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**Special Guest by Distance**
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# Taking the Home Economics Paradigm into the 21st Century

This *working paper* will share my current thinking about what home economics could embrace as a paradigm that would place it on the vanguard of empowered professional practice in the 21st century. I am currently writing a book on *Transformative Practice* in home economics and most of the ideas shaping this paper are culled from my current thinking around what a transformed home economics practice would look like. I read a large body of literature that discussed, either directly or indirectly, the proposed paradigm of practice for home economics in the 20th century. I published my conclusions in two different papers in 1997 and, very recently, in 2004. Since that time, I have continued to ponder the issue of relevant paradigms for our practice and am pleased to share some of these ideas in this paper.

## Philosophical Well-being

Before I begin, I would like to tender the new idea of philosophical well-being. Ideas for the concept are extrapolated from a think piece I have posted at the KON Human Service Working Paper series (McGregor, 2004). The basic premise of this idea is that, while a collection of scholars is chipping away at codifying the philosophy of the profession (including the preferred paradigm for practice), it is the responsibility of each individual to clarify, and continually refine, her own philosophical well-being.

*Philosophical well-being* refers to the healthy state of our intellect, with intellect referring to our ability to think, reason, acquire, critique and apply knowledge and paradigms? The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2004) defines philosophy as the act of constantly improving one's understanding by way of thinking and discussion. The Philosophy Dictionary (2002) defines philosophy as, literally, a love of wisdom. Philosophy is careful thought about the fundamental nature of the world, the grounds for human knowledge, and the evaluation of human conduct. Plato defined *philosophical well-being* as the preservation of one's soul, claiming that it is better to be at odds with the whole world than to be at odds with, and contradicted by, oneself (Folks, 2002). In order to be in a state of harmony with oneself, one has to question one's life on a regular basis, asking "*what's it all about*, *Alfie*?" A home economist needs to ask herself, "Why am I doing what I do, and what is the impact of those actions? What are the underpinnings of my practice? Am I philosophically sick or well?"

After some prolonged reflection on this issue, I propose that philosophical well-being seems to be achieved by continually examining the world one lives in, and one's relationship

with that world. The objective is to always take morally responsible decisions that benefit all humanity and nature. This entails questioning the prevailing world view and pondering the impact of practicing by using the theories and models stemming from that world view. Being *philosophically well* means one would always consider how one's practice might need to change to reflect the insights gained from constantly improving one's wisdom, defined as deep, thorough and mature understandings of life. One becomes a philosopher, a person who seeks reason and truth by thinking, meditating, deliberating about, and celebrating, life.

A philosopher has an extraordinary rich repertoire of theoretical and paradigm perspectives at their disposal. Therefore, they are especially adept at seeing the implications and assumptions behind the thinking that guides their practice and the world within which they live and work (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2004). This is a standard of practice that home economists could achieve if they cultivated their philosophical well-being. Are you endowed with a rich repertoire of perspectives beyond the prevailing world paradigm of capitalism, neoliberalism (free markets), corporate led globalization, consumerism and Social Darwinism? A *well-lived professional life* is contingent on philosophical well-being (Russell, 1987).

## The 21st Century Home Economics Paradigm

On the assumption that I have convinced you that philosophy and paradigms matter, this paper builds especially on the emancipatory practice and critical paradigms touted in the 20th century. The new paradigm will have home economists embrace an understanding of power dynamics, a respect for relationships, see things holistically and bring a global perspective to everything. Transformative leading and learning, transdisciplinary research, respecting chaos and change, being receptive to the insights from the new sciences, seeing consumers as accountable citizens and consumerism as structural violence, and considering the notion of the human condition as a concept to replace family well-being are some of the ideas to be introduced for your consideration in this paper. At this point in time, I have not prioritized this collection of ideas, leaving them open for interpretation.

## POWER

### Critical Science Approach

This information is also taken from a working paper at the KON site (McGregor, 2003). A critical science approach provides a means to politically deal with broader social issues within the context of communities. It provides a tool for raising personal, professional and public consciousness of conditions impacting family well-being and community life, including the impact of public policies at the local, state and national levels. Critical science is concerned with power relationships, especially distorted power relations, that make it easy for the elite to oppress others by controlling knowledge, access to power, meanings and daily practices. Unpeeling the beliefs, attitudes and actions that contribute to subordination of most people by a very few (elite), reveal the current power relations. Once they are exposed, it is easier to challenge the patterns of domination, and to change the balance of power, so people no longer "buy into" a false consciousness - their awareness can now be continually fed by ongoing exposure of political and economic decisions that keep them down so elite interests can be served (Rehm, 1999).

The critical science approach reveals hidden power agendas that keep people oppressed. It involves probing beneath the surface meanings to comprehend root causes of problems instead

of always treating the symptoms from a technical, quick-fix perspective. The critical science approach assumes that, if societal structures and conditions can be altered through debunking ideologies then, human happiness and social autonomy can be attained *within* the community rather than happiness at the expense of the community (Gentzler, 1999). Each society needs critics to idealize a higher order of freedom than that which is currently attained under the prevailing ideology (McGregor, 2003).

The critical science approach is grounded in moral foundations so as to emancipate individuals from externally imposed forms of authority and control - the status quo and prevailing ideology (Bass, 1997; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998). It is concerned with unearthing underlying issues and potentialities of people, in raising the consciousness of people about deep ethical and ideological issues. The critical science approach is very much grounded in the moral reasoning process because the welfare of others is at stake when political decisions are made. Home economists are challenged to ask, "what is our duty in relation to a fellow human being, given that there are shades of "good" and rival interpretations of what is "right"? How people understand and respond to moral issues and problems make a difference in the quality of lives (Arcus, 1999).

## TRANSFORMATIVE AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY

### Transformative leadership

Information for this topic is extrapolated from a draft chapter for my book. From the transformational leadership perspective, one does not have to be a manager to be a leader (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2001). A leader can be *anyone*, regardless of formal position, who serves as an effective social change agent (Astin & Astin, 2000). In this sense, every single person in the profession has the potential to be a leader. Leadership does not have to be relegated to any one person, committee or working group anymore. Transformative leaders succeed in: (a) articulating powerful change agendas over a long period of time; (b) getting people to change inside as they embrace this new agenda; (c) accepting the idea of power through people instead of power over them; (d) grounding people in a moral dimension; (e) striving for them to exceed their own expectations, reach their fullest potential; and, (f) getting them to challenge the status quo.

TF leaders help people to: (a) enlarge their vision, insight and understandings, (b) clarify their purpose, (c) make their behaviours congruent with beliefs, principles and values of the envisioned future, and (d) bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating and momentum-building. They do this by being able to adapt their style to suit the ability and maturity (competence and commitment) of other people (Covey, 2001). Transformative leaders critically assess the asymmetrical relations of power and those practices that engender solidarity, democracy, liberation and hope (Dantley, 2002). Transformational leaders are willing to stand in the centre of new ideas and amass energy around it (Dantley, 2002; Stokes, 2003). These people will then be able to deal with uncertainties and ambiguity rather than concentrate their efforts on maintaining the status quo (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2001).

Transformational leaders will coach people to take on greater responsibility for developing and improving their personal performance. They will encourage people to rethink ideas or problems from a fresh perspective, to increase their awareness, and to question the tried-

and-true ways and assumptions. TF leaders will communicate the vision in compelling ways so that people embrace it and make it their own. TF leaders will give up needing to know everything (they are no longer the expert) and, instead, hunger for the insight and input of others (Bass, 1985).

**Transformative Learning**

Information for this idea is also taken from a draft chapter of my book. When a learner has an "aha" experience, a profound moment of insight enabling her to see the true nature of a situation or a person, their perspective changes. Sometimes, a new insight (or collection of insights) can be so profound it affects the learners' entire view of the world (Robertson, 1997). They have been personally transformed, changed in such a way that they can never go back to the way they saw the world before (Di Biase, 1998). This type of learning does not refer to learning simply to gain more information or facts; rather, it refers to a completely new, deeper understanding of life conditions and changing events - a totally new frame of reference or personal paradigm. As a result of this change, symbols and metaphors used to understand life take on new meaning or are totally replaced.

Transformative learning is a shift of consciousness that dramatically, and permanently, alters one's way of being in the world. Such a shift involves an understanding of one's self and one's self-locations; of relationships with other humans and with the natural world; of an understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; of body awareness; of alternative approaches to living; and of a sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy (O'Sullivan, 2003). A transformed learner is progressing toward being an autonomous, critically thinking individual who negotiates their own meaning instead of uncritically acting on those of others or doing what has always been done. As a result, the learner is more self-aware, more conscious of conditions of society and more predisposed to continually search for new meanings, not just more facts and information (Barkmeier, 1999; Mezirow, 1991).

Transformational experiences are usually preceded by an emotionally charged situation, a catalyst, that fails to fit one's expectations; that is, the formative learning, to this point in time, has not prepared the learner to be able to deal with the new dilemma. Mezirow referred to these situations as *disorienting dilemmas*. By this he meant that the learner experiences something that makes them completely lose their bearings and become lost. This disorientation occurs because what happened, or what they have learned, does not fit with their preconceived notions, with their frame of reference or personal paradigm. This perspective change can be triggered by an acute personal or social crisis (e.g., a natural disaster, job loss, divorce, war, or retirement) or a series of cumulative events. What is central to either instance is that the experience is so traumatic, stressful, painful or enlightening that it can threaten the very core of one's existence (Taylor, 1998). Sometimes the dilemma, even a positive learning experience, can be so disorienting that the learner drastically shifts their practice.

**Transdisciplinary Research**

This is a profoundly complex idea and I cannot do it justice in this paper. What follows is a very rudimentary overview extrapolated from a longer working paper on this topic (McGregor, 2004). Transdisciplinary takes us *beyond* disciplines by weaving a new kind of knowledge. The objective of transdisciplinary is to understand the present world, in all of its complexities,

instead of focusing on one part of it (Nicolescu, 1997). Indeed, transdisciplinary research is being conceptualized as a new form of learning and problem solving involving cooperation among *different parts of society*, including academia, in order to meet the complex challenges of society. Through mutual learning, the knowledge of all participants is enhanced and this new learning is used to collectively devise solutions to intricate societal problems that are interwoven (Regeer, 2002).

The result is a new kind of knowledge - transdisciplinary knowledge - that complements traditional, mono-disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. A *new intellectual space* is formed in which resides a gradual cross-fertilization resulting from the convergence of different paths, all done in the spirit of conviviality and celebration - the dance. This is a space for the integration of credible knowledge into a new "whole" in which new insights can emerge (Lattanzi, 1998). This transdisciplinary knowledge base is best for treating problems that benefit from not treating them in "disciplinary isolation." Such problems include: human aggression, harmonious distribution of resources, development of anthropocentric (human centered) world views, and the realization of human empowerment and potential through education (refer to the human condition concept at the end of the paper).

While we have interdisciplinary teams, we need *transdisciplinary concepts* which serve to unify the knowledge being applied from areas that cut across the trenches which mark traditional disciplinary boundaries. Key to these concepts is the notion of patterns that provide a template for us to find similarity between disciplines that are not alike. It is suggested that people use *metaphors* to help them understand the very complex, connections of many interconnected parts. These connections that are difficult to understand because of their foreignness and intricacy. Metaphors simplify and augment the joint learning process, giving us a temporary common language while we navigate the space between the disciplines.

Those who embrace the transdisciplinary approach also agree that there is middle ground between disciplines instead of dead space (Nicolescu, 1997, 2001). If we accept that different people have different perceptions of things (their own truth), then finding new knowledge in the fertile middle ground is possible when everyone's ideas are heard. For each person, their point of view is *their truth* <u>until</u> it encounters ideas from another person or discipline (Enigl, 2003). In this state of mind, we would see information as both coming from outside us and being transformed by us. Our flow of consciousness (awareness of connections) would to the flow of information from others in this fertile space. We would move from seeing things in dualities to seeing things in open unity, more complexly.

A central concept for transdisciplinary research is emergence. A complex problem (compared to a complicated problem) has the additional feature of *emergence*, the process of deriving some new and coherent structures, patterns and properties. There is a set of constantly adapting relationships that lie at the heart of what makes solving a complex problem so special. As well, any information brought to the fertile space will be modified as it is passed from one person to another within these changing relationships. Energy and information are constantly being formed, meaning the "fertile space between the disciplines" is in constant flux. So, not only is the space changing, but so are the people, their relationships, the nature of shared information and the energy flows. New knowledge emerges!

## HUMAN CONDITION CONCEPT

**The Human Condition Concept**

This idea is still a work in progress, but I wanted to share what I have conceived so far. Brown (1993) maintains that home economists who do not see the world holistically, have a mind full of little islands with no bridges between them (p.109). They 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). To rectify this stance, she suggests that we move from seeing well-being comprising any number of different dimensions to seeing it as based in very basic normative concepts and principles (p.111). By normative, Brown means stating how things *ought to be* as opposed to being positive 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, resilient communities, participation, power, responsibility, interests, et cetera.

Brown (1993) beseeches us to arrive at a holistic conceptual scheme that we can use to *interpret* the well-being of families and individuals rather than *describe* their state of well-being. This blueprint would be normative rather than descriptive and would emerge from the grassroots of the field as a result of sound reasoning, deliberation and consensus (Smith, 2003). Since our lives are very complex, it makes sense that the concept our profession uses to interpret the conditions of our lives be complex as well. I suggest a new concept, the intricate notion of "the human condition" (see Table 1 in).

**Table one - Building Blocks of the Human Condition Concept**

| Distinct Dimensions of the concepts of Personal Wellness and Well-being | Holistic, integrated perspective - Wholeness | Functional definition of the family as a democratic institution | Universal normative principles or values that help us think about "what ought to be" |
|---|---|---|---|
| occupational or vocational (focus on wellness at work, including leisure)<br><br>economic<br><br>emotional<br><br>social<br><br>physical<br><br>spiritual<br><br>intellectual<br><br>political (personal autonomy<br><br>environmental | From a holistic perspective, no one part is seen as greater than another part and nothing exists except in relation to something else.<br><br>Each part, factor or element in society exists as part of the whole, as each is contained within the whole.<br><br>The term holistic emphasizes the importance of the relationships between factors or elements in our society.<br><br>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 | (a) procreation and addition of new members, including adoption and fostering; (b) physical care and maintenance of family members and the home or household;<br><br>(c) morale, love, relationships and nurturance;<br><br>(d) production and consumption of goods and services;<br><br>(e) social control of members; and,<br><br>(f) morality as it socializes children into adult roles towards self-formation. | justice<br><br>equity<br><br>fairness<br><br>freedom<br><br>human rights<br><br>human security<br><br>resilient communities<br><br>participation<br><br>power<br><br>responsibility<br><br>interests<br><br>sustainability<br><br>solidarity<br><br>non-violence<br><br>exclusion<br><br>marginalization<br><br>discrimination/prejudice |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | environment. | | diversity |

Using this concept of the human condition, instead of family well-being, means home economists would deal with each dimension of wellness or well-being from the assumption that one cannot address one separate element of wellness without considering the impact on other elements. 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. And, the biggest change would be embracing the normative approach to practice wherein, instead of simply describing the state or condition of families and individuals, FCS would go further and *interpret* those conditions using the universal principles and values related to peace, justice, equity, fairness etc.

## POSTMODERNISM

We live in post modern times. It is important that members of the profession have a solid understanding of the five ways that postmodernism has been conceptualized because it truly affects how one approaches posing and solving problems in the 21st century. Postmodernism in included in this paper because of recent work undertaken by Donna Pendergast (2001) as she attempts to understand home economics from a postmodern perspective. Material for this idea is drawn from a lecture I prepared for my advanced family studies curriculum course.

The Pre-modern (medieval) age was called the *age of faith and superstition*, followed by the Modern age, the *age of reason, empiricism and science*. Postmodernism, which became an area of academic study in the mid eighties (Klages, 2003), is a term used to designate the era beyond modernity. It is an era characterized by ubiquitous technology and science (technoscience), mass production and industrial efficiency, the origins of the middle class (formerly there were just aristocrats and peasant classes), central governments with centralized power, and economics organized around consumption instead of production - consumerism (Scheurich, 2001; Shepherd, 2000).

There is no ONE way to view postmodernism. Oord (2001) identifies five strands of postmodernism. The type of postmodernism we embrace greatly affects how we understand home economics in the 21st century and also helps us understand the stance taken by others. This part of the paper simply shares a summary of Oord's ideas while directing you to a recent paper that applies the five different approaches to understand consumerism and peace (McGregor, 2003).

**(1) popular culture postmodernism**

- society is obsessed with technology, mass communications, mass marketing, the therapeutic orientation, and conspicuous consumption - all tools for the prorogation of newness, novelty and consumerism
- embraces consumerism and claims that anyone who resists it is unable to come to grips with the paradigm shift that we are experiencing
- consumerism is a world view meaning it means it offers a philosophy, a way of answering life's ultimate questions about meaning and purpose
- consumerism is a moral and cultural attitude, meaning that it posits standards informing our choices, including consumption choices
- consumerism is a process of self-identification, a process that has to be continually fed by buying more things to define who we are - hence, the need for novelty
- everything, every person and every relationship has to be commodified (has a price for sale) to create enough things to buy
- consumer culture creates people with a widespread sense of consumer entitlement there is a growing distrust and disrespect of authority

**(2) deconstructive postmodernism**

- resists the tenet that only knowledge garnered from the scientific method is valid.

Instead, knowledge is subjective and open to interpretation - there is no one Truth, a multiplicity of voices exist. Instead of knowing truth, we express opinions, indicate preferences or go with our gut or instincts

- ideas of what is right or wrong become matters of personal taste, emotional preference, community standards or cultural choice
- one thing leads to another and there is no neat pattern, no visible order
- with the advent of global telecommunications, mass media, information technology and transportation, corporations gained power, states lost power, citizens became consumers and economies organized around consumption
- all values are baseless
- believes in moral ambiguity (uncertainty or many interpretations)
- assumes that people are not capable of living by a coherent ethical code and that truth (correctness) degenerates into personal beliefs, tastes, and lifestyles where private preferences are alienated from moral convictions
- nothing can be known or communicated with certainty, that all is illusion - there is no reality
- each thing is relative to some particular standpoint and that no standpoint is uniquely privileged above the others. All points of views are equally valid, all belief systems are equally true and all moralities are equally good. Meaning and truth are decided by each person (relativism)
- ambiguous social, personal and intellectual boundaries
- focus on difference rather than synthesis and on diversity rather than unity, and on free will to chose instead of determinism (no free will - it is influenced by motives)
- nothing is constant so we have to continually redefine ourselves

**(3) liberationist postmodernism**

- focuses on liberating people from the oppressive conditions created by globalization, capitalism and neo-liberal development models
- speak in ways that empower rather than oppress women
- assume that cultural uniqueness establishes one's value and that this uniqueness is the basis for one's *voice*
- assume that humans need to responsibly nurture the earth and its resources

**(4) narrative postmodernism**

- stresses the power of *language* over the power of science
- strong focus on "irrational elements" of emotions, feelings, intuitions, refection, speculation, personal experiences, customs, metaphysics (the science about other forms of knowing other than knowledge generated using the scientific method), magic, myth and mystical experiences.
- knowledge, meaning and truth are seen to be sociologically constructed in communities and reflected in people's stories.
- culture-specific myths define what is right and true and full of meaning

**(5) constructive (revisionary) postmodernism**

- embraces a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective so as to gain new unity between scientific, ethical, aesthetic and religious institutions
- conceives of societal structures as organic and having a purpose
- offers an organic world view that is viable for our time (rather than one truth)
- allows for nonsensory perception (memories, dreams and visions) as a form of knowledge instead of just accepting knowledge gained from the five senses using the scientific method - nonsensory perceptions are just as valid as the truth we know from our five senses
- assumes that everything is interrelated and in relationship with all living organisms on earth
- calls for a fundamental openness to other beings and holds that all entities are interwoven in webs of interdependency

· possibility that humankind is standing on the threshold of *a new age*.

Personally, I believe that the profession of home economics would be best served if we embraced the latter three approaches and stood on guard for messages from those who embrace the other two approaches. That way, we can account for a holistic approach that respects people's stories and values the environment while helping people seek insights into the power relationships behind society and their own ambivalence while living in a consumer society.

## PATRIARCHY AND HOME ECONOMICS

Drawing on collaborative work with Donna Pendergast in Australia (in progress), I offer the idea of repositioning home economics beyond patriarchy. Home economists have been complicit in placing themselves in a marginalized position, largely out of a lack of understanding about the way structures exits in society and the way these structures and ideology reinforce dominant masculine discourse. Even the founder of home economics, Ellen Swallow Richards, was rejected from the academy in the late 1800's until she found a way to define the home and family within the male dominated scientific paradigm and used *their* framework as a measure of the value of her work. They then "let her in" to the university since women were not seen to have any power or status. So she, and the field of home economics, were not seen as a threat (Pendergast, 2001a).

Interestingly, when she chose the name of human ecology as the preferred name for the new profession, the men in the biology discipline took issue with it (feeling threatened) so Richards and the other founders switched to home economics. From the very birth of our profession, we were let into "the boys club", but not allowed to drink at the bar. Being barred (pun intended) from the networking, positions of status at the bar and the power brokering left us on the margin (Pendergast). And, here we sit today, over 100 years later - thirsty and desperate for attention.

We still complain that our profession is marginalized and not respected and it is true. But, *why* it is marginalized and not respected is what we have to deal with by facing a larger issue - what it means to practice, as a woman, in a profession which focuses on the home and families, in a patriarchal society. Bottom line - because the profession is comprised mainly of women, and because our focus has been on the home and family, the profession has been kept subordinate within the patriarchal system. When breaking from the hold of gender conditioning, and engaging in conscious reinforcement of ourselves, we will have to deal with two issues: the external systemic restraints imposed on the profession by the patriarchal system and the unacknowledged restraints embedded deeply within our individual psyches as a result of living in a patriarchal society. This idea is so deep, so much a part of our unconsciousness, that we balk at being asked to examine it. We go on the defensive and try to *justify our existence* instead of examining how we came to this current existence and whether it is "right" or not for the times and our sustainable future as a profession and a member of this profession.

Patriarchy is a system of oppression - it is that simple and that complicated. Patriarchy literally means "rule by the father;" hence, any social, political, economic or educational system that grants privileged status to males, and permits or encourages their domination of women, is a patriarchal system (Kemerling, 2001). Patriarchy is the common term for the ideology that men are dominate over women in wealth, status, power and reproduction. An ideology is an *unquestioned* set of values and beliefs held by a social group.

Home economics is especially affected by the ideology of patriarchy because, although not intended by the founders, it has evolved to be a women's profession. Although the focus was always intended to be on the home, we were thwarted in our efforts because the home is the domain of women from a man's perspective. Worse, the dominant story of our history shaping thinking in our society continues to be the silencing and objectifying of women (anything associated with women's knowledge) and "others" as the basis for male subjectivity (Lerner, 1986). Such was the case when home economics was founded and such is the case today. This ideology prefers the masculine and then structures institutions and practices to reinforce and

perpetuate this preference (Duerst-Lahti, 1998). We have struggled, and failed, to legitimize the profession within this ideology.

Our legitimizing imperative has been a very harmful strategy to our professional culture because we conducted these activities using a particular set of tools while still functioning within the patriarchal system. As Pendergast (2001a,2003) so clearly points out, using "the masculine master's tools" only reinforces *their* legitimacy and *their* values, making them increasingly more powerful and *us* less valued and patriarchal paradigm still prevails and we are still on the periphery of the system, on the outside looking in with our noses pressed against the bar room glass.

What complicates this situation is that, while we were trying to gain legitimacy for home economics, the public's perception of us did not change. No matter what we did, no matter how hard we tried to play the game in the patriarchal system, which *should* have made us legitimate!, home economics was still devalued, looked down upon, dismissed and ridiculed. There is a simple explanation for this. All institutions and professions in society, no matter how powerful they are, obtain their legitimacy from *the perceptions of people*. Since people all live in the same patriarchal society, we are socialized to see anything to do with home, women and caring as not legitimate or valued (Lerner, 1986). As long as home economics is characterized as women's knowledge, used in the private sphere of the home, it will be marginalized in a patriarchal system which has its focus on maintaining power and status within the domains of government and business using men's knowledge (Pendergast, 2001a). That is it why we have to find a non-patriarchal position from which to practice.

In order to break out of this mold, we have to learn to trust in the significance of our lived experiences as home economists if we want to break free from patriarchy (Pendergast, 2001b). You have to *liberate yourself from yourself*! The process of becoming a newly conscious person or group is liberating. The longer we stay confined within the boundaries of "the great man's system," the longer sources of new insights are closed to us. These new insights will give us the power to change individually and to change the profession from a liberated stance, free of the influences of patriarchy. The result will be home economists working towards a world free of dominance, hierarchy, racism, gender bias, inequalities, militarism - a world that is truly human (Lerner, 1986).

## PEACE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND NON-VIOLENCE

### The Consumer Accountability Concept

Another idea I want to share in this paper is about our challenge to reconceptualize the consumer to be a global citizen. Again, this material is taken from a working paper that is in progress and a chapter in my book. Collective greed, propagated by consumerism, has created injustice in society and in nature that is unconscionable and unsustainable. Who is holding the consumer accountable for their actions in the marketplace? Given the rampant focus on rights in our consumer society, and the new thrust at the United Nation's level to examine a declaration of human responsibilities, I think it is time for our profession to consider what it means for the third pillar of the marketplace - consumers - to be accountable to someone other than themself. Corporations, with their lack of accountability, coupled with such enormous wealth and power, are key culprits to our unsustainability. BUT, how much greater is the issue of the unaccountable consumer? There are about 200 national governments, 60,000 transnational corporations and over 6 Billion consumers. Leaving them out of the equation is inconceivable; yet, we do it all the time and get away with it because of our individualistic, consumer society.

Consider the suggestion that accountability measures are needed wherever there are concentrations of power in society (Democracy Watch, 2002). In most developed countries, consumers spend over two thirds of the GDP relative to business and government. Even though Northern consumers (Western and European) comprise 20% of the world's population, they consume more than 80% of the world's resources to support their consumer society. This is phenomenal collective power implying that accountability measures should be in place.

Twentieth-century Western consumer culture is often characterized as thinking in individualistic terms: individual rights, individual liberties, and, presumably, individual responsibilities. According to this characterization, the individual bears moral responsibility for what s/he does and no one else. Indeed, some argue that moral responsibility is a personal, individual matter, and we should never be expected to bear responsibility for the wrongdoings of another. Instead, if a person's consumption infringes on human, labour and environmental rights, they are being morally irresponsible.

Others could argue that some people cannot afford to exercise their desire to buy ethically so are forced to support the unsustainable and unjust status quo. One way to move beyond this narrow view of responsibility is to use the concept of "collective responsibility." It assigns responsibility to the collective, consisting of the various people who constitute it (e.g., the consumer collective). From this line of reasoning, we *can* expect the entire cohort of Northern consumers to be collectively, morally, responsible for their actions in the marketplace.

Remember my earlier question, "who gave citizens the responsibility and the authority to consume?" Society gave that authority when markets were first created as a way for people to meet their basic needs - it was a right that implied responsibilities. However, in the last few centuries, the values of the market have pervaded all aspects of society leading to a consumer or market society and "something is clearly amiss in our consumer society."

**Consumerism as Structural Violence**

As a consequence of my recent forays into the peace education field, I am now able to see consumerism as a source of structural violence and suggest that this perceptive be part of the 21st home economics paradigm. Again, this part of the paper is extrapolated from a think piece I have posted at the KON Human Services Working Paper series (McGregor, 2003). We have to reflect more deeply on how the profession conceptualizes consumerism and whether its members are part of the problem or part of the solution to ending structural violence in the marketplace. Strong and unsustainable consumption patterns have developed and have been unchallenged over a long period of time. We are now at the point that consumerism and structural violence represent dominant forces in human social interaction and these forces are transforming human life in powerful and destructive ways (Santi Pracha Dammha Institute, 2001).

Under the spell of consumerism, few people give thought to whether their consumption habits produce class inequality, alienation, or repressive power; that is, structural violence. Johan Galtung (1969) first coined the term structural violence intending it to refer to the presence of justice (positive peace) to balance the prevailing focus on negative peace, the absence of direct war and violence. Structural violence is almost invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and our regular experiences. Because they are longstanding, these structural inequities usually seem ordinary, the way things are and always have been done. Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care or to legal standing are all forms of structural violence (Winter & Leighton, 1999). People affected by structural violence tend to live a life of oppression, exclusion, exploitation, marginalization, collective humiliation, stigmatization, repression, inequities and lack of opportunities due to no fault of their own, per se. The people most affected by structural violence are women, children, elders and those from different ethnic, racial and religious groups and sexual orientations.

Consumers living in a consumer society live a comfortable life at the expense of the violence imposed on impoverished labourers and fragile ecosystems in other countries. Consumerism is the drug that causes people to fall into moral sleep and remain silent on all kinds of public matters, including the possibility that their behaviour constitutes violence. As long as their little world of peace and relative prosperity is not disturbed, they are happy not to get involved. It is against this background of consumer complacency that all kinds of moral relaxation can arise(Benton, 1998).

Too often, people conclude that they must arm themselves to protect their commodities and the ongoing access to them (gas, oil, etc). This position helps them justifies war and violence (Cejka, 2003). The "veil of consumerism" enables them to overlook the connections between

consumerism and oppressive regimes (governments, world financial institutions and transnational corporations) that violate human rights, increase drug trade and military spending (Sankofa, 2003). This disregard is possible because consumerism accentuates and accelerates human fragmentation, isolation and exclusion for the profit of the few, contributing significantly to violence . Society has ignored the "new slavery"and the resultant *disposable people* through ignoring the implications of consumption decisions on third world citizens, the next generation and those not yet born (Sankofa).

From yet another perspective, McGregor (2001) suggests that consumerism is also a form of slavery to those *doing* the consuming. People behave as they do in a consumer society because they are so indoctrinated into the logic of the market that they cannot "see" anything wrong with what they are doing. Because they do not critically challenge the market ideology, and what it means to live in a consumer society, they actually contribute to their own oppression (slaves of the market and capitalism) as well as the oppression of others who make the goods and of the natural ecosystem.

Consumerism has caused a visible and dramatic increase in human kind's obsession with possessions, and in the identification of one's person with what one owns. The trend has significantly grown over the last century, and with it the violence it entails (Sols, 2002). Witness the killing of youth by youth for brand name running shoes or jackets. Witness the violence present in advertisements, video games, music, videos and children's programming on television. Witness the not so silent violence in the home due to dual income and single parents working to meet increasing costs of living. Witness the latch key kids, underfunded daycare and escalating violence in schools. These are symptoms of violence in a society structured around consumerism. Carter (1999) agrees, advancing the idea that the root causes of youth violence can be partially blamed on the focus society places on consumerism.

## Home Economics and Peace

On a final note, I would like to direct you to the monograph I wrote as a KON Fellow that develops the idea that home economics and peace are two fields of study that have profound synergy. Http://www.kon.org/leadership/peace.html Part two of the monograph shares a discussion of the 14 themes that characterize the synergy existing between these two fields and the Reflective Human Active leadership approach to practice (see Table 2 for a summary of the themes).

| **Table 2** | **14 themes that characterize the synergy between home economics and peace education** |
|---|---|
| **Both fields:** | |
| ♦ | are considered to be social movements |
| ♦ | advocate for a global, holistic, ecosystem perspective |
| ♦ | value day-to-day life |
| ♦ | embrace a long-term perspective rather than the quick fix |
| ♦ | are concerned with relationships and interactions as well as structures |
| ♦ | recognize different levels of physical and intellectual action (how to, talk/values and emancipation) |
| ♦ | respect diversity |
| ♦ | strive for balance between rights and responsibilities |
| ♦ | work for enhanced quality of life, well-being and security |
| ♦ | are sensitive to how events and issues are framed, determining expectations and actions |
| ♦ | hold congruent value systems |
| ♦ | are concerned with community |
| ♦ | embrace the critical, reflective approach |
| ♦ | are recognizing that peace and well-being include outer, inner/spirituality and eco- dimensions |

**References Available from the Author** (or in the following publications)

My papers cited in this paper contain most of the references except for the human condition, patriarchy, consumer accountability and transformative learning and leadership concepts which are either works in progress or in press.

Transdisciplinary research and practice. http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/transdiscipl.html (Posted June, 2004)

A Satire: Confessions of recovering home economists http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/recovering.html was co-written by me and 10 others authors. It is radical and we welcome the dialogue that will stem from this!! (2003)

Philosophical Well-being at http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/philosophical.html (2003)

Consumer entitlement, narcissism, and immoral consumption posted December 17, 2003 at http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/mcgregor_1.htm.

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