important to an individual, he will be satisfied with the home.

¹⁷Koppe, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁸Lawrence K. Frank, "Creating A Life Space," Paper presented at National Home Furnishings Conference, Chicago, Illinois, April, 1958, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹Virginia F. Cutler, Personal and Family Values in the Choice of a Home, New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, p. 74.

Glenn H. Beyer reports that the values approach is basically sound. Speaking of primarily sociological research related to housing, he states:

An important area for research in this field is that of family values . . . The approach of studying "family values" seems to be a sound one since it does not depend upon mere preferences and opinions of families but also considers their ideals, motives, attitudes, cultural background, education, and habits. In other words, it attempts to determine the real and underlying likes and dislikes of families, as against what they say they like and dislike. . . . There is a need for learning more about the values of people in different population groups and wider sections of the country.²⁰

Dr. Frank further develops his challenging approach to furnishing the home by saying:

But I believe many, not all, let me emphasize, young people and many in middle and late life, can or will, if encouraged, respond to an invitation to explore for what is meaningful and satisfying to them individually. Each has a selective awareness, a patterned perception, with greater or less sensitivity to esthetic aspects of life, but these can be altered if they are encouraged to explore and experiment. Each can find that combination of spatial arrangements, of color, of form, of composition which will give them the feeling of living in congenial surroundings, of resonation to their domestic environment, instead of living in a home where the furnishings, including the pictures, are all "correct" and proper, but they feel like actors on a stage with more or less strange and incongruous scenery in no way related to, or expressive of themselves.²¹

The research undertaken in this field appears to support this dynamic approach to home furnishings. Furnishing the home for family living calls for intelligent decision-making based on sound information, in the light of family goals and values.

²⁰Glenn H. Beyer, Housing: A Factual Analysis, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1958, p. 290.

²¹Frank, op. cit., p. 9.

It is the purpose of this thesis to determine the sources of information available to the families in the sample, and their use of the information in the light of their family goals and values. The next chapter considers the findings of the study.

CHAPTER III

THE FINDINGS

In this chapter the twenty-four families and their houses are described. The living rooms and the families' goals for furnishing the living rooms are discussed. The actual improvements made in the living rooms and the sources of information consulted by the participating homemakers are considered.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE FAMILIES

The twenty-four families in this study represented a fairly homogeneous group. The majority of the families were in the expanding phase of the family life cycle, with children living in the homes of twenty-two of the twenty-four families.

Ages of the children ranged from one month to twenty-six years, but the majority of the children were from six to twelve years old. Only two families had elderly relatives living with them.

The parents ranged in age from twenty-eight to more than sixty-five years, the majority being from thirty to forty-five years old.

In this rural community, only three of the families studied derived their income primarily from farming. The majority of the husbands were wage earners, employed as laborers, foremen, or clerks. There were, however, two professional men and one business owner-operator in the group.

Nineteen of the homemakers were not employed outside the home.

Of the five who had outside employment, one was a factory worker, two were office workers, and two were teachers. Gainful employment of the homemakers did not seem to be related to the age of children in the family, as two of those employed had children under school age while the others had older children.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSES

The houses, as well as the families, represented a fairly homogeneous group. All of the families in this study owned their own homes. All houses had a living room, kitchen, and bedrooms. The majority of the houses had three bedrooms (Chart A). All except one of the houses had a bathroom, and ten of the houses had more than one bathroom. Approximately three-fourths of the houses had a den in addition to the living room. Separate dining rooms were found in seven of the houses, and four of the houses had utility rooms. Nineteen of the houses had some type of central heating system.

Fifteen of the houses in the study were less than ten years old. Seven were from eleven to twenty years old, and two of them were more than twenty-six years old.

Brick was most frequently used as an exterior finish, followed by wood siding and asbestos shingles. Several combinations of these materials occurred also.

All of the families rated high when judged by the "Short Scale for Measuring Farm Family Level of Living", a modification of Sewell's

Type of room

Number of houses

Living rooms

24

Kitchens

24

Bedrooms *

(a)
7(b)
14(c)
3

24

Bathrooms **

(a)
13(b)
6(c)
4

23

Dens

17

Dining rooms

7

Utility rooms

4

CHART A. TYPES OF ROOMS IN THE TWENTY-FOUR HOUSES

- * (a) 2-bedroom houses
 (b) 3-bedroom houses
 (c) 4-bedroom houses

- ** (a) 1-bathroom houses
 (b) 1½-bathroom houses
 (c) 2-bathroom houses

Socio-Economic Scale.²² However, this scale was not found to be discriminating in this situation, perhaps because of the fact that the families in the study were found to be largely rural non-farm, and because of the small number of families involved.

III. FACTORS REFLECTING THE HOMEMAKERS' KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN HOME FURNISHINGS

Four factors which might reflect the homemakers' knowledge of and interest in home furnishings were considered by the writer. These factors were: (1) the level of formal schooling and the level of home economics education attained by the homemakers, (2) a daughter's experience in home economics classes or 4-H Club work which might have contributed to the homemakers' home furnishings information, (3) the magazines containing home furnishings information to which the homemakers subscribed or which they read occasionally, and (4) the homemakers' preferences for certain homemaking activities.

Formal Schooling and Home Economics Education. It was found that thirteen of the homemakers in this study had been graduated from high school; two of these thirteen had, in addition, attended one year of business college, and two of them had completed four years of college.

Fifteen of the participating homemakers had studied home economics in junior high school, high school, or in college (Table I).

²²John C. Belcher and Emit F. Sharp, A Short Scale for Measuring Farm Family Level of Living: A Modification of Sewell's Socio-Economic Scale, Technical Bulletin No. T-46, Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1952, p. 20.

TABLE I
COMPARISON OF LEVEL OF FORMAL SCHOOLING
WITH LEVELS OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION
(20 Homemakers)*

Education of homemakers	Homemakers answering	Home economics education			
		In school	4-H Club	Home dem. program	Adult classes
		(homemakers)			
Eighth grade or less	3	1	-	2	1
Part high school	4	4	1	2	-
High school graduate	9	6	2	8	4
One year busi- ness college	2	2	1	1	-
Four years college or more	2	2	-	1	-

*Four homemakers who reported home economics education, did not report level of schooling completed.

Eleven of the homemakers stated that their high school or junior high school home economics courses had included some study of house furnishings. Two of the homemakers had studied house furnishings as a part of their home economics major in college.

In comparing the level of formal schooling with the level of home economics education, it was found that the nine high school graduates had had the greatest variety of home economics education. Six of these nine women had studied home economics in school, two had been 4-H Club members, eight Home Demonstration Club members, and four of the same group had attended adult classes in home economics.

Home furnishings information had been offered in the Sumner

community over a period of years through adult homemaking classes and home demonstration clubs. Eighteen of the women interviewed had at some time been members of a home demonstration club. Five of the women had attended adult homemaking classes; these five had also studied home furnishings through the home demonstration program.

Daughters' Experience in Home Economics. Regarding the second factor, it was found that eight of the families had daughters who at some time had been enrolled in home economics classes or 4-H Club work. Only four of these girls had, to their mothers' knowledge, ever carried a home project having to do with house furnishings.

Use of Magazines. It was found that all the homemakers subscribed to or read occasionally some magazines containing house furnishings information (Table II).

TABLE II
MAGAZINES SUBSCRIBED TO OR READ OCCASIONALLY
(24 Families)

Name of magazine	Number of families subscribing to magazines (19 families)	Number of families not subscribing but reading magazine occasionally (21 families)
Farm Journal	11	5
Progressive Farmer	8	3
McCall's	6	5
Better Homes and Gardens	6	12
Farm and Ranch	5	-
Good Housekeeping	4	7
American Home	3	9
Ladies Home Journal	3	1
Southern Planter	2	-
Woman's Day	-	15
House Beautiful	-	6
Living for Young Homemakers	-	4
Family Circle	-	2
House and Garden	-	1

Nineteen of the women subscribed to some of these magazines. It is interesting to note that the magazines most frequently subscribed to--Farm Journal and Progressive Farmer--are not primarily house furnishings magazines. Among the magazines the women stated they read occasionally, Woman's Day, Better Homes and Gardens, and American Home were mentioned most frequently.

Homemakers' Preferences for Certain Homemaking Activities. In order to secure information which would indicate individual interest in house furnishings, the homemakers were asked to rate their preferences for certain homemaking activities. The activities were: cleaning, cooking, laundry, furnishing the home, sewing, and entertaining. Results of this rating as shown in Table III indicated a rather strong interest in furnishings as a homemaking activity.

TABLE III
HOMEMAKERS' PREFERENCES FOR CERTAIN
HOMEMAKING ACTIVITIES
(20 Homemakers)*

Homemaking activities	Homemakers' orders of preference					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
	Number of homemakers					
Cleaning	3	3	3	3	6	2
Cooking	10	2	3	2	3	-
Laundry	-	6	-	3	5	6
Furnishing the home	5	6	4	3	-	2
Sewing	2	2	6	2	1	7
Entertaining	-	1	4	7	5	3

*Four homemakers did not give order of preference.

The homemakers' ratings were examined for a possible relationship between interest in furnishing the home and interest in entertaining. Of the twenty homemakers who stated their preferences, fifteen of them rated house furnishings activities in first, second, or third place. On the other hand, fifteen of the twenty answering, rated entertaining activities in fourth, fifth, or sixth place.

IV. HOMEMAKERS' GOALS FOR FURNISHING THEIR LIVING ROOMS

Families' Use of the Living Rooms. In order to determine the families' goals in relation to furnishing the living rooms, an effort was made to determine first the actual uses of the rooms. Chart B shows the use of the rooms by the twenty-four families. Only eleven of the families used the room for the family to "get together" in the evenings, but twenty-three of the families indicated that it was used for entertaining small groups. Only nine of the respondents stated that children were allowed to play in the living room.

When asked which family members used the living room most frequently, the homemakers indicated the following:

	Number of families
Adults	9
Children	1
All family members	14

Each homemaker was asked to indicate whether she considered her living room adequate: (1) for family centered activities, if the rooms were used for these activities, and (2) for parties and meetings, if the rooms were used for these activities.

Activities

Number of families

Children
playing

9

Family watching
television

10

Family getting
together in
evenings

11

Holding parties
and meetings

18

Entertaining
small groups

23

CHART B. ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH THE LIVING ROOMS WERE USED

Ten of the thirteen homemakers who reported that the living rooms were used for any of the family centered activities considered the rooms adequate for these uses. Sixteen of the eighteen families, who reported that the rooms were used for parties and meetings, stated that they considered the rooms adequate in size for these uses. However, they did find it necessary to bring in extra chairs from other parts of the house or to borrow chairs in order to seat these larger groups.

Other Factors Indicative of Goals. The homemakers were asked to rank, as to importance, a list of factors thought by the writer to be indicative of goals for furnishing a living room.

It was of interest to the investigator also to try to determine if evidence existed that the factors which the homemakers stated as important had been realized in the furnishing of the rooms. Accordingly, certain factors were also evaluated by the writer. These findings are acknowledged as subjective data.

Table IV shows the relationship between the homemakers' ranking of certain factors related to furnishing the living rooms and the investigator's ranking of the evidence of certain factors in the actual furnishing of the living rooms studied.

The majority of the homemakers agreed that it was "very important" to them that their living rooms be: comfortable, easy to care for, and a good place for friends to visit. Most of the women also stated that it was "very important" to them that their living rooms be: an orderly place for entertaining callers, and a quiet place for adults.

The majority of the women rated beauty, economy, and stylishness

TABLE IV

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTORS RATED BY THE HOMEMAKERS
AND FACTORS RATED BY THE INVESTIGATOR

Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Factors		Yes	Some- what	No
			Rated by the homemakers	Rated by the investigator			
8	15	1	Beautiful				
13	9	2	Quiet place for adults				
3	3	18	Good place for hobbies				
22	2	-	Comfortable	Comfortable	19	3	2
21	3	-	Easy to	Easy to	20	4	-
			care for	care for			
9	13	2	Furnished at	Furnishings	5	13	6
			low cost	costly			
4	15	5	Up to date	Catered to	2	3	19
			in style	fads			
6	5	13	Play space	Play space	7	3	14
			for children	for children			
21	2	1	Good place for	Entertaining	12	8	4
			friends to	facilities			
			visit	available			
16	5	3	Orderly place for				
			callers				
				Arranged	14	7	3
				conveniently			
				Used regularly	11	4	9
				by family			
				Cheerful	18	3	3
				atmosphere			

as "somewhat important" considerations in furnishing these living rooms.

More than half of the women stated that it was "not very important" for their living rooms to be: a good place for individual hobbies, or a play space for children.

In the opinion of the writer, the factors relative to comfort, ease of care, and entertaining facilities--stated as "very important" by the homemakers--had been realized in the actual furnishing of the room. There was, in the opinion of the writer, little evidence that play space for children was provided for in the living rooms. This, too, would seem to agree with the homemakers' rating of the same item. It will be noted that the factors rated by the homemakers and those rated by the investigator are not all the same.

V. DESCRIPTION OF THE LIVING ROOMS

The twenty-four living rooms which were studied, showed a considerable amount of individuality, although they were similar in many respects.

Furnishings. In all cases the living room floors were finished. The most frequently used flooring material was hardwood with a varnish finish. Linoleum or vinyl tile had been used in a few living rooms, and wall-to-wall carpeting directly over plywood subfloor had been one family's choice.

Seventeen of the families had chosen plaster or dry wall construction for the living room. In most cases the walls were painted, and in one case, wallpapered. Wood paneling was found in one-fourth of the living rooms, either alone or in combination with brick, stone, plaster or dry wall.

Items of furniture found in the living rooms are shown in

Table V.

TABLE V
FURNISHINGS OF THE LIVING ROOMS
(24 Families)

Furnishings	Number of families	Furnishings	Number of families
Upholstered chairs	24	Free-standing bookcases	9
Sofas or daybeds	23	Large tables	7
Draperies	22	Cornices and valances	7
Bric-a-brac	22	Footstools	6
Lamps	21	Pianos	6
Small tables (other than coffee tables)	19	Benches	4
Some type rug	18	Desks	4
Pictures	18	Record players	3
Coffee tables	13	Combination radio record player	2
Occasional chairs	12	Chest of drawers	2
Television sets	10	Radios	1
Built-in bookcases	9	Mirrors	1
		Curtains	1

Every living room studied contained at least one upholstered chair. In twenty-three of the living rooms there were sofas, and in twenty-two there were draperies. In the majority of the living rooms there were lamps, small tables, some type of rug, and at least one picture.

Television sets were found in ten of the living rooms. Large tables including library tables and drop-leaf dining tables were reported in seven cases.

Eighteen of the living rooms had some type of floor covering. Wall-to-wall carpeting was found in three of the rooms, and large rugs, 8' x 10' or larger, were used in eight of the living rooms. Scatter rugs

alone were used in eight rooms, and in one case a linoleum rug was used.

It is interesting to note that a mirror was found in only one of the living rooms studied; the same living room contained the only curtains reported in the study.

VI. IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE LIVING ROOMS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONSULTED

The nature of the improvements made in the living rooms within the three years prior to this study, indicate that these families tended to provide for two social rooms. The improvements were of three general types.

Nature of improvement	Number of houses	Number of houses with two social rooms
New houses	7	5
New room added as living room	7	6
Redecoration of existing living room	10	6

Wall and Ceiling Finishes. Seventeen of the families in the study had made some changes in wall or ceiling finishes within the three years prior to the study. These were:

Improvements	Number of families
Walls painted	13
Dry wall installed	9
Ceiling tile installed	5
Wall plastered	4
Strip paneling installed	3
Plywood paneling installed	2
Wall stone or brick veneered	2
Walls wallpapered	1
Dry wall repaired	1

The most frequently mentioned changes involved painting of walls and ceilings, installation of dry wall, and installation of ceiling tile.

Plywood paneling and strip paneling was installed in five cases, either as the entire finish or in combination with other materials. In two cases masonry walls were installed as the interior finish on one wall in the room. In only one case was wallpaper used as the interior finish.

In most cases the homemakers reported that they had been satisfied with the wall and ceiling finishes. In the four instances in which the homemakers reported some dissatisfaction with wall finishes, the reasons given indicated faulty workmanship and lack of information regarding materials used.

Reasons for dissatisfaction mentioned by the homemakers were:

(1) cracks showed in dry-wall installation, (2) water marks showed in plaster, (3) paint used was difficult to work with, (4) "sand" finish paint used proved to be a dustcatcher.

Seventeen homemakers reported improvements in wall and ceiling finishes. Fifteen of them reported that they had consulted the following sources of information:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Home demonstration personnel	7
Magazines	6
Husband	5
Own knowledge and experience	4
Manufacturer's printed material	4
Store or supply house personnel	3
Contractor	2
Painter	1
Newspapers	1
Books	1
Shopping around	1
Visiting other homes	1

The most frequently consulted sources were the home demonstration personnel and magazines. These two sources were usually consulted in

regard to selecting colors for the walls. In the matter of materials to be used, the homemakers tended to depend more on their own or their husband's general knowledge and experience, and on manufacturers' printed material.

Two sources of information mentioned here were not mentioned in any other area of furnishings. These were newspapers and visiting other homes, and they were consulted by the same homemaker.

It is interesting to note that while in eleven cases the new wall and ceiling finishes involved paid work, only three homemakers listed the painter or contractor as a source of information regarding the wall and ceiling finishes. Two of the homemakers did not report any source of information consulted in regard to the wall and ceiling improvements they had made.

Only one homemaker indicated that she would like to have had more information about wall finishes. Home improving was a family hobby for this family, and the homemaker reported having made a practice of studying several books in regard to all improvements. This homemaker stated that she would have been interested in further information about types of paint which might have been easier to apply.

Floor Finishes. Thirteen families reported having made some improvements in floor finishes in the three year period prior to the study.

Improvements	Number of families
New hardwood and finish	6
New tile	4
Refinished hardwood	2
Plywood subfloor	1

The most frequently mentioned improvement was the installation of hardwood floors, or floor tile. In two instances, hardwood floors had been refinished and in one case the flooring was plywood subfloor, over which carpeting had been installed. In all except one case, the work had been done by paid labor.

Three of the homemakers reported that the new floor had not been satisfactory. In one case the homemaker stated that workmen had applied a varnish rather than a penetrating seal as she had requested, and she believed the varnish showed scratches more easily than the seal would have done. The other instances of dissatisfaction, according to the participants were: vinyl tile showing scratches, and brown asphalt tile showing foot prints.

The homemakers reported having consulted the following sources of information in regard to floor finishes:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Husband	6
Builder or carpenter	5
Store or supply house personnel	3
Own knowledge and experience	3
Home demonstration personnel	2
Manufacturer's printed material	1

The indication was that these homemakers tended to rely upon their own judgment and their husband's knowledge, on supply houses and contractors, for their information about floor finishes.

None of the respondents indicated that they would have liked more information regarding floor finishes.

Floor Coverings. Within the three year period prior to the study, nine families had made the following improvements in floor coverings:

Improvements	Number of families
Wall-to-wall carpeting installed	3
Scatter rugs added	3
Large rugs added	2
Linoleum rug added	1

Wall-to-wall carpeting had been installed in three of the living rooms, while large rugs had been purchased for two of the rooms, and scatter rugs for three rooms. One homemaker reported a new linoleum rug for the living room.

When questioned as to satisfaction received from the floor covering, three of the nine homemakers reported that the floor covering had not been satisfactory. The reasons stated were: (1) cotton-nylon rug shed a considerable amount of lint, (2) one homemaker had wall-to-wall carpeting but would have preferred having some of the floor showing, and (3) one homemaker who was using scatter rugs would have preferred a larger rug.

Five of the nine homemakers who made improvements stated that the sources of information consulted in regard to floor coverings were:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Home demonstration personnel	2
Store personnel	2
Shopping around	2
Own knowledge and experience	1
Interior decorator	1

Shopping around, home demonstration personnel and store personnel seemed to have been of equal importance to these homemakers as sources of information regarding floor coverings.

One homemaker had consulted an interior decorator before deciding on her wall-to-wall carpeting, and another woman reported that she had

relied upon her own experience with rugs and carpets in making her decision. This woman stated that she had been pleased with the long-wearing qualities of her old wool rugs, but not pleased with what she considered the problems of cleaning a strip of flooring around the edge of the rug. Through this line of reasoning she concluded that wall-to-wall carpeting would be her best choice. This same homemaker, interestingly enough, stated that she "guessed she was just born with the talent" for decorating.

Four of the homemakers making improvements in floor coverings did not report any sources of information consulted.

None of these nine homemakers expressed a desire for having had more information related to floor coverings before making their decisions.

Window Treatment. The findings related to improvements made in window treatment within the three year period prior to the study present an interesting picture:

Improvements	Number of families
New draperies	15
Remodeled draperies	2
Cornices	4

Draperies, either new or remodeled, were involved in all these improvements which had been made by seventeen families.

In twelve cases, the homemakers reported that the draperies had been made by themselves, their families or friends. In four cases, the draperies had been purchased ready-made, and in only one home had the draperies been made to order by paid labor.

Fabric covered cornices had been installed in two rooms and two

cornices were made of wood, painted to match the living room walls.

Two of the homemakers reported some dissatisfaction with the draperies they themselves had made. Both of these cases had to do with inaccuracies in measurements; in one case length, and in the other case width requirements had been under estimated.

A variety of sources of information had been consulted in regard to fabric, color, and construction of the draperies, according to reports of the homemakers.

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Home demonstration personnel	6
Own knowledge and experience	6
Family and friends	4
Home economics teacher	3
Sales personnel	3
Shopping around	3
Demonstration given at store	1
Interior decorator	1
Daughter in home economics	1
Manufacturer's printed material	1
Books	1

The most frequently used specialized source of information was consultation with home demonstration personnel. These women also tended to rely on informal sources of information such as their own knowledge and experience and their family and friends, and the time-honored technique of shopping around.

The home economics teacher in the local school and sales personnel were consulted by three of the homemakers in regard to draperies.

Drapery-making was one of the few instances in which a homemaker stated explicitly that her daughter's home economics classes had been an important factor in improving her living room.

Only one homemaker indicated a desire for more information than she had obtained in regard to window treatment. This homemaker would have liked to have known how to measure more accurately in making draperies.

New Furniture. Both the addition of new furniture to the living rooms and the renovation of old furniture for the living rooms were considered in this study.

Additions of new furniture within the three year period prior to the study were as follows:

New furniture	Number of families
Sofas	12
Upholstered chairs	12
Tables	10
Others	7
Occasional chairs	4

Sofas, upholstered chairs, and tables were the major purchases reported. Other items purchased included occasional chairs, record players and television sets.

Only two items of new furniture were gifts, according to homemakers' reports, and two bookcases were homemade.

Dissatisfaction with an item of new furniture was reported by only one homemaker. In this case, a curved sectional sofa had been purchased and then found to be too large for the space it was to occupy.

According to their reports, most of the homemakers seem to have relied heavily on their own knowledge and experience for their information about new furniture. Eight homemakers reported the following sources of information consulted:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Own knowledge and experience	9
Shopping around	6
Store or supply house	5
Magazines	2
Husband	2
Interior decorator	2
Home economics teacher	1
Leaflets from manufacturers	1
Family and friends	1

Some of the women reported shopping around and consulting stores for information about furniture. Two of the homemakers had consulted an interior decorator, two stated that magazines had been helpful, and two listed their husbands as sources of information about furniture. The husband, in one of these cases, was the owner and operator of a furniture store.

Two homemakers who had purchased new furniture did not indicate any sources of information consulted in this regard.

One of the homemakers stated that she would have liked more information about "furniture in general"; this was the only case where a need for further information about furniture was mentioned by any of the seventeen respondents involved.

Renovated Furniture. Ten homemakers reported some furniture renovations. These were:

Improvements	Number of families
Reupholstered pieces	4
Refinished pieces	3
New slipcovers	2
Remodeled pieces	1
Painted pieces	1

These renovations represented, for the most part, reupholstered chairs, refinished case goods, and slipcovers made or purchased.

In three cases, the renovation work was done by family or friends, and in seven cases it was done by paid workers.

One homemaker had remodeled an old round dining table into a coffee table. This same table was the only painted piece reported in the study. The table had been painted white, and topped with pink marble-patterned adhesive plastic; it was used to hold a collection of bric-a-brac.

A noteworthy piece of refinishing had been done on an old upright piano by one family. The homemaker in this case was so pleased with the beautiful wood and finish that she intended to plan the whole room to emphasize the piano.

The sources of information which the homemakers consulted in regard to renovation of furniture were as follows:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Own knowledge and experience	2
Tradesmen doing renovation work	2
Magazines	1
Friends	1
Home demonstration personnel	1

According to the homemakers reports, their own knowledge and experience and, in the case of paid work, tradesmen doing the actual renovation seemed to be equally important sources of information. Four of the ten homemakers reporting furniture renovation did not indicate any sources of information consulted in this regard.

There were no reports of dissatisfaction with renovated furniture, and in no instance did any of the ten homemakers involved state the recognition of having needed further information in regard to furniture renovation.

Lighting. In fourteen of the twenty-four living rooms studied, some improvements had been made in lighting within the three year period prior to the study. Improvements reported were:

Improvements	Number of families
Lamps	12
Ceiling fixtures	5

New lamps had been added in twelve living rooms. Conventional ceiling fixtures with one or two incandescent bulbs and some type of shade were installed in five living rooms within the three year period.

All except one of the homemakers who reported lighting changes, stated that these had been satisfactory. Some interesting ideas were expressed by homemakers in this regard. For instance, one homemaker stated that lighting was satisfactory and followed this with the comment that, "whenever we want to eat or play bridge in here we can bring in the bedroom lamps".

The one homemaker who reported dissatisfaction stated that a ceiling fixture "did not give enough light for close work". This fixture was designed so that only very low wattage bulbs could be housed under the shade. The only other artifical lighting in the room was one floor lamp.

In regard to lighting improvements, the homemakers reported the following sources of information consulted:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Own knowledge and experience	3
Husband	3
Electrician	3
Shopping around	2

Informal sources were used most frequently. Three respondents named the electrician as a source of information about lighting. Four of the homemakers reporting changes in lighting did not indicate any sources of information consulted in this regard.

The majority of homemakers did not indicate a need for having had additional information about lighting at the time they were making these decisions. The one respondent who did indicate such a need, stated that she would like to have had more "to say" in the decisions concerning ceiling fixtures. The building contractor who was in charge of the work had, according to this homemaker's report, asked her to indicate what colors the rooms would be painted, and then he selected the fixtures accordingly. The homemaker, who was in poor health at the time, did not press the matter further.

Accessories. Eleven of the homemakers in the study reported the addition of accessories as a part of living room improvements within the three years prior to the study. These additions were:

Improvements	Number of families
Pictures	7
Placques (metal)	3
Planters	2
Miscellaneous	4

Pictures were the most frequently mentioned accessories, followed by metal placques and planters.

Five families reported having received accessories as gifts. One homemaker, whose husband worked in a gift store, reported numerous accessories which were gifts of the employer. In only one case were homemade accessories reported, and these were copper placques, tooled

and framed by the homemaker herself. Other evidence that copper tooling had been taught in the community was seen among accessories reported as gifts by other homemakers.

None of the homemakers reported dissatisfaction with accessories, nor did they indicate that they would have liked more information regarding accessories.

Five of the eleven homemakers reported the following sources of information in regard to accessories:

Sources of information	Number of consultations
Store personnel	2
Home demonstration personnel	2
Interior decorator	1
Magazines	1
Own knowledge and experience	1

Only one homemaker reported having consulted more than one source of information in regard to accessories for the living room. The other homemakers reported having consulted either a store, home demonstration personnel, an interior decorator, or magazines. Six of the homemakers reporting addition of accessories did not indicate any sources of information consulted.

VII. IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO BE CONSULTED

Homemakers were asked to state whether they planned to make any further improvements in their living rooms within the two years following this study. Seventeen of the homemakers stated that they did plan some improvements within that period.

Families' Two-Year Plans for Living Room Furnishings. In analyzing the families' two-year goals for further improvement of the living rooms, it was found that most of the planned improvements represented the purchase of new furniture, refinishing of walls and ceilings, making of draperies, the addition of accessories, and improvement of the lighting facilities (Table VI).

All the families who planned improvements for wall and ceiling finishes and for renovation of furniture planned to do their own work. This "do-it-yourself" tendency was seen even in plans for floor coverings, with one of the homemakers planning to make a 12' x 16' braided rug as the next improvement for her living room.

TABLE VI

TWO-YEAR PLANS FOR LIVING
ROOM IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements planned	Number planned	Articles to be purchased	Articles to be made by		Renovation to be done by	
			Family or friends	Paid labor	Family or friends	Paid labor
Wall and ceiling						
Finishes					6	
Paint	6				1	
Install dry wall	1				1	
Install ceiling tile	1					
Floor finishes						1
Refinish	1					1
New tile	1					
Floor coverings						
New rug or carpet	3	3				
Make rug	1		1			
Window treatment						
Draperies	5		4	1		
Cornices	2		1	1		
New furniture						
Sofas	5	5				
Chairs	4	4				
Tables	6	6				2
Other	6	6				
Renovated furniture					2	
Reupholster	2				1	
Refinish	1					
Lighting						
New lamps	5	5				
Accessories						
Pictures	5	3	2			
Planters	1	1				
Other	1	1				

Sources From Which Homemakers Plan to Seek Information. Table VII shows the sources from which homemakers planned to seek informed concerning the improvements they intended to make within the two years following this study.

Homemakers were first asked to state the improvements they planned to make. They were then asked if they would like to have more information before making the changes or improvements. In every category of furnishings (wall and ceiling finishes, floor finishes, window treatment, etc.) the number of homemakers desiring information was less than the number who were planning improvements. Although six different sources were mentioned by the homemakers, only one--home demonstration personnel--was mentioned by more than one homemaker. In five cases, homemakers desiring further information were undecided as to where they planned to seek that information.

TABLE VII

SOURCES FROM WHICH HOMEMAKERS PLAN
TO SEEK INFORMATION

Improvements	Number of families planning improvements	Number desiring more information	Sources from which homemakers plan to seek information						
			Informal sources				Specialized sources		
			Store	Shopping around	Husband	Other family and friends	Home dem. program	Interior decorator	Undecided
Wall and ceiling finishes	7	1					1		
Floor finishes	2								
Floor coverings	5	3		1	1				1
Window treatment	6	3				1			2
New furniture	13	4	1				2		1
Renovated furniture	3	1					1		
Lighting	5	1							1
Accessories	6	1						1	

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken in an effort to determine the extent to which homemakers use available information in making decisions regarding the furnishing of their living rooms.

The sample consisted of twenty-four homemakers in the Sumner community of Guilford County, North Carolina. All homemakers had made some improvements in their living rooms within the three year period prior to the study.

An interview guide was developed which was designed to reveal: (1) homemakers' goals for furnishing the living rooms, (2) the information available to them, and (3) homemakers' use of available information.

The interview guide was pre-tested with five homemakers, and revisions made. The homemakers were interviewed in their homes, by the writer, in March, 1959.

It is recognized that this represents a small sample, and results would be applicable only to the Sumner community.

I. SUMMARY

The Families and Their Houses. Most of the twenty-four families represented in this study were in the expanding phase of the family life cycle, with children living at home. The majority of the husbands were wage-earners, although the sample did include a few farmers, professional men, and one business owner-operator. Only five of the homemakers interviewed were employed outside the home.

All of these families owned their own homes. Most of the houses consisted of a living room and a den, three bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. The average living room represented in this study was equipped with a sofa, upholstered chairs, small tables, and some type of floor covering, as well as draperies. Lamps and pictures were also found in most of the living rooms.

Factors Reflecting Homemakers' Knowledge of and Interest in House Furnishings. Four factors, considered by the writer as reflecting the homemakers' knowledge of and interest in home furnishings, were considered. These were: (1) homemakers' formal schooling and home economics education, (2) possible influence of a daughter's experience in home economics, (3) homemakers' use of house furnishings magazines, and (4) homemakers' preferences for certain homemaking activities.

(1) In this sample of twenty-four homemakers it was found that more women had studied house furnishings through out-of-school programs than through in-school programs.

Slightly more than one-half the homemakers interviewed had been graduated from high school. Two of them were college graduates with home economics majors.

Fifteen of the homemakers had studied home economics at some level in school, but less than half of the homemakers had studied house furnishings as a part of their home economics courses.

Eighteen of the women interviewed had at some time been members of a home demonstration club; five of these had also attended adult classes. House furnishings information had been offered in both of these adult programs.

Two homemakers recalled having studied house furnishings in the course of their 4-H Club work, although four of them had been 4-H Club members.

(2) Although eight of the homemakers interviewed had daughters who had at some time been enrolled in home economics classes or 4-H Club work, only four of these girls had carried home projects in house furnishings.

(3) All the homemakers interviewed subscribed to or read occasionally some magazine containing house furnishings information. However, the magazines most frequently subscribed to--Farm Journal and Progressive Farmer--were not primarily house furnishings magazines. Likewise, the magazine, Woman's Day, which was most frequently reported as read occasionally but not subscribed to, is not primarily a house furnishings magazine.

(4) Homemakers rated their preferences for six homemaking activities: cleaning, cooking, laundry, furnishing the home, sewing, and entertaining. More than half of the twenty-four homemakers rated home furnishing activities as their first, second, or third preference among these activities.

Goals for Furnishing the Living Rooms. In order to obtain an indication of family goals in regard to the living rooms, an effort was made to determine the actual uses of the living rooms. It was found that less than half the living rooms were used for family-centered activities, such as children's play, getting together in the evenings, or watching television. It was found that adults used the rooms most frequently. Entertaining small groups or holding parties and meetings seemed to be the main uses of the living rooms.

These uses were reflected in the homemakers' ratings of the importance of certain factors in relation to furnishing the living room. Most of these homemakers considered it "very important" that the living rooms be orderly places for entertaining callers, and good places for friendship activities. However, the majority of the homemakers stated that it was "very important" to them that their living rooms be comfortable, and easy to care for.

Most of the homemakers stated that it was "somewhat important" that their living rooms be beautiful, up to date in style, and furnished at low cost. Most of these homemakers considered that it was "not very important" that these rooms provide play space for children or a good place for individual hobbies.

The results of a subjective rating by the investigator indicated that the factors rated "very important" by the homemakers had been realized in the actual furnishing of the living room. The rooms appeared to be comfortable, and easy to care for. There was little evidence that they were planned to provide play space for children or for individual hobbies.

Improvements Made and Sources of Information Consulted. Homemakers were asked to state the improvements made in the living room within the three years prior to the study. Furnishings were considered under the following categories: wall and ceiling finishes, floor finishes, floor coverings, window treatment, new furniture, renovated furniture, lighting and accessories.

Within the three years prior to the study, improvements had been made in all of these areas of furnishings. The greatest number of improvements, however, had been made in the areas of wall and ceiling finishes, window treatments, and the addition of new furniture. These improvements are summarized in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII
SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONSULTED IN RELATION TO IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE LIVING ROOMS

Improvements Made	Families Making Changes	Sources of Information Used															Number of Consultations	Number of Different Sources
		Mass media				Informal sources						Specialized sources						
		Magazines	News-papers	Books	Manufacturers printed material	Own information	Husband	Other family and friends	Shopping around	Visiting other homes	Store or supply house	Contractor or builder	Tradesmen	Interior decorator	Home Economics teacher	Home demonstration personnel		
Wall and ceiling finishes	17	6	1	1	4	4	5	—	1	1	3	2	1	—	—	7	36	12
Floor finishes	12	—	—	—	1	3	6	—	—	—	3	5	—	—	—	2	20	6
Floor coverings	9	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	1	—	2	8	5
Window treatment	17	—	—	1	1	6	—	5	3	—	4	—	—	1	3	6	30	9
New furniture	17	2	—	—	1	9	2	1	6	—	5	—	—	2	1	—	29	9
Renovated furniture	10	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	7	5
Lighting	14	—	—	—	—	2	3	—	2	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	10	4
Accessories	11	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	2	7	5
Totals		10	1	2	7	28	16	7	14	1	19	7	6	5	4	20	147	15

Wall and Ceiling Finishes. In general, standard materials such as painted dry wall or plaster, were used. In the newer houses, there seemed to be a trend toward the use of brick and plywood paneling in combination with other materials. Homemakers consulted many different sources for information about wall and ceiling finishes. Mass media sources (magazines, books, newspapers, manufacturers' printed material) were used frequently for information in regard to wall and ceiling finishes. This was not the case in any other area of furnishings.

Floor Finishes. In most cases, hardwood with a varnish finish or a floor tile was used. It appeared that homemakers making improvements relied upon their husbands and on contractors and supply house personnel for information related to floor finishes.

Floor Coverings. A great deal of variety was seen in the homemakers' choices of floor coverings. Styles ranged from scatter rugs to wall-to-wall carpeting. Homemakers had consulted very few sources for information about floor coverings, and there was no evidence of their having consulted mass media sources in this regard.

Window Treatment. There appeared to have been an almost complete acceptance of French pleated draperies by these homemakers. Many of the homemakers had made their own draperies, or had them made by friends. It appears that they had made use of the information they had received from the several sources consulted, which included the home economics teacher and home demonstration and store personnel.

New and Renovated Furniture. Purchase of new furniture seemed to be an important feature in the improvement of the living room studied. Reupholstering was the most frequently mentioned type of renovation. Homemakers relied upon informal sources of information in regard to new

furniture. Few sources of information were consulted in regard to furniture renovation.

Lighting. The lighting improvements which had been made in these living rooms were conventional in nature. Table and floor lamps and ceiling fixtures with incandescent bulbs were the only lighting facilities in any of the rooms. Fewer sources of information were used in relation to lighting than to any other improvement made in the living rooms.

Accessories. There appeared to be a general lack of variety in accessories chosen for these living rooms. Pictures, plaques, and planters were the most frequently occurring items, and in many cases the only accessories. Few sources of information had been consulted in regard to accessories.

Improvements to be Made and Sources of Information to be Consulted. The participating homemakers were asked to state the improvements they planned to make in their living rooms within the two years following the study. Seventeen of the homemakers did plan to make improvements. Improvements were planned for every area of furnishings, with the addition of new furniture being mentioned most frequently.

The homemakers were then asked if they would like to have additional information before making these changes or improvements. In every category of furnishings, the number desiring information was less than the number planning improvements. Many of those desiring information were undecided as to the sources from which they would seek the information. These seventeen homemakers mentioned only six sources from which they planned to seek information. Three of these were informal sources such as husbands, friends, and shopping around. In contrast, the homemakers who made actual improvements within the three years prior to the study, consulted fifteen different

sources of information.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Results of this study seem to indicate that the participating homemakers' goals in relation to the use of living rooms were primarily for adult entertaining rather than for family activities.

It appears that these homemakers wanted a living room which would be comfortable and easy to care for. Beauty and economy, so often emphasized in house furnishings advertising and instruction, were ranked as "somewhat important" by these homemakers.

The homemakers in this study consulted a number of sources for information in regard to wall and ceiling finishes, window treatment, new furniture, and floor finishes. It appears, however, that little information regarding lighting, accessories, floor coverings, or furniture renovation was sought by these homemakers.

The source of information most frequently mentioned by the homemakers was their own knowledge and experience. These homemakers apparently believe they had sufficient information for making decisions about home furnishings. However, it may be that they did not recognize their need for information before making these decisions. This is further evidenced by the fact that a large number of the homemakers reported no source of information consulted, not even their own background of knowledge and experience.

There is some evidence also that these homemakers recognize the home demonstration program as an accessible source of information on a variety of subjects, since this was the second most frequently mentioned source of information.

The source of information which seemed to be third in importance to these homemakers was sales personnel in stores and supply houses.

In this study it was found that mass media sources of information were used less than either specialized or informal sources. Magazines, found to be an important source of information in studies by Vann,²³ Starkey,²⁴ and Van Syckle,²⁵ did not appear as such in this study. Although most of the homemakers subscribed to or at least read magazines occasionally, they were mentioned as a source of information very few times. This would suggest the possibility of including, in adult education programs, some instruction on adapting and using information in house furnishings magazines.

Many of the homemakers who were planning further improvements, were not aware of the sources from which they would seek information about the planned improvements. This seems to indicate that these homemakers do not plan ahead for home furnishing improvements, many of which represent sizable investments of time, money, or energy.

There is evidence that many of the homemakers were not aware of, or not taking advantage of, the sources of information available to them. There seems also to be a lack of understanding of the fundamentals of decision making--seeking alternatives and thinking through the consequences of alternatives--in relation to improvements in home furnishings. There is evidence, therefore, of a need for adult education programs in house furnishings to emphasize the resources available to the individual home-

²³Vann, op. cit., pp. 43-49.

²⁴Starkey, op. cit., p. 53.

²⁵Van Syckle, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

makers, and how she might use these resources critically and effectively, in the light of her goals for furnishing her home.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

The actual interview guide was mimeographed on legal size paper, 8½" x 14". Hence, more space was provided for answers than appears in the following copy.

Two items in the following interview guide are marked for homemakers' use. One, a checklist, was clipped and given to the homemaker to check. The other, a list of some sources of information, was also clipped and handed to the homemaker to stimulate thinking regarding possible sources of information.

HOMEMAKERS' USE OF AVAILABLE
HOUSE FURNISHINGS INFORMATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name _____

Address _____

Children (under 18) living here:

Adults living here:

Sex

Age

Sex

Age

Husband's occupation? _____

Your occupation? _____

Do children frequently visit in your home?

YES _____ NO _____

Do the children play in the living room?

YES _____ NO _____

Does the family watch TV in this room?

YES _____ NO _____

Does the family usually use this room to
get together in the evenings?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you consider the room adequate for these
activities?

YES _____ NO _____

Which family members use this room most
frequently?

YES _____ NO _____

Is this room used for entertaining company?

YES _____ NO _____

Is there usually sufficient seating space
for their comfort?

YES _____ NO _____

If not, how is extra seating space provided?

Is this room used for parties or meetings?

What is the usual number of persons attending?

What age groups? Young children _____

Teenagers _____

Young adults _____

Adults _____

Other _____

How is extra seating provided?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you consider the room large enough for
these parties and meetings?

INVENTORY OF LIVING ROOM FURNISHINGS

<u>Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Comments</u>
---	Sofa	
---	Loveseat	
---	Daybed	
---	Other lounge	
---	Upholstered chairs	
---	Occasional chairs	
---	Footstools	
---	Benches	
---	Coffee tables	
---	Other small tables	
---	Piano	
---	Desk	
---	Chest of drawers	
---	Bookcase	
---	Console radio	
---	Table radio	
---	Console record player	
---	Table record player	
---	Console TV	
---	Table TV	
---	Combination of above	
---	Pictures	
---	Mirrors	
---	Bric-a-brac	
---	Lamps	
---	Curtains	
---	Draperies	
---	Valences	
---	Cornices	
---	Rugs and carpets	
---	Linoleum rug	
---	Scatter rugs	
---	Area rugs	
---	8 x 10 or larger rug	
---	Room-fit	
---	Wall-to-wall	

What changes have been made in the wall and ceiling finishes of this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Did family and/or friends do the work, or did you pay to have it done?

Family and/or friends _____
Paid work _____

Has the new finish been satisfactory?
Why?

YES _____ NO _____

Where did you get your information about methods, paints or other materials?

Would you like to have had more information? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, what kind?

What changes have been made in the floor finish of this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Did the family and/or friends do the work, or did you pay to have it done?

Family and/or friends _____
Paid work _____

Has the new finish been satisfactory?
Why?

YES _____ NO _____

Where did you get your information about materials and methods to use?

Would you like to have had more information? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, what kind?

What changes have been made in the floor coverings of this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Has this floor covering been satisfactory? YES _____ NO _____
Why?

Where did you get your information about this?

Would you like to have had more information? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, what kind?

What changes have been made in the window treatment of this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Were the items: purchased ready-made _____
 made to order _____
 made by family or _____
 friends

Has this window treatment been satisfactory? YES _____ NO _____
Why?

Where did you get your information about fabrics, color, style,
methods of construction?

Would you like to have had more information? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, what kind?

What furniture has been added to this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Furniture	Purchased	Gift	Homemade	Has this been satisfactory?		Why?
				Yes	No	

Where did you get your information about quality in furniture and how to judge a good buy?

Would you like to have had more information?
If YES, what kind?

YES _____ NO _____

What furniture has been renovated for this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Furniture	Work done by		Has this been		Why?
	Family or friends	Paid labor	<u>satisfactory?</u>		
			Yes	No	

Where did you get your information about materials to use, and how to do the job?

Would you like to have had more information?
If YES, what kind?

YES _____ NO _____

What changes have been made in the lighting of this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Has the new lighting arrangement been satisfactory? YES ____ NO ____
Why?

Where did you get your information about lighting fixtures, amount and kind needed, etc.?

Would you like to have had more information? YES ____ NO ____
If YES, what kind?

What accessories have been added to this room in the past 3 years?

If NONE, check here _____

Item	Purchased	Gift	Homemade	Has this been satisfactory?		Why?
				<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	

Where did you get your information about selection and arrangement of accessories?

Would you like to have had more information? YES ____ NO ____
If YES, what kind?

CHANGES TO BE MADE

Do you plan to make any changes in the living room within the next two

WITHIN NEXT
years?

Would you
information
this chan
or purcha
YES

Changes to be made	IF NEW, is item to be		IF RENOVATED, will work be done by		
	Purchased	Made by S* F* P*	S*	F*	P*
WALL AND CEILING FINISHES					
FLOOR FINISHES					
FLOOR COVERINGS					
WINDOW TREATMENT					
FURNITURE					
LIGHTING					
ACCESSORIES					

*S = Self

F = Family or friends

P = Paid labor

WITHIN NEXT TWO YEARS

years? YES _____ NO _____ (if YES, answer the following)

Would you like to have more
information before making
this change or improvement
or purchase?

YES

NO

Where do you
plan to look for
this information?

Who will make the
decisions about
these changes?

Self Family Other

How important is it to you that your living room be	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Beautiful			
Comfortable			
Easy to care for			
Furnished at low cost			
An orderly place for entertaining callers			
Up to date in style			
A play space for children			
A quiet place for adults			
A good place for friends to visit			
A good place for individual hobbies			

SOME SOURCES OF HOME FURNISHINGS INFORMATION
(For homemakers)

Here is a list of some of the sources of information which might have been helpful.

Magazines

Books

Leaflets put out by manufacturers

Leaflets put out by stores which sell home furnishings

Interior decorators

Decorating consultants from stores

Home Demonstration club programs, Agents, bulletins,
leaders

Home Economics teachers

Daughter in 4-H or home economics class

"Shopping around"

Other

INFORMATION REGARDING CHANGES TO BE MADE

Will these purchases or improvements be paid on the installment plan?
 YES _____ NO _____

Has the amount of these purchases or improvements been established in the budget?
 YES _____ NO _____

INFORMATION REGARDING THE HOUSE

Age of house _____

Number of years you have lived here? _____

Rent? _____ Own? _____

What type construction is the house exterior? _____

Rooms in the house:

<u>Rooms</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Used daily?</u>	
		Yes	No
Living room	_____	_____	_____
Family room (or den)	_____	_____	_____
Dining room (or area) (but not kitchen)	_____	_____	_____
Kitchen	_____	_____	_____
Utility room	_____	_____	_____
Bedrooms	_____	_____	_____
Bathrooms	_____	_____	_____
Enclosed porch	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

Is the living room floor finished? YES _____ NO _____

What is the living room wall construction? _____

How is the house heated? Central heat _____
 Floor furnace _____
 Space heater _____
 Other _____

Is the living room heated regularly? YES _____ NO _____

Does the house have running water? YES _____ NO _____

Do you have a mechanical refrigerator? YES _____ NO _____
 If NO, what type? _____

Do you have a home freezer or freezer locker space? YES _____ NO _____

Do you carry insurance on your furniture? YES _____ NO _____

INFORMATION REGARDING THE HOMEMAKER

Highest grade completed in school:

Grade School
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

High School
1 2 3 4

College or Professional training
1 2 3 4 over

Home Economics Training:

Through Extension work:

None

4-H Club

Home Demonstration Club

member

leader

officer

Did you study house furnishings?

Yes No

Yes No

In school or adult classes:

None

Grade School

High School

College

Adult Classes

Did you study house furnishings?

Yes No

Yes No

Yes No

Yes No

Has your daughter studied home economics in:

4-H Club work

School

College

Yes No

Yes No

Yes No

Has she ever carried a home furnishings project? Yes No

What phases of homemaking do you like best? (Rate from 1 through 6 in order of preference, that is #1 you like best, #2 second best, etc.)

Cleaning

Cooking

Laundry

Furnishing the home

Sewing

Entertaining

Do you subscribe to or read occasionally any of these magazines?

Magazine

Subscribe

Read occasionally

American Home

Better Homes and Gardens

Farm Journal

Good Housekeeping

House Beautiful

House and Garden

Living for Young Homemakers

McCall's

Progressive Farmer

Woman's Day

Other

SHORT SCALE FOR MEASURING FARM FAMILY LEVEL OF LIVING*
(To be completed by interviewer, after interview)

Construction of house: Brick, stucco, etc., or painted frame ... 5
Unpainted frame or other 2

Separate dining room: Yes 6 No 3

Living room floor finished: Yes 6 No 2

Living room wall construction: Plaster or wall board 5
Ceiling, building paper or none 2

Living room lounge: Bed, cot, bench, or none 2
Divan, studio couch, couch, day bed 5

Lighting facilities: Electric, gas, mantle or pressure ... 5
Oil lamps, other, or none 2

Water piped into house? Yes 7 No 3

Refrigerator: None 1
Mechanical or ice 5

Deep-freeze unit or town locker: Yes 6 No 3

Furniture insured: Yes 6 No 3

* This short scale is taken from: A Short Scale for Measuring Farm Family Level of Living: A Modification of Sewell's Socio-Economic Scale, by John C. Belcher and Emmet F. Sharp. Technical Bulletin No. T-46, Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, Stillwater, Oklahoma, Sept., 1952. P. 20.

CHECKLIST FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE FAMILY VALUES
(To be checked by interviewer, after interview)

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Do the furnishings appear to be comfortable?			
Is the furniture conveniently arranged?			
Do the furnishings appear to be costly?			
Does the room appear to be easy to care for?			
Is there evidence of catering to fads in furnishings?			
Is the general atmosphere cheerful?			
Is there evidence that children play here?			
Are facilities available for entertaining?			
Are there evidences that the room is used regularly by the family?			