

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Home Handymen: An Exploratory Study

by

James Ronald Hilbert

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

MARCH, 1994

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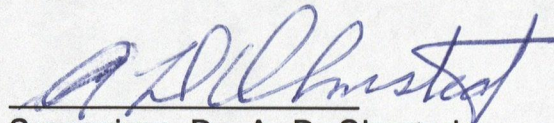
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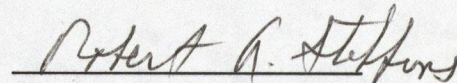
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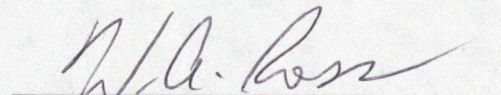


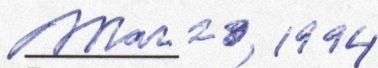
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Supervisor, Dr. A. D. Olmsted


Dr. Robert A. Stebbins
Department of Sociology


Dr. William A. Ross
Faculty of Environmental Design


Date

Abstract

Although interest in home handymen is increasing, very little is known about the role. The focus of this research is to qualitatively explore what contingencies influence the home handyman role and to examine how individuals construct the role of home handyman.

Data for this study is based on thirty four interviews of individuals who defined themselves as being a home handyman. All have performed by their own account either "some" or "extensive" home renovation activity. It was found many individuals had early experience with the activity. All individuals persevere and persist at the activity. Respondents face similar project contingencies . Few were forced into the activity by strict financial need. Orientation or attitude towards the activity is found to be salient. Three orientations: work, semi-leisure and serious leisure are identified and discussed. Suggestions for future research are presented.

Acknowledgements

In the preparation of this thesis, I am indebted to a number of people. I am especially grateful to my family, Ronald, Betty-Lou, and Catherine Hilbert, James and Lianne Chilton, and Walter Wood. Without their encouragement, support and understanding, this thesis could not have been completed. This accomplishment is as much theirs as mine.

My sincerest gratitude to Dr. A.D. Olmsted for inspiring my interest in sociology and for guiding this undertaking with much wisdom, sage advice, and patience. I am very thankful to have him as a teacher, advisor, and friend.

Discussions with Dr. Robert Stebbins and Dr. Stanley Parker were very useful for clarifying my thinking on the complex nature of work and leisure. Dr. Robert Stebbins and Dr. William Ross offered invaluable comments on later draft versions.

Acknowledgement is also offered to those individuals who participated in this study. Their enthusiastic, open discussion has offered a unique opportunity to understand what it is to be a home handyman.

Dedication

To my parents, Ronald and Betty-Lou.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As a student of urban society, it is with great interest that I take my daily neighborhood walk. In the past dozen years several features about my neighborhood have impressed me. First, people who buy into the district stay for a great deal of time. Second, most of the single family homes are thirty years and older; one might expect a certain amount of physical deterioration to have occurred. This is not the case. Many homeowners pursue, on a regular basis, renovation tasks (1) that significantly change the dwelling's physical structure.

Many of the renovations to neighborhood homes are completed by owner occupants as do-it-yourself activities. Except where extensive electrical work is required or where emergency service is necessary, paid professional help is seldom hired. (2) The prevalence of recurrent do-it-yourself home renovation activities suggests a lot of individuals are deft, or believe they are deft, at the building trades. These people I call home handymen. (3)

This research is aimed at learning more about how individual incumbents define the role of home handyman. Using a qualitative approach, the central questions guiding this study are:

- A) Why does a person become a home handyman?
- B) What kind of "career" do home handymen have?
- C) How is the role of home handyman constructed by individuals who undertake the role?

D) What contingencies (4) influence home handyman activity?

E) Does the home handyman role have any intrinsic meaning for individuals who undertake the role?

Why Study Home Handymen?

Many sociological studies have been conducted under the general rubric of urban renewal (5). Almost all research is being done to predict when and where urban renewal will occur and to understand the full impact of urban renewal on society. To pursue goals of prediction and understanding, many researchers have focused on delimiting the antecedents and consequents of urban renewal. The physical, social, economic and demographic aspects of urban renewal have been well studied (Clay, 1979; Firey, 1947; Grier and Grier, 1980; Kary, 1988; Mckee et. al., 1979; Millward and Davis, 1986; Spain, 1980).

In spite of the increased production of research on housing renewal, little attention has been paid to the actual process of physically changing the housing stock. Two questions naturally pose themselves; who performs the physical work involved in renovating any residence? and, why do it? In many instances, work is done by professional trades people for monetary gain. Glaser (1972) examined the relationship between the subcontractor and his or her client. Carscallen (1983) provides a step by step guide for those individuals willing to assume the duties of a subcontractor. These studies overlook an alternative option for homeowners who desire renovations to their homes; the opportunity

to do it for themselves- to become home handymen.

Commercial interest in home handymen and their activities is extensive.

Following demographic trends, a major hardware chain has restructured itself and

got on with its new emphasis on home improvement superstores aimed at the burgeoning ranks of (female) renovators (Fagan, 1988 :B3).

A number of publishing houses (eg. Meredith 1991-; 1991-; Time Life: 1989-;) have produced a series of "how to do it" books for the home handyman. Also, do- it- yourself handyman television shows have become standard fare. A recent television magazine (Pegg, 1992) lists at least three such offerings. Additionally, courses on various home renovation skills have been developed and are offered to the public. Three continuing education programs offer no less than thirty six different courses for the home handyman (City of Calgary, 1992; Mount Royal College, 1989; Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, 1989).

In spite of this existing interest, little is known about the role of the home handyman. The aim of the current research is to uncover the "...complexes of interpretations, concepts, and theories that (participants) invest with reality and therefore base their actions upon" (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979:195). Many social researchers have adopted this methodology for the sociological study of roles.

Of particular relevance are those studies of how people take on a given role. An interest in "becoming" has motivated several studies of deviant roles. For example, marijuana users (Becker, 1953), alcoholics (Rudy, 1986;

Wiseman, 1970), nudists (Weinberg, 1966), school skippers (Crespo, 1978), pool players (Polsky, 1969) and homosexuals (Sawchuck, 1978). A number of deviant work and leisure roles have also been studied (see Miller, 1978). To a lesser extent, non-deviant roles have also been studied using the "becoming" perspective. Among this work are Olmsted's (1988) study of hobbyists, Scott's study of blind men (1969), Stebbin's study of magicians (1984) football players (1986) and amateurs (1979), Bennett's (1980) study of musicians, various studies of becoming a doctor (Coombs, 1978; Haas and Shaffir, 1982).

These studies of deviant and non-deviant activity all have a common denominator. Frequently there exists some form of social organization, weak or strong, to socialize people into the role. In other instances no social organization exists. It may not make sense to speak of a social group:

For some problems the researcher will find himself studying individuals who are a group only in the sense that they are collected in his mind because of how they bear upon a sociological problem. Such groups include suicide attempters, schizophrenics and certain other kinds of deviants. In no natural way do these people share some common social world. They need not be regularly in one another's physical presence, need not be in any communication with one another, and need not mutually affect one another's lives in any direct way (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979:61).

The purpose of this thesis is to study individuals who undertake the non-deviant role of home handyman. A prime goal is to determine the group status of home handymen. From this beginning it will be possible to address the issue of what the home handyman role involves for activity participants and how the

role is constructed. The following chapter offers a theoretical overview of home handyman activity. It provides a base from which this issue may be explored.

Notes

(1) Home renovation is defined by Seek (1983:455) as " ..to include addition, alteration, or renovation to (the) dwelling."

(2) These statements are based on personal observation and discussions with neighbours.

(3) Throughout this study the masculine form shall be used. It is recognized that women do participate in, and may hold a high degree of competency and knowledge about, all aspects of handyman activity.

(4) As used in this thesis, a contingency is anything which may affect the doing of an activity. Contingencies for the home handyman include past experience, current employment, the influence of spouses, availability of time, degree of skill, et.cetera

(5) For comprehensive bibliographies see Corke (1980) and Listokin (1983).

Chapter Two: Theory

Introduction

My interest in home handymen also stems from those features that make the role unique. As used in this thesis, the role of handyman is:

A) non-professional; incumbents do not derive more than half of their income from handyman activities. The end product of home handymen is not, however, necessarily substandard to that of the professional trades (Stebbins, 1979).

B) an enduring pursuit. Individuals, over a number of years, consistently engage in the activity.

C) restricted to owner occupants (Mendelsohn, 1977; Seek, 1983).

D) one of many roles chosen by homeowners to occupy.

E) a means to the end of a more satisfying housing package (Mendelsohn, 1977; Stebbins, 1982). Other rewards associated with the activity (self actualization, renewal of self, self expression, social contact and financial reward) may exist but are assumed to be secondary.

F) independent of socio-cultural, age and geographic ties (see the case studies by Hudson, 1987 and Kern et. al., 1976).

G) not institutionalized. No social prescriptions define the handyman role.

To provide a least complex treatment of the handyman phenomenon, discussion of theoretical issues will be developed in two parts. First, a review of past and current research on private housing renewal will be presented. Second, a review of sociological literature bearing upon work and leisure will

be presented. The purpose of this exercise is to locate the present research within the larger genre of academic literature and to legitimize the research problem. In serving these two functions, this section on theory will provide insight into the choices made in organizing analysis of data.

Research on Housing Renewal

A large body of literature has been accumulated on the subject of housing in industrial and post industrial societies (See Corke, 1980; Listokin, 1983; TEEGA, 1989 for concise bibliographies). Many of these studies have a common theme. There is an ever increasing demand for a limited supply of suitable dwelling units. A frequently advocated solution to this dilemma is to reclaim or adapt existing dwelling units for further or better use. Three processes of housing renewal are most frequently studied: slum clearance, incumbent upgrading and gentrification.

Slum clearance entails wholesale destruction of a very dilapidated multi-family housing stock and reconstruction of multi-residential units for housing the economically disadvantaged. Typically, the process of slum clearance requires extensive public financial support and regulation. For these reasons, slum clearance needs to be considered separately from other forms of housing renewal. A more complete treatment of slum clearance can be found in earlier research such as Twitchell (1953).

Incumbent upgrading and gentrification are activities whereby single family residential homes are upgraded by owner occupants. Both are forms of

private housing renewal; the distinction between the two is relative. Frequently, seven criteria are used to compare and contrast the processes. Three criteria - the age and condition of the dwelling and the degree of renovation undertaken - relate to the home itself. Four criteria - age, socio-economic status, lifestyle and length of tenure - refer to the characteristics of the householder.

Incumbent upgrading occurs in old neighborhoods that have a generally well kept housing stock. According to Clay (1979: 48), a majority of renovations are aimed at interior and exterior structural repair and modernization. Individuals who engage in incumbent upgrading tend to be older and have reduced levels of education and income. In addition, they tend to maintain small, mature households and have had a long tenure in their houses.

Alternatively, gentrification occurs in very old neighborhoods that have a significantly deteriorated housing stock. It is generally assumed renovations undertaken by gentrifiers are very extensive and expensive projects. Much attention has been given to those efforts that attempt authentic restoration or gut rehabilitation of a home. However, Clay (1979:22-23) emphasizes renovations undertaken by gentrifiers vary widely in expense and extent of effort. Gentrifiers tend to be young, highly educated and well paid; frequently they are childless, career oriented couples. Gentrifiers are often newcomers to the neighborhood; they have had only a short tenure in their houses.

In defining incumbent upgrading and gentrification in this manner it is possible to point out the existence of a "grey area" in which much renovation

may occur. Bunting and Phipps (1988:142) succinctly report this problem:

(There exists) a variety of types of home improvement and neighborhood upgrading that amounts to something beyond maintenance and stability but remains less exclusive than gentrification as it is standardly described.

A small number of researchers have begun to probe this grey area.

There are several classical theories of neighborhood change. Urban ecologists (McKenzie, 1968; Park, 1952) employ an invasion - succession model of neighborhood change. Studies by Hoover and Vernon (1962) and Birch (1971) are examples of a school that posits a cycle model for neighborhood change. Both invasion - succession and neighborhood cycle theories are heuristic devices for making sense of two basic processes. First, changes in land use and, second changes in the population composition. What is salient in the current context is that both theories postulate that changes usually occur in a downward direction. Less desirable land uses usually succeed more residentially appropriate land uses; lower status groups tend to succeed higher status groups. An increasing number of researchers reject the bleak outlook posited by these theories of neighborhood change.

Following the classical theories, gentrification and incumbent upgrading occur in a deteriorating neighborhood. However, many theorists argue that neighborhoods not in stages of decline or decay are presently experiencing renovation of their housing stock. The conditions preceding gentrification and incumbent upgrading (1) have not materialized in many neighborhoods. This point can be clarified by reviewing Badcock and Cloher (1981) and Kendig's

(1984) study of Australia and Bunting's (1984; with Phipps, 1988) study of Canada. Both nations have cities in which housing renewal has occurred without widespread or irreversible decline.

This situation can be credited to several factors. First, there are constant and increasing employment opportunities in the city resulting from service sector employment (Bunting and Phipps, 1988; Kendig, 1984; Lipton, 1977). This is related to the finding that individuals with high educational and occupational status place a high value on inner city living (Badcock and Cloher, 1981; Clay, 1983; Gale, 1980). Moreover, it is generally accepted that an increase in the househead's income will be associated with an increase in renovation expenditure (Bunting, 1987; Phipps, 1983). Mendelsohn (1977:465) calculates that:

for every extra dollar of income the average owner spent an additional 0.37 cents on housing improvements.

Second, the structure of the family is changing. Formation of smaller households promoted by a decrease in fertility, aging of the baby boom (Bourne, 1978; Clay, 1979), increase of non-family households (Bunting, 1987; Gale, 1980) and the increase of single parent households (Filion, 1987; Rose, 1984) all increase the demand for inner city housing. Several authors (Adams, 1984; Bunting and Phipps, 1988; Evenden, 1982; Fallis, 1983) have noted the presence of children in a home positively influences the renovation expenditure of families. Dantas' study of Riverdale Ontario (1988:82) finds

....households with young children spent 111 per cent more

on renovation than those who have no children.

Third, there is no "risk" typically associated with the decision to renovate in the core area of many Australian and Canadian cities. On a physical level, the housing stock is sound, reasonably priced and capable of renovation. Further, many neighborhoods are characterized by amiable settings, low density, accessibility to work, good schools and tolerable limits of pollution, traffic and crime. In both nations the federal and provincial government funds expensive and important public services. Thus, citizens can enjoy a high quality of public service without being heavily taxed at the local level. Owing to these factors, residents are more prone to renovate their homes (Badcock and Cloher, 1981; Clay, 1979; Dantas, 1988).

The conclusion to be drawn from such cross-cultural perspectives is an important one; all demographic groups are involved in home renovation. There is no strict demographic variable that promotes or inhibits housing renewal. Moreover, housing renovation can occur in a multitude of settings and a multitude of different circumstances (government financial aid, government regulation etc.). Given this broad conclusion, many scholars have emphasized the importance of attitudes and assumptions on the decision to renovate.

Phipps (1983) backed up with the findings of Galster (1987) suggests individuals with a positive attitude regarding their homes and neighborhood are, a priori, more likely to renovate their homes. This relationship is not absolute. Jackson (1985) argues housing dissatisfaction may sometimes stimulate

housing renovation; people will renovate to eliminate the dissatisfaction they feel with their current housing package and, as a result, become more satisfied with their home.

Kendig (1984) concludes that, in Australia, the cost of rehabilitated housing is much greater than that of newly constructed suburban housing. If, however, the social costs of moving and long distance journeys to work are taken into consideration, the advantage of new housing is minimized. Jackson (1985) corroborates this conclusion. In his study of extenders who made initial inquiries about moving (N = 115), 49.5 percent extended primarily because they thought it was more fiscally sound to do so. The key point is that people's perceptions of fiscal considerations are salient in their decision to renovate.

Additionally, long term homeowners who have previously renovated tend to engage in further renovation activity for three reasons; personal satisfaction, perception of gain at sale of home and the belief they can monetarily afford to do so. Alternatively, homeowners who are planning their first renovation are motivated by perceptions that neighbours are renovating and that government programs can help defray the cost (Phipps, 1983).

Once the decision to renovate is made, a supplementary decision must also be made. Should paid professional labour be utilized or, should the project be completed as a do-it-yourself venture? This supplementary question, however important, has not received a great deal of academic attention. An assessment of magnitude of the handyman phenomenon has been completed

(2). Other authors (Hudson, 1987; Kern et.al., 1976) and the mass media (Curtis, 1990) tend to romance the handyman activity. Where it is otherwise discussed (Bunting, 1987; Bunting and Kesick-Delfgaauw, 1989; Loomis, 1980; Phipps, 1983; Seek, 1983; Wulff, 1982) handyman activity receives but mere mention, seldom more than a few lines of text (3).

In academic research, only broad assumptions are made about the handyman role. Mendelsohn (1977) postulates that home handymen will work on their house until the rewards of work (4) equal the value placed on leisure time. Linked to this assumption is the belief that individuals who are more productive (i.e. are physically healthy and dexterous) and who possess the necessary skills, knowledge and time are likely to complete more home renovations as handyman projects (Clayton and Associates, 1986; Mendelsohn, 1977; O'Connell, 1989).

Further, it is assumed that residents with a short tenure and low household income are more likely to pursue home renovations as handyman projects (Clayton and Associates, 1986). Another assumption is that there is an important social component to home handyman activity. Tomlinson (1990: 68-69) notes the activity of home handymen is "culturally expressive"; it allows individuals to exercise their "consumer power" and "cultural tastes".

These assumptions do not really tell much about how the role of home handyman is constructed by individuals who undertake the role. It is the goal of this thesis to provide a more systematic treatment of this topic. To pursue

this goal, I will focus on the subjective careers of home handymen (5).

In summary, traditionally, scholars interested in private dwelling renewal have focused on processes of incumbent upgrading and gentrification. A much larger phenomenon is renovations being completed by individual households that do not easily fit into one or the other traditional categories. Recently, interest has been expressed in this "grey area" of renovation activity; many scholars have emphasized the importance of attitudes and assumptions on the decision to renovate.

To this emerging scheme I would like to add a further dimension. It is the notion that homeowners can make significant home renovations as do-it-yourself ventures. That amateur tradesmen, or home handymen are an important force behind home renovation is not new. Yet, to date, no research has been conducted specifically on home handymen. This may, in part, be due to a lack of conceptual tools to think about the activity of home handymen. Furthermore, it may be attributed to a consumer oriented, "quick fix" society that promotes the hiring out of home repair.

Theoretical advances by Stebbins (1979, 1982) and Dumazedier (1974) have opened the possibility of more fully conceptualizing the notion of "home handyman". Moreover, in the current economic times it is likely many individuals will attempt home handyman activity. For these reasons, the present is a fruitful time to begin research on home handymen and their activity.

Home Handyman Activity: Work or Leisure?

Many researchers have developed typologies for categorizing the daily activity of individuals. Reviewing these typologies Parker (1983:8-9) identifies five main categories of daily activity:

A) work, work time, sold time or subsistence time - These terms refer to the remunerated ways of earning a living, one's occupation.

B) work related time, work obligations - In this category are those activities to prepare for, or as a result of, one's occupation. Travelling to and from work, attending conferences, union meetings or taking courses are all types of work related obligations.

C) existence time, meeting physiological needs- This is the first of three non-work activities identified by Parker. Existence time refers to the mechanics of living; eating, sleeping, eliminating, bathing, procreating etc.

D) non-work obligations, semi-leisure - Outside the area of work time individuals may feel they have obligations to other people or objects. As no remuneration is received, these tasks are not work. Since the task is undertaken with some sense of obligation, it is not leisure. Dumazedier (1967; 1974) coined the term semi-leisure (6) to designate these marginal activities. Depending upon one's attitude, examples of semi-leisure activities may include playing with children and maintaining gardens or pets.

E) Leisure, free time, spare time, uncommitted time, discretionary time,

choosing time. Many definitions of leisure have been put forward. Parker (1983, 3-6) notes three general types. Residual definitions are concerned with what is taken out of total time so that time free of obligations remains. Functional definitions posit leisure as discretionary time used to regenerate or improve the self or in service to the community. Wholly prescriptive or normative definitions consider leisure as an attitude of mind in which time is used in the betterment of self and society. For current purposes, leisure refers to those activities that are freely chosen and do not entail obligations to self or others. A wide range of activities can be termed leisure: reading, collecting, watching television, sports, art etc.

Where does the activity of home handymen fit into this scheme? A fundamental assumption of this research is that home handymen activity is not a full time vocation. A few individuals may be monetarily rewarded. However, no handyman receives a majority of his income from the activity. Consequently, the activity of home handymen does not constitute a work role or a work related role. It is evident home handyman activity is, in Parker's scheme, a form of non-work. Following the reasoning that "non-work obligations are only obligations within a prior context of freedom to choose." (Parker, 1983:10), home handyman activity can not be termed as existence time. The most constrained individual has at least one choice. He may elect to put off any contemplated or necessary repairs.

In Parker's scheme, home handyman activity is either a form of semi-

leisure or a type of leisure. Persons who feel an obligation to act whether it is self imposed or not, are semi-leisure participants. People who choose to do home handyman activity are leisure participants.

It may seem foreign to classify the activity of home handymen as leisure. In common usage, time spent at leisure is casual; activity participants engage in activities that are a low yield use of free time and return only evanescent benefits. Casual leisure participants seek only mild temporary diversion to fill their free time. They do not invest a great deal of psychic energy or intensity into their chosen activity. Much of what North Americans choose to do in their free time may be termed casual. (7) However, from an academic standpoint, leisure includes a range of activities that are not "casual".

Many researchers (Ennis,1968; Gunter and Gunter,1980; Kelly,1981; Parker, 1983; Wilson,1981) point out elements of "work" and elements of "leisure" can penetrate any activity. It is possible to be leisure-like while at work; it is also possible to be work-like while at leisure. In studying leisure pursuits that are work-like Stebbins (1979, 1982) notes some participants consistently engage in their chosen activity. They strive for perfection and have grown " proficient enough and knowledgeable enough" to personally "identify" with the activity (Stebbins 1979:30). The passion felt for the activity is revealed through the individual's orientation and talk about the activity. These individuals Stebbins (1982) terms "serious leisure" participants (8).

There are three types of serious leisure - amateurism, hobbyist pursuits

and career volunteering. Two definitions of amateur - one organizational and one social psychological - are offered by Stebbins (1979). Amateurs engage in activities that constitute a profession (9) for other people. In each case there exists a functional relationship between the amateur participants and the professionals. Briefly, each group provides important resources- money, training, expertise, challenge, feedback, product etc.- for the other group's normal functioning. The flow of resources between the groups is aimed at strengthening, expanding and maintaining high standards for the common activity.

Amateurs produce a product or a performance. The consumers of this output are termed the public. The size and composition of the public varies as to the activity or volunteer's cause. The public also provisions resources - financial support, encouragement and feedback etc.- for the proper functioning of the system. Together, these three groups constitute a functionally interdependent Professional- Amateur- Public system.

Some leisure roles such as fly tying, model building, figurine collectors, hang gliders, computer hackers etc. , do not have a full time work equivalent. In other cases a work equivalent may exist; however, the occupation does not meet the seven criteria for a professional status. In this sense there is no professional counterpart to some serious leisure roles. When there is no professional counterpart, the activity is termed by Stebbins (1982) as a hobby. Hobbyists are external to any complete P-A-P system.

Six distinct qualities formulate a social psychological definition of serious leisure. These qualities distinguish serious leisure from casual leisure. First, persons who undertake serious leisure generally have a pleasant recollection of the activity. However, owing to personal attributes, situation, or the leisure activity itself, there may arise moments of considerable stress and strain. For serious leisure participants, these incurred "costs" are less than the "rewards" of the activity. Unlike their casual counterparts, serious leisure participants persevere through the adverse conditions.

Second, serious leisure is not a mild diversion, an aimless pursuit or a passive activity. To engage in most serious leisure requires a special knowledge, skill or training. Only through significant and persistent personal effort can the "tools" necessary for serious leisure be acquired.

Third, most serious leisure activities have evanescent benefits- self gratification or fun. However, serious leisure participants are attracted to the activity by the durable benefits that accrue: self actualization, self -enrichment, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self image, self expression, social interaction and physical product.

Fourth, serious leisure participants tend to be strongly oriented towards their activity. Aspects of the activity permeate and are a force in shaping the daily lives of individuals. Owing to this, serious leisure activities often rival occupation as a source of personal identity.

A fifth distinct quality of serious leisure is the unique ethos that develops

around the activity. Serious leisure participants in an activity tend to be loosely organized with both local participants (via clubs and local newsletters) and (through modern channels of communication) participants from a wide geographic area. Often these voluntary organizations are informal, fluid, and held together by weak ties (10) . As participants interact, specific beliefs, values and norms emerge. These features influence two important areas. First, how the activity is performed and second, how participants view the outside world and their place within it.

For some leisure activities, the functions of social worlds need not be performed. Such is the case when the activity is highly visible (ie. the activity is commonplace in society), does not require a high degree of social interaction (eg. most folk art, see Bennett's (1980) study of musicians) or is provisioned with the necessary resources through existing ethos' and or commercial ventures (eg. Soiffer and Herrmann's (1987) study of the garage sale). In these situations, the products of social interaction among activity participants - beliefs, values, norms - do not always develop. The extent for a unique ethos to emerge is limited. This point does not prohibit many leisure activities from being classified as "serious".

A sixth quality of serious leisure is the tendency of participants to have careers in their pursuits. Of serious leisure activities Stebbins (1982:256) notes

These endeavors are enduring pursuits with their own histories of turning points, stages of achievement or involvement, and background contingencies. They are anything but evanescent occurrences devoid of social or

psychological continuity.

It is clear that serious leisure participants consider the personal experience of doing the activity as important as the end product. Not all activity participants share this frame of mind. As various typologies (Kelly, 1972; Prus, 1984; Stebbins, 1979) have indicated, it is possible to engage in leisure activity without becoming "serious" or "casual". The concept of semi-leisure helps explain this residual category of leisure.

Semi-leisure participants share some of the social psychological characteristics of serious leisure participants. Both types of activity participant persevere and endure the adverse conditions that affect the product or performance of an activity. Both types of participant can be work- like in their significant expenditure of personal effort that is channelled into the activity.

Two central differences exist. First, semi-leisure participants do not, of their own volition, recurrently engage in the activity. Second, semi-leisure participants are drawn to the activity out of an obligation. Based on these distinctions a rudimentary social psychological definition of semi-leisure is possible. Three defining characteristics of semi-leisure are:

- 1) A self defined interest in the activity does not exist. In many cases the activity of semi-leisure is subjectively felt as an encroachment on preferred ways of spending one's free time.

- 2) For semi-leisure participants the task has no strong inherent meaning; the purpose of engaging in the activity is mostly utilitarian. Other benefits (self

actualization, self-enrichment, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self image, self expression and social interaction) may accrue from the activity but are not actively sought.

3) Semi-leisure participants are not forced into the activity. They do not normally experience closure. Discussing closure , Prus (1984:302) writes:

Closure denotes involvements which come about in attempts to obtain goals and / or meet obligations thought unobtainable by more desirable means. As such one experiences limited options relative to one's self imposed responsibilities or those imposed by others and so may become involved in an activity by "necessity" rather than by preference. As the " necessity of fulfilling specific obligations appears more acute," and " as the options for doing so become more limited," one's sense of closure becomes more acute.

In summary, a review of the life space reveals home handyman activity can be viewed as a form of leisure. Two types of leisure have been discussed: serious leisure and semi-leisure. Drawing upon the work of Stebbins (1979, 1982) a social psychological definition of each type has been presented. These definitions provide a basis to begin study of roles like that of home handyman.

Though it is possible to classify the activity, relatively little is known about home handymen. As a result, it is not plausible to set forth rigorous hypotheses. The purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of the home handyman outlook. This research is aimed at learning more about what the home handyman role involves and how the role is constructed by activity participants. This chapter provides a base to achieve these aims. The next chapter discusses issues relevant to sampling home handymen.

Notes

(1) These conditions are a decrease in housing demand, increased segregation and increased risk associated with inner city living.

(2) Smith (1987) calculates home repair as the largest form of informal economic activity in the United States. In 1981, forty two billion dollars was spent in the informal economy. Of this, twelve billion dollars was allocated to home repair activities.

(3) Journals in sociology, psychology, the built environment, and engineering as well as recent Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation publications and thesis abstracts were reviewed to find any substantial reference to home handymen.

(4) The rewards of working on one's house depend on productivity of time spent engaged in handyman activity, marginal utility of the home and other assets and the market price of the property (Mendelsohn, 1977). Phipps (1983) extends this list of rewards to include the perception of windfall profits at sale, the presence of previous renovation and the subjective assessment of home and neighborhood.

(5) Stebbins (1970:37) defines a subjective career as

... a predisposition. It involves recognition and interpretation of past and future events connected with a particular identity. Through the operation of these processes, knowledge results which bestows upon its holder a special view of the world and such knowledge, when activated, influences behaviour and heightens our awareness of an overall career.

6) Dumazedier (1968) coined the term semi-leisure . In Sociology of Leisure (1974: 74-75) he offers this definition:

Basically leisure serves no lucrative end, unlike work, no utilitarian end, unlike household duties, no ideological or proselytizing end unlike political or spiritual obligations.... Consequently, if leisure is partly geared to profit making, to a utilitarian end or to some form of commitment, it does not become a duty, but is no longer fully worthy of its name. It becomes part leisure. I shall call it semi-leisure. It is as if the circle of primary obligations cut across that of leisure obligations and semi-leisure occurred when the two overlap.

Semi-leisure is thus a mixed activity in which leisure mingles with an institutional obligation. This happens when the amateur fisherman sells a few fish, when the gardener who loves flowers grows some vegetables for his own table; when the do-it-yourself enthusiast does all repairs at home....

(7) Statistics Canada (1991) reports that in 1986, the Canadian population fifteen years of age and older averaged 5.5 hours of leisure per day. Of this time, an average of 1.1 hours was for participation type activities (organizational, voluntary or religious activities and sports or hobbies). The remaining 4.4 hours were for low participation type activities (entertaining, watching television or reading).

(8) Gelber (1992:2) prefers the term "productive leisure" to "serious leisure". His focus is on the "broader cultural meaning of the symbolic value (usually measured in cash) produced by particular hobbies". As it focuses on the meaning of the activity for the individual the term "serious leisure" will be used in this research.

(9) In ideal conditions professionals a) produce an unstandardized product; b) hold a wide knowledge of a specialized technique; c) identify with their colleagues; d) have mastered a generalized cultural tradition; e) have an institutionalized means of training and judging the performance of trained individuals; f) emphasize standards and service rather than material rewards; g) are recognized by others as having an authority based on their technique and knowledge (Stebbins, 1979: 24).

(10) Shibutani (1955) uses the term social world to describe this form of social organization. The purpose of these organizations is to promote and regulate a serious leisure activity. There are several ways this can be done. First, recruiting new members. Second, defining or negotiating what the "proper" performance of an activity is and who is "qualified" to practice the activity. Third, provisioning the materials, equipment, knowledge and training required to "properly" perform the activity. A fourth function of organization is the development and distribution of material or cultural symbols used by the individual to identify as an activity participant.

Chapter Three: Methods

Introduction

Several features of the home handyman scene make it unique from other studies of "becoming". First, no strong social organization exists to promote and protect home handyman interests. Second, no one setting exists in which home handymen can be located. Third, home handyman activity is not deviant or illegal. Fourth, there is no background literature dealing specifically with home handymen. Fifth, the extent of home handyman activity is not fully documented. Lack of information on home handymen makes it difficult to define a geographic area for study and develop a list from which home handymen can be selected for interview.

Defining an Area for Study

A prime goal of any study is to control for those variables that may confound research findings. For the study of home handymen such variables include age of the home, neighborhood "reputation", development restrictions, and the socio-economic status of individual homeowners. Control over these variables can be gained by drawing respondents from middle class neighborhoods that lie in close physical proximity to each other.

Furthermore, owing to the time and budget afforded this research a favourable geographic area for study is one that has a density sufficient to observe the phenomenon under study - home handyman activity on single family housing by owner occupants. The area should be easily canvassed by

one researcher. Also of value would be any sort of contextual material (for example City of Calgary Planning Department 1977, 1979) produced by scholars or government agencies.

The area selected on the basis of these criteria is an approximately forty by twelve block area situated north of Calgary's downtown core. This area includes the neighborhoods of Crescent Heights, Rosedale, West Mount Pleasant, Balmoral and Tuxedo. Logistically, the area is bounded on the south by Crescent Road; Edmonton Trail is the eastern boundary and tenth street north west acts as a western perimeter. Fortieth avenue is the northern boundary.

Profile of Study Area

It is my contention that housing renewal is, in part, made possible by the activity of home handymen. To date, handyman activity has not been explicitly studied. To situate home handyman activity in perspective, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the communities under study. The purpose of this section is to provide a background to the communities chosen for the study. Once a background is established, an important goal is to provide evidence suggesting that renovation activity is occurring in the district and that handyman activity is commonplace. A further aim is to point out the major demographic similarities and differences that exist between the communities. Recognizing that differences do exist, it will be argued the districts' residents are homogeneous with regard to dwelling tastes, wants and needs. Both

primary and secondary data will be used (1).

The communities of interest to this study are located north of the Bow River; collectively the neighborhoods comprise the area known as the North Bow. In comparison with newer subdivisions of Calgary, the North Bow region fares well (City of Calgary 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1979). An important advantage is the area's proximity to employment opportunities within the central business district. Additionally, major post-secondary institutions, hospitals, cultural facilities and shopping centers are found in the regions immediately surrounding the North Bow. Within and near the area is an extensive, city maintained, infrastructure for a wide range of child and adult recreational or sporting activities. Unlike many subdivisions, most homes in the North Bow boast large lots and mature landscapes. This ambience is enhanced by the visible diversity of single family homes and low density zoning restrictions.

Until recently, the economy of Calgary has owed its vitality to the oil industry. During the period of 1976-1982, a boom in this industry allowed Calgary's economy to overheat. A significant consequence of this was exceptionally high incomes, housing values and immigration. From 1982-1988 a recession in the Calgary economy has had the effect of reducing income, immigration and housing values (City of Calgary 1987, 1989c) (2).

During the 1978-1986 period, Calgary experienced a rapid growth in new subdivisions. This increase in choice of dwelling units did not detract from the

desirability of inner city living. In the five year period under study each neighborhood experienced a net growth or loss of only 1.00 percent to 1.50 percent per year. Moreover, each community except Mount Pleasant experienced a small to moderate increase in total number of households. This would indicate that few multifamily dwellings have been constructed during the 1981- 1986 period and that a low vacancy rate is typical of the district.

It is important to note the districts have a significantly larger than average portion of dwellings built before 1960. In the C.M.A. of Calgary, 25 percent of all dwellings are built on or before 1960. In the five communities under study, this portion ranges from approximately 45 percent to 92 percent.

Given their age, relatively few dwellings are in need of major repair (see Table 3). This suggests a lot of home maintenance and repair is occurring in the study district. A review of the demographic, social and economic characteristics corroborates that renovation is occurring within the area. Each community, with the exception of Rosedale, possesses the base characteristics that suggest some form of physical upgrading is occurring. Specifically, a population decrease, above average portions of people aged twenty five to thirty four and small households (see Tables 1 and 2).

An important fact is that the community of Rosedale is experiencing renovation. The relative strength and stability of social and economic indicators for Rosedale(no significant change in number size and composition of households from 1981-1986) suggests the "risk" (3) that underlies many forms

of housing renewal is absent. Owing to this, property owners can confidently pursue home renovations (4).

There are two basic programs to defray the cost of hiring paid workers to maintain and renovate homes. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (R.R.A.P.) is a program funded by the three levels of government. A maximum of \$5000 is available to homeowners with an annual household income lower than \$13,000. Smaller amounts are available to homeowners making up to \$23,000 annually. No assistance is available to homeowners having an income in excess of \$23,000 annually. The Alberta Pioneers' Repair Program (circa 1980 - 1983) provided home owning seniors with assistance to maintain their dwellings. On condition that no other grants have been received, a maximum grant of \$2000 was available to seniors making less than \$13,500 annually. An extension of this program - The Seniors' Home Improvement Program (circa 1983- 1989) - provided a maximum grant of \$3000 to home owning seniors with incomes below \$17000. Smaller amounts were available to seniors with an household income of up to \$23,000 annually.

Table One: Selected Characteristics of North Bow Communities

	Metropolitan Calgary	Heights	Crescent Rosedale	Tuxedo	Mount Pleasant	Highland Park
1986 Population	630,850	5635	1470	4215	4475	3615
1986 Density persons per acre (a)	+4.84	+16.00	+10.21	12.73	9.40	+22.18
Percentage Change in Population 1981- 1986	+6.42	-4.71	+1.99	-6.17	-10.07	-8.89
Percentage of Population 25 - 34 years old						
1981	21.97	28.95	20.2	22.26	22.01	21.37
1986	23.24	37.73	20.52	27.24	28.98	25.52
Percentage of Population 65 years and older						
1981	6.13	12.44	23.5	13.36	16.08	9.80
1986	6.91	9.77	20.85	15.5	17.26	13.81
Percentage of individuals with white collar employment						
1981	29.30	31.73	52.52	21.80	24.95	16.87
1986	31.86	41.04	62.26	24.50	28.50	22.11
Median Household Income						
1981	26745	18647	26374	19859	20554	21818
1986	34403	25712	n/avail.	23230	26315	22919
Percentage of population with University training						
1981	24.54	29.06	37.81	17.15	19.07	15.45
1986	27.70	35.02	50.00	17.77	25.40	18.09
Percentage of population with technical training						
1981	27.68	40.06	26.05	28.80	29.17	31.51
1986	28.19	29.56	21.25	31.89	33.29	25.99

Source: Prepared from 1981 and 1986 Federal Census Data as tabulated for
The City of Calgary, Corporate Resources Department
(a) Prepared with data from Community Profiles- 1981

Table Two: Selected Household Characteristics of North Bow Communities

	Metro Calgary	Crescent Heights	Rosedale	Tuxedo	Mount Pleasant	Highland Park
Mobility status						
People who have on census day lived at same dwelling for 5 or more years						
1981	34.90	23.86	62.59	36.36	49.57	42.71
1986	42.10	28.72	63.97	34.92	47.87	41.75
Percentage of households made of families						
1981	71.07	42.35	64.57	53.35	58.70	60.37
1986	70.62	38.15	64.60	50.50	60.14	55.39
Percentage of 1 or 2 person households						
1981	51.94	80.23	66.14	69.85	70.98	64.40
1986	54.63	85.21	64.84	73.73	73.35	71.56
Percentage change in total number of households						
1981-86	+11.25	+4.29	+0.78	+2.02	-3.85	+3.29
Single family dwellings(a)						
1984	119115	955	520	903	1218	547
1989	133180	1000	546	964	1309	574
Percentage ownership, single family dwellings (a)						
1984	89.00	69.90	87.70	74.90	80.60	83.70
1989	90.20	74.70	93.40	74.50	82.10	83.76

Source: Prepared from 1981 and 1986 Federal Census Data as tabulated for The City of Calgary, Corporate Resources Department

(a) Prepared 1984 and 1989 Civic Census data as tabulated by The City of Calgary, Corporate Resources Department

Table Three: Selected Housing Characteristics of North Bow Communities

	Metro Calgary	Crescent Heights	Rosedale	Tuxedo	Mount Pleasant	Highland Park
Average dwelling value as determined by resident						
1981	114666	107886	153320	87776	87612	93764
1986	98845	89876	129042	71022	75067	75765
Percentage of occupied private dwellings in need of major repair						
1981	4.56	6.49	6.30	10.25	9.95	10.96
Percentage of occupied private dwellings in need of minor repair						
1981	14.16	20.00	21.43	23.00	18.10	26.10
Percentage of occupied private dwellings built before 1946						
	6.44	33.64	63.43	26.24	30.28	9.79
Percentage of occupied private dwellings built between 1946 and 1960						
	16.94	11.11	28.36	33.66	50.00	53.21
Percentage of multifamily dwellings(a)						
1984	48.17	69.01	21.33	54.30	45.56	68.67
1989	47.91	69.24	17.14	53.76	40.58	68.11

Source: Prepared from 1981 and 1986 Federal Census Data as tabulated for The City of Calgary, Corporate Resources Department

(a) Prepared 1984 and 1989 Civic Census data as tabulated by The City of Calgary, Corporate Resources Department

The median household income of North Bow residents puts them in an awkward position to receive significant financial assistance to renovate their homes. For this reason, most eligible households must pay a portion of their renovation costs out of pocket. Higher income households must pay their entire renovation expenses out of pocket. As the median household income of the five areas is below the C.M.A. average, the problem of finances is salient. This research assumes that to afford renovation projects many homeowners use their own unpaid labor to renovate their home.

The most salient discrepancies that exist between the communities involve education, income and occupation (See Table 1). The geographic boundary of 16th. Avenue North provides a useful north - south axis to discuss this matter.

Those communities south of 16th Avenue are Crescent Heights and Rosedale. Both communities have a highly educated, white collar population. Crescent Heights has an average family income that falls below the metropolitan average; Rosedale has an average family income that greatly exceeds the metropolitan average.

Those communities north of 16th Avenue are Tuxedo, West Mount Pleasant and Highland Park. Each district has a family income lower than the metropolitan average. The communities are largely blue collar. With the exception of Highland Park, the area has greater than average portions of technically trained individuals.

The preceding indicates class differences do exist in the North Bow district (5). Based on their higher levels of income, education and occupation, communities south of 16th Avenue have easier access to acquisition of goods and better "life chances". Communities north of 16th Avenue are less privileged in terms of acquisition of goods and life chances. Following Hassinger and Pinkerton's (1986:238-241) discussion of Warner et. al. (1963), the communities under study consist of upper middle class, lower middle class and upper lower class individuals.

While differences in social class do exist, there is very little difference in the social status of community residents. Whereas "class" is largely dependent upon income, "status" is determined by an individual's consumption of goods, and lifestyle (Weber, 1974). There is ample evidence to suggest residents of the North Bow communities share a similar lifestyle.

The most salient indicator of a similar lifestyle is the fact residents share the same inner city locale. Many authors have commented on the diverse array of amenities and diversions offered by residence in the inner city (6). Residency within the inner city is sought by individuals to satisfy three motives:

(1) practical, mainly economic incentives; (2) preferences for certain neighborhood and housing types - really matters of taste and style of life; and (3) ideological factors.... The belief in the future of (inner) cities and... the motif of social and cultural diversity is of most interest here. (Allen, 1980, Reprinted in Palen and London, 1984:29-30)

These motives are indicators of a commitment to an inner city life. Based

on this shared commitment to inner city life, it is possible to conclude residents of the North Bow communities share a similar lifestyle (7). This suggests that in regard to dwelling features and style, middle and upper lower classes have similar tastes and wants. For this reason, it is assumed the middle and lower social statuses do not pursue distinctly different types of home renovation.

Data Sample

Having defined an area for study, the problem of developing a list of home handymen presented itself. Most "becoming" studies have focused on a role that occurs in a fairly well defined - if not predictable- social setting. As a result, many researchers have had the luxury of a predetermined list (8) of all individuals they could conceivably gather data from. Random sampling techniques can be used.

Sometimes random samples can not be drawn or there is an alternative sampling method that provides better information at a lower research cost. Such is the case for studying home handymen. A random city wide sample could be drawn using civic building permits (9). However, several issues suggest alternative ways of sampling may be more efficient. The list of home handymen gathered from building permit data would not be complete. Those individual home handymen whose work does not require a building permit would be excluded from study. Similarly excluded would be home handymen who are just now applying for a building permit at their current address. Further it is likely many home handymen do work without obtaining building permits.

Moreover, contacting people for interview using building development permits may prove awkward. Respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded. Further, a link between the researcher and the civic building department may be assumed by some respondents. At a minimum these issues may strain relations between interviewer and respondent. Taken further, the kinds of information respondents are willing to provide may be affected. For these reasons, reliability of the data may be questioned.

Based on these points, simple random sampling techniques cannot be used to sample home handymen. Though other sampling techniques are available, research budget limitations indicate non-random sampling techniques are most appropriate to use. All of the "becoming" studies reviewed followed a non-random, purposive sampling technique (10).

To draw most non-random samples (snowball, judgement, quota, and interval) researchers rely on their well informed experience or knowledge of the topic area (Labovitz and Hagedorn 1981:63-64). I did not have such a command of the home handyman subject. Consequently, criterion of self designation - a handyman is someone who claims to be a handyman - would be used to develop a purposive sample of home handymen. A short survey was constructed to determine the status of single family homeowners in the district.

The actual survey had two components, a cover letter and a self administered survey. A conventional style was used in drafting the cover letter (see appendix A). Basic sections included first, my name, institutional affiliation

and supervisor; second, an explanation of why the information requested was needed; third, instructions on completing and returning the questionnaire; and fourth, assurances of voluntary participation and respondent confidentiality. The cover letter was typed on departmental letterhead. As a means of conserving letter head, and to measure differential response rates, twenty five photocopies of the letter were distributed; seventeen original letterhead were also distributed.

In developing the survey brevity was employed. An initial section sought basic personal information. A final section had three basic questions. The first question asked the status of the respondent - did he or she own or rent the dwelling ? A second question inquired into the degree of renovation completed in the past. Two time frames - the past five years and the past ten years - were pretested (11). A final question inquired as to the portion of renovation activity performed by the handyman.

Requests for personal information (name, telephone number, address, and dwelling status) are unconventional. Their inclusion was necessary for two reasons. First, the eventual purpose of the survey was to accumulate a list of homeowner handymen who could be contacted at a later date. Second, provision of such information can be interpreted as interest in the project. These people could provide important information for the current study.

To sample home handymen in the geographic area negotiated, a systematic sample is advantageous. Delivering a survey to every third single

family dwelling is administratively simple and would reduce the possibility of researcher bias. At the same time, such a system is likely to provide a pool of respondents large enough to make valid generalizations about home handymen residing in the study district.

What is the best way to distribute and collect the surveys? Two issues present themselves as being pertinent. First, the small number of questionnaires involved. Second, a desire to verify information on certain contextual features of the study district. This included the amount of renovation activity, the extent of home sales and the like. Owing to these issues, provisions were made to deliver and collect the questionnaires by hand.

The Pretest Interview- Preliminary Considerations

Two strands of thought influenced the types of data to be collected. First, many studies of urban renewal (eg. Goetze 1979, Galster 1987) have posited perceptions of the neighborhood as important in decisions to physically improve one's home. Second, Stebbins' (1979) study suggests there are three sources of information to help amateurs clarify their role. They are: professionals in the field, other amateurs, and the consumers of an amateur's output- a public.

With this background in mind, eleven general questions were developed. Three questions probed neighborhood perceptions; seven questions probed respondents' initial involvement in handyman activities, sources of help and knowledge, the rewards and peeves associated with handyman activity. A final

question sought any other information the respondent would like to share regarding his home handyman activity.

A decision was made to approach these questions using open ended interviewing. This style has at least two points of merit. First, the loose structure of questioning allows for opportunity to probe and or clarify statements made by respondents. Second, open ended questioning encourages respondents to volunteer information. Data that is not forced promotes the reliability and validity of the study, controls researcher biases and facilitates development of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As the goal is to provide a holistic account of the handyman perspective, open ended interviewing is appropriate.

Pretest Results

A pretest of the Resident Questionnaire was completed during the last week of May, 1988. A questionnaire was distributed to every third single family residence on twenty second and twenty third streets in north Calgary. Of the forty two questionnaires distributed, sixteen responses were received; of these four were incomplete. A return rate of 28.6 percent was achieved.

Approximately 71 percent of those people receiving a questionnaire chose not to reply. Using a recent Hendersons Directory and a telephone book, information on these non-respondents was collected. Of thirty non-respondents, information could be obtained on twenty four (12). This effort provided several points of interest. First, retired people tend not to answer unsolicited questions

regarding home handyman activities. This would present additional sampling problems should difficulty in contacting adequate numbers of retired people occur. Second, some of the non-respondents are recent arrivals. It is hypothesized that recent arrivals may not have had the opportunity to pursue any handyman activity at their current residence. This points out a weakness in the initial questionnaire. An inquiry about future plans to pursue home handyman activity should be added to the initial questionnaire.

Information gathered from people who did respond to the questionnaire provided insight on the incidence of home renovation activity. It was found most respondents were homeowners who had completed "some" or "extensive" home renovation. By self definition six individuals (50 percent of the cases) were home handymen; four were involved with extensive home renovation. From this it was concluded the area had a sufficient density of home handymen to warrant further study.

The form of cover letter did not influence the return rate. In total, 29.4 percent of the original letterhead and 28.0 percent of photocopied letterhead was returned. A slightly higher return rate - 31.8 percent versus 25.0 percent was achieved when information was requested for a shorter time frame of renovation activity. Based on this outcome, two important decisions were made. First, a five year time frame for handyman activity was employed on the larger scale questionnaire. Second, original letterhead was used in printing the cover letter for mass distribution.

An important task of the pretest was to gather information regarding respondents' views of the questionnaire and to develop questions for a measurement instrument. To these ends, six pretest respondents were randomly selected and contacted for interview. A three week time limit was imposed on completion of these interviews. Four 2.5 - 3.0 hour interviews were conducted at respondent's homes. Two telephone interviews of approximately twenty to thirty minutes were also completed.

In discussing the initial questionnaire, it was learned disclosure of personal information was of little concern to respondents; university letterhead used in printing the cover letter reinforced and gave credibility to the request. Many respondents were flattered that their activities were considered worthy of attention. This, combined with an interest in helping academic research, motivated all respondents to freely provide information and time.

There were no objections voiced against the cover letter and questionnaire employed in the pretest. Both were short and relatively easy to understand. Given this positive feedback, I felt safe in using each on a large scale with only a minor revision. (13)

Few people expressed an opinion on the distribution and collection technique employed. The neutrality of respondents on this issue buttressed by a relatively good return rate indicated it would be acceptable to continue distributing and collecting questionnaires by hand.

A review of the pretest interviews reveals an important finding.

Respondents were willing to address all questions asked of them. Furthermore, all respondents appeared confident and knowledgeable about their home handyman activities. On this basis, three conclusions were drawn. First, respondents were receptive to the open ended questioning style used in the data collection. Second, the self designation route of defining a home handyman works well and should be continued. Third, the line of questioning used could be developed into an interview guide for gathering information from the larger sample (14).

Pretest Data Collection- Results

Approximately two months after preliminary work was completed, fieldwork began. Within a week, 269 questionnaires were distributed, 51 responses were collected by hand. Towards the middle of the first week, several unrelated and unforeseen events made it unfeasible to continue collecting replies from home mail boxes (15). Several options were open at this time. On the advice of professional agencies contacted for opinion (16), a mail back questionnaire was chosen. A reprint of the questionnaire was ordered. One month later, fieldwork proceeded. An additional 1091 questionnaires were personally delivered; 196 replies were received through the mail (17).

The exercise of compiling a list of home handymen resulted in a total of 247 replies being collected. A portion - seventeen replies - were received from renters and therefore were unusable for purposes of this study. Twenty four of the replies had insufficient information to allow for contact or to determine

home handyman status. The following summarizes the codable replies obtained:

Table Four: Summary of Codable Replies (a), (b),

Category of Renovation	Number of Handymen	Total N for Category
Extensive	45	75
Some	48	83
Minor	<u>34</u>	<u>48</u>
Totals	127	206

Source: Resident Questionnaire distributed in September to November 1989

(a) A self designation method of defining home handymen is used.

(b) Respondents were asked to place themselves in a category of renovation activity over the past 5 years.

In attempting to schedule interviews with home handymen, a problem became apparent. People who had pursued minor handyman activity were generally unwilling or unable to be personally interviewed. Consequently, a methodological decision was made. Those people performing minor handyman activity were excluded from interview. It is likely those people who are "minor players" would not be well integrated into the perspective I wished to study.

Owing to this decision, a pool of ninety three home handymen was formed. Using a simple random draw home handymen were selected and contacted for interview. In the months of February 1989 to early June 1989 thirty five interviews were conducted. One interview was quickly terminated by a fussing baby and did not yield sufficient data to be analyzed. The remaining interviews averaged 1.5 hours; two lasted for approximately forty five minutes

and three interviews lasted more than 2.5 hours.

Written notes were made during all interviews. To supplement field notes audio tapes were made of all but one conversation (18).

Data Analysis (19)

After interviews were completed, the audio tapes were transcribed and compared with field notes to include any omissions or clarifications. As a result of this exercise, thirty four home handyman accounts were arrived at. There are several rules for analyzing accounts:

- A) Let the data speak for themselves.
- B) Pay special attention to respondent's statements that reflect:
 - i) necessary and sufficient conditions of activity.
 - ii) actions and beliefs that are subjectively important for individual's participation.
 - iii) abstract sociological and psychological theory.
- C) Believe what you are told by respondents.

To facilitate data analysis, each interview was reviewed using the above rules. Some respondents clearly indicated they had a work orientation to the home handyman activity and, consequently, were placed in the category of work. Some respondents indicated they had a very strong leisure like orientation to the handyman activity. These individuals were placed in the category of serious leisure. The remaining individuals (a majority of respondents) did not clearly express an orientation to the activity. These individuals were put in a

residual category for further analysis. Having this initial categorization in place, a factual story of each handyman was written. Comparison of these stories uncovered basic emergent themes and criteria (20). These themes, criteria and relevant data form the basis of subsequent chapters.

Notes

(1) There are two important secondary information sources for North Bow communities. The 1981 and 1986 census' of Canada provides a wide range of data on socio- economic, demographic, cultural and housing trends. Statistics Canada has been contracted by a civic agency (the Department of Corporate Resources, City of Calgary) to prepare this information for each neighborhood in Calgary. Further sources of information are those studies undertaken by other civic departments. These studies are narrower in both scope and topic.

Census data of any type must be used with caution. Undertakings of such magnitude and depth are not without error. For a more detailed discussion of the principal forms of error found in Census data, see the appendix to 1986 Census of Canada: Information by Community District for Calgary: 100% Data.

(2) Owing to this fluctuation, caution must be exercised in interpreting changes in economic indicators. Specifically, a decrease in income or housing values do not necessarily indicate housing disinvestment. Nevertheless, time series data does provide opportunity for some meaningful comparison of, within, and between districts.

(3) Risks include both the financial and social costs of buying a home in a delapidated neighborhood.

(4) That physical upgrading is occurring is supported by primary data. Two hundred six homeowners responded to the initial hand delivered questionnaire (N = 1366). In the past five years, thirty six percent had completed extensive renovations to their homes. In the same time period, forty percent of homeowners who replied had completed moderate levels of renovation. Moreover, fifty four percent of all responding homeowners indicated they planned renovations to their home within the next two years. These statistics lead one to infer many area residents are active, or plan to be active, in upgrading or home maintenance pursuits.

(5) How differences or changes in socio-economic status influence non-wage labor is a complex matter. A full discussion of this can be found in Gronau (1977).

(6) For a concise review of these viewpoints, see Allen (1980).

(7) From a slightly different perspective, mass media tends to dictate what is "in fashion" or "trendy" for the home environment. These standards are frequently aspired to by those who wish to share the lifestyle of the "fashionable and trendy" (Weber, 1974). An informal walk within the study area reveals a significant number of residents have engaged in fashionable

renovations such as sun decks, sun rooms, bay windows, and steel siding are commonplace.

(8) Such lists are based on membership records of an institution or organization.

(9) These documents detail what structural work is to be done at a given address. It is the responsibility of people performing such work to obtain a building permit. Consequently, permits taken out by individual owners indicate no professional assistance was formally required. It is assumed these people are home handymen.

(10) McCall (1980:150) defines purposive samples as "non probability samples chosen on basis of researcher's interests or purpose."

(11) It was felt a long time frame may increase the number of respondents but may increase the difficulty respondents had with recalling past events.

(12) Results of this inquiry are as follows: a portion of non-respondents (five men, five women) were retired and living alone or with one other person. A total of five non-responses were obtained from female heads of households. Women in this category are employed in white collar clerical occupations. A further five non-responses were obtained from male heads of households. Men in this category are employed in a variety of blue and white collar occupations. In total, four non-respondents were listed at their current address for less than one year.

(13) A question seeking data on future home handyman activity was incorporated into the questionnaire.

(14) See appendix C for complete interview guide.

(15) In the time preceding completion of the pretest many neighborhoods instituted "Block Watch" programs to protect against criminal intrusion. Specifically targeted was mail theft.

(16) This group included my thesis supervisor, city police and postal inspectors.

(17) This episode is detailed to provide an important methodological note. Within the confines of the study district there was virtually no difference in response rates between the two techniques of questionnaire collection. A return rate of 18.96 percent was achieved for those questionnaires to be collected by hand. A 17.96 percent return rate was achieved for those questionnaires requiring a mailed reply.

(18) This instance was at the discretion of the interviewer. The physical setting of the interview was not conducive to use of audio taping.

(19) The following discussion draws upon Becker and Geer (1960) and Schwartz and Jacob (1979).

(20) The theme of constraints (or lack there of) was prominent in the data analysis. Several criteria emerged as being components of this constraint: a need to do the activity, a lack of time, inexperience, low levels of skill and knowledge, a distrust of tradesmen et. cetera. It was found that work type home handymen felt constrained in their activity. Leisure type individuals did not feel such constraints. Individuals in the residual category felt, at differing points in the home handyman project, constrained; at other times individuals in this group did not feel constraints.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Introduction

In chapter two the theoretical underpinnings of the handyman issue were discussed. Chapter three dealt with the methodological matters associated with finding and interviewing home handymen. The current chapter is devoted to presenting the data gathered as part of this research. Of interest are the following avenues of inquiry: who are the individuals interviewed and why do they chose to do home handyman activity? What role do friends and family have in fostering the activity? What does home handyman activity entail? Are future home handyman activities planned by interview respondents? In short emphasis is placed on understanding how the activity of home handyman is experienced by those individuals who undertake the role.

Profile of Respondents

As defined in this research home handymen are homeowners who try do-it-yourself home renovation. The studies reviewed in chapter two indicate it is theoretically possible for any homeowner to become a handyman. For this reason, an exhaustive demographic profile of all interviewees is not undertaken. The following table cross tabulates respondents' age with their life-cycle status:

Table Five: Cross Tabulation of Interview Respondent's Age Category by

Age category of Respondent (1)	<u>Family Status</u>			Total
	Single (2)	Life-cycle Married, no children living at home	Family (3)	
25-40 years old	4	9	10	23
41 years of age and older	<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	4	15	15	34

Source: Depth interviews conducted February to June 1989

Notes:

1) The matter of a respondent's age was not formally brought up in the interview. Some respondents volunteered this information. In other instances an interviewee's reference to specific dates or events allowed the author to establish a respondent's age with enough precision to make the twofold schema workable.

2) No single parents or widowers were interviewed as part of this research project.

3) Eleven respondent's families are comprised of two or three children; four respondents have one dependent child.

Table Six: Occupational Classification of Interview Respondents

Respondent's occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Professional	11	33
White collar	12	36
Skilled Blue collar	8	24
Retired	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>
Totals	34	102

Source: Depth interviews conducted February to June 1989

Note: a) Owing to rounding, percentages do not total 100

Consistent with the literature on housing renovation a majority of respondents are from small (1 or 2 person) households. As suggested by most literature, a majority of respondents - 68 percent- are young; a vast majority are married (1). There is a tendency for respondents to have middle to upper middle class occupations. In terms of tenancy there is a distinct split. Those individuals under forty years of age are predominantly newcomers; 16 of 23 respondents have a tenure of under four years. Those individuals forty one years of age and older often have tenures spanning decades.

Based on the above socio-economic profile, it is not possible to accurately categorize respondents as either gentrifiers or incumbent upgraders.

The people interviewed for this research are not all childless affluent couples. Neither are they all older, less affluent family orientated people. The profile suggests a wide range of individuals participate in the activity. To understand more about the home handymen requires further information than this profile can provide. Two areas of special interest are respondent's initial involvements and reasons why he chooses to do home handyman activity.

Doing Home Handyman Activity

Initial Involvements

In reviewing the data, four paths of initial involvement are clearly identifiable. First, ten people indicated their home handyman activity began with the purchase of their current house (2). Eleven respondents considered themselves as being mechanically inclined and have "always" been involved in doing some sort of handyman activity. One respondent noted:

(When did you first become involved in home handyman projects?)

Quite a few years ago. My dad was a home handyman, and of course, as his oldest son, I tended to become involved with projects that needed a second hand. We built a rumpus room in the basement of our house when I was a kid. So, I have a taste for it as early as twelve years old. Plus, my dad owned a fair number of workshop tools and he introduced me to safe tool use when I was eight (years old). You know... how to respect a drill or sander or so forth.. So pretty early in my youth I got introduced to renovating or home handyman things- repairing an electrical outlet, fixing a switch and I love mechanical things anyway so that was a natural. (older, married electronics technician)

Another said:

I have been involved in a lot of small projects early on, but none home related. I use to fly model airplanes when I was a kid. It's very fussy, hobby type work; you work with sanders, saws, paint and different things. So it's very small scale renovation, if you will. Then I got interested in cars and started to take cars apart. [I] stripped my mother's car apart ... just to see what's inside the engine. Spread it all on the garage floor and put it back together again. I was involved in some of those things. Then we moved to (a small rural town). I didn't own a house up there but.. we were racing cars and doing a little help out work with other people's renovations. (young single engineer)

In discussing his home handyman skills one individual noted:

I've always been involved with doing something with my hands. But it would be hard to go back through the years and determine just what it was. Working with metals and things like that are fairly simple. I've designed a number of draw works- like a spice rack that runs up and down the wall. In the last fifteen years I have probably created six or seven of those for friends. Then, I have what we call a main elevator, it's a ten footer. I created that because of the lack of cupboard space in [the kitchen]. That goes back sixteen or seventeen years. So I've always been handy with my hands that way. I have a huge imagination of how to make something do. (older, married and retired business machine technician)

A further eight respondents had their first experience working construction as either casual summertime jobs or as full time employment for a brief time. A final routing experienced by respondents is a two stage notion. In their youth, this group had done significant amounts of home handyman activity under the tutelage of their fathers. During college years, considerations of time, need and ownership status posed little opportunity to pursue the activity. Having graduated, and having purchased a home, these individuals

began the activity anew.

The interview data also indicates skill and know how of respondents varies. There are several factors that can account for this. One factor that comes into play is a respondent's age. By way of their advanced age, older individuals have had more frequent opportunity or necessity to pursue some sort of home handyman activity. Furthermore, some of the older individuals interviewed have lived in rural locales that lacked specialized tradesmen. In these instances, becoming adept at building and maintaining one's own home was done by necessity; there was simply no trades people to rely on. It was also found some of the younger individuals interviewed engaged in building or remodelling homes as a side line business and for investment purposes. In total, ten respondents (30 percent of cases) have been intimately involved in building a structure from conception to finish.

A further factor in the level of skill and know how is past or recent employment in construction related trades- landscapers, audio technicians, glaziers etc. Owing to this exposure, respondents have been able to see how construction is done. These individuals have worked on, and become proficient at, one or two tasks involved in building a home, but have not been with any project from start to finish. (3)

The respondent's current occupation plays a role in several cases. Engineers and realtors for example, have become by need, familiar with building codes, technical jargon, prices of material et cetera. In their occupation,

mechanics and technicians have developed a comfort working with the materials, tools and solving problems. One individual is currently employed as a plumber. This experience carries over into handyman activity.

For eighty percent of respondents (27 of 34 cases), another source of physical experience is one that occurs mainly outside the context of employment. Starting, for the most part, in their adult years these respondents have built small furniture or crafts. Such activity helps build and maintain the skills required for extensive handyman activity.

Some of the respondents recall their father or a close relative doing home handyman activity. However, at the time, some respondents were too young or not sufficiently interested in the activity to become physically involved with it. Growing up in an environment where home handyman activity was commonplace did have an important benefit. Watching their fathers do home handyman activity taught respondents how to do the activity and how to get ones mind in gear to do the activity. This was an important aspect of the socialization process. In discussing his childhood experience one respondent remarked:

Myself and another guy, as summer students, built an outhouse. My dad did a lot of it . He added a big chunk on his house; not that I was of any age at the time. But, I guess, it sort of gives you the feeling that it was possible at least. (computer programmer with mature family)

Another said:

My dad was always a handyman...he worked on our house. I can remember he didn't do any mechanicals but he did do

a lot of woodwork, did our basement, and always was working outside on the garden, landscaping . Things like that. He most influenced me as far as doing things because, ever since I was little, Saturday was for chores and for working around the house and that's what you did. As you got older, you did more and more of it and he did less and less of it. Then I got really interested in woodworking itself-cabinet and finishing carpentry, but never really did any renovation. But it's not that much different, just basics. (doctor with young family)

One respondent commented:

My family has always lived in older houses. So, even as a child, I was brought up with people doing home renovations more or less on a continual basis. Everything from replacing the sewer to painting.. (remodelling)kitchens ..(and) dry-walling. I picked up a certain amount of familiarity with how things are done and knowing where to ask "how to do it" and where to look. (young, married office manager, no children)

The initial involvements of respondents provide, at minimum, the belief that renovation projects can or should be done as do-it-yourself home handyman activity. However, until the purchase of a home, few people have the need, want, or opportunity to do any significant activity. The need, want or opportunity to do home handyman activity intensifies with the purchase of a home. It is of value to understand why respondents purchased their current home and why they perceive significant renovations are required.

Purchasing a Home

A main assumption of this research is that old houses, a priori, require greater amounts of homeowner effort than do newer houses. The opportunity for home handyman activity is greater in older houses. For these reasons, the

factors that lead respondents to the purchase of their older home should be reviewed. The following quotes fairly represent the fundamental reasons for purchasing a particular house:

This house, although an absolutely ideal location...had previous low class, poor taste renovations. The cardinal rule of real estate (is) there's only three things to look for when buying a house and that's location, location and location. So I looked at it and thought well it's less than ideal but it's basically there...it's a super location so I think this has to be the one. (young married aircraft technician, no children)

One of the things, of course, being a long time Calgarian, I prefer older districts because that's what I have lived in and what I am used to. I always have liked the North Hill, perhaps better than the south side. This particular house had some old characteristics....high ceilings. I was not about to get into a new house with seven and one half foot ceilings. Plus, there was a cost factor. We got an extremely good deal that we could not have got on any other house. That had a bearing also. (older, married and retired business machine technician)

Basically, the house was in good shape. There was not a lot of things that had to be done. More of what to do were things that made it more pleasing to us. We could move in and not have to start work if we didn't want to. It was that combination of we can work on things slowly.. or do as little as we want or as much as we want and still live in it comfortably. It was not going to take a lot of work, but it was going to take some. (engineer with young family)

There is no one specific reason why respondents chose to purchase their current house. Certainly, economic considerations and location are salient. Lifestyle is also important. Most individuals had grown up in older city districts and desired to maintain those benefits of living in an older urban neighborhood- larger lots, architectural distinctiveness, mature vegetation and mix of

population. A further reason - the opportunity to "personalize" an older home seemed prevalent in about one third of all purchase decisions. The combination of price, area and availability often narrows the possible choice to one particular home. Frequently, the home purchased "requires" some degree of work.

Respondents indicate three main reasons why their home requires work. First, a great number of the homes have space that is not being utilized . Much home handyman activity is undertaken to reclaim basement and attic space or to open up small kitchen or bedroom accommodations. These tasks frequently, but not always, entail significant structural change to the home. Second, many of the homes have cosmetic blemishes that the owners wish to correct. Personal tastes play a central role here. Items in this category of activity - painting, tiling for example, are not done to improve the functioning of the home. It is work carried out to (subjectively) beautify the living space. Such work does not usually constitute significant structural change.

Third, as all homes are at least 40 years of age, structural or mechanical deterioration may be occurring. Replacement of these safety related items constitutes significant structural change. Repair of these items is often done without significant structural change. In either case, it is work that cannot be seen by the casual observer. Items in this category- replacing kitchen wiring or plumbing for example - often need to be done before any other needs or wants are addressed.

In short, the needs and wants of individual residents are different from

what the home is able to provide. It becomes necessary to adapt the home to meet individual or family requirements. The homeowner has two choices: he can hire out the work to be done on the house or do the work himself. The sample drawn for this research consists of individuals who have chosen the latter alternative. All respondents have described themselves as having done extensive home handyman activity.

Why do respondents choose to do extensive handyman activity? The reasons for becoming involved in and continuing home handyman activity are many. Certainly the expense of paying professional tradesmen is a factor in most cases. More typically, there is a certain interest in or sense of enjoyment from the activity. Both intrinsic rewards and a functional end product are important. The prevailing attitude on "becoming" a home handyman is revealed in the following accounts:

I take pride in being able to do something other people consider difficult. (young, married geologist, no children)

Her: There's a lot of people out there who don't know what's inside the walls of their house. It's been interesting for me to see how things are put together.

Him: It's a lot of fun if you keep the right frame of mind. (young married couple, homemaker and engineer, no children)

I think even beside the money point of view, the fact you have done it yourself and it's good is probably the best part of it. (older married mechanic, no children)

Bottom line for me I was very pleased with the outcome and darn proud of what we accomplished. Those are some things you can't go buy off the shelf. (older, married electronics technician)

So more than anything else I enjoy creating in a home environment... The other thing is I work all day with my head and fingertips, I sit in front of a computer. Home renovation work tends to be a little more physical... I find it's a good change- its a nice pace. (computer programmer with young family)

A key point is that a relatively minor portion of individuals feel forced into the activity by financial constraints. Most people willingly pursue handyman activity. Many respondents have had prior experience with home renovation. In most cases, a sense of familiarity and comfort with home renovation activity has allowed individuals to develop a confidence to begin renovations on their current home. For about half of cases, the next step is to acquire the skills required to do extensive home renovation activity.

Learning Home Handyman Activity

It is very common for respondents to be self- tutored. An initial step in this self teaching method is to become familiar with what is technically and legally required. For some, this entailed taking one of the courses that are offered locally. However, a greater number began their initial quest for knowledge doing a great deal of reading from technical manuals or building code books authored by some government agency.

Having gained a basic technical appreciation of what is involved, respondents were faced with more specific problems related to home handyman activity such as how to remove a wall, plumb a kitchen, or wire a living room. A number of "how to" publications are readily available for interested

consumers. Further, several weekly television shows deal with renovation issues. Some respondents made use of these media offerings while working on their projects. An overwhelming majority of those individuals interviewed have found these offerings to be less than satisfactory sources of knowledge; though well written and produced, these publications do not take into account the quirks of an older home (4). Further, the publications are American based. In some cases, the materials they advertise or demonstrate are not available to or feasible in the Canadian market.

Aside from mass media offerings there are two additional sources of knowledge tapped by most home handymen. One source of knowledge pursued by some respondents (15 of 34 cases, 45 percent) is asking experienced friends or relatives how to do something. Help in this regard may take on two forms: a) the friend or relative actually doing the work for some form of remuneration and, b) extensive coaching aimed at encouraging and helping the respondent to safely and properly perform a home renovation task. However important this source is, a great majority of respondents indicated their main source of knowledge is through trial and error. The following comments provide an indication on how respondents view this issue:

The problem is it is generally cheaper to buy most easy to make furniture..you can buy it for cheaper than you can purchase the wood. But what I keep telling my wife and myself is that if you do not start building the cheaper things...and maybe it doesn't turn out as good the first time around..but if you don't start by building that stuff you'll never build up the level of expertise to build the expensive stuff that is cheaper to build yourself if you have the skills.

But that takes a lot of time and work. It's very rewarding once you have gained that level of expertise. There's an old line: you do not pay a plumber so much just because he's putting in a tap. You pay him so much because he has flooded several basements learning how. (young married geologist, no children)

Another respondent relates the following:

You don't go buy the tools and immediately go into a project that, when you are finished, is going to be something perfect. It doesn't happen that way. What I did in order to learn how to use the tools...I would get a lot of scrap lumber and, when I was finished with that lumber, it was smaller scraps. You learn that way. It is like riding a bicycle. First you must learn how to balance the bicycle before you can ride it. So, it's the same thing with tools. You must know how to use them before you can have a project you can say I built that and I am proud of it. You must learn; you must experiment. I did two or three years before I got to a big project. Sometimes it's a little bit costly to learn how to use a tool. But in the long run it did pay off. (older married stock keeper, no children)

Respondents widely hold the notion that handyman activity is not inherently difficult. Anyone, if willing to persist, can learn "how to". Individuals frequently indicate there are rules to properly doing handyman activity. The best way to develop an understanding of these rules, according to a majority of respondents, is to practice the skills involved and learn from one's mistakes. The more one does handyman activity, the better one becomes. It is widely held that, if enough time and money is put into the pursuit near perfection will be achieved. A majority of respondents considered perfectionism to be a trait of their personality. It is realized, however, that time and money are scarce resources. Moreover, respondents note some projects- rough in plumbing,

framing etc. - are not visible to the untrained eye. Such tasks, it is reasoned, need not be "perfect" when completed. Owing to these factors, home handymen sometimes remark that they are not craftsmen and judge their work accordingly.

Hiring Subcontractors

Many of the tasks involved in renovating a home are labor intensive. Frequently tasks such as concrete, framing, drywalling are unmanageable for one person to attempt. In other cases - major electrical or engineering for example- licensing, advanced training or specialized shops are required to adequately perform the job. In cases where the respondent or experienced non remunerated friends do not have this training, paid tradesmen need to be hired.

Most home handymen have hired a professional tradesman to work on portions of their renovation. The process of hiring contractors is complicated by two contingencies. First, the sheer number of potential subcontractors made finding reputable and reliable help very difficult. Second, there is a common perception that, in general, tradesmen have a poor reputation. In discussing the issue of reputation one respondent said:

Because of the fact we are not involved in the trades it's hard to get good help. We don't know where to get it other than by word of mouth and things like that. We don't know if we should trust people you just get out of the phone book. It's a little difficult. If the company's been around for fifty years, well then you can be pretty confident that they do quality work and will be around another fifty years. But you don't know that positively and you don't go to the phone book for things like .. a framing carpenter. (young married bank employee, no children)

A young single bus driver offered this comment on the reliability of contractors:

(How did you find this contractor- the one you were unhappy with?)

He (the subcontractor) went through the neighborhood and put notices in the mail boxes. So I figured it's like when I go buy a car. Inevitably I am going to buy a lemon. So I might as well not worry about it and just get something and fix it. I decided he seems knowledgeable so I'll try him. I checked with the Better Business Bureau to make sure there were not any complaints, and he did not have any liens, criminal record .. or anything like that. When they come to my door now I just tell them to go away .. nobody touches my house.

Owing to these contingencies, hiring a subcontractor is viewed by most respondents as, at best, uncertain. A preferred way of reducing this uncertainty is to tap personal contacts or references. When this luxury is absent, respondents contacted potential sub-trades through use of both the telephone book and newspaper advertisements. Using information that they have read, or from past experiences, inquiries were made into the product, service, and price of each subcontractor. Contracts were awarded largely on the subcontractors willingness to answer these inquiries.

A great majority of respondents were pleased with the work performed by the trades. Few respondents were excessively unhappy with the work of subcontractors. Most often, one of two reasons were given for their dissatisfaction. First, the actual job was not completed properly. Second, it was felt, given the same amount of time and money, respondents themselves could

have done a better job.

One handyman- who previously had experience with what is involved in being a general contractor- had this to say about the last contractor she hired to work on her home:

I would never do it [hire someone] again. Not meaning to be facetious or anything, but I really felt if given the same materials or whatever, I could have done better. It was a situation where you pay someone to do something and all's they want to do is get the job done as fast as they can, get the money, and get out. I just don't find any personal care, any pride, or anything like that in [their] work. It was just a slap up and away they go. (student with young family)

Another respondent noted:

(Were you pleased with the work of the contractor?)

Yes, he did good work. I wasn't too pleased with some of his helpers. I guess I could have done it faster than they did it. I suppose that's because I am the homeowner and I would work faster. But he was a hired person, doing what he was told to do and then sort of stop. I phoned the contractor and told him I wasn't too pleased with some of the helpers. He said " yeah, some of them are slower but you have to understand because you are the homeowner you get in there, you know exactly what you want done" and that sort of thing. Overall, I am pleased with the results of the general contractor; I have had no problems with [the work completed by contractors]. (engineer with young family)

Generally, complaints about the subcontractors are minor. Still, mistakes made by paid tradesmen are seen as unprofessional. In most cases, respondents simply indicate that "mistakes" are a normal contingency of the renovation process. Most respondents indicated they could live with such mistakes. In fact, pointing out the mistakes in work done by paid tradesmen is a particular

source of home handyman delight.

In summary, when personal contacts are not present, hiring a subcontractor requires a lot of background preparation. One must become familiar with the jargon, procedures, billing practices and time schedules of trades. For the novice, this preparation is an important, time consuming part of being a home handyman. The proper preparation in this area helps respondents reduce the potential for any unwanted surprises. This allows the activity to proceed at a smoother pace. As a result, the stresses associated with the handyman activity are reduced.

Buying Tools and Materials

An important step in "becoming" is to acquire those props required to perform the role. In the case of home handymen these props- building materials and tools are readily available through retail outlets.

The respondents interviewed believed in having the proper tool for the task at hand. It is generally recognized that each trade has it's own specialized tools. Proper use of these tools helps make a task go quicker, more efficiently and offers a more pleasing finished product.

A majority of respondents (29 of 34 cases, 86 percent) indicated they did not own an extensive set of tools. Rather, most owned a good set of hand tools supplemented by some basic power tools- saws, sanders etc. Two reasons were offered for this. First, it was stressed relatively few tools are needed to do home handyman activity. Second, some items are generally for tasks that

the handyman does only once or twice; the cost factor of these tools makes purchase prohibitive. In these cases, tools are rented from a nearby rental shop.

It was hypothesized that talking with building supply dealers would be an important source of know how or product information. Very limited evidence supports this notion. Rather for most individuals, procuring materials and tools is strictly an economic transaction (5). Thus, the choice of building supply dealer rests on two prime criteria, price of product and location. There are four building supply stores in the North Bow district. Owing to their convenient locale these stores have received a lions share of respondents' patronage. These stores do not carry a wide selection of some items - carpet, commode, counter top etc. Consequently, when respondents shop for non-generic items, the amount of time and effort involved magnifies greatly.

The following exchange discusses a respondents views on choosing a particular kitchen cabinet for his renovation. His comments typify those of most home handymen:

(Would you do it again ?)

I really enjoyed the whole process..... If I was to do it again I would know a lot more about what to do and I would probably waste less time. But we found it... very time consuming and an awful lot of work. It was difficult but we certainly survived. I wouldn't want to do a whole house...if I was not working, I could see doing that. But I don't want two full time jobs and that's what it comes down to.
(young married geologist, no children)

Purchasing quality goods is of paramount concern to virtually every

respondent. Quality materials cost more. With few exceptions, respondents did not consider it worthwhile to decrease costs by purchasing a lower grade material. The following comments are representative of how home handymen view this issue:

Definitely don't go cheap on materials. My wife insisted we go out and buy an expensive paint- some salesman convinced her it would be worth the extra money. And, when you think of it... it is worth the extra money. But you buy a cheap brush and it goes on wrong and leaves bristles in it and it looks..[terrible]. (young married geologist, no children)

Another handyman commented:

I tend to maybe skimp a bit, buy the thing on sale instead of something else. So you save a few dollars; but you end up with stuff that's not exactly what you want. I think that there are some things that in the long run are worth paying for. (young single bus driver)

The task facing home handymen is to purchase quality goods at the lowest possible price. The primary strategy for acquiring materials (31 of 34 cases, 92 percent) is to keep close track of material prices via the flyers published by many building supply dealers. Taking advantage of loss leaders and sale price items offers significant dollar savings on material purchased in quantity. The above sections discuss those resources that a handyman has some degree of control over. However, the activity does not occur in a vacuum. It is often undertaken for and, sometimes, with other people. What role do these other people - friends, relatives and spouses - have on the activity of home handymen?

The Role of Friends and Relatives

Half of the respondents have recently purchased their home. In such cases an intense period of activity occurred within the initial months of tenancy. It is during this period that non-remunerated friends and relatives are most likely to offer or be asked to work on the home handyman's project. Beyond this move in period, few respondents have received any significant, sustained help from friends.

A number of reasons are advanced for this. First, additional help is not sought out by some respondents. On the one hand, the activity is done because of the enjoyment or recreation it provides; on the other hand, many home handymen consider themselves to be independent and resourceful- not requiring any help. Second, most respondents report they are the only ones in their close circle of friends who do extensive home handyman activity; a majority of close contacts are unhandy or disinterested in such activity. Consequently the opportunity to reciprocate help exists for only a few respondents. Third, having non- remunerated friends and family help on projects is not the best way to get things done. Respondents do not want to push or insult guest helpers with their "unreasonable" demands. Thus, working with friends and family often means taking frequent rest breaks. This eats up precious time that could be spent working on the activity.

Home handymen infrequently initiate talk with their friends about handyman activity. Moreover, the process of handyman activity is not, in most

cases, a "serious topic" of discussion (6). In this regard the following exchanges are salient:

It's kind of funny- because of course I get excited about it when I talk about it at work.. People will go " We gotta see your house". And yet when you see it, of course, the visions I have been giving them about the house are not what they expected. They have modern tastes. They say: "How can you live like this? You're telling me this is so wonderful but you walk in and there's a power saw in your living room." So not everyone can appreciate it or be sympathetic to it. To me, it's wonderful. (bank employee, wife of a young handyman, no children)

(Do you frequently talk with other people regarding your home handyman activity?)

Other than my brother, who also owns a house, I don't know of any other people. I think it's like parents with kids- that if you are a person without kids you are not interested in listening to people talk about kids. People with houses look to talk with other people with houses. (young single bus driver)

Though it is not a prevalent topic of discussion, the matter of home handyman activity is not foreign among friends and relatives who are homeowners. It is useful to make three distinctions here: helping family, helping handyman friends, and helping unhandy friends (7). Based on obligation, home handymen provide both physical labor and advice to family members when asked to do so (8). In these cases respondents play a very active role in other family member's projects.

In those instances where friends are home handymen, the nature of help changes. Most frequently individuals will become a member of an informal, fluid discussion group whose purpose is to provide information and trade tips on

how to handle a specific renovation task. On occasion home handymen will provide labor to their handyman friends. Overwhelmingly this labor is described as "grunt work" or "dumb labor"- heavy physical labor to assist in the activity rather than direct it. Such work is often in payment of labor received on personal handyman activities.

When helping unhandy friends, home handymen infrequently do "grunt work". (9) Most frequently, help is in the form of "how to advice" and encouragement. The principle behind this is to teach others handyman skills. Two main reasons were put forth for this. Most prominently, the physical activity is considered an experience that everyone must experience for themselves. Second, work on other's projects decreased the time respondents could spend completing their own projects.

Role of Spouses

In contrast to friends and relatives, spouses tend to play a pivotal role in the activity of home handymen. In 29 of 34 cases (86 percent) home handymen are married. To be sure, there are instances where (usually female) spouses have expressed concerns when the "side of the house was torn off" or when "I lacked any [home renovating] experience". Still, virtually all home handymen have received on going support from their spouses. In only two cases a bulk of activity was planned when spouses left for vacation.

Interview respondents suggest the tasks involved in home handyman activity fall into two broad categories: decision making and the physical work.

Two types of decisions are clearly identified. First, broad based decisions on "what to do". Second, a finer set of decisions aimed at the visual aspect of the project- what fabrics, fixtures, colors or textures to incorporate. Few significant disagreements occur during decision making processes. On the one side, home handymen tend to defer to their spouses tastes for the visual aspects of a project. More importantly however, most home handymen conceptualize their activities as a "continual discussion" that involves a measure of "compromise".

With respect to spouses, the following examples demonstrate this point:

A lot were ideas between the two of us, as we went along and did the renovations. We thought of it and it seemed appropriate at the time because of the preexisting structure available. We were not trying to spend a lot of money, just make it a comfortable and functional house. (doctor with young family)

The third source (when we were first married) we toured show homes.... That was sort of standard Saturday and Sunday sport. Literally, to go notebook and pencil in my pocket and look at show homes to see what kind of features we... felt were essential or (thought) we could do without. I gave up counting, but I would say we toured several thousand homes in the course of three years.

This same individual went on to say:

There was considerable sitting down and negotiating as both of us had different renovation ideas. But we always came to a compromise. When I look back I am pleased with the way our compromises worked out. In some cases her idea was a little bit more suitable than mine. The end product was there was lots of discussion and lots of touring show homes to get ideas we both like. (older, married, electronics technician)

Approximately one third of the spouses are capable and sufficiently

interested to offer physical labor on the handyman's activities. In some cases, wives have grown up in an environment where home handyman activity has occurred; they are familiar and comfortable with the idea of handyman activity. However, few wives have had any early experience physically laboring on a renovation.

Those wives who become involved commonly engage in and become proficient at a wide range of physically demanding tasks such as demolition, plumbing and drywalling. Home handyman activity requires a great number of hours. In discussing the issue of time one respondent said:

Take your estimated time and multiply it by two and one half to three times. If you figure you'll get something done in two months of solid work make it six or seven months of daily work. (young married engineer, no children)

Another respondent conveyed this:

Take your time estimate and quadruple it. It always seems to take longer in an old house. Things just are not square or do not work quite the right way for a variety of reasons.... We put a subfloor in the basement and shimmed it every 18 inches. Every shim was different! We used eights and quarters of inches to get it working all right. (young married geologist, no children)

Most home handymen indicate their spouses' labor and input play an integral role in the completion of their projects.

Sources of Stress in the Handyman Activity

Regardless of how they became involved or what they do, activity participants overwhelmingly emphasize the need to persevere at the activity. For the short term, respondents have few frustrations regarding the overall

project. In the long term however, all respondents find the activity to be mentally stressful (10). Most frequently respondents report three reasons for this stress.

First, some respondents become over enthusiastic when beginning their renovation projects. When this occurs, the decisions made are not as well thought out as they could be. This may necessitate a great deal of (unwanted) work . For example, a young couple had this experience:

Him: Sometimes we jumped into things and in the midst of it we thought oh oh !

Her: We had never done plumbing before so what did we do? We ripped out our kitchen and bathroom. Well, in retrospect, this was really dumb. We had to turn up at work Monday morning, (the hardware store) closes at 5 pm Sunday.

Him: We were there with two minutes to spare (laughs)....

Her: Some of it was really pointless.

Him: Once you have the water off and the pipes apart there's not much you can do. You have to put them all back together again before you can turn on the water tap.

A second source of stress is that while home handyman activity is going on, it affects the daily life of all who live in the house. A teacher with a young family conveyed the thoughts of most respondents. He said:

This renovation business- it's not for everybody. You have to have a certain type of person to do this. You've got to be quite willing to put in a lot of hours and put up with a lot of nonsense- dirt and disruption to your family life, disruption of your personal plans - to do this. You have to plan around all this. In an older house there is so much to do. You just have to be ready to do it. There's no end to it... a lot of work, a lot of work. Sometimes I just sit down and shake my head. Why am I doing this? But then I go back because I enjoy this; because I see something out of it.

Another individual expressed a similar view:

There's a lot of mental stress and anxiety going on when all this is happening. Every weekend you are in here just driving, living amongst the grime. It's not much fun. (Gail) Carsgallen said that renovation is something like childbirth; It's really unpleasant but you soon forget how unpleasant it really is or was. That's a very good description because when you are going through it, it really is bad. (young, married, aviation technician, no children)

Home handyman activity, once started, cannot be put away for completion at another time. Houses, by their nature, are a set of interconnected rooms; most often it is not possible to alter the structure of one room without affecting the other rooms. Many houses experience wear caused by their advanced age. Some have been poorly renovated by previous owners. Owing to these factors, it is often not possible to do the smallest renovation activity without unravelling a string of problems that need attention. The activity can quickly "grow" out of hand.

A further source of stress is that home handymen pursue their activity on limited time and budget. The result in most cases is that there is little discretionary time available to complete a lot of work. Pressures of family life and employment often exacerbate this problem. An engineer with a young family said:

I find I would like to do more things with my family-pleasure things. But this renovation seems to take all the spare time. It's just hanging over my head all the time.... How can I go and do this-the fun stuff- when I have to get this done? It takes away from what I would like to be doing with my family; yet I must also do this for my family. So

I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Respondents have offered three main strategies for dealing with these stresses. First, know what you are doing. Become familiar with the tasks needed prior to embarking on a major renovation. One respondent remarked:

I would suggest people get as much information as possible before [starting] the project. That might have been my main shortcoming. [For example] you know how to do something and you go ahead and do it. Then someone comes in with a tool or procedure that would take half the time and does a much cleaner job. My father said of the wood beam ceiling " cover them up".. I was up there with a big sander trying to get all this off, chipping away.. He said just get new stuff and box it in the same. Well, I guess we could have done it that way. But we didn't buy an old house to cover up the wood work with new stuff. (young, married engineer, no children)

Another individual said this:

If you are going to tackle something this size you better know what you are doing because it can turn into a disaster. I think the one thing I have noticed - some people tackle it with more enthusiasm than good sense and projects tend to bog down because... they are not clear on how to proceed with things. I have seen a few examples where the workmanship is so poor that they had to hire professionals to do it over again....If people are planning on major renovation projects they should sit down and talk with someone or better be equipped with skills. (older, married electronics technician)

Advice most often offered to new home handymen is to "sit down and talk with someone who has done a renovation". These people will be able to explain the " rules behind" and the "flow" (11) of a renovation project. Knowing the "flow" will help renovations proceed smoother.

Second, before proceeding with renovations, live in the home for a time. This will allow individuals a better opportunity to understand how the home needs to be altered to fit their personal needs and wants. Above all avoid quick decisions, they are usually the wrong ones.

Third, plan all activity. As conveyed by most respondents planning is a thought process in which an idea for a project is closely scrutinized to ensure it can be done on the handyman's time and budget. As one individual said, ".. you must look at every angle, know what you are getting into.". The process of planning usually involves three questions:

- 1) How important is it to do this task? Is the product of this task wanted?
- 2) How can this task best be accomplished without causing major disruption or inconvenience to the house and it's occupants?
- 3) Have the required measurements been taken so that the proper types and widths of material can be acquired?

Finding answers to these questions may, at the discretion of the handyman and the project involved, take days, months or years. In any case knowing what is to be done and what to expect can greatly reduce the stress of handyman activity.

Future Activity

At the time of interview twenty two individuals (65 percent) indicated they would continue doing some form of home handyman activity; twelve

individuals (36 percent of the cases) had decided to stop their involvement.

A portion - eleven individuals (33 percent of the cases)- indicated they had enough projects for the distant future. Half of these respondents suggested homeowners always have a constant supply of handyman activities to busy themselves; this condition was viewed as desirable. A further six individuals (18 percent of the cases) indicated they were about to finish their major project, but would not be adverse to doing any type of handyman activity as the need arises. Six individuals would contemplate further handyman activity if their next home had a mechanically sound structure.

A major factor in not continuing handyman activity is that there is no more to do. The work respondents had wanted to complete is nearly finished and there are no ideas conceived or requirements for future projects. As three respondents put it "... you can do only so much with so many square feet".

Two basic reasons were given for not pursuing future handyman activity: failing health and advancing age are the factors behind four "always been handy" individuals retiring from the activity. Six individuals ruled out future activity owing to the great amount of time involved or the "dust, dirt and disruption" involved. One respondent said he could now afford to hire tradesman to do any contemplated work. Once their current project is completed, these individuals will be diverting their attention to things they would rather do - relax, travel or leisure pursuits.

Conclusion

In summary, the profile of respondents indicates they are from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds; it would be difficult to classify them as either incumbent upgraders or gentrifiers. More appropriately, they fit into the grey area of home renovation that is now receiving some academic attention.

The premise of this research is to view respondents as having a career in their handyman activities. Each career has a beginning, a middle and an (eventual) end. Various contingencies influence how the career takes shape and how the activity is done.

By definition, for this thesis, home handymen are homeowners. Economic considerations, desire to live in a specific neighborhood and availability of houses frequently narrows the possible choices of homes to one. Often this home requires some physical work to satisfy the needs wants and safety of it's occupants. Respondents interviewed have chosen to do this work by themselves.

Four paths of initial involvement were identified: for ten individuals their first experience with handyman activity was with the purchase of their current (first) home. A portion - eleven- have always been doing some sort of handyman activity. Some have held casual jobs working at construction or otherwise helped (to varying degrees) on a renovation project. Others engaged in some variant of the activity as youths but became disinvolved until the

purchase of a home requiring work.

Previous experience with the tasks required in home handyman activity has allowed individuals a certain level of comfort and familiarity with the notion of pursuing extensive home handyman activity. Once initiated, the activity is, in most cases, fostered by tangible and intangible rewards such as a pleasing functional product, a sense of enjoyment, renewal, self actualization etc.

To become a handyman, an individual must develop or acquire the resources needed to efficiently perform the role. Some of these resources - knowledge of what is required, materials and tools to do the job and paid help - the handyman has some control over. Other resources - the basic housing structure, unpaid help from friends, relatives and spouses - are beyond the direct control of home handymen.

The current chapter outlines some of the more common problems in acquiring these resources. For those resources that home handymen can control, these problems are relatively minor. In contrast, those resources that are beyond the control of home handymen can develop into significant stresses. The impact of handyman activity on family life is especially salient. Strategies home handymen have developed to minimize these problems have been identified. In discussing these problems and strategies it has been possible to provide a glimpse at the problems associated with constructing the home handyman role. The following chapter will deal in-depth with the matter of how individuals construct the home handyman role.

Notes

(1) In 33 of 34 cases (97 percent) spouses are female. Only one female handy person was interviewed at length. Consequently, a further profile of this individual is warranted. This person is approximately forty years of age, married with two small children. Her husband does not like doing handy activities and seldom participates in any of the projects; he "sneaks out of the room each time (she) talks of renovating". Employment as a realtor, shop keeper and student of architecture has allowed her experience with the trades. Her first "hands on" experience came in 1975 with the purchase of her family's home. Many small repairs were made and in her words "the list of things to do never gets shorter, even though a lot gets accomplished". This individual feels competent enough to tackle any project. She prefers to do-it-yourself but admits the cost of hiring professional tradesmen is the number one reason for doing the activity. Presently, her future renovation plans are on hold. Many of her ideas for renovating require more than basic carpentry; they necessitate more time and money than is currently feasible to spend. A prime goal for this respondent is to become better at finishing carpentry.

(2) All "first time homeowners" are not recent homeowners. At the time of interview six of ten first time homeowners have been in their house for at least a decade; two have lived in their homes for six years. Two first time homeowners have been in their house for less than three years.

(3) The intensity of this experience varies from a casual one or two times to full time employment as summer jobs.

(4) Respondents indicate there is one exception to this. The television show "This Old House" deals exclusively with renovations in older homes. However, problems still exist. Aside from being American based, the projects being undertaken are too lavish and extensive for consideration by a budgeted home handyman.

(5) There are notable exceptions to this. Four respondents collect tools as a "hobby"; three are drawn to the store by curiosity or interest; two others enjoy "shooting the breeze" with a local building supply dealer. One individual reports he seldom buys any material, making do with the materials he has accumulated through his years in business. Two individuals supplement their material purchases with items "scavenged" or "horse traded" from neighbors.

(6) A typical justification for this is that home handyman activity is only one of

many interests pursued by respondents; no one interest receives too much attention.

(7) The term "unhandy" is used to describe those individuals who lack the basic skills and knowledge to adequately perform do-it-yourself activity.

(8) The notion of family obligation is complex. For a treatment of the topic see Finch (1989).

(9) Physical labor may be provided in two cases: when friends are in their advanced years and when the handyman is paid to work on the project.

(10) It is important to note these stresses are not wearing on the individual or his family to the extreme. If this were the case, the cost associated with handyman activity would be much more than it's value and the activity would cease.

(11) The "flow" of a renovation refers to the proper sequence of doing renovation. All required mechanical structural changes must be done before cosmetic changes.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Traditionally, research on private housing renewal has focused on areas where there has been widespread or irreversible decline. Using the socio-economic status of owners and the degree of renovation pursued, two processes- gentrification and incumbent upgrading- have been noted and well studied.

However, these concepts do not accurately account for much of what is going on. The cross-cultural studies reviewed in chapter two have shown that a) housing renewal can occur in neighborhoods that have not experienced wide spread or irreversible decline, b) all demographic groups engage in housing renovation, c) housing renewal occurs in a wide range of settings and circumstances.

There is a lot of home renovation that remains less exclusive than gentrification but is still something other than incumbent upgrading - activity oriented towards maintenance and stability. This "grey area" of renovation is yet to be fully explored. The purpose of this thesis is to focus on one part of this "grey area"- extensive home renovations undertaken as do-it-yourself ventures.

Home handymen are individuals who undertake do-it-yourself home renovations as an avocation. To develop a theoretical perspective for understanding home handymen and their activity, research on work and leisure

has been reviewed. It was noted many avocational activities are, to use Stebbins' terminology, "marginal"; they do not easily fit into conventional schemes of work and leisure.

Stebbins' concept of "serious leisure" offers a beginning point to resolving this gap. Six social psychological traits suggest serious leisure participants become enveloped in their chosen leisure activity. They persevere at and seek to become extremely skilled in the activity. Individuals who engage in serious leisure are oriented towards more than evanescent benefits.

It is possible to engage in a marginal leisure role without becoming serious. The attitude an individual has toward the activity determines how the activity is perceived and how the role will be carried out.

The focus of this research is on the North Bow district of Calgary. This inner city area contains a large portion of aging, single dwelling homes that have yet to experience any physical decay.

A questionnaire seeking information on home handyman activity was distributed to single family dwellings in the area. A sample of thirty five individuals who had recently performed, by their own definition, some or extensive home handyman activity was selected for interview.

With one exception, all interview respondents were male; a majority (29 of 34 cases, 88 percent) were married. (1) Most respondents (23 of 34 cases, 68 percent) are young. All respondents have a middle to upper middle class lifestyle. Most (62 percent, 21 of 34 cases) have white collar occupations.

Three respondents (9 percent of all cases) are retired. Slightly under half of the respondents (14 of 34 cases 45 percent of all cases) have children living with them.

Interviews were conducted via open ended questioning. It was hypothesized home handymen could have a career in their activity. Consequently, all questions were oriented to exploring the three basic aspects of a career: beginning, middle and (eventual) end. In offering such questions it was possible to obtain data on the various contingencies that exist for home handymen and how these contingencies affect the doing of home handyman activity.

The Work Leisure Relationship

An initial premise of this thesis is that home handyman pursuits are activities that involve components of both leisure and work. There is no steadfast definition of leisure and work. Typically, leisure occurs when the participant has a choice of whether or not to engage in the activity. Work occurs when the participant does not have a choice; obligation or necessity dictates engaging in the activity. As used in this paper, leisure and work are defined using three criteria. Both are a) activities that b) take up time and c) have a strong subjective component. The latter aspect is most salient. How the activity is experienced by the individual determines a wide range of perceptions, motives, values and related behaviors for doing the activity.

All home handymen have, at one point or another, approached the

activity with a work orientation; they engage in tasks out of obligation or necessity. If the roof is leaking it needs to be repaired. Furthermore, some home handymen have approached the activity with a non- work, leisure orientation; by choice they decide to do a specific project task in a particular way. However there are instances whereby neither obligation, necessity nor choice figures prominently in the activity of respondents. The same individual may experience the activity in different ways at different times. For most respondents, the activity of home handyman is neither strictly work (driven by obligation and necessity) or leisure (engaged in through free choice). These respondents comprise a residual category between the two polar orientations of work and leisure. These individuals are, in Dumazedier's (1971) terminology, semi-leisure participants.

Data collected as part of the current research suggests nine respondents (27 percent of all cases) usually consider the activity work. A further seven respondents (21 percent of the cases) usually consider the activity to be serious leisure. The remaining eighteen individuals (53 percent of the cases) did not usually consider their home handyman activity to be work or leisure. Three interrelated questions need to be answered: a) what makes the activity of home handymen work? b) what makes the activity leisure? c) what makes the activity felt as neither work or leisure?

Home Handyman Activity and Role Marginality

Based on the data, it can be stated the role of handyman is a marginal

role. It lacks the basic criteria of what is referred to as work; yet it is not fully a leisure activity. However, this marginality is different from the type posited by Stebbins (1979).

Very few of the respondents were passionate about their activity; frequently, respondents were intrigued by the author's choice of topics. Most respondents conveyed the notion home handyman activity is nothing new or different to them. This blase attitude is reinforced by a strongly held belief. Enthusiasm must at all times be tempered with caution, good judgement and patience. Moreover, no respondent looked forward to the disruption of normal household operations caused by activity. In short, the process of home handyman activity does not blend itself with a passionate response.

The role of home handyman tends to be life long. Most individuals (31 of 34 cases, 92 percent) indicated they had entered the role "sideways" . Home handyman activity is one of the many responsibilities and duties encountered in the role of child, homeowner, spouse, parent or employee. As time proceeds and individuals engage in new roles or circumstances of current role change, the need for home handyman activity also changes. Two examples will help clarify this. Home handymen with very young children tended to report a slow down in their activity in favor of other parental duties obligations. In other instances, (3 of 34 cases, 9 percent of all cases) respondents were asked by their current employer to build specialized office furniture. Though not always active, the tendency toward home handyman activity is, for most individuals,

far from dormant.

A third aspect of marginality- that of uncontrollability - is not widely shared by respondents interviewed as part of this study. Unlike other leisure pursuits- fishing, skiing, hiking, photography etc. there is no attempt to specialize in the activity or to hone one's skills (2).

It is generally accepted that a good set of hand tools and some basic power tools are important to properly performing the tasks required of home handymen. Those individuals owning more specialized tools did so for reasons beyond their home handyman activity. Several individuals had worked in the trades and had obtained a set of specialized tools through their employ. Other individuals accumulated a wide array of tools for use in other pursuits such as hobby crafting, auto repair, and contract building. Some individuals indicated they had purchased tools for which they had no immediate use. These collectors were great believers in tools and were frequently drawn to the tool sections of department stores.

Those individuals who did not own a wide array of specialized tools cited cost as a major factor. As many of the specialized tools are only used once or twice during the course of any project, most respondents suggested renting as a more viable alternative. A further benefit of renting was expressed by those individuals who are less experienced. Staff at rental outlets make sure the equipment is functioning properly. More importantly when renting, home handymen can seek advice or demonstration on how the equipment can be

used in a safe and effective manner.

A further aspect of uncontrollability is the drive to always improve upon one's skill level or technique. Only one respondent was adamant that the skill level of home handymen "should never plateau". Other respondents agreed that every task should be completed to the best of one's ability. The finished product, it is reasoned, is a semi-public reflection of the individual and his family. Consequently, turning out a poor product is not an accepted practice among interview respondents. Still, about half the respondents recognized they were not craftsmen and judged their work accordingly.

Getting better at home handyman activity requires at least two resources that are in short supply for most home handymen: time and money. More than one individual commented that if too much time is spent on any one task, the activity becomes more like work and therefore less enjoyable. Furthermore, spending a great deal of time at any given task reduces the time available for other more pleasing activities such as vacationing, socializing, playing with the children and enjoying hobbies.

A further reason why individuals do not always want to increase skills is related to respondent's existing level of skill. At the time of interview, all respondents had completed at least one extensive renovation; others had worked with or in the trades. Through these past ventures, many respondents became very knowledgeable in technical jargon and comfortable in the use of tools. It was generally conveyed that respondents were satisfied with their

capabilities. There was no perceived need to get better. The general mood of handyman on this issue is reflected in one individual's comment: " I would not be afraid to tackle anything.. except those things I don't find enjoyable.. or that take too much time."

Closely linked to the concept of uncontrollability is the notion of expectation. Most respondents indicated they had prior expectations as to how the project would turn out. A vast majority of projects turned out to meet or exceed respondents' expectations. All respondents emphasized that more than skill, proper planning was central to this outcome.

More than any other variable, respondents view the process of planning as central to the home handyman role. Foremost in all respondent's minds is to allow sufficient time to map out a plan. Unbridled enthusiasm is seen by most respondents as the key difference between a good home handyman and those who pursue the activity as a weekend pastime. Taking one's time to plan the activity ensures that an individual can accomplish a realistic goal within his given means. During the planning stage home handymen make sure they actually want to do a specific activity, know what is to be done and how it is to be accomplished.

Both leisure and work types share some of the social psychological qualities identified by Stebbins' conceptualization of serious leisure. In the first place, all participants persevere at the activity. The contingencies that operate in any activity (boredom, anxiety, lack of time, becoming tired) do come into

play in the tasks of home handymen . However, unlike participants in many other types of activities, home handymen do not have the benefit of a back door. They can not easily pack away their activity until better circumstances prevail. Once started, there was no instance whereby home handymen " gave up" on a specific task. No professionals were hired and no plans were changed to speed up the process of doing individual tasks- plumbing, electrical etc.- of the overall project. However long it took, all tasks were finished.

All individuals interviewed put forth a persistent personal effort. In many cases, a specialized skill or knowledge had to be learned or reviewed prior to engaging in the activity. All participants can be said to have had a career in the activity. Respondents easily identified a beginning point to their pursuits. A majority indicated their current project had been going on for a number of years (3). All talked without hesitation about their current projects. Most were able to speculate on an eventual end to their activities.

In every case, respondents felt they received some benefit from doing the activity. At minimum this was expressed as a financial saving and the achievement of a more pleasant and functional living space. In addition to these benefits, individuals who engaged in the activity as leisure expressed a much wider array of benefits including self actualization, respite from vocation, creativity and enjoyment.

A fifth social psychological quality advanced by Stebbins is that of identity with the role. Respondents interviewed identified strongly with the

home handyman role. Evidence of this comes in three forms. First, all individuals were chosen for interview on the basis of self selection. Respondents defined themselves as being home handymen who recently completed extensive home renovation. Second, some respondents repeatedly made unprompted comments indicating their natural tendencies toward and enjoyment of the activity. Third, all respondents talked with a sense of ease and in many cases, authority on the various technical aspects of home handymen activity (4).

It is worthy to note a sixth social psychological quality in Stebbins scheme- unique ethos- has not developed for home handymen. This is because there is no organization, fluid or otherwise, of home handymen. Several speculative reasons can be advanced for why no group has emerged to construct the home handyman experience.

The type of activity itself does not necessitate any sort of long term contact among home handymen. The wide range of materials used by home handymen are available at local (often neighborhood) building supply stores. Anyone who has the financial means can purchase the supplies. Further, the activity is not inherently social. There are short periods of time when " more than two hands are required" . However, more often than not, the tasks of home handymen can be adequately performed by one individual. There is very limited potential to schedule home handyman activity into small, non disruptive and clean packages that could be presentable as a social occasion.

An organization of home handymen is not required for individuals to obtain technical assistance for their projects. When interviewed, most home handymen indicated they were technically competent and required no help in this area. Moreover, some home handymen did not want anyone outside their immediate family to physically toil on their projects.

Why is this so? On the one hand, the fundamental basis of home handyman activity is a do-it-yourself orientation; it is frequently noted that friends and relatives "get in the way" or "slow down" the pace of work. On the other hand, prolonged physical toil on one's home by others would create a social obligation or debt for the individual. Extensive renovation is hard to schedule as a social occasion. Consequently, when an opportunity to repay the social debt comes, individuals may not have the time, interest, skills or physical strength. Thus, the opportunity to repay this social obligation with like services is remote. To avoid the potential of having a long term social debt, respondents do not generally seek outside help to physically toil on their home.

There are two ways respondents were able to avoid this social obligation. First, some individuals received a great deal of help from family members who are skilled or knowledgeable in the building trades. In primary interaction or in groups it is socially acceptable to incur an obligation without specifying future repayment. Second, when additional technical help is required, information can be easily obtained through the mass media, or labor can be purchased via a commercial transaction.

A further reason why a group does not form can be traced to the big world constraints that impinge on home handyman activity. Civic zoning restrictions place a limit on the size of a single dwelling (5) . Provincial building codes also act to restrict home handymen in their activities. Certain tasks such as major electrical or structural design changes, can be performed by home handyman but must be inspected and approved by professionals.

Several internal pressures place a limit on the activity of home handymen. Unlike many other activities, home handymen activity is financially and social psychologically very costly. Owing to a large capital outlay, it is not possible to repeatedly engage in extensive renovation activity. Furthermore, for most individuals, the only way to continue significant home handyman activity is to purchase another home that required some work. This is very unlikely; to do so would uproot and distress the home handyman's family (6).

In short, both external and internal pressures place a limit on the extent to which home handymen can engage in their activity. Owing to these limitations, home handyman activity tends to occur in concentrated doses intermingled with dormant periods. Different projects proceed at different speeds. This pattern of participation does not favor the formation of a group. As most individuals do not regularly continue with the activity, the need for and opportunity to develop a unique group does not exist.

An ideology premised on hard work, self sufficiency and quality is shared by all those interviewed. However, these values are also held widely by the

larger society. The values of home handymen are not marginal or deviant. Consequently, a handyman organization is not required to defend any particular handyman interest, goal, value or ideology from society.

The fact that home handymen are not organized has an important consequence. To effectively perform the activity, all home handymen must construct the role. How, why and when this is done determines the individual's orientation to the activity. In order to distinguish a work orientation from a leisure orientation it is necessary to understand the individual's motives, justifications and definitions of situation. The remaining part of this discussion will focus on these issues.

Work Home Handymen

An initial probe in talking with respondents was to find out how they view their home handyman activity. Nine respondents (27 percent of 34 cases) frequently made reference to work or work related concepts when discussing their activity. For these individuals the sense of enjoyment received from the activity is minimal. Several factors account for this.

Individuals who consider the activity of home handymen to be work feel forced into the activity; an acute need to adapt one's dwelling develops from either the physical wear and tear on one's home or as a result of subjective tastes and preferences of family members. The (financial) costs of hiring professional tradesmen or the social costs of doing nothing are, in this group's mind, prohibitive. For this reason, a do-it-yourself approach is adopted.

Aside from the cost factor, work individuals frequently mention a dissatisfying experience with the workmanship of tradesmen hired in the past. A salient belief of this group is that trades people attempt too many short cuts. Instead of giving what the customer "really wants", these tactics are oriented towards the "quick and cheap method" of doing things. Short cuts, in the opinion of this group, produce bad work. Most work individuals (8 of 9 cases 89 percent) feel negative towards professional tradesmen. As a cohort, this group is most likely to offer scathing attacks on the reputation, workmanship and character of tradesmen. To avoid bad work and get the job done right, work participants undertake their home renovation tasks as home handyman projects.

Work individuals have hired fewer professional tradesmen than other individuals in the sample. Correspondingly, the amount of work they have to do is greater than other respondents. Time becomes a crucial variable for most work individuals. Seven of nine respondents (78 percent of work participants) indicated they would like to devote more time to finishing off their handyman projects. (7)

These two factors, limited time and a perceived unlimited amount of work, tends to create a great deal of stress for the work individual. This pressure is exacerbated by the notion that any home renovation activity creates a measure of dirt, mess and disruption to family life. As a means of alleviating this pressure, individuals in this group attempt to finish large amounts of home

handyman activity very quickly. It is typical of this group to engage in intense periods of home renovation without rest. Owing to this activity pattern, most work individuals believe home handyman activity is too much like a full time job. This diminishes the enjoyment received from the activity.

The attempt to take on too much at one time has a further consequence. Work participants generally have multiple home handyman tasks going on at one time. This situation is viewed as undesirable. No one task can receive the handyman's full attention; most tasks are completed only to the point of being functional or utilitarian. Two sources of stress arise. First, the individual handyman becomes aware (often through gentle or not so gentle comments made by immediate family and friends) he has not really finished any project. Second, as time passes, new plans may require further changes to the unfinished project. The stress of living in a half finished house is constant.

All home handymen interviewed suggested there was a flow to doing home handyman activity. For work individuals this flow consisted of two steps: a) plan the activity and b) do the activity. More so than other home handymen, work participants are apt to enthusiastically develop an initial idea of what they want to accomplish. For most of these individuals, the planning stage is used to work out the cosmetic details of a project. The underlying structural issues (8) are not fully addressed in about half of the cases (4 of 9 cases 45 percent of all work participants). Only one respondent of nine indicated he had drafted a master plan to give direction to his home handyman activities.

For work individuals, the creative personalized enjoyable part of home handyman activity is loaded almost exclusively in the planning stage. The initial and primary motivation to do home handyman activity is the enthusiasm carried over from the planning process. A second source of motivation develops as a result of a (subjectively felt) bad experience with the trades. In contrast to other individuals interviewed, work participants feel a strong competition with the trades. Their personal accomplishments are judged in reference to the workmanship of professionals. As a group, work individuals find a great deal of satisfaction in doing a job or task "better" than the professional trades.

In short, most work individuals are highly motivated to start a project and finish a project to better than professional standards. Few work individuals report any enjoyable or pleasing experiences that may motivate them during the stages between beginning and ending a project. Consequently, the orientation of work individuals is to get the project over with as well and as soon as possible. Only one individual has any desire to continue home handyman activity beyond what is reasonably required to complete his current home.

As a project unfolds, all home handymen are likely to encounter problems or situations that are new to them. Typically, such problems arise because most home handyman activity is oriented to adapting new materials or technologies to houses that have been constructed using old technologies and materials. Generally, the matter of adapting new to old is not covered in any text book. Respondents have identified three ways of dealing with such issues. First, have

experience in the trades, second talk with someone who has done it, third, trial and error.

Work participants find the first two of these solutions unacceptable. In seven of nine cases (78 percent) work individuals have had very limited experience with the tasks required of home handymen. Only two respondents had, in the past, worked in construction trades. To differing degrees all work individuals feel isolated when doing home handyman activity. Few of their friends or relatives share the interest in home renovation. Consequently, most work individuals (8 of 9 cases, 89 percent) rarely discuss their home handyman activities. Without the benefit of some experienced guidance, work individuals are left to their own devices to determine solutions to their often complex renovation problems. Owing to this situation, there is a feeling that the projects undertaken unwrap or grow to devour more time, money and energy than expected. As projects unexpectedly unwrap, a salient attitude typical of work individuals is changed. The belief that older homes are quality constructed become replaced with the notion that older homes are substandard to newer homes. Owing to these attitudes, the enjoyment received from the home handyman activity is lessened.

A central characteristic of work participants is a feeling of being forced into the activity. Generally, individuals in this category have limited experience in the pursuit. Most typically the activity is undertaken with a sense of urgency. For work participants, the contingencies that revolve around the activity act to

strictly limit thoughts of additional activity. For these reasons, the scope of enjoyment received from the task is very narrow; typically, most work individuals state that the end product is the only thing enjoyable about home handyman activity.

Only a portion of those interviewed share the orientation of home handyman activity as work. The next section will discuss a serious leisure orientation to home handyman pursuits.

Serious Leisure Home Handymen

Seven individuals interviewed (21 percent of cases) discussed their home handyman activities using predominantly leisure or leisure related concepts. For this group, home handyman projects offer a great deal of enjoyment.

Most serious leisure home handymen have been "mechanically minded" from an early age. Two respondents indicated that it was a personality trait to change, fix or repair things. For this group the scope of what can be considered home handyman activity is much wider than assumed by work interview respondents. Gardening, tinkering, vehicle repair and wood working are activities serious leisure individuals indicate they most frequently engage in.

All serious leisure home handymen have been socialized into the activity early in life - watching and helping fathers and uncles or through formal education and steady employment in one trade or engineering. Consequently, most serious leisure individuals report they are skillful in the use of tools and have at least some notion of the time, effort and money involved in renovating

a home.

Based on this prior experience, serious leisure individuals consider it natural that they engage in home handyman projects. No serious leisure individual reported being forced into the activity by a lack of money. The activity is undertaken because individuals want to do it and because of the personal benefits (satisfaction, renewal, challenge. etc.) that accrue.

In most instances the sense of urgency to do renovations is replaced by a more relaxed approach. It is common for serious leisure home handymen to view their activity as a learning experience. All have acquired substantial amounts of construction knowledge via taking night courses, talking with friends in the trades, and learning from the bad renovation experiences they have had. Moreover, most serious leisure home handymen have, by choice, invested a great deal of time and effort to keep up with the newest technologies and materials and learn the construction jargon. The aim of this learning experience is not to find immediate solutions to pressing projects. Rather, the focus is to accumulate a general knowledge that will be of use in all future projects.

Owing to this strong skill and knowledge base, serious leisure home handymen feel they are equal to their professional counterpart. Furthermore, serious leisure home handymen are most apt to take on significant projects. In contrast to work individuals, serious leisure individuals predominantly discuss their projects as "innovative" or "creative" activities that bring their homes "up

to code" or make them "structurally different" or "safer".

Six of seven serious leisure individuals (86 percent) are adamant in the belief that time is unimportant when doing home handyman activities. As with other home handymen, leisure individuals report spending a great deal of enjoyable time shopping for renovation ideas and planning what to do. Unlike work participants leisure individuals are more apt to talk with less experienced home handymen regarding technical problems, logistics and offer basic "how to" advice. Most leisure participants have offered significant physical help for another's project. It is important to note the time spent in these activities is not viewed as wasted time. All serious leisure individuals report a great enjoyment or satisfaction from helping others reach their renovation goals.

Serious leisure home handymen recognize a "horrendous" amount of time goes into handyman activities involving the home. This group has been able to balance or off-set this time with other enjoyable activities. Serious leisure home handymen do not, as a rule, labor past the point of exhaustion. Rather, other activities, often those associated with their expanded definition of the handyman role, are interspersed between tasks that are subjectively felt to be especially mentally, physically and financially draining.

These "side shows" provide a time off from more demanding activities. Consequently, leisure home handymen do not feel their life has been put on hold by engaging in large activities. The great amount of time spent on home handyman activities is not viewed as lost time. Serious leisure home handymen

feel no urgency to engage in or complete any specific project. Beyond what is reasonably necessary for safety and comfort, there is no stress felt to complete a project. Under these conditions the serious leisure home handyman is subject only to his own limitations. The enjoyment and personal benefit received from doing the activity are, for serious leisure home handymen, very high.

For serious leisure individuals the flow of home handyman activities consists of three steps: a) find an initial idea for the activity, b) look at the idea from all angles and know the consequences of doing the activity, c) do the activity one stage at a time. This flow differs considerably from that followed by work home handymen.

As with other individuals interviewed, serious leisure participants report a measure of satisfaction and enjoyment from getting an initial idea for their home handyman activities. Whereas work participants are more inclined to speak of ideas developing from necessity, serious leisure most often mention the notion of "want" and the opportunity to "personalize" their home.

Leisure home handymen take a more detached approach when developing an idea. Enthusiasm for getting the project going is tempered by a salient belief (held by all leisure participants) that a quick decision is a wrong decision. Consequently, a second stage in the flow of serious leisure individuals is to examine an idea from all angles. Through this examination, several important issues will be resolved. Specifically, the following will be determined: a) what methods materials and technologies are most appropriate for doing the

activity, b) if the individual has the ability to execute the idea, c) how much money it will cost to do the activity, d) what the impact of doing this activity will be for the home's structure, e) what can be done to avoid any long term or severe logistical problems resulting from the activity. In answering these questions, serious leisure home handymen will have developed the "best" (most efficient, least costly, less time consuming, stress free) way of doing home handyman activity.

A third step in the flow of serious leisure home handymen is to do the activity in stages. All respondents in this group noted the "proper" way of doing the activity is to, first and foremost, complete any structural work that needs to be done. Only after this is done should cosmetic work be undertaken. As a group serious leisure home handymen hold two distinct attitudes that influence the actual doing of the activity. First, they are enthusiastic about learning and using trade secrets. In their opinion, trade secrets allow tasks to be done more cost and time efficiently and can produce a more finished, presentable product. Second, serious leisure home handymen are especially concerned with the finer details of a project. Craftsmanship, not function, is the measuring stick by which a project's worth is evaluated.

In short, serious leisure home handymen have an advanced flow for accomplishing their renovation goals. It is based on thinking out the consequences of an activity, doing work in stages, making effective use of trade secrets and paying special attention to detail. There is an important

consequence to this advanced flow. The problems serious leisure home handymen most frequently encounter are felt as only minor inconveniences. Consequently, serious leisure home handymen usually pursue their activity in a relatively relaxed atmosphere. The possibility to enjoy the activity and derive personal benefits is relatively high.

A majority of respondent's orientation to home handyman activity is neither strictly work or leisure. The next section will discuss these individuals.

Semi-Leisure Home Handymen

In reviewing the data, a third type of respondent is clearly identifiable. For this group, home handyman activity is neither predominantly work; nor is it predominantly leisure. Individuals in this category have an orientation to the activity that is something other than "work" or "leisure". Dumazedier (1974:74) has coined the term "semi-leisure" to describe these activity participants. Eighteen of thirty four individuals (53 percent of the sample) approach home handyman activities with a semi-leisure orientation.

Most semi-leisure participants have had at least some prior physical experience with the skills required of home handymen. These past experiences have instilled a high degree of confidence and comfort to try doing extensive home handyman activity. Many semi-leisure participants recognize they are mechanically minded or have above average technical competence to do the activity. However, they do not generally have a strong interest in doing home handyman activity. Neither do they feel forced into the activity by finances or

by a strong, urgent (subjective) need to act. For most semi-leisure participants the activity is undertaken with the belief that it is "more or less something people do" or that "it is a good way to get out of the office".

Virtually all work individuals and a majority of semi-leisure individuals (13 of 18 cases, 73 percent) recognize they are in some way constrained when doing home handyman activities. These groups will not undertake certain projects or tasks that fall into the realm of home handyman activity. Such limits are both self imposed (the job is "too difficult" or "too big") or imposed by other individuals (a spouse may have a different opinion on what should or could be done by a do-it-yourself venture). This is in sharp contrast to serious leisure individuals who are generally not hesitant to take on any size or type of project.

For both work and semi-leisure individuals there is, generally speaking, an orientation to " get finished with the jobs" required to complete the house. While stress and fatigue do play a role here, it is more likely that semi-leisure participants want to finish because they have better things to do with their time- relax socialize, be with family etc. A fundamental difference between work and semi-leisure participants is that for work individuals all home handyman activity revolves around completion of their home. Home handyman activity is undertaken only when: a) some deficiency in the physical home needs correction, b) normal home maintenance is required, c) more space is required to house a growing family. Clearly, work individuals consider home

handyman activity as being adjunct to the homeowner role or the parent-spouse role.

This is not the case for semi-leisure and serious leisure participants. For both these groups there is an attempt to develop the home handyman role into a more distinct and complete role. There are several ways this is done.

First, leisure participants "create" home handyman projects that can be done at one's own pace when one feels like doing something. The rationale behind this project creation is to produce an item that is either unique in design, can not be found in stores, or is custom built to serve a special need or want. These items are typically luxuries like mechanical spice racks, refurbished heirlooms, antique cars, model airplanes etc. Such projects allow semi and serious leisure participants the benefit of always having something to do. Respondents note these projects are often very detailed and intricate in design and method. Doing such projects, it is reasoned, provides a solid background in the skills and techniques required to engage in more extensive home handyman activity. Moreover, the positive feedback from family and friends acts to reinforce the notion that the individual is truly a craftsman.

Semi-leisure and serious leisure participants attempt to define their home handyman role by developing a unique self image based on their activities. It is generally agreed that anyone who is physically fit and who has the right frame of mind can do home handyman activity. Frequently, semi-leisure and serious leisure participants relay "horror stories" of individuals who engage in home

handyman activity with less than admirable results. It is believed the fault with these novice participants is a lack of patience and persistence. Moreover, the novices tend to be over enthusiastic and have an inflexible orientation. These virtues- patience, persistence, level headedness and flexibility are often used by leisure participants to discuss their own activities. It is clear these virtues have become an important part of what it means to be a "good" home handyman.

All home handymen interviewed generally tried to achieve a professional (or better than professional) look to their projects. Respondents believed that to become "good" at the activity required much time and effort. In contrast to work participants, semi-leisure and serious leisure participants spend significant amounts of time preparing for the activity. This advance preparation is in any of the following forms: a) reading "how to" magazines, government regulations and code books; b) taking courses on both general renovation activity and the finer craftsman skills; c) tracking information on the types, prices and quality of available materials; d) planning the activity to conform to a basic flow - think, plan, act.

Few people prepared for a big renovation project by talking with anybody. This is surprising; virtually all respondents interviewed advised potential home handymen to discuss the activity with someone who has done it. It was stressed that individuals should know what they are "getting into" before embarking on any sort of extensive home handyman activity. It is apparent respondents make a distinction between types of knowledge. One

type of knowledge is that which you can get from a book or through taking a course. A second type of knowledge is the "real story" behind extensive activity; the frustrations, aggravations, problems and joys of home handyman pursuits. Respondents make it clear that this second type of knowledge is of equal or greater importance than actual home handyman skill. Talking to those who have done home handyman activity clarifies a salient point. Though the activity "looks easy", it is not. Having at least some idea of what to "expect" influences one's orientation to the activity.

About one half of serious leisure participants (3 of 7 cases, 43 percent) further solidified the role of home handyman by contracting themselves out for pay (9). Friends and work colleagues spread word of mouth that these individuals are very handy. Through this network, serious leisure individuals have been asked to build a variety of things such as estate homes, specialized computer furniture, shop work benches etc. In pursuing these jobs individuals become extremely fluent in construction methods, tool use, materials and their prices. Thus, compared to others in the sample, individuals who hire themselves out are less shocked by the financial costs and time commitments of their home handyman activities.

Alternatively, no semi-leisure participant had sold anything he made. There was a distinct caution about selling their handyman services for pay. A chief concern is that many semi-leisure respondents felt they could not receive adequate monetary compensation for the amount of time that went into the

activity. Other concerns included a lack of workshop space, the belief that too much capital was required, and a desire to keep current activities manageable.

Both semi-leisure and serious leisure participants have a high respect for tradesmen. This was reinforced by trying to do specifically challenging tasks such as drywall, linoleum, etc. Often it was emphasized the tasks undertaken "looked easy enough" but were in reality very difficult and time consuming. It is a salient belief among these two groups that anyone who has never tried any sort of home handyman activity can not really appreciate the accomplishments of individuals.

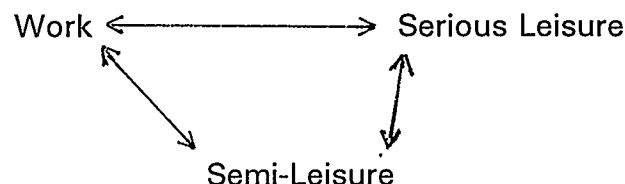
Unlike the other types, semi-leisure participants had or have developed a keen sense of the dollar cost and effort that goes into home handyman activity. There are two reasons for this high awareness. First, semi-leisure participants are very cognizant of doing projects that increase the value of their home. Cosmetic upgrades (common among work participants) and innovative or creative renovations (typical of serious leisure participants) are secondary to those renovations for investment purposes. Second, a majority of semi-leisure participants reach an important conclusion. If one puts a reasonable price on one's spare time and factors in the cost to fix one's own mistakes, do it your self home handyman activity is extremely expensive. In the long run, it would be better to hire professional tradesmen than to attempt do-it-yourself home renovation. This is in direct opposition to work participants who believe firmly that tradesmen are too expensive and from serious leisure participants who

believe overall, the benefits of doing home handyman exceed most costs.

As with serious leisure individuals, semi-leisure participants are not forced into the activity; most have had prior experience with home handyman tasks. Commonly, semi-leisure participants try, as do serious leisure oriented individuals, to develop the activity into a more complete role. Similar to work orientated individuals there is no strong self defined interest in doing the activity; often there is a desire to finish the activity as soon as possible. Unique to the semi-leisure orientation is an acute knowledge of the time and effort that goes into doing the activity. It is this knowledge which prevents any future extensive renovation projects from being contemplated.

By way of summary, Figure One sketches three relationships between work and leisure as posited by interview respondents.

Figure One: The Relationship of Work and Leisure as
Experienced by Interview Respondents (a)



Note: (a) N = 34; all interviews conducted from February to June 1989

Figure One suggests an individual may enter into an activity with one of three orientations: work, semi-leisure or serious leisure. The current research indicates certain contingencies; past experience, level of skill, perceived pressures to participate et. cetera influence how respondents choose to structure time and define the role. As these contingencies change, it is possible for an individual's orientation to the activity to change. Thus, it is possible for an individual to enter into long term activities (such as that of the home handyman) at any one node and through time move among nodes.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was designed to qualitatively explore the questions of why people become home handymen, what the role involves and how the role is constructed. Data gathered has a bearing on three main areas of sociological interest: urban renewal, work and leisure and ethnographic studies.

Academic research on the processes of urban renewal has most frequently used macro-sociological concepts and demographic survey data. It is useful for planners to explore demographic and social trends in housing and land use. However, if one is to get at the base of these trends, a clear understanding of perceptions and attitudes of individuals is required. As reinforced by the current research, the best way of doing this is through a qualitative, micro- sociological orientation, and open ended interviewing.

A second set of implications has to do with the academic understanding of work and leisure. A major finding from the current research is that various

contingencies influence one's perception of the activity such that it is experienced as work, leisure or a mixture of both. Consequently, the notion of a work-leisure continuum may be expanded or reshaped. Based on data from this research it may make more sense to discuss a work-leisure "triangle". One idea for such a triangle was diagrammed in Figure One. The triangle configuration stresses that activity participants can become involved in an activity through a variety of influences. An individual's orientation to the activity can easily change depending on perceptions of activity contingencies.

The research also has implications for individuals contemplating ethnographic studies. Traditionally, ethnographers have focused on activities that occur in some sort of formal or informal group. One advantage of this is that it is very easy to develop a sample from group membership rosters and the like. There are potential problems with such sampling methods. Many common place activities do not take place in a group. Alternatively, individuals may pursue their activity in isolation, outside any formal or informal group. In focusing on interviewing group members only one side of the "big picture"-that promoted by the group-is uncovered. For this reason, more effort needs to be done to study those individuals who do not "belong". There are several expected (and unexpected!) issues that must be addressed when attempting to develop a sample of non-group individuals. The current research has advanced some solutions to these issues.

As a methodological note, the concepts used in ordinary life as well as

academia are not clear cut. There are different shades of interpretation to the same concept; this is certainly the case with the notion of leisure. Researchers should be made aware that such inconsistencies do exist. To strengthen one's data it is advisable to clear up or probe these inconsistencies during the initial interview.

By way of suggestion for future research, this exploratory study of home handymen has revealed the ways individuals perceive the handyman role and how the role is constructed. Several sensitizing concepts (tinkering, perfectionism, self sufficiency, planning etc.) have been uncovered. The next step would be to use these concepts in the development of a survey for home handymen. From such an exercise a more quantitative analysis of home handymen will be possible.

On a general level, much more research needs to be done to develop and reshape the concepts of semi-leisure and serious leisure. Additional research may uncover activity orientations other than those discussed in this thesis. A possible starting point for such research this would be to study other solitary activities undertaken by differing genders, age groups and the like. One solitary activity uncovered by this research is "tinkering". Some aspects of "tinkering" were probed in this research; however, more needs to be done to clarify the concept.

The discipline of sociology has much to offer the study of solitary activities. Some methodological and theoretical issues in researching solitary

activity have been addressed in the current study. In exploring the challenges offered by solitary activity, it is hoped more research questions, ideas and approaches will be developed. If this is the case, a fundamental purpose of this thesis will be met.

Notes

(1) Some interviews were conducted with a spouse present at one point or other. This second set of impressions and observations was also recorded during the interview session.

(2) For more information on specialization at outdoor leisure activities see Bryan (1979). Singleton (1978) offers an extended analysis of practical skills.

(3) This figure roughly reflects the tenure of most respondents. Current home handyman activity most frequently began shortly after moving into a new home and continued up to and beyond the date of interview.

(4) These indicators suggest respondents selected for interview are substantially different than those individuals who occasionally perform a home maintenance task or who pursue the activity in a haphazard fashion.

(5) The size of lot a dwelling is located on determines the extent to which a dwelling can be built upon.

(6) Most home handymen had purchased their home because they wanted to live in the area. Although questions were not formally asked, it was indicated that many individuals and their families were relatively settled in their neighborhood; children were attending neighborhood schools, neighborhood friendships had developed, church and community organization memberships were cultivated.

(7) The remaining two individuals were retired and had the opinion that time was irrelevant to doing their home handyman activities.

(8) Structural issues refers to two basic questions: a) how will the project affect the entire home? and, b) what needs to be done to ensure, maintain or reinforce the home's physical structure ?

(9) One other serious leisure participant was adamant in the notion he would do the activity for a living if he could. However, it was his belief there was not enough money involved in the activity to make it a full time pursuit.

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APPENDICESAppendix A: Sample Cover Letter

October 19, 1988

Dear Resident:

I am currently engaged in thesis research on home renovation. My goal is to more fully understand the reasons why people renovate their homes. This study is supervised by Dr. A. D. Olmsted (telephone 220-6501) and is carried out with the permission of the Department of Sociology, University of Calgary.

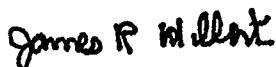
To complete this research I need to talk with some people in your neighborhood who have made renovations to their home within the past 5 years. As a means of developing this list, I request that you fill out the attached questionnaire and send it to me by return mail. A postage paid envelope is enclosed for this purpose.

All information provided will be used only for academic purposes; I will handle all information in the strictest of confidence; at no time will personal information be given to any person or organization. My final thesis will not contain references to specific people. All individuals will remain anonymous.

You are not required to participate in this study; however, I hope very much that you will. Please answer all questions as fully as possible. Remember, all questions pertain to the home this survey was delivered to.

I recognize there are many demands on your time; thus I greatly appreciate your help in allowing me to learn more about why people renovate their homes. If you have any questions about this survey do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest regards,



James R. Hilbert
Sociology Graduate Student
Telephone : 277-6202
220-3213

Appendix B: Resident Questionnaire

A) The following questions are asked as a means of sorting survey results and making future contact with residents.

1) How long have you owned this home: ___ years ___ months

1B) If renting:

How long have you been at this address: ___ years ___ months

2) Address of home this survey was delivered to:

3) Name of Resident(s): _____

4) Telephone Number of Resident(s): _____

B) For the following questions please circle the letter which best represents your response.

1) I would like you to think of all the renovations you have made to this home. This includes all renovations and alterations you may have completed personally and those renovations you paid other people to do. In the past five years have you made:

A) extensive home renovations

B) some home renovations

C) minor home renovations

2) Are you planning to make any renovations to your home within the next 2 years?

A) yes

B) no

3) Sometimes home renovations are completed by home handymen / handy women or as family projects. Are a majority of renovations to your home completed this way? A) yes B) no

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey. Please use the enclosed postage paid envelope to mail your reply to me.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

- 1) When did you first become involved in home projects? Please tell me more.
- 2) Where do you get ideas for your renovation projects?
- 3) Tasks involved in renovation require a basic understanding of carpentry plumbing etc.. How did you acquire this knowledge? books? hard knocks? training- formal informal?
- 4) Do you know any other home handymen? Where do you meet? Do you frequently talk shop? trade information? labor? tools?
- 5) Do you belong or know of any associations or clubs for home handy people?
- 6) Do you frequently talk about projects with friends neighbors cohorts relatives? What types of response or feedback do you get? (encouraging discouraging etc.)
- 7) Have you given anybody assistance with their renovation projects? What form did this take? labor tools advice? Were you remunerated in any way? Would you offer assistance again?
- 8) Did you complete any renovations to homes you lived in previously? Briefly what types? Can you remember the reason? Anybody help? Anything else you would like to add?
- 9) Have you made other things using you handyman skill? (toys furniture etc) Have these been for personal use? Sale? Have you received any feedback? Explain.
- 10) Are you especially good at any one renovation task? Is there a renovation task you would rather not do? Please tell me.
- 11) Do your renovation projects frequently require specialized tools?
- 12) Have you built up a workshop of tools? Rent tools as needed? Use friends' tools? Do you mind borrowing or lending your tools?
- 13) Which suppliers of materials do you favor? Why? Do you have any one sales person you contact when making purchases at these suppliers? If so why?
- 14) Have you used any newspaper to buy or sell materials? If so, have you

been pleased with the results?

15) Are you (or your family members) active in your community association? If so how?

16) Do you anticipate any changes in neighborhood within next five years? What? Do you feel these changes are good or bad?

17) What do you like the most about your neighborhood? Least? Why?

18) Turning to your home, is there anything you would like to change immediately? Why?

19) Delegation of work and authority: What family members help out in renovation projects? What types of tasks? With what frequency?

20) Does your home handyman activity influence any of your relationships with your family? spouse? friends? employer? If so in what ways?

21) For the renovation goals you have in mind, do you spend too much or too little time being a handyman? What prevents you from devoting more time to this pursuit?

22) Throughout renovation projects people tend to have routine difficulties and problems (eg. lack of time, indecisions regarding choices weather). What types of routine difficulties have you run into? How do you deal with them?

23) Expectations - At the beginning of a project people may have certain expectations as to the eventual outcome. Do you have such expectations? Does the finished product usually meet with these expectations? Have you developed a level of competence in line with your expectations?

24) What types of skills have you developed as a result of your handyman activities? (budget, methods material) Have these been useful in other pursuits? If so how?

25) What renovations have you made or are planning to make to this home?

26) Have you ever contracted out work to professionals? If so why? Any complaints or problems? How did these resolve?

27) How did you come to hire these contractors? (On recommendation of friends? From the yellow pages? etc.)

28) Can you remember a moment in your renovation pursuits that has given you

29) Was your father a home handyman?

30) What is your occupation? approximate age? What sorts of hobbies do you have?

31) Do you consider yourself a perfectionist? Please tell me more.

32) Why did you decide to buy this house? Are you planning to stay here for a long time?

33) Any advice to people just starting renovation projects?

34) Anything else you would like to tell me regarding your handyman activities?