

LOCATING THE HUMAN CONDITION CONCEPT WITHIN HOME ECONOMICS

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The intent of this monograph¹ is to tell a story that introduces the construct of the human condition to home economics² practice. This story starts with the founding of the profession in North America³, and follows our exploits through the development and utilization of central ideas that guide our practice (in particular well-being, wellness and basic human needs). This is not the first time that scholars in the field have alluded to the place of the human condition in home economics practice. Consider that, in 1979, East profoundly stated that home economics should be “focussed on the home in order to improve humanity. Humanity? Yes... the ultimate goal is to make life successively better for each following generation” (p.141). Fifteen years elapsed, and then the 1993 Scottsdale conference acknowledged that the profession needed to take leadership in enhancing the human condition (American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences [AAFCS], 1993). Fifteen more years passed, and McGregor (2008b, 2009b) began to reiterate the merit of embracing the concept of the human condition, as did McGregor, Pendergast, Seniuk, Eghan and Engberg (2008). It seems we are drawn to this idea every 15 years or so. It also seems that we may be truly ready for the idea this time.

¹ I am deeply grateful to my dear friend and colleague Dr. Kaija Turkki (Finland) for her deep and rigorous review of a draft of this monograph. Her philosophical and intellectual insights informed the final version you are now reading. Kaija has read Hanna Arendt’s work in the Finnish language. Finnish translations of Arendt’s work offer different insights into her intended message. Kaija also wisely observed that different professional cultures speak aloud on certain issues and remain silent on others. Also, professional cultures can prevent home economists from seeing things, or make them see things that are not there. She helped me realize that I prepared this monograph through the eyes of the North American home economics professional culture. A key factor influencing whether others will embrace the ideas in this monograph is a full respect for home economists in the world and their roots. We do not have to accept everything we read, but we do have to be ready to listen and try to understand others’ stories of home economics.

I am also grateful that Dr. Dorothy Mitstifer (KON) urged me to intellectually dig deeper when she read an earlier version of this idea in 2004. She explained that any discussion of “What should be the nature of home economics?” could only be answered through rational argumentation. To honour her suggestion, I tried very hard to make sure that the ideas shaping this monograph are not based on faulty reasoning. Given the daunting, slippery slope of fallacies, I hope I managed to share a clear line of thinking by using evidence to support my opinions through a chain of reasoning, knowing others may not share my view. I apologize if I did not succeed.

² This monograph respects that other names for the profession are preferred, including family and consumer sciences, human ecology and human sciences. The message herein applies to everyone.

³ Most home economics practice in the world has been influenced by the thinking at the founding Lake Placid Conferences in the United States, in the late 1890s and early 1900s; hence, I feel confident discussing home economics using this as the departure point for this story. However, future chapters in this story should include developments in Asia (Fusa, 2004), Europe (Tuomi-Grohn, 2008; Turkki, 2005; von Schweitzer, 2006), Australia (Pendergast, 2001) and other regions and countries. This caveat is especially significant in that insights from European home economics scholars, about Hanna Arendt’s theory of the human condition, will add rich layers of understandings currently absent from this monograph. Hanna Arendt was from Europe.

Because knowledge has always been the real vector of any transformation and progress in our profession, this monograph shares an intellectual accounting of the profession's conceptual innovations, illustrating our preparedness for the idea of the human condition. I fully respect our reality that home economists from around the world hold different perspectives of what constitutes home economics and its relation to everyday life, and that this diversity in our body of knowledge strengthens the profession. I hope this monograph encourages the development of our knowledge base in many directions and does so from a new core - the conditions of being a human being. I draw heavily on Hanna Arendt's theory of the human condition as a way to augment our existing home economics body of knowledge. I encourage others to pick up new theories from other disciplines and use them to further the advancement of our professional knowledge base. Although it may seem to some that I am disrespectful of our theory of well-being and quality of life, my intent is to reinforce its importance to our intellectual strength while advocating for an intellectual augmentation - that of the human condition.

As well, one of the telling characteristics of home economics is that it unites individuals, families, communities and society. From this integrated perspective, home economists can strive to reach a holistic understanding of the human being and relate humans to the world at large. The basic premise of this monograph is that we need a new construct to help the profession achieve this integral approach to practice. With respect, our standard concepts of well-being and quality of life are too limiting for addressing the pressing, complex, global issues facing humanity.

Our Historical Beginnings

Our story begins with this quote from the North American context. *“McGregor and Goldsmith (1998), taking direction from Brown (1993) and Henry (1995), provide detailed discussion of the distinction among seven facets of well-being and compare well-being to quality of life and standard of living. They challenge the profession to continue the dialogue about this fundamental political/moral focus for the profession. But, there is little written evidence that this dialogue has continued, nor does it seem that professionals have agreed upon a political/moral meaning of family well-being”* (Smith, 2003, p. 8).

Well-being has been the clarion call of the profession for over 100 years; however, the previous quote is a ringing endorsement that we have yet to come to a profession-wide agreement about how we understand this concept (Baldwin, 1996; Smith, 2003). Brown (1985) asserted that this lack of consensus stems from the founding Lake Placid Conferences (1899-1909) (see Figures 1 and 2). Although she credited our founders for seeking a rationality for home economics, she described their legacy as piecemeal and flawed, resulting in an incoherent platform from which to practice (p.369).



Figure 1 Lake Placid Club where several meetings were held (lower left on water)
(used with permission, Joyce Mills)

Continuing this critique, she turned specifically to the concept of well-being, arguing that we lack a consensus about this concept because it is highly abstract, and internally complex (Brown, 1993, Chapter 3). In a damning testament, she claimed, although not deliberate, “failure [of the Lake Placid Conference participants] to articulate the purpose of home economics by reflectively examining and agreeing upon a valid set of concepts, beliefs, and norms to comprise *an overall whole interpretative scheme of well-being* of families and individuals has led to a blurred and fragmented perspective [of practice] ... producing consequences contradictory to our intentions” (1993, p.111, emphasis added).



Figure 2 - Current Lake Placid Boat House 2009

It is important to note that we were not the only ones drawn to this reductive approach. Decisions taken at the end of the 19th century reflected the thinking of the time, that of scientific positivism and capitalistic economics in an era called the Industrial Revolution. Morin (1999) explains that those living at the turn of the 20th century tended to cut up what is human into separate pieces of a puzzle that could not form a whole image. With this approach, human complexity became invisible, and people vanished into knowledge of only the parts and not the integrated whole. Such was the thinking when home economics was founded. But, times have changed, and our thinking needs to change as well (McGregor, 2009c). So, our story continues.

Theoretical and Conceptual Well-being Initiatives in the Nineties

A century later, Brown (1993) claimed we were still living with this lack of consensus. But, evidence shows it was not for lack of trying. During the 1990s, pivotal home economics events and research efforts focused on developing a theory of well-being. In her work with Australian home economists, Henry (1995) found that, although home economics writers claim that well-being of individuals and families is their focus, few study participants, if any, could explain what they understood by the concept of well-being.

In 1996, in an attempt to begin a Canadian dialogue to gain consensus about well-being as a concept, I (then Chair of the Canadian Home Economics Association’s (CHEA) Public Policy Committee) prepared a collection of well-being fact sheets (available on request). CHEA’s leadership did not follow up with this initiative. More recently, McGregor and MacCleave (2007) provided an overview of three initiatives to conceptualize home economics in Canada, efforts that ended when CHEA closed its doors in 2003. The concept of well-being was central to these three intellectual and philosophical exercises.

Success was more forthcoming in United States. In 1996, like-minded home economists arranged for sessions about *a theory of family well-being* to be held at the AAFCS conferences, formerly the American Home Economics Association (AHEA). Two sessions were held in 1996, with a follow up session in 1997. A background paper with

responses was prepared for the 1996 session (Mitstifer, 1996) and a rich collection of reflection papers was prepared for the 1997 session (Henry, Mitstifer & Smith, 1997). Henry (1996, 1997) (from Australia) attended these sessions. She judged that after all three sessions, the participants were no closer to an agreement regarding the meaning of well-being than when they started, and this proved disappointing for those expecting a definitive framework. There was agreement that the conversation and intellectual journey should continue. In 1998, McGregor and Goldsmith developed a detailed discussion of the concept of well-being, juxtaposing it against quality of life and standard of living. Humm (2000) acknowledged their conceptual contribution, crediting their work as being one of seven key journal articles containing new knowledge generated for the profession during the nineties.

Conceptual Migration - From Well-being to Wellness to Basic Human Needs

Let us go back to our beginnings again for a moment. The original intent of the Lake Placid meetings was to attend to the organization of a body of knowledge (BOK) for the new profession. Brown (1985) reported that our founders recognized there should be a systematically organized body of knowledge to inform practice. And, although she characterized the original approach to organizing the home economics body of knowledge as ‘very undisciplined’ (p.275), recent attempts to generate an American body of knowledge were quite systematic (with McGregor and MacCleave (2007) striving to gauge any degree of global consensus). Baugher et al. (2000) and Anderson and Nickols (2001) reported on the comprehensive process that lead up to the creation of the American body of knowledge. United States is the only country in the world to publish a home economics-related BOK. It is available at the AAFCS website (Baugher et al., 2003).

Back to present times. “The concepts and principles for promotion of individual well-being are central components of the family and consumer sciences body of knowledge” (Anderson & Nickols, 2001, p.16). As well, the ideas of wellness (Fain & Lewis, 2002) and basic human needs have been identified as key organizing elements of the BOK (Baugher et al, 2003; Nickols-Richardson, 2008). Indeed, there has been discernable conceptual movement amongst the notions of well-being, wellness and basic human needs. Rather than characterize this as conceptual slippage, this monograph assumes that this phenomenon is an opportunity to draw the profession’s attention to the idea of the human condition.

Indeed, two scholars at the 1997 AAFCS conference session on the theory of well-being raised this possibility. Braun and Bauer (1997) suggested that “well-being ...[is] a starting point for discussing the human condition” (p.73). They also connected well-being with basic needs. “Well-being...is a state of being in which basic needs are met” (p.73). Then, they linked the well-being of families with their ability to function as a democratic, social institution, concluding, first, that “if family well-being suffers, families are less able to perform the functions they ideally are intended to perform” (p.73) and, second, “when families are not functioning well, society cannot function well” (p.73). This idea infers a functional definition of families (McGregor, 2009a). As well, these ideas are placed in quotation marks here because it is very rare to see these concepts all linked together in written home economics discourse. More exciting is their coining of the terms “the condition of well-being” and “the condition of families,” exciting because it leads into a discussion of the human condition. Our story now returns to how the profession came to

understand the notions of well-being, wellness and basic human needs.

Well-being

McGregor and Goldsmith (1998) wrote at length about the differences between quality of life, standard of living and well-being in home economics practice. They favoured Marshall et al.'s (1995) definition of well-being as "a state of being where all members of a community have economic security; are respected, valued and have personal worth; feel connected to those around them; are able to access necessary resources; and are able to participate in the decision-making process affecting them" (p.1). Drawing on Brown (1993) and Henry (1995), they conceptualized well-being as comprising seven dimensions: economic, physical, emotional, social, political, spiritual and environmental. As an aside, political well-being is construed as being in control of one's life, being able, and having the freedom, to make decisions with full awareness of the consequences. Smith (1997) proposed moral well-being (meaning of life and what it means to be human) as well as aesthetic well-being (the beauty of human life and the best of humankind). Pendergast (1997) suggested that we keep the list open to other dimensions and offered us the concept of cultural well-being. King (2007) augmented individual well-being with collective well-being comprising community, ethnic and cultural groupings, and other groups of shared interest, characteristics or both. Within the last decade, home economics rhetoric frequently referred to the well-being of individuals, families and communities (a collective approach).

Wellness

As with lists of dimensions of well-being, some wellness scholars have created lists of dimensions of wellness (e.g., Hettler, 2008; Montague, Piazza, Peters, Eippert & Poggiali, 2002; Omar, 2002). For the first time in home economics, Fain and Lewis (2002) shared a conceptualization of "the wellness concept" (p.8), suggesting that wellness is a way of living that integrates a person's six dimensions in order to function optimally: physical, occupational, social, spiritual, intellectual and emotional. Dimensions of wellness and well-being often overlap. Most conceptualizations of wellness include the well-being standards of economic, social, psychological and physical. Wellness always includes an occupational or vocational component (similar to economic well-being with a focus on work and career) and an intellectual component. Intellectual wellness refers to one's intellectual curiosity and growth, lifelong learning, creative stimulation, and the challenge of one's mind leading to lively interaction with the world (Hettler). Hart (2007) explained that the underlying assumption when creating lists of wellness dimensions with attendant definitions is that a list is sufficient if the categories are broad enough to form a flexible framework applicable in diverse settings. But, it is still a fragmented list (harken to Brown, 1993).

In response to this fragmentation, some scholars view wellness as more than a list of dimensions. They place it in a holistic perspective, appreciating that wellness is a state of proper alignment attained through personal empowerment, the balanced interplay of body, mind and spirit (e.g., McCusker, 2002). Wellness embraces the concepts of self-responsibility, self-direction, choice and optimism (Montague, et al., 2002). In his Six Dimensional Model of Wellness, Hettler (2008) views it as an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices towards, a more successful, positive, affirming existence. Most telling is the following conceptualization of wellness (Cabrini

College, 2008, p.1):

*Wellness is a **choice**: a decision you make to move toward optimal health.*

*Wellness is a **way of life**: a balanced lifestyle you design to achieve your highest potential for well-being.*

*Wellness is a **process**: an understanding that there is no end point, but health and happiness are possible in each and every moment.*

*Wellness is the **integration** of body, mind, and soul: an awareness that the choices we make in one area affect all others.*

Wellness can be perceived as one of four things: a personal choice, a way of life or a lifestyle, a “be-in-the-moment” process, or a holistic perspective (Omar, 2002). This process-oriented, integrative understanding of wellness brings us closer to Brown’s (1993) call for a more holistic and integrated conceptualization of well-being. As mentioned, the current AAFCS BOK references wellness as a specialization thread (Baugher et al., 2003); however, the concept is not defined.

Wellness and well-being are different. On a final note, although many definitions of wellness use the concept of well-being in their explanation, wellness is different from well-being. Wellness is more about a personal choice that *affects* one’s well-being. It is a precursor or pre-condition for well-being, grounded in mental, physical and emotional *health* (McCusker, 2002). Jonas (2000) clarified that health is a *state* of being (akin to well-being) while wellness is a *process* of being. Along the same vein of thought, Seiwell (n.d.) noted that accomplishing wellness is contingent upon people going through the process of questioning their current state of being. Wellness is conventionally associated with health and freedom from disease while well-being is a contented *state* of being happy, healthy and prosperous (King, 2007). Wellness emphasizes individual responsibility for well-being through the practice of health-promoting life-style behaviours (Lisako Jones, 2001). Wellness is a dynamic *process* while well-being is a less-than-dynamic *state*.

Basic Human Needs

Our story again takes us back to our beginnings. Although the concept of *basic human needs* seemingly first appeared in the AAFCS BOK (Baugher et al., 2003), it had been in our rhetoric since the beginning. The notion of fundamental human needs appeared in the conversations of those attending the Lake Placid conferences. Brown (1985, p.257) explained that a small cadre of participants (definitely a minority) believed that families have a moral obligation to attain, and gain satisfaction from attaining, basic human needs. In 1902, Alice Chown explained, “home economics in its broad sense was a subject for developing... the meaning of the physical, social, moral, esthetic [sic] and spiritual conditions of the home” (as cited in Brown, p. 263). Chown’s list identified five dimensions of human needs (to be discussed shortly). Seventy-five years after Chown’s 1902 comment, Brown and Paolucci (1979) asserted that, indeed, “individuals and families have become so immersed in the material needs of life that psychic, social and cultural needs are neglected” (p.14). Brown (1993) reported that this neglect happened because, despite the founders’ compelling concern for basic needs, the voices of this small cadre were overpowered by the cohort of attendees who favoured a scientific management approach to home economics, with a focus on material needs.

Forward now to the late Eighties, when Kappa Omicron Nu (KON) (the profession's leadership and honour society) re-introduced basic human needs as a central idea for home economics, devoting two issues of *Home Economics Forum* (now *KON FORUM*) to this topic. In one paper, Nygren (1989) entreated home economists to search for consensus on the concept of basic human needs because its attainment impacts well-being. A short four years later, the Scottsdale Conceptual Framework (AAFCS, 1993) referenced *human needs* (akin to basic needs). The original (Anderson & Nickols, 2001) and current American BOKs (Baugher et al., 2003) recognized basic human needs as a key element. In a recent application of the BOK, Nickols-Richardson (2008) positioned basic human needs at the very core, but still did not define the concept.

Although there is little agreement in the general literature about how to conceptualize basic needs (Huitt, 2004), and although there is no elaboration of the concept in the current American BOK, there is general agreement that basic needs are central to human motivation, because needs are forces that induce people to action (Burns & Rayman, 1989). Resultant human behaviour creates living conditions of humanity - characterizing the human condition (Arendt, 1958). Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is one of the most popular and often cited theories of human motivation (Huitt). In his original conceptualization, Maslow tendered five levels of needs: physiological, safety and security, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. In 1971, Maslow added a sixth level beyond self-actualization, self-transcendence (need to connect with something beyond self). And, in 1998, Maslow and Lowery added two more levels: cognitive (need to know and understand) and aesthetic (need for beauty, symmetry and order), placing them after the first original four needs (see Figure 3).

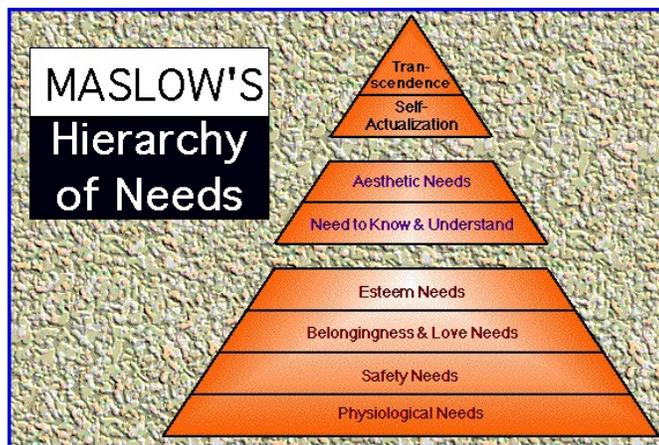


Figure 3 (used with permission, Huitt, 2004)

Nearly 40 years after Maslow (1954) tendered his theory, Max-Neef (1991) classified basic *human needs* into nine fundamental categories, explaining that human needs are the same for all peoples (are universal). What changes is *how* the needs are satisfied, inherently shaping the human condition. His nine categories are: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity, and freedom.

He believes there may be a tenth need, transcendence, but is not convinced that it is universal (see Figure 4). All needs are necessary, and all are equal. Any need that is not satisfied reveals a human poverty. Beyond a certain threshold, a poverty can become a pathology, a marked departure from a desirable human condition.

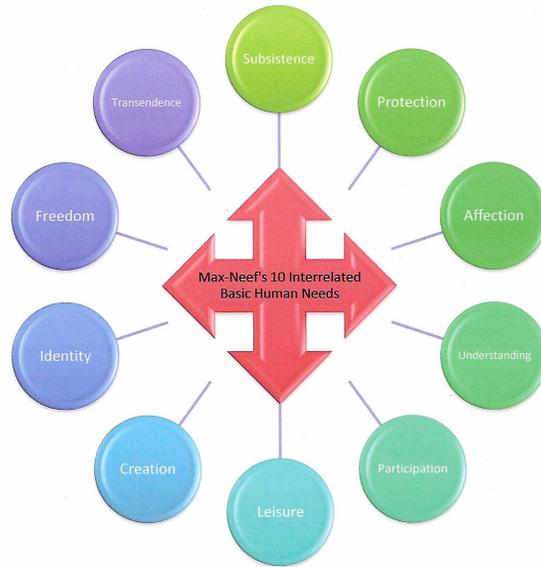


Figure 4

Even though there are striking similarities in Maslow's and Max-Neef's dimensions of basic needs, the assumptions underlying each approach are profoundly different. Maslow (1954, 1971) assumed that people must meet the lower need(s) before being able to move to the higher levels; hence, he labelled it an hierarchy. Conversely, Max-Neef (1991) assumed that needs are interrelated and interdependent, that simultaneity, complementarity and trade offs are features of the process of human needs satisfaction. Not surprisingly, home economists relied on Maslow's hierarchy of needs because it was de rigeur in the formative years of the profession. Even though the profession has yet to explicitly define how it understands basic human needs, its traditional reliance on Maslow's model infers that the American BOK likely draws on the hierarchal approach rather than Max-Neef's integrative, dynamic approach (needs are interrelated and interactive). What matters to this discussion is that moving to a basic needs approach brings home economics one step closer to the human condition concept.

Table one - Building Blocks of Home Economics Human Condition Construct

Well-being and Wellness	Basic Human Needs	Holistic, integrated perspective	Family as Basic Social Unit and Institution (Functional definition)	Universal normative principles (interpreting the state of human affairs and what we <i>should</i> do)
economic	subsistence (physical and mental health, employment)	From a holistic perspective, no one part is seen as greater than another part and nothing exists except in relation to something else.	(a) procreation and addition of new members, including adoption and fostering;	peace (many types)
physical	protection (care, safety, adaptability and autonomy)		(b) physical care and maintenance of family members and the home or household;	non-violence (transcend conflict)
emotional	identity (sense of belonging, self-esteem)	Each part, factor or element in society exists as part of the whole, as each is contained within the whole.	(c) morale, love, relationships and nurturance;	justice (many types)
social	affection		(d) production and consumption of goods and services;	equality (treat the same)
intellectual	understanding (critical capacity, intellectual curiosity, intuition)	The term holistic emphasizes the importance of the relationships between factors or elements in our society.	(e) social control and discipline of members; and,	equity (treat differently leading to equality)
occupational or vocational (career, work, including leisure)	idleness leisure, tranquillity, spontaneity)	Individual families would share thoughts, experiences and situations with the whole of humanity and would not make decisions without considering the consequences of the next generation, those living elsewhere, those not yet born and the natural environment.	(f) morality as it socializes children into adult roles towards self-formation.	freedom (from and to do)
political (personal autonomy)	freedom (autonomy, open minded, rights)		meaningful participation (not marginalized)	
cultural	creation (inventiveness, bold imagination)			human rights
aesthetic	participation			human responsibility
moral	aesthetic (symmetry, order)			human security (and national security)
spiritual	Self-actualization (fulfilment of human capacities and reach potential)			resiliency and capacity
environmental	Self-transcendence (connect to something beyond self)			solidarity and empowerment
				transparency and accountability

Making Space for the Human Condition - Shifting Rhetoric in The Body of Knowledge

Still, our story continues. With a clearer appreciation of the distinctions between these three concepts, this section further chronicles evidence of changes in rhetoric, this time couched specifically in the content of the American body of knowledge, and related initiatives. In 1993, at the visioning exercise in Scottsdale, Arizona, the American profession endorsed *The conceptual Framework for the 21st Century*, with an attendant name change to Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS, 1993; Simerly, Ralston, Harriman & Taylor, 2000). The signatories of the framework used the concept of well-being, not wellness; hence, those endorsing the document, de facto, endorsed the concept of

well-being. In the intervening years, AAFCS, drawing on the 1993 Scottsdale framework document, generated an official Body of Knowledge, first published in 2001 (Anderson & Nickols, 2001). With subsequent revisions, it was posted to the AAFCS website in 2003 (Baugher et al., 2003). In a related event, participants at the 1999 Open Summit on the future of FCS in higher education (Arlington, Texas) identified “a wholistic, integrative approach to the study of factors related to the *well-being* of individuals, families and communities” as a core value of the discipline/profession (Summit Steering Committee, 1999, p.7, emphasis added).

The story gets more interesting. In the year leading up to the BOK being posted at its website, AAFCS devoted a full issue of the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* to the special theme of Body of Knowledge (Anderson, 2002). There is a short article on wellness, one of the first articles about wellness in relation to the BOK. It is the first time anyone framed wellness along six dimensions within the home economics literature (Fain & Lewis, 2002). They advised the profession that its challenge is to gain a thorough understanding of the knowledge base surrounding an holistic approach to *wellness*. So, whereas the original version of the BOK used the well-being concept (Anderson & Nickols, 2001), the BOK now features wellness as the main concept (Baugher et al., 2003). Interestingly, the 2000 slogan for AAFCS employed the concept of well-being, ‘*Uniting generations for lifelong well-being.*’ But, it is missing from the 2010 slogan, ‘*Bringing people together to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities.*’

Also of interest to this story are the national standards for FCS education, designed to ensure consistency in the body of knowledge informing FCS curricula. Both the original (Vail, Fox & Wild, 2000) and recently revised standards use both concepts (National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences [NASAFCS], 2008). The original version referred to a nutrition and *wellness* standard that focused on the enhancement of individual and family *well-being* (Yahnke & Wissman, 2000, p. 169). Yet, instead of defining well-being, the standard elaborated on wellness (p.170). This pattern is repeated in the 2008 version. While the Process Framework for the updated standards still identifies well-being as the key concept (Fox, 2007), the actual standard now *lists* dimensions of wellness.

Apparent conceptual slippage is very evident in our story, within and across initiatives and time. Although one is tempted to conclude that this state of affairs contributes to what Brown (1985) called a very undisciplined approach to organizing the home economics body of knowledge, this monograph assumes that it is evidence of moving closer to some degree of consensus about the central focus of the profession. Embracing wellness and basic human needs, in addition to well-being, moves us forward. The movement mirrors the profession’s focus on integrative processes. Baldwin (1997), a participant at the well-being theory sessions held at the AAFCS conference, urged the profession to strive for a wholeness of perspective concerning family well-being leading to a framework that: (a) acknowledges the significance of all dimensions of well-being, and (b) highlights the importance of raising critical consciousness of powerful forces that influence peoples’ interpretation of their needs and the family’s ability to meet these needs. This advise is a nod to the body of knowledge’s reference to basic human needs and Brown’s (1993) normative notion of well-being, wherein home economists would *interpret*

the human condition and the forces that create it rather than just *describing* the current state of affairs. This idea is elaborated upon in the next section, because it is considered a theoretical innovation for the field, one that has yet to be fully embraced.

Normative Approach to Well-being

In a powerful discussion of well-being as one of the five basic ideas of home economics, Brown (1993, Chapter 3) concluded that the profession did not have a coherent view of this concept (and the preceding analysis tends to support her conclusion). She insisted that the profession holds a fragmented and diffused understanding of the notion of well-being. With deep insight, she maintained that we tend to see the world in fragments, that we understand one piece at a time. Those of us who do not see the world holistically have a mind full of little islands, with no bridges between them (p.109). We assume that, “because the world is fragmented, well-being is to be achieved by individuals and families separately and independently from other persons and from society” (p.106). Due to this fragmentation, home economics professionals have come to understand well-being as coming in separate packages (e.g. McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998), with little concern for the moral or cultural imperatives of seeing them separately.

The situation seems to be resolving itself, evident by the current vacillation between well-being and wellness, and more recently, basic human needs. After holding us accountable for accepting a narrow, fragmented conceptual scheme for well-being, Brown (1993) beseeched us to expand our understanding of well-being, to move from a fragmented to a holistic appreciation. We seem to be making our way towards this understanding, as the following examples demonstrate. The Scottsdale Framework stated that FCS practice would focus on integration, with an outcome being enhanced well-being (AAFCS, 1993). At the AAFCS session on a theory of well-being, Smith (1997) acknowledged that the many dimensions of well-being are not mutually exclusive. But, she fell short of referencing a holistic approach. Baldwin (1997), at the same conference, admitted that her earlier framework for well-being (1996) could have been further developed to provide wholeness of perspective. The 1999 summit for FCS in higher education also called for a wholistic, integrative approach to well-being (Summit Steering Committee, 1999). Fain and Lewis (2002) conceptualized wellness as a way of living that integrates a person’s six dimensions in order to function optimally. These emergent professional positions of well-being align with the world’s current penchant for integrative and integral thinking; that is, our emergent thinking is mirroring the intellectual innovations of our times, just as it did 100 years ago.

Brown (1993) offered another strategy to rectify our conceptual fragmentation. She urged us to move from seeing well-being as comprising any number of different dimensions to seeing it based in very basic normative concepts and principles (p.111). By normative, she meant stating how things *ought to be* as opposed to being positivistic wherein one states, factually, how things *are*. For example, instead of *describing* the economic, social, physical and emotional states or conditions of families and individuals, we would go further and *interpret* those conditions using concepts such as: justice, equity, fairness, freedom, human rights, human security, resiliency, participation, power, responsibility, and interests (akin to Max-Neef’s (1991) basic human needs). Indeed, the conceptual innovation of *normative well-being* brings us closer to the concept of basic

human needs, currently a core, but ill-defined, element of the AAFCS BOK (Baugher et al, 2003; Nickols-Richardson, 2008) (see Table 1).

Home Economics' Experience with Idea of The Human Condition

Our past⁴ and recent actions imply that home economics is, intentionally or not, preparing itself for the introduction of the idea of the human condition. But, it seems we are not yet fully committed. Consider that the 1995-2000 Strategic Plan for AAFCS identified as a core value, “a healthy environment that positively affects *the human condition*” (Chadwick, 1999, p.6, emphasis added). However, there is no reference to the notion in the current governing principles (AAFCS, 2007), nor is the human condition mentioned in the BOK (Baugher et al., 2003). Yet, the BOK rhetoric employs the notion of basic human needs, and Max-Neef (1991) argued that fundamental basic human needs are part of the condition of being human.

Given this apparent conceptual movement, it does seem logical to suggest that the profession should move forward by embracing the notion of the human condition (McGregor, 2008b, 2009b, McGregor et al., 2008). Yet, again, our story takes us back in time to the Lake Placid Conferences when the profession was founded, principally to deal with the negative fall out of the contemporary condition of humans. They met “out of concern for the home raised by conditions of society” (Brown, 1985, p.248). Subsequent to her interpretation of the minutes of the Lake Placid meetings, Brown identified two aims of home economics that emerged: (a) educate for the scientific management of the work of the home for efficiency and economy, and (b) educate for strong men and women so their participation in society would channel social institutions in directions that would advance human freedom and development of human capacities (pp.248-249). Those advocating for the latter approach were in the minority; they wanted the profession to focus on the relationship between families and the social condition (p.257). One participant at the tenth and final conference asserted “the family is dependent upon the general conditions of society” (Vincent, 1908, p. 152). At the fourth conference (in 1902), Alice Chown recognized the significance of the home in developing the *possibilities of humanity* (as cited in Brown, 1985, p.261). Nonetheless, the focus on scientific management prevailed, while the concern for the conditions of society did not.

4

Although a careful review of the articles contained in the earlier volumes of the *Journal of Home Economics* likely will reveal much discussion of the impact of social conditions on individual and family well-being, this review has not been undertaken at this time. The Journal is archived at Cornell University <http://www.aafcs.org/cornell.html> and <http://hearth.library.cornell.edu>

Forward now to the mid-1970s, when AHEA (now AAFCS) constituted a *Home Economics Defined* Committee.

Marjorie Brown and Beatrice Paolucci undertook a philosophical analysis of home economics as a concept and offered a definition and mission of the profession (see Figure 5). d'Entreves (2006) explains that seeking particular moments in history can help recover the lost potential of an element from the past, in hope that it may find actualization in the present. This is one of those moments from our history.

Brown and Paolucci (1979) drew from Hanna Arendt's (1958) book, *The Human Condition*, and her theory of action (labour, work and action). In fact, they employed part of her theory (action) when they generated the mission statement for home economics (Brown & Paolucci, pp.21-23).

Back to the present. Instead of lamenting that the profession missed the human condition boat, this monograph attempts to recover the lost origins of this key philosophical concept. If the profession does not give the human condition the emphasis it deserves, it cannot attend to the problems and opportunities that the human condition inevitably will pose. And, even though the profession cannot possibly address all of the problems inherent in the human condition, neither can it ignore them. Just what does this construct comprise?

People outside of the home economics profession often make reference to human betterment, improving the prospects of the world, and improving the state of the earth and her inhabitants - the state of humanity (e.g., Simon, 1995). However, home economists seldom use the expressions the *individual condition* or the *well-being of humanity*. As noted, we have started to refer to the human condition while continuing to reference well-being and wellness of individuals and families. Actually, in the broader literature as well, wellness and well-being are usually used in conjunction with individuals and families (and communities), while the notion of condition is usually associated with all of humanity. This usage occurs because the word condition, in this instance, means existing circumstances, the state of being. The human condition refers to the past or current lived experiences of a collective people - the human family (McGregor, 2001, 2009b). Humanity's present condition (state of being, see Figure 6) reflects the totality of the actions humans have taken to date leading to humanity's current state of existence (Arendt, 1958). The next section will share a definition of the human condition concept as tendered by Arendt. In this instance, I take *define* to mean both (a) a wish to clarify the meaning of words and (b) a "wish to adapt our actions and institutions to changing circumstances" (Kockleman, 1979, p.91).

Mission of Home Economics

"The mission of home economics is to enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action which lead (1) to maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them"



Figure 5 Mission of Home Economics (1979)

Character of the Human Condition

Today's human condition is characterized by suffering, war, oppression, poverty, vain striving, disappointment, ignorance, disconnectedness, disillusion, and a crippling attachment to, and worship of, consumption, materialism, money, wealth, power, race, nation, or a political cause (proliferation of idolatry). These conditions are a result of exclusion, discrimination, injustices, inequality and so on. There is also a powerful movement that characterizes the potential human condition as one of hope, passion, tenderness, respect, sensuality, gentleness, forgiveness, love, faith, care and stewardship. This state of affairs can emerge if there is justice, peace, non-violence, solidarity, tolerance, security and so on.



Figure 6

Hanna Arendt's Conceptualization of the Human Condition

As noted earlier in our story, Brown and Paolucci (1979) embraced Arendt's (1958) notion of the human condition. Arendt proposes that the human condition is a result of many human activities, and many human capabilities. Furthermore, whatever touches or enters into relationship with a human's life assumes the character of one of the conditions of their existence as a human (labour, work or action). The conditions of existing as a human include: being born, living, being in relationship with the earth, being in relationship with others (plurality - we are all humans yet are all different), worldliness (a collection of things generated from our work), and dying. Arendt explains that, in order to live an active life (*vita activa*),⁵ people need to engage in all of labour, work and action.

Each of these three human activities that shape the human condition is now discussed (and are summarized in Table Two), noting that Arendt's (1958) use of these

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Hanna Arendt also philosophized about *vita contemplativa* (thinking, willing and judging). But, this idea - *The Life of the Mind* (with 2 of 3 volumes completed at the time of her death) (d'Entreves, 2006) - does not inform this monograph. This means that her notions of responsibility, courage, equality and justice are not part of this discussion, an admitted shortcoming (see Herzog, 2004). This monograph employs her idea of an active life rather than her idea of a contemplative life, leaving the door open for future ruminations on how the latter can contribute to home economics philosophy. Each form of *vita* represents a vision of how life should be lived to ensure a sustainable human condition. I am the first to admit that there are widely recognized critiques of her notion of the human condition, but because Brown and Paolucci (1979) drew on her work when they philosophized about home economics practice, I will do so as well, again leaving the door open for welcomed critiques of the ideas presented in this monograph. The intent of the entire intellectual exercise, incomplete as it is, was to move us forward as a profession.

words does *not* mirror lay usage: labour does not mean paid work, work does not mean to labour, and action does not mean behaviour. She viewed *labour* as that which people do to survive; *work* as what people do beyond what is necessary to survive in order to contribute to the world around them; and *action* as that which people do beyond labour and work that gives meaning to their lives. According to Arendt, people find meaning in their lives through action, which requires authentic participation by citizens in the public realm. Action is the result of, and at the same time the creator of, the human condition.

Humanity needs to engage in repetitive activities that sustain life (labour) and in activities that leave behind enduring artifacts and institutions for the collective human world (work), and humans must fulfill these two former activities so that meaningful action can take place through the shared enterprise of human interaction. This human action is unpredictable and irreversible. Also, because human action is experienced through interactions with others in webs of relationships (through discussion and persuasion), people need to be able to make promises to each other and be able to forgive each other. Arendt (1958) placed these three types of activity in an ascending hierarchy, with action at the top because action intimates freedom - the ultimate feature of the human condition, the apex of human values and goals. More detail is provided in the following text.

Table 2 Overview of Hanna Arendt’s (1958) Human Condition Construct

<p style="text-align: center;">Theory of Action (how life <i>should</i> be lived) <i>Vita Activa</i> - The Active Life (Conditions to be a human being) Tripartite of Human Activities</p>			
Type of Human Activity	Labour <i>Animal laborans</i>	Work <i>Homo faber</i>	Action <i>Zoon politikon</i>
Three conditions	With labour, we ensure the condition of <i>living</i> (reproduce conditions for living)	With work, we ensure the condition of <i>worldliness</i> (humans cannot work without institutions, equipment; they build these artifacts while using them)	With action, we ensure the condition of <i>plurality</i> of actors (each actor is equal but distinct)
Metaphor	 <p style="text-align: center;">Private Sphere</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Intermediary Sphere</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Public Sphere</p>

Greek Etymology	<i>Techné</i> Knowledge and theory of how to do things	<i>Poiesis</i> Skilful manufacture, production or creation	<i>Praxis</i> Voluntary, goal directed action, done for its own sake
Space	Household and nature	Buildings, laws, institutions and artifacts	Public space for human togetherness
Values	Life Productivity Consumption Abundance	Permanence Stability Durability	Freedom to act Plurality of actors Disclosure Solidarity
Intent	<i>Behaviours</i> to meet material needs and sustain physical life (food, shelter, water, biological processes)	<i>Fabricate and build</i> stable and enabling institutions, laws and artifacts that serve as preconditions for creating public life	Common space where people encounter a community, a space where <i>actions</i> can be witnessed, assigned meaning and be remembered
Pursuits	Sustainable physical life in household and natural environment	Build and maintain a world fit for human use	Affirm human realities, disclose identity, and actualize capacity for freedom
Types of actions	Behave Preform roles Fulfil functions	Display talents Use abilities	Reveal personality Affirm unique identity Enact agency
Nature of world	Natural world and the realm of material things	Artificial, fabricated world of sustainable structures and institutions	Realm of human affairs and new realities via web of relationships sustained through interactions (speech and action)
Who is acting	Individual <i>doers</i> creating world within which to live	Semi-connected <i>builders</i> creating a world within which to work and secure the goals of civilized living	<i>Community</i> of memory (hearers) that is operating in a potential space that materializes when humans act but disappears when the act stops. Therefore, it needs to be continually recreated by more speech, deeds, listening and remembering
Nature of activity	Repetitive and never ending	Semi-permanent (bounded by time and circumstances, so can and should change)	Fleeting and perishable unless preserved and remembered through narratives and stories

Power	Economic power and power of exploitation via force, strength or violence	Institutionalized power sustained by bureaucracy	Power of promise, forgiveness and convictions; power is the <i>potential</i> that springs up when people act in concert
Freedom	To choose from a set of alternatives	To apply talents and abilities to fabricate artifacts and societal structures	People are free as long as they can act (see below)
To act	Mere behaviour (habituated, regulated, automated)	Behaviour in the form of processes conditioned by cause and effect	To start a story; a mode of human togetherness - to disclose oneself within the public space by setting something novel, unanticipated, unexpected and unconditioned in motion through words and deeds Human acts are unpredictable and irreversible, so need to be able to forgive and promise (to deal with consequences)
Understanding the act	Subconscious, habitual, compulsive or necessary behaviour to meet needs	Determine cause and effect	Look for reasons for the deed (motives and intentions)

Labour

By *labour*, Arendt (1958) means repetitive activities undertaken by individuals and families within their households to sustain the basic conditions for living and to meet material needs - shelter, food, consumption, reproduction, clothing, water. Sound familiar? These biological processes ensure Life itself, individual survival as well as that of the human species. Through role, task and function fulfilment, people create homes and maintain households (through consumption and production, paid labour in the workplace). Arendt argues that this household activity is shaped by mere behaviour (habits, necessity, regulated). It involves the freedom to make choices between alternatives to ensure efficient use of scarce resources, while striving for an abundant lifestyle. It comprises all activity necessary to sustain life, and nothing beyond that.

Work

Arendt (1958) understands *work* to be those activities that generate durable institutions, laws, equipment and other artifacts that serve as the preconditions for action - for creating public life for the collective human world. Through work, people build and maintain a world that should be fit for human use. People build these artifacts (made by people and not by nature) as they use them. This world of laws, institutions and human-

built artifacts (buildings, infrastructure, machines, technologies) changes over time, and is governed by official, institutionalized power. People are free to apply their talents and abilities to fabricate artifacts and enabling societal structures. Work provides people with an artificial world to complement the natural world, known as the earth's ecosystem. This collection of things people make through work (i.e., worldliness) bestows permanence and durability to the fleeting passing of time and life. People's work behaviour involves the application of processes conditioned by cause and effect relationships.

Action

Moving beyond the private sphere of the household (where people labour to meet daily needs), through the enabling world (within which people collectively work and function through social institutions and laws), Arendt (1958) takes us to the public sphere of *action*. This is her lasting contribution to understanding the human condition. With labour, people ensure the conditions for living and subsistence. With work, people ensure the conditions of worldliness, of permanence, durability and the stability needed for growth and progress. With action, as she understands it, people ensure the condition of plurality of actors, each equal but distinct. She believes that men (plural), not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world creating the human condition of plurality. Brown and Paolucci's (1979) intrigue with her understanding of the Greek notion of action (*praxis* - voluntary, goal-directed deeds done for their own sake) led them to build on Habermas' (1973) critical theory, creating the systems of action approach so popular in home economics (see McGregor, 2007).

Succinctly, Arendt (1958) theorizes that the public sphere is a place for human togetherness, where people come together to discuss matters of significance to the human condition. This public space appears when individuals volunteer to disclose themselves by setting something novel and unexpected in motion, doing so through their words (language) and deeds. An action occurs when people speak and others listen. This conceptualization of action is totally different from the lay notion of mere behaviour. To understand an act of *praxis*, one has to understand the reasons behind the action - the person's motives and intentions. Human activity in this sphere occurs in the realm of human affairs via a web of relationships sustained through interactions. Through their actions, people reveal their personalities (who they are), affirm their unique identity within the context of a plurality of actors (appreciating that all are equal but distinct), and enact their political agency. Through this form of action, people create potential, power and solidarity. This notion of action is a far cry from the necessary but different daily acts to sustain physical life, or the acts of work that generate enabling structures to bridge the private household to the public sphere.

To convince people of the merit of embracing the human condition construct, our home economics story warrants a deeper discussion of the nature of *the act*. Acts of *labour* taken within the household for the purpose of sustaining life and ensuring an abundant life tend to be rote, habitual, repetitive and necessary, with fairly predictable results. People perform a collection of roles (caregiver, earner, saver, spender) and functions (discipline, control, love, nurturance). An act taken within *work* activity is influenced by the antecedents to the situation and anticipation of attendant consequences of the action (cause and effect).

An act in the *public* sphere unfolds quite differently. In the public sphere, people

make a decision to act or engage in a deed never knowing what the consequences will be, appreciating that they cannot reverse the act (irreversible, unpredictable and unbounded). If people in the web of relationships take up the innovation, there is no guarantee where the idea will go, because its journey is shaped by how people engage with it. Because there is no retracting it and no control over what happens, people operate on two principles, forgiveness and promises. People agree to forgive the originator of the act for any unintended consequences if the actor promises to take some degree of responsibility for events caused by his or her words or deeds. This promise serves as an island of security in an otherwise uncertain and unpredictable future. Without forgiveness, people would be afraid to act. Without promises, people would be reluctant to take up the ideas. Through promises and forgiveness, people reveal their personality, character and identity (central to public activity).

By now, most readers will recognize this tripartite of human activities in three home economics theoretical innovations: (a) three systems of action (Brown & Paolucci, 1979), (b) the Hestian/Hermean (private/public/biosphere) metaphor developed by Pat Thompson (1998, 1992); and, (c) and human ecology theory, the main contributors being Margaret Bubolz and Suzanne Sontag (1993) (see Table 3). Although none of these three theoretical initiatives specifically mention the human condition concept, it seems apparent that there is considerable compatibility amongst the four approaches (to be discussed shortly). This insight leads us to the next chapter in our story.

Table 3 Comparison of several home economics initiatives to Hanna Arendt’s (1958) tripartite of human activities

Arendt’s Three Human Activities	Systems of Action	Human Ecology Theory	Hestian/Hermean Metaphor
<i>Labour</i> Private Sphere Subsistence, then strive for abundant lifestyle Household (home) Technical (how to) Nature	<i>Technical Action</i> Meet basic needs Caregiving needs Home maintenance Extract resources from natural environment	Human Group living in home and household <i>Natural environment</i>	<i>Hestian Sphere</i> <i>Private domain</i> <i>Okios Sphere</i> Household/family Domestic Life Everyday Life <i>Nature/Bio-sphere</i>
<i>Work</i> Enabling environment (institutions, laws, artifacts) Bridge between private and public Create world fit to live in	<i>Interpretative Action</i> By way of stronger dynamics and understandings within families, a bridge is created to critical action	<i>Human built environment</i> infrastructure (i.e., roads, bridges, buildings), consumer products, manufacturing systems Institutions, laws and workplaces are placed in the socio-cultural environment (see below), akin to <i>work</i> activity	<i>Hermean Sphere</i> <i>Public Domain</i> <i>Polis Sphere</i> Politics Commerce Public Life Ideology of Competition

<p><i>Action</i> Public sphere Realm of human affairs Common conversation space Meaningful words and deeds Plurality, identity, solidarity</p>	<p><i>Critical, emancipatory, empowerment Action</i> (social change and agency)</p> <p><i>Interpretative Action</i> communication, language, meaning, identity, values clarification, connections</p>	<p><i>Socio-cultural environment</i> comprising collections of humans, and social and cultural elements such as values and language</p>	<p><i>Ideology of Connection</i> is present in the Hestian Sphere</p> <p>Hestian sphere concerns itself with aesthetics, caring, empowerment, freedom, justice, ethics, morality.</p>
<p><i>Action</i> Public sphere Realm of human affairs Common conversation space Meaningful words and deeds Plurality, identity, solidarity</p>	<p><i>Critical, emancipatory, empowerment Action</i> (social change and agency)</p> <p><i>Interpretative Action</i> communication, language, meaning, identity, values clarification, connections</p>	<p><i>Socio-cultural environment</i> comprising collections of humans, and social and cultural elements such as values and language</p>	<p><i>Ideology of Connection</i> is present in the Hestian Sphere</p> <p>Hestian sphere concerns itself with aesthetics, caring, empowerment, freedom, justice, ethics, morality.</p>

Evidence of the Human Condition in the AAFCS Body of Knowledge

The body of knowledge posted at AAFCS’s website is not really our body of knowledge at all; it is a simple representation. As sacrilegious as that sounds, it is true. Instead, Baugher et al.’s (2003) written text (BOK model) reflected their attempt to mirror the main ideas embedded in the *real* body of knowledge that has evolved over the last century - contained in journal articles, conference proceedings, think tank initiatives, speeches, keynotes, newsletters, university courses, textbooks, monographs, curriculum documents, professional inservicing materials, and other explicit expressions of ideas we use to practice home economics. Baugher et al. (and others) examined our *explicit* knowledge (tacit knowledge remains unarticulated in our heads, McGregor, 2006), and characterized it as having cross-cutting threads and specialization threads.

If one brings Arendt’s (1958) notion of the human condition to bear on Baugher et al.’s BOK written text, one can suggest that there is evidence in our collective knowing of all three human activities. *Labour* within the home to meet basic needs and ensure a life of abundance is reflected in the specialization threads, with basic human needs identified as a cross-cutting thread. *Work* to create, fabricate and build a world fit to live in (laws, policies, institutions, infrastructures, processes) is mainly evident in the cross-cutting threads (as it should be), but also is present in specialization threads in the form of scientific developments to create products, economics, management, and leadership. *Acts* in the public sphere are also present through the notions of community, diversity (pluralism), ethics and morality, spirituality, and policy (in the cross-cutting threads).

Figure 7 Proposed editing for AAFCS Body of Knowledge, incorporating basic human needs and the human condition (changes in italics):

“They included the basic assumption that the focus of work was *within the human family* and community system with ecological perspective.”

“Real progress is often retarded by trying to make the new fit into the old scheme of things,” Richards told the conferees of the last century. The 2008 Body of Knowledge participants *will rise to the challenge by considering that the new is couched in concepts of basic human needs and the human condition. Instead of simply describing the state or condition of families and individuals (well-being or wellness), FCS will go further and interpret those conditions using universal principles and values. Remember that whatever touches or enters into relationship with a human’s life assumes the character of one of the conditions of their existence as a human (labour, work or action). Let FCS be that touch.*”

“Basic human needs can be conceptualized broadly to include many of the familiar dimensions of well-being and wellness. On the other hand, basic human needs should be operationalized, not as an hierarchy, but with the assumption that needs are interrelated and interdependent, that simultaneity, complementarity and trade-offs are features of the process of human need satisfaction. It is understood that basic human needs are forces that motivate people to action and that resultant human behaviour creates the human condition - the living conditions of humanity.”

“A continuing trend in the field is the need for FCS professionals to function as specialists, requiring both considerable depth in one subject area specialization and the ability to integrate concepts from *both other disciplines and from other areas of the family and consumer sciences knowledge base to ensure achievement of basic human needs and the enhancement of the human condition.*”

As an intellectual aside, Figure 7 (above) proposes revisions to the AAFCS BOK from a human condition perspective - something to ponder. These comments are based on readings of the formal written material posted at AAFCS’s website. I was not involved in the process leading up to the preparation of this public document but neither were most home economists who avail themselves of the formal BOK. Presumably, this official statement reflects necessary compromises between the five contributing organizations that participated in the 1993 Scottsdale Conference. I do feel comfortable sharing my ideas for how to reformulate the official BOK because we are encouraged to view it as a living document.

To carry our story into the future, consider this idea. If we were to return to our *real* body of knowledge housed in the artifacts created by the profession (e.g., journals, proceedings, books, monographs, course materials), and apply a human condition lens, we would be readily able to identify research, theoretical innovations and intellectual musings related to each and all of labour, work and action (three components of the human condition). With the results of this exercise, members of the profession could truly announce and believe that “home economics is focused on the home in order to improve humanity” (East, 1979, p. 141). We could say that the profession grounds its approach to practice in an appreciation of the interplay and synergy created when human activities related to labour, work and action intertwine to create the human condition. This conceptualization respects our past and emergent experience with the concepts of well-

being, wellness and basic human needs because all three of these are met through the tripartite of human activities. Humans engage in activities that sustain families and nature. They engage in activities that create a world fit to live in. And, they take part in activities that engage citizens in deliberative dialogue for human betterment.

Bringing It All Together

Galtung (2004), in his wisdom, discusses the life cycle of concepts. He observed that the human condition concept stays on despite the coming and going of sister concepts, including basic human needs (which, in the case of home economics, was preceded by well-being, currently sharing the stage with wellness). He explains that concepts retire from center stage (while perhaps remaining on the stage) because the paradigm underlying the concept has been squeezed for all it is worth and because all permutations of the concept have been explored and exhausted. “Such is the life cycle of concepts” (p.1). It seems that home economics is in the process of moving well-being from the centre stage, upstaging it with wellness and basic human needs. We appear to be ready for the concept of the human condition.

To that end, Tables 1 and 3 and Figure 8 (a very rudimentary attempt to pull this together) profile the main building blocks or characters in our story, so readers can begin to see the parts and how they might begin to fit together in a holistic view of practice. If we take the multifaceted elements of wellness and well-being, layer a holistic, integrative perspective over them, bring in the functional definition of the family as a basic democratic institution (McGregor, 2008a, 2009a) and ground the whole thing in a normative approach focused on basic human needs, we would be well on the way to a new schema related to well-being so ardently called for by Brown (1993). We would be taking things from the past that worked and embracing new things for the future (McGregor, 2008b).

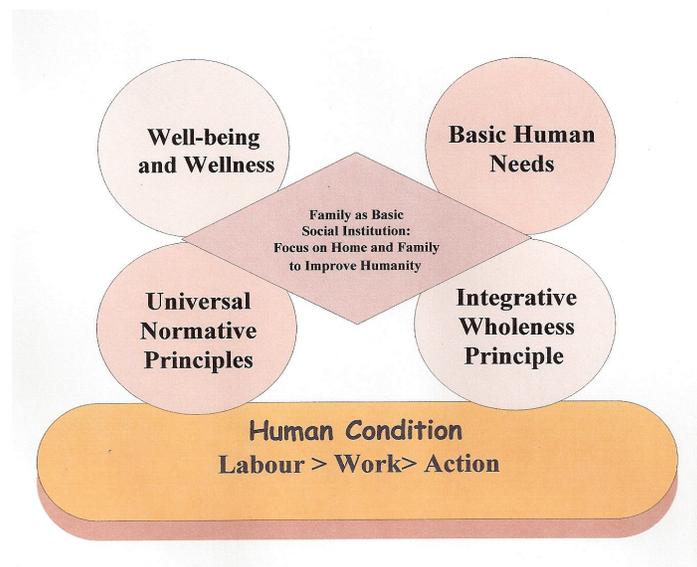
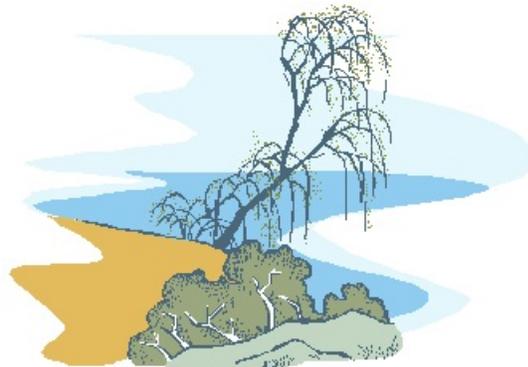


Figure 8 Home Economics Human Condition Construct

There is valuable synergy to be found in the complexity of this approach to practice. Home economists would deal with each dimension of wellness or well-being from the assumption that they cannot address one element without considering the impact on/of other elements - bringing an integrated perspective to wellness (McGregor, 2009b). They would progress from perceiving families as separate, distinct social entities with labels based on what they look like to seeing families as a basic democratic unit in the world with functions they are responsible for to ensure social progress and prosperity of the entire human family (McGregor, 2008a, 2009a). Home economists would cease to see wellness as the purview of individuals or specific family units or family types and begin to be concerned with the wholeness of the human family (McGregor, 2001).

The largest gain would be our ability to embrace the normative approach to practice wherein, instead of simply describing the state or condition of families and individuals, we would go further and *interpret* those conditions using universal principles and values. Members of the profession should be comfortable moving from the notion of basic human needs to the human condition and Arendt's (1958) tripartite of human activities. This monograph has illustrated that home economics already employs a collection of intellectual constructs that mirror her theory of the human condition. Indeed, one of these, three systems of actions, was predicated on her theory (Brown & Paolucci, 1979).

As evidenced in Tables 1 and 3 and Figure 8, we already have conceptual constructs respecting the essence of the human condition. Kaija Turkki challenged me to find some other way to represent this idea, aside from a static table format. She teased me with "Can a table be a story?" She tendered the idea of a lake metaphor as a way to engage home economists in a conversation about the merit of embracing the human condition construct. The lake can be regarded as home economics' conceptualization of the human condition. Each of our conceptual constructs set out in Tables 1 and 3, as well as Arendt's (1958) theory of the human condition, are rivers or streams flowing into the lake. The lake (our emerging theory of the human condition) is a living organism with complexity in its content and processes. Many of these intellectual processes are invisible yet integral to the integrity of the lake (our theory). There are different layers to a lake and everything is moving, even the air in the water and the stones. Kaija felt that this metaphor was an excellent way to begin to move our thinking towards embracing the notion of the human condition - people can start from where they are comfortable and move forward.

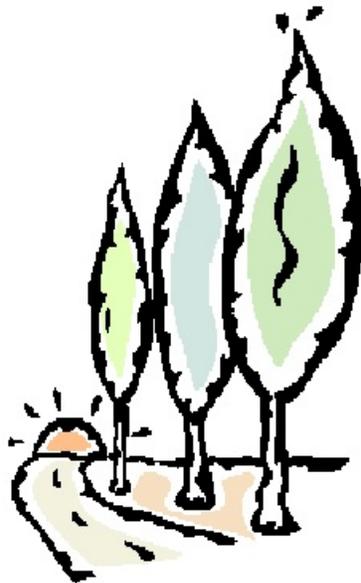


Moving our Story Forward

Storytelling involves weaving a narrative out of people's actions and pronouncements. This exercise, this narrative, enables the storyteller to share retrospective insights about the significance of previous actions and deeds. Only when past actions (deeds and words) have run their course can their import truly manifest and be embodied by current listeners. This story (monograph) gives the profession a chance to "recover lost potentials of the past in the hope that they may find actualization in the present [and the future]" (d'Entreves, 2006, p.5). It means the burden of our present times can now be faced with the aid of past practice ideas in conjunction with evolving ideas.

In effect, home economics started with an unfocused concentration on well-being, moved onto an emergent understanding of wellness and basic human needs (while still holding onto well-being) and, in the process, opened the door to a normative approach to practice couched in the human condition construct. The profession can continue to ground this intellectual innovation in an integrative, holistic approach informed by a functional definition of families as a basic social unit and institution, and our long standing theoretical approaches referenced in Tables 1 and 3. This bridging strategy respects the need people have during change for familiar anchors as they move from one way of practice to another (Pendergast & McGregor, 2007; McGregor, 2009b, McGregor et al., 2008).

The story told in this monograph confirms that we truly are ready for this philosophical and intellectual innovation. I invite everyone who reads this to share their responses with me so we can collectively move this idea forward into the 21st century. We all know in our hearts that the world needs home economics, now more than ever. In order to live up to this responsibility, we need to embrace deep, vanguard conceptualizations of humanity and home economics. Embracing the human condition construct is the right thing to do for the good of the world. We can, as Marjorie East (1979) proposed, focus on the home and family for the good of humanity.



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