

Choosing our future: Ideologies matter in the home economics profession

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibility of conceptualizing future home economics practice with a focus on the human condition. It is our belief that home economics brings much that is unique to the work of advancing the human condition. In order to consider this possibility, we argue that concentrating on underlying ideologies and paradigms that underpin professional practice is where professionals should direct their energy. To that end, we: (a) briefly discuss the concept of the human condition, (b) set out the relationship between ideologies and paradigms, (c) provide an overview of selected prevailing and emergent ideologies and paradigms, and then (d) position home economics practice within this dynamic paradigmatic context. This paper, crafted through a cooperative framework, builds on work shared with aligned fields and disciplines. Special attention is given to practical perennial problems, values reasoning, three systems of action and a pluri-science approach for enlightened home economics practice that appreciates the power of ideologies.

Introduction

In 2004, a small group of home economics colleagues interested in exploring the intellectual foundation of home economics posted an electronic paper they collaboratively developed at the Kappa Omicron Nu (KON) Human Sciences Working Paper series titled *A satire: Confessions of recovering home economists* (McGregor et al., 2004). The paper discussed implications of grounding our practice too heavily in the expert, how-to, quick-fix technical approach. In this current paper, we provide a possibility for re/conceptualizing enlightened practice that is removed from this perspective and instead focuses on the human condition, thereby creating an opportunity for practices that feature justice, freedom, security, peace, non-violence, prosperity, opportunities, potential, and human rights with accountability.

In order to make this ideological shift, it is necessary to reflect on ideological origins. An ideological conundrum emerged during the formative years of our profession in the 1900s (Pendergast, 2001; Pendergast & McGregor, 2007). At the Lake Placid Conferences in New York State, there were two camps of people trying to articulate a path for our profession to follow. There were those who wanted to take a scientific, capitalistic road, contrasted with those who wanted our profession to walk a sustainable, people-focussed path - two very different ideologies. The former camp won, and our profession unfolded, practising within scientific, empirical and capitalistic ideologies, with attendant paradigms (Brown, 1993). McGregor et al. (2004) argue that these winning ideologies no longer serve individuals and

families in the present human condition. If we want to reduce the impact of certain ideologies, and advance the influence of others, we have to understand those impacts and use this understanding to reframe our practice.

The human condition

Improving the human condition is a different end result than our profession’s traditional aim of enhancing well-being and quality of life. McGregor and Goldsmith (1998) discuss our profession’s traditional, descriptive understanding of the concepts of well-being and quality of life, that: standard of living reflects actual reality; quality of life is one’s perception of and satisfaction with that reality; and well-being comprises the indicators of this reality. Brown (1993) asserts that our profession sees well-being as a collection of separate dimensions that can describe people’s conditions, and makes the case for a normative approach that would have us interpret those conditions using concepts such as justice, equity, fairness, freedom, human rights, human security, resilient communities, participation, power, responsibility, interests (see Table 1).

Table 1 Descriptive versus normative approach to practice

Descriptive dimensions of well-being and quality of life, describe “what is”	Universal normative principles or values that help us think about “what ought to be” for the human condition
<p>Economic—the degree to which individuals and families have economic adequacy or security</p> <p>Physical—concern with or preoccupation with the body and its needs plus maintaining the integrity of the human body by protecting it and providing sustenance</p> <p>Social—the social space of the family as a group, the social needs of the individual played out daily in interactions via interpersonal relationships within the family group and with the larger community, including the workplace</p> <p>Emotional—the mental status or inner space of individual family members versus the group as a whole</p> <p>Environmental—concern for our role in the earth’s diminishing resources</p> <p>Political autonomy—family and individual’s internal sense of power and autonomy based on moral and ethical freedom, concern for the welfare of the community and nation</p> <p>Spiritual—captures a layer of well-being, a sense of insight and ethereal, intangible evolution not readily imparted by either social or psychological well-being as they are conventionally defined</p>	<p>justice</p> <p>equity</p> <p>fairness</p> <p>peace</p> <p>freedom (from and to do)</p> <p>equality</p> <p>human rights</p> <p>human security</p> <p>resilient communities</p> <p>participation</p> <p>power</p> <p>responsibility</p> <p>interests</p> <p>sustainability</p> <p>solidarity</p> <p>non-violence</p> <p>inclusion</p> <p>diversity</p> <p>democracy</p> <p>tolerance and acceptance</p> <p>participation and involvement</p>

Source: Extrapolated from McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998 and Brown, 1993

The actions of people create the conditions within which people live their lives. The human condition shows how people came to be in their current situation, what that looks like, and what it could look like in the future (Arendt, 1958). Best viewed through the lenses of justice, security, freedom and peace, this assumption moves far beyond the descriptive stance conventionally adopted in home economics, taking us to a more normative perspective. What could the human condition be like if we want to ensure human betterment, empowerment, sustainability, and the peaceful advancement and potential of the human race, globally? Addressing this question could be a new focus of home economics, provided we are open to examining the ideological and paradigmatic underpinnings of our practice.

If we accept Griffith's (2003) assumption that the predicaments humans face stem from the reality they create, then understanding the beliefs, values and assumptions behind human actions brings us closer to appreciating how we can experience, at the same time, the indifferent and aggressive side of human nature and our potential for compassion, love and cooperation. Paradigms and ideologies help explain how humans can be capable both of immense sensitivity, selflessness and inclusiveness and also of greed, hatred, prejudice, competition, and selfishness. In many parts of the world, the human condition is characterised by suffering, war, oppression, poverty, vain striving, disappointment, ignorance, disconnectedness, disillusion, and a crippling proliferation of idolatry (Taylor, 1992; Wilson, 1991). However, there is also a powerful, global movement that characterizes the human condition as one of potential, one of: hope, passion, tenderness, solidarity, respect, sensuality, gentleness, forgiveness, love, faith, care, family, community, collaboration, and environmental stewardship.

Primer on ideologies and paradigms

People tend to resist new ideas because they have favoured ways of viewing the world, and of making sense of what happens to them. These favoured views encompass ideologies and paradigms.

Ideologies

In current times, ideologies are understood to be the ruling ideas of the times; hence, they merit careful study and scrutiny. They are prescriptions for a preferred way to live our lives (Dillman, 2000; Kuhn, 1962). This gives ideologies a lot of power, and it gives people who control the propagation of ideologies even more capacity to influence and control society. Although there are political, economic, epistemological and social ideologies (Rejai, 2003), our discussion refers to ideology as a concept in social thought and comes with assumptions about what is worthy of belief and attention, what is accepted as true, and what is valued. Ideologies comprise two dimensions: (a) how society should work, and (b) the rules or blueprint most appropriate to achieving this ideal arrangement (Johnson, 2005). Successful ideologies become so ordinary that they are invisible, unquestioned. They are successful because they: (a) explain people's place in nature, society and history; (b) contain beliefs and values that people accept as true and worthy; (c) are plausible enough to mesh with common sense understandings of facts about social reality; and, (d) are useful in serving the needs and interests of those in power, and useful in justifying that they stay in power (Ady, 2000; Duerst-Lahti, 1998). One such success story is that of patriarchy. Contemporary society

works within the overarching ideology of patriarchy. This ideology, and the impact it has had on the development of home economics over the past one hundred years, has been explored in depth by Pendergast and McGregor (2007). They urge the home economics profession to refuse compliance with this dominant ideology.

Paradigms

While ideologies provide beliefs, assumptions of truth and values (Chawla, 2004; Zube, 2002), paradigms are self-contained systems of meanings within which everything is explained, or sometimes ignored. Paradigms constitute a way of viewing reality that is meaningful for the community sharing the beliefs of their ideologies (Heath, 2003). Paradigms are familiar thought patterns; they provide structure, dependability and define who we are. Paradigms provide the lens through which people make sense of their world, by giving meaning to lived experiences within the prevailing values and belief systems of ideologies. Some liken paradigms to watchtowers, from which people observe life within the ideological camps (Zube). Figure 1 shares a brief synopsis of family life lived within the neoliberal ideological camp and attendant paradigms. It is a powerful example of the insidiousness of ideologies.

Figure 1 - Family life lived within the neoliberal ideology

The neoliberal ideology values decentralization, privatization, deregulation, and individualism (currently operating in tandem with the ideology of capitalism). The industrial and materialistic paradigms assign meaning to profit, growth, production, and wealth as a means to progress, all in conjunction with another paradigm, mass consumerism. Through the values of this ideology, people do not see any problems from these paradigms when they observe cutbacks to social services, education and health. They watch what is going on, and conclude that things are right, and as they should be. They readily accept policy makers' explanations that it is more important to strengthen the economy than to strengthen families. They accept the belief that families are valued only as producers and consumers. They support government initiatives to make economies stronger so there are jobs for the workers, goods and services for consumers to buy, and help to be efficient in these processes.

People standing in their observation tower happily assign positive meaning to neo-liberal values of profit, success, wealth, materialism, production, consumption, efficiency and competition. Hence, because everyone is supposed to be out for oneself, people making sense of this world through attendant paradigms tend to argue against any policy that props people up with welfare, unemployment insurance, and free public education and health care. Because this ideology assumes that individuals should be able to take care of themselves, thought patterns held by people observing this reality enable them to conclude that such support is not needed; rather, if people cannot succeed, they have failed, and deserve what they get (McGregor, 2001).

Pendergast and McGregor (2007) ask home economists to face a change in ideologies and paradigms, acknowledging that it can be very unsettling. People move through paradigmatic

change slowly, progressing through three predictable stages: denial, stretching things to fit and, finally, letting go of the familiar way of practicing. This most difficult part of a paradigm shift requires letting go of one trapeze and swinging through the air almost in free-fall before grasping the next, a maneuver requiring bravery and determination (Adams, 2000). The next section sets out our arguments for why ideologies matter in home economics and offers suggestions for what home economists can do to privilege the human condition, if they accept this message.

Ideologies and paradigms matter in home economics

It is our argument that the home economics profession historically became too comfortable viewing the world through the Newtonian, empirical, positivistic paradigms - something our profession calls technical practice (Brown, 1993). This has led to a comfortable acceptance and familiarity with this technical approach at a time when families and communities need more from us. Our level of comfort with technical practice would not be an issue, except that the ruling ideas of times past led to policies and elite actions that repressed intellectual challenges related to addressing or improving the human condition. If our present professional practice and understanding espouses the guidance of a mission of empowerment, efficacy, and enlightenment, its members can no longer cling to the way they have been making sense of the world. We can no longer condone values, assumptions and beliefs of ideologies that put money, profit and economic growth before human and social development, empowerment, sustainability, and the ecosystem (McGregor et al., 2004).

Table 2 and Table 3 contrast the dominant ideologies and attendant paradigms, respectively, with the emergent, contending ideologies and paradigms. The information contained in these tables was drawn from several compelling documents (see Daly, 1996; Elgin & LeDrew, 1997; Engberg, 1990; Friends of the Earth, 2003; Hines, 2000; International Forum on Globalization, 2003; Korten, 1998; McGregor, 2001, 2006; Merryfield, 2001; Shanahan & Carlsson-Kanyama, 2005; Wheatley, 1999). Our analysis of the information in Tables 2 and 3 helps us present the case that awareness of dominant and emerging ideologies and paradigms gives home economists the potential to change and to practice differently. The right column in each table suggests the need for particular philosophies, valued ends, theoretical orientations, research methodologies and analytical frameworks, if our profession is to accept this great challenge of working for the human condition.

Drawing on past practice

As we strive to practice while standing in the emergent camp (the right columns), the home economics profession has a rich heritage from which to draw. Over the years, scholars in home economics have developed unique ideas to inform their practice. As well, they have drawn ideas from others and adapted them to our stated mission of optimizing and enhancing the quality of life and well-being of individuals and families. There are also aspects of scholarship and practice in allied disciplines that home economists can turn to in a collaboration to conceptualize enlightened practice focused on the human condition. Table 4 is a preliminary step in our attempt to model these ideas to facilitate future discussion. This combination of typologies, traits, approaches, perspectives, theories, and intellectual processes is conducive to practicing with our feet planted in both camps. Agreement about

Table 2 Comparison of dominant and emergent ideologies

Dominant ideologies	Contending and emergent ideologies
Patriarchy	Humanist, feminist
Neo-liberalism	Sustainable people-focused networks
Capitalism	Mindful markets e.g., feminist, ecological & behavioral economics
Globalization	Localization
Conservatism	Participatory democracy
Christianity	All world religions
Social Darwinism (evolutionism)	Equality, diversity, pluralism, egalitarianism

Table 3 Comparison of dominant and emergent paradigms

Prevailing paradigms	Contending & Emergent paradigms
Industrial & materialistic	Reflective & living systems
Mechanistic	Holistic & life-centered
Newtonian (linear, disconnected, fragmented)	New sciences (quantum physics, chaos theory) (holistic, connectedness and relatedness)
Positivistic, empiricist, scientific (facts & value neutral)	Post-positivistic, narrative, interpretive, reflexive and other ways of knowing
Reductionist (categories, microanalysis, specializations)	Contextual, holistic dialogue and discourse focuses, critical sciences, collective philosophy
Scarcity/competition	Abundance (plentitude & creativity)
Relativism (quick fix, no absolute truth, deconstructive and popular postmodernism)	Collectivism. Critical, reflective and constructivist (narrative, constructive and liberatory postmodernism)
Mastery over resource management	Stewardship & co-managed sustainability
Transmission & transaction	Transformative
Multi & interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary
Eurocentric & ethnocentric	World centered & world people centered
Egocentric	Eco-centric (environment & planet focused and harmony with nature and other species)
Control, mastery, efficiency	Emancipatory, empowerment, efficacy
Consumerism & conspicuous consumption	Global citizenship, consumer-citizen and conscious consumption
Materialism, material gain and success & social achievement	Relationships & people focused to develop balance between inner & outer lives

how to order these will emerge from a much richer, profession-wide conversation. As an interim measure, we suggest that, taken together, the ideas in Table 4 have potential to inform ongoing initiatives concerned with the development of common conceptual frameworks (e.g., McGregor & MacCleave, 2007).

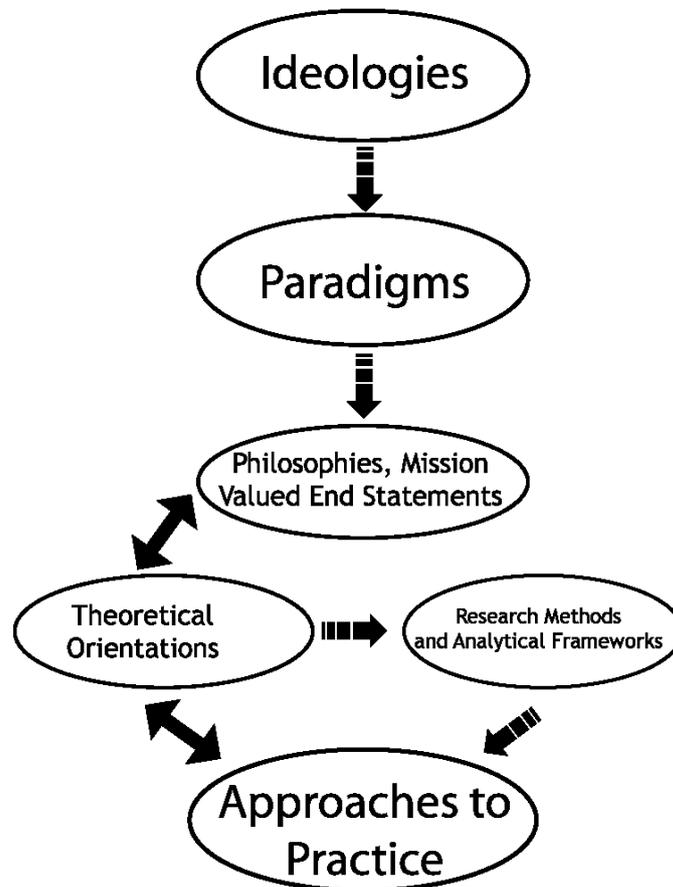
Table 4 Approaches to practice conducive to working within the contending and emerging ideologies and paradigms

Unique to home economics	Adapted by home economics	Shared with allied disciplines
Practical, perennial problem solving approach	Values Reasoning	Transformative learning
Three systems of action	Critical science approach	Transformative leadership
Participatory consumerism	Family is the basic democratic unit	Transdisciplinary inquiry
Focus on everyday life for family and household	Reflective practice	Postmodern understandings
Well-being theory	Family ecosystem theory	Human and social development (augmenting economic development)
Qualities of living concept	Human ecosystem perspective	Consumer citizenship
Philosophical well-being	Global perspective	Knowledge management
Reflective human action theory (drawing on the new sciences)	Quality of life concept	Communities of practice
Typology of home economic types	Inter-disciplinarity, holistic and integrative approach	Critical thinking
Consumerism as structural violence	Systems theory	Participatory action
Whole economy approach	Dialectic approach	Action research
	Social change agent	Sustainability
	Authentic pedagogy	Mentoring
	Life-world approach	Intellectual curiosity
		Post-positivistic theoretical and research approaches
		Participatory production
		Patriarchal influence
		Morality of consumption

Home economics as an expression of emerging ideologies and paradigms

Ideologies produce the paradigms, which, in turn, determine and inform accepted theoretical orientations and perspectives, attendant research methodologies and methods, and analytical frameworks. A profile of home economics practice as an expression of the emerging ideologies and paradigms (the right columns of Table 2 and Table 3, and the common conceptual framework tendered in Table 4) indicates that our professional practice has the potential to remain strong if we are aware of the how ideologies and paradigms shape our practice. Figure 2 represents this idea.

Figure 2 Relationship between ideologies, paradigms and practice



While it is imperative that we gain an understanding of what our practice would entail if we embrace this collection of ideas, it is beyond the scope of this paper to explain all of the ideas in Table 4. We attempt to tease out three particular approaches: the practical perennial problem approach (including value reasoning), the three systems of action approach, and the pluri-science approach, originally tendered by Brown and Paolucci (1979), and shared more recently with the home economics profession by McGregor (2007).

We believe that these three disciplinary standards provide a substantial anchor for our future practice ensuring that it is contextual, emancipatory, empowering, and sustainable, leading to rich potentialities for the human condition. As a caveat, we acknowledge there are competing sources from which we could develop our understanding of home economics practice, which are also beyond the scope of this paper. Succinctly, as we identify in this paper with Western home economists' reliance on Jurgen Habermas's (1970, 1973) critical theory, we honour a different philosophy of home economics emerging in the East (namely Japan) based on a different German philosopher, Otto Bullnow (Fusa, 2004; McGregor, 2005). As well, we recognize that European and Scandinavian home economists also rely on the philosophical works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (phenomenology), Edmund Husserl (life world) and Martin Heidegger (being-in-the-world) (Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008).

Practical, perennial problem approach and values reasoning

Families typically deal with three different types of problems: technical, theoretical and practical. Technical problems involve finding a known way to deal with the issue at hand, "how do I select foods that are nutritionally adequate?" Theoretical problems entail determining a cause and effect relationship, "what effect do poor eating habits have on my physical health?" Practical problems involve judgements about what should be done, decisions that require reasoned, moral thought and action, "am I obligated to be well nourished?" The term practical problem also can refer to the technical problems families face in their everyday lives as they strive to meet material needs (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992). A practical, moral problem that endures from one generation to another generation is called a perennial problem. With a profound impact on the state of the human condition, at any point in time, these problems are conventionally associated with the perpetual family needs of shelter, nourishment, clothing, resource management and consumption, and personal development and family relations. Although each generation and culture deals with these problems differently, they are enduring problems with which home economists are concerned (Brown & Paolucci, 1979).

Values reasoning is a process that improves individual critical thinking and reasoning abilities to make morally defensible decisions to address perennial practical problems by arriving at reasoned judgements through examination of underlying values, as well as superficial facts. Through this process, home economists rationally decide what should be done to solve a practical, perennial problem by using facts and values (Kieren, Vaines, & Badir, 1984; McGregor, 1996; Vaines, 1980). This approach means we deal with personal, individual and social change. We balance personal interests with general, universal interests, and balance the betterment of our own daily lives with the human betterment of others (Smith, 1993). Because a majority of problems addressed by families are value-laden rather than value-neutral, solutions to practical perennial problems involve value judgements. These decisions may appear as personal choices. But, on a deeper level, they have social consequences; thus, it is imperative to build capacity in this area of practice. The use of values reasoning helps people decide and support their claims and stick to their values and beliefs as they decide what action to take. The resultant decision is more likely to be well informed and free from distortions or bias. This reasoning process incorporates the central tenet of what is fair or just, and this notion is applied before taking any action. Table 5 provides more detail on the steps involved in this important process.

Three systems of action approach

Philosophers in our field developed, and continue to promote, a triad of practice, calling it three systems of action (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Johnson & Fedje, 1999; McGregor, 2007). They are referring to the three ways of thinking about a practical, perennial problem: (a) technical (coping skills, care giving skills, getting by); (b) interpretative (talking, listening, relationships); and, (c) critical/emancipatory (political and self-power, and social action). The systems of action approach is a way to take ownership of actions and practice from a stance of integrity and accountability. Brown and Paolucci would have practitioners approach each problem situation by engaging in all three ways of thinking about the problem. Instead of presuming that what was done in the past will work again, consideration of situations from

Table 5 Steps for values reasoning process

<p>Steps for values reasoning process</p> <p>The whole values reasoning process is complex, elaborate, exacting, and involves seven basic steps (Eghan & MacCleave, 2006; MacCleave & Eghan, 2005; Mayer, n.d.; Metcalf, 1971). It is intended to help develop both one's (a) inclination and ability to think critically and (b) to reason well about values issues, moral questions and the insidious ideological import (Arcus & Daniels, 1993). These seven stages (and sub-steps) include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying the value question or value claim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distinguish value claims from factual claims so one does not confuse the two. ▪ Select a value claim or value question to analyze in an area of concern or interest. ▪ Clarify the phenomenon being evaluated to make sure everyone shares the same meaning and understanding (or at least appreciates any discrepancies in meaning sharing). 2. Assembling supporting and refuting factual statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Locate supporting and refuting statements ▪ Create a Reasons Assembly Chart, with supporting claims on one side and refuting claims on the other 3. Assessing the truth of statements using either or both of empirical and analytical means 4. Clarifying the relevance of facts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and pair a value principle(s) with each factual claim to reveal why the factual claim is relevant to the overall value claim ▪ Identify points of view from which each factual claim is made (moral, religious, legal, political, health, economic, beauty, intellectual, prudential) ▪ Reorganize facts in the Reasons Assembly Chart according to points of view to help make the relationship between the values and facts explicit and apparent 5. Making a tentative value judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examine the information on both sides of the Reasoning Assembly Chart (point of view plus facts and value principles) ▪ Test your judgement by formulating a practical syllogism (reasoning from general to specific) to either accept or reject your original value claim based on any new information. Where relevant, moral points of view take precedence over other views 6. Testing the acceptability of the tentative value judgment by determining if you can accept the value principle (the norm) implied in your judgement by using one or more of these four principle tests (the first two are the most common tests used): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal consequences test (What would happen if everyone did what you proposed? How would you like it if everyone did that?) ▪ Role exchange Test (Would you change places with those affected by your decision, based on your proposed solution to the problem?) ▪ New cases test (Would the same decision hold in another case?) ▪ Subsumption Test (Is there a higher principle (stated norm) involved in this judgement? Is the judgement logically related to this higher order principle (it should be)? Is this higher order principle acceptable?) 7. Making a final judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accept, reject or modify your value claim based on your test

all three perspectives results in determination of which combination of actions is most appropriate, in full consultation with those affected by the decision (Brown, 1980). Each action will now be discussed.

Practice from a technical approach looks at the how to questions. It involves helping people gain skills necessary to meet material, day-to-day needs and delivering technical skills to enable families to cope with, or survive, the daily impact of change. Technical action is concerned with accomplishing goals using criteria set by an expert. From a technical approach, home economists see families as clients that we serve. This conveys an exchange process wherein the client is dependent on the expert. If clients do not succeed, they can, in turn, blame the expert for bad advice, and the expert can blame them for not following directions. From a technical perspective, our profession often provides families with the technical skills to produce or procure physical goods or services required for the good life, without ever questioning what makes this the preferred way of life, or whether it is sustainable. We tend to do things the way we were taught, the way it's always been done, from fear of being fired, because that is what is in the textbook, because that is what we were told to do, or because everyone does it that way. The technical approach is not bad; however, on its own, it is inadequate for the long-term sustainability of the family as a social institution and for advancement of the human condition.

Interpretative practice enables people to understand, adapt to and conform to change, instead of just coping or getting by. Achieved by helping individuals and families talk and communicate about values, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and meanings, this approach helps them understand why they decide to act, or not act, in certain ways. Cooperative dialogue and conversations in the home can help people begin to understand and interpret complex concepts, the values important in their culture, and what others expect of them in their society. Through this action, reasoning and judgement habits are developed and used, where values, attitudes and habits are formed, and where social relationships are learned. When this action in a home is healthy, families are able to work for individual self-development, and successfully prepare members for their roles in society. This approach to practice would entail facilitating a process so that both home economists and family members change inside as they gain more control of their situations. Both would work together to design and redesign things to make events meaningful and challenging, so everyone can realize their potential. The goal would be to facilitate people changing their beliefs about themselves and their near community so they have more positive expectations, and so they can be more creative and autonomous in the future, improving their human condition.

Emancipatory practice involves self-reflection and self-direction to determine what is, how it came about, and what we should be doing, so that communities, societies and the world are better places. Concerned with understanding power dynamics that are oppressive or limiting, and with helping people take moral, ethical actions for the good of all people, with ideas that have been developed unconsciously, are taken for granted, are perpetuated, and left unexamined, emancipatory action helps individuals and families be reflective so they can reach their full potential as citizens in the larger global community. This type of practice is called emancipatory because it frees individuals and families from distorted societal, media and political messages (informed by ideologies). In this unencumbered state, they can engage

in an evaluation process that allows them to judge the adequacy of their environments against their own needs and goals, and vice versa.

The types of problems and questions dealt with using the systems of action approach are messy and complex, with no ready-made answers. They require thinking and personal and professional moral justification. They require that we take into consideration the current context, and not assume that what we did before will work again. They require that those who are affected by the decision are part of the problem solving process (Brown, 1980). In summary, the systems of action approach requires that home economists see themselves as practitioners who:

- are eager to see the complexity of life as opportunity and potential instead of obstacles and scarcity;
- see people as partners rather than as clients;
- help people build capacity for their future success instead of just getting by in a crisis;
- focus on capabilities and assets instead of just needs and deficiencies;
- see strength and goodness in people to facilitate empowerment, instead of dwelling on the negative, exercised by holding power over someone;
- believe that everyone has the inherent capacity to grow and change through diversity rather than seeing people as perpetual victims; and,
- believe that community and context are everything, rather than assuming that people are isolated and left on their own.

In many ways, we can feel good about our early years as a profession, But, we have strayed far from contending ideas of a home economics philosophy that could focus on global, contextual, ecological, and holistic paradigms (Brown, 1993; McGregor et al., 2004). Brown believes that today's generation of home economists could grapple with the reality that emerged from thinking informed by the past ideologies and attendant paradigms (see Table 2 and Table 3). We believe that by valuing and evaluating our past, we can pick out what was good, as well as uncover what led us to an over-reliance on technical practice to the exclusion of the other two approaches to problem solving (interpretative and emancipatory). Using this strategy, home economists would ask themselves, among other things:

- Did I approach each situation as unique and work with the family to see which combination of these three actions we think is best for their specific problem, at this point in time? Or, did I assume that I was the expert with all the information they needed to cope and get by?
- Did I create a situation where they could feel safe talking about the issues or did I just give advice, facts and tips?
- Did I help them create a space where they could find their own inner strength and power so they were motivated to change things so others are better off, or did I just lecture and preach, judge and give out handouts?

A pluri-science approach

To meet the challenges of addressing the human condition via practice informed by emerging ideologies and paradigms, and to truly embrace a systems of action, values reasoning approach to practice, we will have to learn to balance our over-reliance on empirical science with the analytical, critical and interpretative sciences (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; MacCleave, 2005; Vincenti & Smith, 2004), what we are calling a pluri-science approach. Our notion of what counts as knowledge has to expand beyond that of conventional empirical science, wherein only knowledge generated using the scientific method is considered valid, true, and legitimate; findings are not valid if the procedures are biased and informed by values and norms. On the other hand, analytic science seeks to clarify what concepts mean to people, and the language used to communicate this meaning to others. Critical science concerns itself with power and privilege, the abuse of which leads to oppression, exploitation and marginalization. Interpretative science moves us into the realm of human interactions, to understanding motives, reasons or intentions of someone's behaviour. The latter three intellectual approaches to generating a knowledge base from which to solve perennial problems are related to meanings and actions associated with living day-to-day in our social-cultural context. Within a pluri-science stance, home economists will place less importance on technological and scientific human progress and more importance on the context of daily life so they can hear the voices of those involved, examine their own role in this context, and better interpret the significance of all voices - voices that are informed by ideologies and paradigms.

Discussion

Through this paper, we set up a profound challenge for our profession. This is a call for a far-reaching shift in the way we live in the world as home economists. This paradigmatic shift entails reinterpreting ourselves as being expert novices, people good at learning new thinking, new skills, new processes, new content, new understandings, and so on. In that way, we are never experts at one thing, but become expert at reflecting, rethinking, and renewing (Pendergast, 2001, 2006a).

To effect ideological clarification leading to actual shifts in paradigms, two things have to happen. First, the power of those who are strong adherents to the prevailing ideologies needs to be challenged if the old system is to be replaced. Then, a new view of power, that of the contending camp, has to be made legitimate. It is important to note that the adherents holding power depend heavily on intellectuals to help them prescribe the values and assumptions of the dominant ideologies so that they can perpetuate themselves (Chawla, 2004; Pendergast & McGregor, 2007). McGregor et al. (2004) suggest that we were those intellectuals, complicit in perpetuating the neo-liberal market ideology, embracing the capitalistic notion of economics, consumerism and corporate-led globalization without examining the power it has over us, and our families. They believe that we sank into the mire of group-think, that mode of thinking that people engage in when their desire to conform to the consensus of the group (the prevailing ideologues) is so strong that it overrides their ability to appraise alternative courses of action other than the one being discussed (Janis, 1971). To get out of this uncomfortable quicksand, Pendergast and McGregor suggest that we need to take control and proffer new notions of power. We can be those intellectuals leading

the vanguard of change for an enhanced human condition. We can become the new power brokers of a collection of ideologies and paradigms that privilege the human condition over currently privileged institutions such as economics and politics.

Facilitating a new professional self

Ideological revelations and paradigm shifts lead to a new way of thinking on a large scale. Being asked to embrace alternatives to mainstream ideas is hard work for those in any profession (Brown, 1993; Hodelin, 2004). Our inner professional self is the core that we use to evaluate the external world and our place within it (McGregor, 2006). A change or loss of paradigms, and revelations of the power of ideologies, could mean a loss of professional selfhood to some professionals. Being shaken to the core is a very unsettling thought. This intellectual engagement will be daunting, and fraught with resistance, but also will be profoundly liberating and enlightening. The need to shift paradigms and embrace new ideologies is pressing. To secure widespread agreement that we are at a time when professional dialogue is paramount, we need to approach change with tolerance, forgiveness and sensitivity. For new ideologies and paradigms to evolve in our profession, we need to act to:

- nurture the trait of open-mindedness so that people can neutralize their desire to maintain old notions of power (Heath, 2003);
- create an enabling environment of safety and trust;
- respect colleagues as people who have been shaped by, and live by, their beliefs and learning;
- create a non- judgmental environment, one of affirmation of everyone's contribution to this profession-wide shift; and,
- afford an opportunity for individual professionals and small groups to find their own voice while recognizing that all are capable of moving ahead together for the good of humanity.

The technical voice of the phrase "we need to..." is intentional. We need to understand our past, and we need to choose our future in this time of major convergence (Pendergast, 2006a).

Conclusion

We must not forget that home economics is action oriented (Brown, 1980, 1993). Members of our profession are supposed to be socialized to expect that the actions they take with individuals and families will lead to something better (Brown, 1980; Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Vaines & Wilson, 1986). Underwood (2003) explains that understanding ideologies involves studying the existing system of thoughts and ideas in relation to the socio-historical context within which they are situated. Pendergast (2006a,b) observes that local, national and global issues and actions, which impact the human condition, are converging toward a common centre. She suggests that our home economics profession also is at a convergent moment, amenable to the challenges of paradigm shifts and the embrace of new ideologies. A successful convergence needs a focus. In our case, we can take direction from a respected

elder, Margaret Bubolz (1996), who calls for our profession to focus on human betterment by striving to achieve four great values: (a) economic security (wherewithal to live: food, clothing, shelter, basic essentials); (b) justice (equity, fairness in life chances, in resources and possibilities), (c) freedom (freedom from drudgery, unnecessary work, illness - freedom of action and thought); and, (d) peace.

We urge home economists to consider our idea that any practice grounded in the presently dominant ideologies and attendant paradigms is not conducive to long-term sustainability of human kind. Examining ideologies that inform our practice reveals unduly biased, dogmatic and distorted thinking that may have emerged in the form of obstacles to seeing how the world really works (Duurst-Lahti, 1998; Johnson, 2005). From these insights, we can take action to develop and promote an ideological and paradigmatic framework that encourages people to integrate and live in the modern world. This focus on the underlying ideologies and paradigms shaping professional practice is where professionals could direct their energy to take advantage of this convergent moment in our profession.

In conclusion, ideologies and paradigms matter - they can make or break our practice. Through ideological and paradigm awareness, home economics practice can become freer (rather than stem from an unexamined internal compulsion - the satire), more enlightened (informed by an awareness of alternative approaches and influences), and more impartial (rather than influenced by indoctrinated ideological beliefs). Power revealed is power gained. From this free, enlightened and impartial stance, we can remain viable, relevant, and sustainable, and we can turn our professional attention and subsequent action to the human condition. We believe that home economists are destined to engage in this work.

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