

The Impact of Different Paradigms on Home Economics Practice Published in the Journal of the Home Economics Institute of Australia, 1997 Vol 4 #3 pp.23-33

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Abstract

Our profession is rooted in, but not limited to, our past. As home economics theorists and practitioners, we are continuously challenged to examine how well our existing view of the world is able to generate theories, practice and policies which empower individuals and families in these times of profound change. The aim of this paper is to examine and present commentary on paradigms which have shaped home economics for the past century and which will impact practice into the next century. It argues that home economics is in transition, undergoing a paradigm shift from scientific through organismic to contextual. This multi-paradigm scenario provides the stimulus for an intellectual evolution within the profession of home economics.

The author assumes that most home economists are familiar with the phrase - *paradigm shift* which means changing the way we see and think about life. If two people view the same phenomenon or event differently, it can be said that they are viewing it through their own pair of glasses shaped by their philosophy, research training, life experience and practice. Their minds were prepared or shaped differently so they are in possession of different knowledge bases, assumptions, ideologies, values and belief systems and, thereby, have different views of the world (Ritzer, 1975). A very simple example of this is that some people see a glass as half full while others see it half empty. As an interdisciplinary profession, we are supposed to be trained to borrow from many disciplines, as well as our own knowledge base about families, to develop our own point of view with *families at the core of everything we do* (Kieren, Vaines & Badir, 1984, Vaines, 1980). The resulting home economics paradigm shapes the way we see families in relation to other institutions in the world. Do we see them as empty vessels waiting to be filled up or otherwise? What paradigms guide our daily practice with families?

The objectives of this paper are, first, to explain what a paradigm is and does and how the existence of a different paradigms among practitioners in a discipline influences their knowledge, their definition of problems, their research strategies and their interpretations of research findings. Secondly, this paper shows how different paradigms have shaped the knowledge base of home economics during the twentieth century and how knowledge and practice have or could have changed as a consequence of a 'new way of seeing the world'. Finally, the paper attempts to make home economists aware of the merits of applying this new

way of seeing, grounded in critical theory, while at the same time recognizing some of the difficulties likely to be encountered.

Reactions to Challenging Change

Appreciating that we are rooted in but not limited to our past, a collection of visionaries (to be introduced in subsequent sections) is challenging the current philosophy, knowledge base and mode of home economics practice (e.g., the paradigm), arguing that using past training and practices to serve contemporary families may no longer be appropriate. We often greet such messages with a mixture of questions, but especially "what is wrong with the way things are"? These are normal reactions when people are exposed to change, but reactions which cannot be sustained if we want to be able to accommodate family and society which are rapidly and relentlessly changing (Baldwin, 1991; Istre & Self, 1990). Examples of this change include globalization of the marketplace, technological advances, environmental degradation, restructuring of economies, labour markets and political parties, even the restructuring of family units themselves away from the traditional nuclear family to more diverse arrangements.

The premise of this paper is that home economists would benefit from a commentary on paradigms and an application of this commentary to the recent call for changes in the knowledge base of home economics. However, we often take our knowledge base for granted and when challenged to examine the way we do things with a view to changing, we often get angry, confused or frustrated or we ignore the task (Schneider, 1994). The fact that paradigms are often unquestioned can result (a) in a small rebellion of some of those challenged to change or (b) a head in the sand mentality leading to home economics practice which may not meet the needs of a changing society and families.

Baldwin (1991) asserts that the discipline of home economics has been unable to stop the conditions impacting negatively on the family as an institution mainly because we have remained loyal to the scientific paradigm rather than critically assessing its applicability in today's context. Raising to this challenge is especially difficult for those home economists whose initial training was grounded totally to the scientific perspective rather than a systems of action, critical reflective perspective advocated for in the 1979 mission statement of home economics (Brown & Paolucci). For the many practitioners in the age group of 40 plus, who attended university during the early 1970s, adopting a critical perspective was not even an option since it did not yet exist in the curriculum. The author is assuming that, having been initially trained in the scientific paradigm, too many home economists have not kept up with philosophical developments in their discipline, a sentiment intimated by Engberg (1993) and Vaines and Wilson (1986). Indeed, "many university home economics programs have dropped the educational component that deals with the professional practice of home economics" (MacCleave & Murray, 1984, p.69). Not being trained to think in ways that would allow us to fulfil the responsibility of challenging conditions adverse to family well-being may present a situation where practitioners now feel frustrated, threatened or insulted.

We must understand that our past practices are not "wrong" but that it is time to move in a different direction which will involve viewing our practice differently (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996). This being said, the author proposes that we are now pressed to ask two questions, "Are we erroneously assuming that all practitioners know what a paradigm is or know what the prevailing and contending home economics paradigms are"? More importantly, "Do we even appreciate how paradigms affect the nature of our theory development, research design,

interpretations of our findings and the nature of our practice and approaches to identifying and solving practical, perennial family problems"? One way to facilitate answering these questions is to gain a better understanding of our paradigms and how they affect the profession, consciously and unconsciously.

The Concept of a Paradigm

To put it simply, a paradigm represents different views of reality. Imagine, again, wearing a pair of glasses with distinctive lenses. Someone wearing one pair of glasses will view an event and see something quite different from another person beside them wearing another pair of glasses. As a general introduction to the concept of paradigms, and their impact on our practice, two examples will be shared. First, the prevailing ideology shaping society is the scientific or postivistic paradigm which *assumes* that everything can be controlled, measured, manipulated and predicted. Government and business, even home economists, frequently embrace this paradigm, often without realizing they are doing it (Brown, 1993; Schneider, 1994). It assumes that the only knowledge that matters is that which can be measured and counted (Smith, 1994). Hence, for example, most retirement pension and income security policies do not count unpaid work in the home and community; hence, it is not captured in the national accounts of countries. The scientific paradigm, or perception of reality, assumes that only work that people get paid for "counts". Conversely, many question putting monetary value on such things as love, nurturing and caring (McGregor, 1996c) claiming that unpaid work is valued despite a lack of monetary recognition. The resultant discord among practitioners, and among practitioners, policy makers and marketers, might be understood more clearly, and be more reconcilable, if we examined the underlying assumptions behind our positions (what we want) and interests (why we want it).

Another example draws on our general familiarity with economic theory, grounded in the scientific paradigm. Many home economics programs include courses in economic theory. This theory is often used by people in government and business to identify, prioritize and justify their marketplace behaviour and policies (McGregor, 1994). It is concerned with the allocation of scarce resources on the assumption that there are more needs and wants than can be met by existing stores of resources. If someone chooses one action, they have to forego another necessitating a cost benefit analysis of each transaction to determine trade offs and lost opportunities. The ultimate objective is to use resources efficiently within the context of full competition thereby ensuring maximization of self interest and profit or return on investment. Economic theory is value free, focuses on individual transactions and does not concern itself with relationships or context (Walden, 1992). As professionals, we tend to disagree with the results of consumer policy and marketing practices adopted within this paradigm since they place money before people. Yet, we often do not realize why we feel uncomfortable with our reaction to government or business decisions since we do not question capitalism (Brown, 1993). We were taught to teach families how to be "good consumers" without teaching them how to appreciate the long term ramifications of their decisions and actions (McGregor & Greenfield, 1996).

Paradigms versus Theories and Models

Often, the words paradigm, theory, and model are used interchangeably when they are, in fact, quite different constructs. A paradigm includes unquestioned, even unconscious, assumptions which tend to shape the general approach and the subsequent choices of theories,

models and concepts, possibly even choice of problem to investigate and the research technique and strategies in carrying out that investigation (Arndt, 1985b; Deshpande, 1983). Three paradigms have, or are, shaping North American home economics practice over the last one hundred years including the scientific, organismic and, the emerging, contextual paradigms (Baldwin, 1991; Istre & Self, 1990; Key & Firebaugh, 1989). These will be explained in more detail in the following section.

Theories are attempts to explain reality, based on the assumptions of a paradigm (Ritzer, 1975) combined with the experience of the explainer. Smith (1996), Winton (1995) and Zimmerman (1988) identify five of the most common theories used by home economists to understand families as they function from day to day. These theories, which include exchange, conflict, systems, symbolic interactionism and developmental, each identify and define unique concepts used to describe a phenomenon and posit relationships, via propositions and hypothesis, between these concepts. These relationships can be investigated usually using quantitative, and more and more so, qualitative research methods (Chapman & Maclean, 1990). To illustrate, while economic theory helps us conceive of profit, costs and benefits, trade offs, exchanges and efficiency, systems theory helps us deal with boundaries, balance and interactions as we understand family behaviour. Conflict theory helps us understand family behaviour using such concepts as power, cooperation, consensus, and conflict. Symbolic interactionism helps us conceive of feelings, meanings, symbols and self esteem while developmental theory allows us to envisage family members learning tasks and maturing as they move through predictable stages of life.

Models are actual diagrams of the theoretical concepts and the relationships between them suggested by the theory. These models are developed using boxes, diamonds, circles, or other devices to segment ideas connected with lines and arrows indicating direction of or absence of relationships (Krausz & Miller, 1974). Table 1 summarizes the differences and interdependence of these three constructs. The next section provides a more detailed discussion of paradigms.

Insert Table 1 about here

Paradigms

Paradigms do not 'just appear' in the world. They evolve over time with one paradigm eventually being replaced by another, meaning that several may co-exist at the same time. This takes place over decades although change is happening at a more rapid pace all the time. Thomas Kuhn (1962, 1970) authored the ground breaking text on paradigms, The structure of scientific revolution, setting the stage for heated debate on how the knowledge base of a discipline grows and evolves. He argues that, while slow and steady increments of a knowledge base play a role in the advance of science and related disciplines, the truly major changes come about as a result of revolutions. His model is represented as follows: *Paradigm I* → *normal science (current research and practice driven by Paradigm I)* → *anomalies* → *crisis* → *revolution* → *Paradigm II*. In more detail, Ritzer (1975) explains that "a number of competing schools of thought arise, each seeking preeminence as the dominant paradigm which begins its decline under a mounting number of anomalies [or holes in the paradigm which normal science fails to address]. Each school of thought questions the basic assumptions of its competitors as they seek to dominate the field. Most of the scientists continue to subscribe to the old paradigm and defend it from attack. [This continual defense of the flanks makes it difficult to conduct good science]. Some

[practitioners] try to convert to the new paradigm while others retire or ultimately pass away. The crisis ends when all who remain are converts or younger scientists trained under the new paradigm" (pp. 9-10).

Competing paradigms. There are seldom extended periods in time when just a single paradigm dominates a field or discipline (Arndt, 1985b). Based on this premise, he suggests that the transition from one paradigm to another is a gradual *evolution* not an abrupt, revolutionary shift as was proposed by Kuhn (1970). Although paradigms have a life cycle and a status quo at any given point in time, Arndt proposes two or more paradigms can effectively co-exist. The reigning paradigm will have a core vocabulary and a common theoretical perspective and the discipline will engage in cumulative research using agreed upon methods, research designs, and research tools (Friedrich, 1970). New paradigms do not necessarily replace the old; indeed, the radical changes, which are often the opposite of what is currently being done, can capitalize on what has already been done rather than replace it (Venkatesh, 1985). The new can learn from the old resulting in an enhanced world view or vision made up of the best of both worlds (Redfield, 1996).

Arndt (1985a) notes that contending paradigms "stir things up" as they advance a discipline through reshaping what is on the agenda for research and what constitutes a problem. The new paradigm suggests new research strategies or methodological procedures for gathering evidence to support the assumptions of the paradigm. Ritzer (1975) suggests that an emerging paradigm, in competition with the old paradigm, must have several characteristics. First, it must be seen to be able to explain the things the old one cannot as well as those things covered by the preceding paradigm. Second, it must not attempt to offer all of the answers but leave open a series of problems for solution by the new group of scientists. Third, the competing paradigm must be sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from the existing modes of scientific inquiry. Finally, the new paradigm must include within it the key elements, concepts or constructs of the world view as well as the theories, methods and instruments that will aid in the scientific research to come.

100 Year Evolution of Home Economic Paradigms

Paradigms will reach different degrees of development and acceptance within a discipline. A high degree of acceptance exists if there is agreement within the profession about course content, textbook congruency, and degree requirements (Ritzer, 1975). Speaking intuitively, without empirical research to back it up, the author suggests that home economics currently shares two paradigms, the empirical and the organismic, which are being challenged by the contextual paradigm (to be discussed shortly). A shared paradigm "serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained" (p.7). Although not the case in Australia, as a very general statement, most university home economics programs currently share fundamental courses, textbooks and degree requirements with some variation, often left to the discretion of the professors and individual departments (Arcus & Vaines, 1982). This is gradually becoming even more standardized in countries where practitioners are certified (United States) or registered with legislation (Canada), a process which is affected by how home economics practice is, *or is not*, defined (McGregor, 1995).

Kuhn's (1962) description of the ways in which bodies of knowledge change can be

applied to understand the development of the knowledge base of home economics. Ritzer (1975) proposes that the existence of different images of the subject matter in a discipline is the key to paradigmatic split and evolution. Home economics is no exception. In their criticism that home economists have placed too much credence on the scientific paradigm, Badir (1991), Baldwin (1991), Engberg (1993), and Istre and Self (1990) are calling for a shift to a different paradigm, proposing that the new knowledge base be grounded in critical theory. The challenge is to get the home economics community to recognize, debate and dialogue about this proposed new way of practice relative to the current mode of thinking that is shaping our curriculum, research, daily practice and policy initiatives (McGregor, in press-a, 1996b). This process might be facilitated by a summary of the fundamental shifts in our knowledge base over the last 100 years with the understanding that what was appropriate for one time frame is not necessarily appropriate for now or the future. See Table 2 for an illustration of this evolution, a summary of Key and Firebaugh's (1989) discussion of the evolution of North American family resource management paradigms, an inherent part of home economics.

Insert Table 2 about here

One - The Scientific Paradigm

In the mid to late 1800's, "the scientific phase of home economics was developed" (Parker, 1987, p.30) and the field of study was called domestic science (Brown, 1985). Historically, home economists have been trained from the scientific paradigm. They were, and often still are, taught to see relationships between individuals and family members as predictable, measurable and controllable. This paradigm is also known as the mechanistic, empirical, or positivistic paradigm (Schneider, 1994). It is a very technical mode of practice because it assumes that we are the experts who mould families as they respond to external stimuli; we embodied this new scientific paradigm by telling people what to do so they could cope and get by (Istre & Self, 1990). During the first 75 years of home economics, most curriculum was based on this technical approach (McGregor & Humble, 1997). It assumes that informed, rationale people will act on information to achieve their self interest. If they can be convinced, in a rationale manner, of the merits of change, they will adopt it. Effecting change entails dealing with superstitions and ignorance by providing information and knowledge. It is assumed that training people to know the same knowledge (semantics and linguistics) will facilitate reasoning and communications (drawn from Chin & Benne, 1969).

Using a flower vase as an analogy to show how this paradigm shapes our view of the world, the author suggests that home economists assume that families are an empty vessel waiting to be filled up with information and skills. We decide there needs to be a vase, shape the vase, decide on its colour, size and decorations, then decide what goes into the vase. Families accept our recommendations as expert advice, usually questioning nothing, and then hold us responsible if something happens to the vase.

Two- The Organismic Paradigm

Currently, while many practice from the scientific paradigm, others were taught and embrace the organismic paradigm which perceives relationships between individuals and family members as developmental towards a final goal (Baldwin, 1991; Istre & Self, 1990). In place since the mid-1970s, from this perspective families are perceived as active agents or organisms in control of themselves and active participants in the construction of their micro-macro environments (Key & Firebaugh, 1989). The organismic paradigm assumes that people are living

organisms who do not respond to stimuli from their environment, as is assumed by the scientific paradigm; instead, they gain intelligence as they shape relationships between themselves and their environments and the resources exchanged in this transactional exchange process. The scientific paradigm views family members as passive objects who respond to stimuli and hence can be moulded by others using appropriate data and skills. While the data is what is important from a scientific perspective, those embracing the organismic paradigm are more concerned with the description of or inferences about data. This approach to practice and research entails concern for the evolution of the development of people towards ultimate goals as they remain active participants in constructing their own environments rather than having them constructed for them (drawn from Baldwin, 1991; Chin & Benne, 1969; Istre & Self, 1990).

The developmental perspective is an inherent part of the organismic paradigm (Istre & Self, 1990). It assumes that families, as active, living organisms, progress through predictable stages of life learning new tasks at each stage towards goal directed behaviour. This paradigm accounts for changes in the family system over time and for changes in patterns of interaction over time. Three basis constructs of this paradigm include sequential life cycle stages, task development at each stage, and relationship changes as family members interact with each other at each stage. It assumes that growth responsibilities and tasks arise at each stage and that successful achievement of the task as presented leads to success at later stages as well as happiness and vice versa. Each stage is a distinct period with certain events triggering transitions to the next stage or a different stage. For a family unit to continue to grow and be a stable system, it must satisfy, at each stage, biological requirements, cultural imperatives and, personal aspirations and values of individual members (Winton, 1995).

In this case, while home economists still decide that there will be a vase and we choose its shape and design, we now work with families to decide what goes into the vase with families depending on us to continue to help them as they progress through a predictable life cycle. From an organismic perspective, home economists assume that families can set their own path and we help them achieve this by working with them. However, while it is agreed that families demonstrate initiative and are goal directed, this developmental (predictable life cycle) and organismic (organism in an environment) view of the world does not allow for an explicit appreciation of a reciprocal (two-way) relationship between families and their environments as they procure and manage resources. There is no accounting for sustainability or for restoring resources (Engberg, 1993; Istre & Self, 1990) nor is there necessarily critique of the conditions generating problems, the process leading to solutions or the final solution.

Three - The Contextual Paradigm

There is now a call for a shift towards a third direction, one which builds on parts of the scientific and organismic paradigms and also suggests logical extensions for home economics practice. This new direction has become evident in the literature during the last 10-20 years and goes by a variety of labels according to the particular visionary expressing her opinion: contextual (Baldwin, 1991; Istre & Self, 1990), global (Engberg, 1993), eco-centered (Badir, 1991; Vaines, 1990), practical problem solving (Engberg, 1994; Engberg, Varjonen, & Steinmuller, 1966; Hultgren & Wilkosz, 1986), human ecology (Bubolz, 1990; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993), critical reflective (Vaines, 1990), emancipatory (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Vaines, 1980, 1992) and dialectic (Brown & Baldwin, 1995).

Each of these ideas will be briefly discussed but the basic premise of this third direction,

hereafter referred to in this paper as *contextual*, is *critical theory* which provides a means for us to raise the consciousness of and enlighten people whose suffering is brought about by their own cooperation in maintaining certain practices such that their life conditions are not conducive to a healthy state of well-being and quality of life. The resultant self understanding, stemming from reflection and dialogue about life's conditions, leads to revision of their role in society shaped by the new found belief that they can make a difference (Baldwin, 1990; Brown & Baldwin, 1995; Smith, 1996).

Contextual. The contextual paradigm assumes that family growth and development occurs within the context of changing environments and to a changing individual due to life events and age cohorts. Badir (1991) Baldwin (1991), Engberg (1993) and Istre and Self (1990) are vocal proponents of this new approach to practice claiming that it augments the scientific and organismic paradigms through which we currently see the world. This paradigm assumes that we can perceive relationships between individuals and families and families and their environments as evolutionary, never ending and happening in context rather than predictable and developmental. Istre and Self contend that "contextualism reflects the importance of the sociohistorical milieu and life events" (p.7) and that "the contextual paradigm is ideally suited for our discipline. It recognizes the multidimensionality of human functioning and the importance of studying all of its aspects. ... Simple mechanistic paradigms will no longer suffice for the complex problems facing families today. It is up to us to raise to the challenge of contextualism" (p.8).

Global. From a global perspective, we appreciate that all things are related to all other things rather than assume that each person is an island acting alone. Actions we take now affect the future, others not yet born, people in other countries as well as the environment (Smith & Peterat, 1992; McGregor, in press-b; McGregor & Greenfield, 1995, 1996). Engberg (1993) explains that a global perspective helps us understand the family or household as an ecosystem, an environment where decisions are taken which can lead to better quality of life for all. This is possible because families are seen as dynamic systems that can adapt and change themselves. They can be socialized to care for each other and the earth; to appreciate that living in harmony with environments demands ethical judgements about how to live differently; and to see the merits of embracing stewardship rather than exploitation.

Eco-centric. The eco-centric approach (*ecology*) challenges the *ego*-centered, me oriented perspective pervasive in today's society. Badir (1991) accommodated the eco-centric approach in her contextual model for home economics research and practice. The eco-centric approach "challenges us to recognize that all things are related to all other things. It is a moral vision of the world, conceptualizing the world as a living organism, and requires that we think holistically and act ethically" (p.66). In contrast, the *ego*-centric paradigm is preoccupied with individualism and technology, has less concern for, or is ambivalent about, the well-being and security of others, the environment and society, and places money and materialism over human lives. From the *ego*-centric perspective, "the world is seen as a place to use and society as a body to which one must conform. To get ahead, one must compete and be the 'best'. To be powerful is to use people and resources to gain control in order to reap the benefits of 'success'. Knowledge and information are viewed as commodities to be manipulated and stored for personal gain... some win and others lose. It is up to individual effort to make it in the system" (Vaines, 1990, p.8). It is evident that the *ego*-centric perspective embodies the scientific paradigm while the

eco-centric perspective is a move in a new direction.

Practical problem solving. The practical problem solving approach to serving families provides a perspective from which we can enlighten ourselves and family members about the ways in which larger society has created conditions which make daily life difficult. It enables us to conceive that all individuals are capable of participating fully in working towards changes for the better for all. This takes us beyond the technical and theoretical approaches to solving problems; that is, doing things for or showing people how to do things and explaining why things are the way they are without any critique or dialogue (Engberg, 1994; Engberg, Varjonen, & Steinmuller, 1966; Hultgren & Wilkosz, 1986). Our role as practitioners is to generate and engage in critical reflective thinking and use a systems of actions approach to practice. We would assume that individuals are capable of developing skills to make reasoned value judgements, perform family and community functions, and improve social and economic conditions for the good of all. We need to embrace a moral and ethical vision of what life should be rather than how or why (Engberg, 1994).

Human ecology. A human ecology perspective for home economics entails a shift from the established paradigm of perceiving the family as a system to the broader perspective of perceiving the family as a human ecosystem, in a larger ecosystem (Bubolz, 1990; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993). The human ecology perspective enables us to appreciate that the family ecosystem interacts reciprocally with its near environments (natural, human built and socio-cultural) to access, generate, use and restore resources to meet basic needs (Bailey, Firebaugh, Haley & Nickols, 1993; Touliatos & Compton, 1988). It is this two way relationship that is the key to the human ecological perspective.

Critical reflective. A critical reflective perspective means we must employ critical reasoning, value judgements, and ethical practices as we strive to enable families to understand and to help themselves be empowered and autonomous (Engberg, 1993, 1995; McGregor, 1996a); this rather than doing things based on habit, custom or fear. We must respect different values and support empowerment and autonomy of the individual and family during different points in time and within their context and resource constraints and opportunities. We can no longer assume that what worked before will work again since both the family and their context will have changed (Vaines & Wilson, 1986). We have to move beyond the "taken for granted" and habitual to the realization that we do have choices and these should be well reasoned and thought out, in full awareness of short and long term consequences on ourselves, our communities and the global village (Vaines, 1988).

Emancipatory. Using an emancipatory approach to practice leads to the ability to affect or shape familial and institutional change to benefit society at large. Critical emancipatory action encourages self-reflection and self-direction to determine what is and what we should be doing so that communities, societies and the world are a better place; it is concerned with morals, ethics and value judgements. Emancipatory practice frees the individual and family to examine other and new notions of what constitutes "the good life", for individuals, families and society at large. It frees them from "disconnectedness, from discrimination, from violence, from poverty, from the absence of opportunity" (Green, 1996, p.15). This practice entails an evaluation process which allows people to judge the adequacy of their environments against their own needs and goals, and vice versa. From this type of practice, we are no longer seen as the expert, doling out advise; rather, we provide a safe environment for dialogue and reflection leading to morally

justifiable, ethical, sustainable resource management decisions (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Vaines, 1980, 1992).

This perspective assumes that people can change their norms and develop new patterns and that clarification and reconstruction of values is pivotal to change. If we are to change conditions which affect the daily life of families, we must alter normative structures and institutional roles and relationships and make changes in personal habits and values. Effecting change entails a collaborative relationship between change agent and client and the establishment of problem solving infrastructures and processes. This paradigm assumes that persons must participate in their own reeducation towards self awareness, self understanding and self control. Change involves the client as well as his/her kinship and friendship networks who may also have to be re-educated. The focus is on creativity and critical reflection as requisites to coping with, adapting to and affecting change (drawn from Baldwin, 1991; Chin & Benne, 1969; Istre & Self, 1990).

Dialectic theory. To reiterate, a new paradigm will suggest new theories and research methods such that researchers can embrace the assumptions of that paradigm. In comparison to the scientific paradigm, dialectic theory would have practitioners (a) "take into account everyday life with its common-sense meanings in which the family is emersed ... (b) respect the meanings that things in the home [and community] have for family members... (c) analyze and criticize social conditions and cultural traditions to reveal their constraints on internal and external [individual and familial] freedom and on justice... and (d) help us see families in a totality of relationships enmeshed in conditions of power which influence their self-interpretations of the situation and empowerment to improve their own lives" (Brown & Baldwin, 1995, pp. 28-29). "The dialectic process is one in which those who participate *make* an argument for a new position rather than one where proponents of conflicting positions *have* an argument" (p.26). This perspective parallels the spheres of influence construct shared by Vaines (1994) wherein we appreciate that the whole ecosystem within which individuals and families live and interact is comprised of eight spheres of influence ranging through: the cosmos, the biosphere, the power sphere (politics and business), the public sphere (community and neighbourhood), the private sphere (home as factory, interrelationships and moral center), the inner sphere (self), and the unknown and the unknowable spheres. These spheres comprise the different domains of reality with which families are related. Dialectic theory strives to understand such a totality of relationships appreciating that families construct their own reality through their interpretation of day to day living (Brown & Baldwin).

A new research method under this third paradigm is **participatory action research** (PAR), a strategy which "calls for the active involvement of, and often control by, those people who would be among the objects or beneficiaries of the research. Their roles should include defining the questions, controlling the process, and interpreting the findings, ideally as originators, proponents, and executors of the research" (Peterat, 1996, p.68). Peterat clarifies that participatory action research (PAR) can enable us to work within different assumptions of knowledge, in different kinds of relationships with families; we are engaging in research *with others* rather than research on or for others. This approach to practice and research assumes that every person is capable of knowing, interpreting and giving meaning to information - they are able to be empowered. People do not "have to" accept answers offered by experts (Engberg, 1996). She clarifies that PAR is intended to empower people through a process of constructing

and using *their own* knowledge, rather than, or in combination with, someone else's knowledge. "The process of participation and dialogue generates confidence, the identification of genuine problems, and the capacity to change social structures and conditions" (p.B7).

Using the vase analogy again, practising from a contextual world view means that we enable families to decide if there should be a vase, depending on what is going on in their life, their home and in their other environments at this particular moment in time with their existing or potential complement of human and non-human resources. If yes, they decide what goes in, when and why, with us providing a safe environment for the discussion, dialogue and critique of the design, the building and filling up of the vase. The family owns the vase and any future problems with it. We are seen as professionals who share our knowledge and generate new knowledge by interacting with families rather than simply telling or showing families what to do. This approach leads to a contribution to family well-being through prevention, education and development rather than just remedial, therapeutic, crisis intervention.

Discussion

This paper has profiled the new call for practice in home economics. It constitutes a new paradigm since it fits the four criteria identified earlier by Ritzer (1975) for a new paradigm: it explains the things the old one cannot, it leaves open a series of problems for solution by the new group of scientists, it is sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from the existing modes of inquiry, and finally, it includes within it the key elements, concepts or constructs of the world view as well as the theories, methods and instruments that will aid in research to come: contextual, global, eco-centered, practical problem solving, human ecology, critical reflective, emancipatory, dialectic theory, and participatory action research.

The call for a new direction to practice entails a radical paradigm shift since we are moving away from being an expert, to being a facilitator, to one who creates a safe environment conducive to families being able to empower themselves as they interact with a diverse collection of influences on their day-to-day lives. No longer will we get the instant gratification (quick fix) from the scientific approach or the continued reliance on us for advice from the organismic, developmental approach. These are compelling reasons why the shift is so threatening to many practitioners. A contextual approach necessitates that families take action when they are ready not when we are ready. Their decision to act could take years with more years before results are evident. Society has "trained" us to rely on the quick fix and to feel needed (Redfield, 1996; Taylor, 1992). We are hooked as is everyone else. But that can, and must, change.

We need to view our world through new professional glasses. The author suggests that the prescription for the new glasses, as set out in this paper, provides the lens for the sensitive, yet necessary, process of reflection and dialogue on the nature of our practice in these dynamic times. When we finally don our new glasses, we may feel a little dizzy and disoriented at first. But, with a period of collective adjustment, our future vision and view of reality should be much clearer and consistent and our practice much more relevant in today's challenging and perplexing global world.

Global Evidence of a Paradigm Shift

There is evidence of a growing world wide acceptance of the necessity of changing the knowledge base home economists use to shape theory, research and practice. Australia seems to be opening up to the new direction for changes in practice. Vincenti discusses the history,

philosophy and new directions for Australian home economists (1995). Burke and Pendergast (1995) ponder the present realities and future prospects for home economics in Australia and Peacock (1995) expresses concern for what is missing in the national Australian home economics curriculum. Slocum and Engberg (1995) are involved in rethinking home economics in war torn Eastern Europe, from a participatory action research perspective. Africa has held several conferences on reconceptualizing home economics in light of the changing African context (Kwawu, 1993). In December 1994, the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA) formalized a three year partnership with the Home Economics Association of Africa (HEAA) to contribute to the reconceptualization of the African home economics profession and, by association, that in Canada (Engberg, 1995). The 1996 CHEA conference highlighted two related sessions, one on home economics in higher education and another on new directions for home economics (delivered by the author).

At the 1993 Scottsdale Conference, United States repositioned and renamed its profession "Family and Consumer Sciences" and now call practitioners 'family and consumer scientists' rather than home economists. Coppack (1996) challenges British home economists, as experts on family and community issues, to band together to undertake research and publish works on the future development of the profession. The International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) has published a book on new directions for family resource management and practice based on many of the new principles and approaches set out in this paper (Engberg, Varjonen, & Steinmuller, 1996). These initiatives are taken as evidence of a growing world wide acceptance of the necessity of reconnecting as a professional community and embracing a new vision, knowledge base and practice in a changing, global context.

Challenges to Changing Practice

It is the author's experience that, to some, paradigm shifts are compelling, enticing, and exhilarating. To others, they represent frightening and intimidating change, new and unfamiliar views of the world and practice. Somehow, given the pressing needs of today's society, families and the natural ecosystem, it is doubtful that many of us can, in good conscience, adopt this posture for very long. We are beginning to sense our professional and moral obligation to progress beyond the coping stage as an expert giving information, through the adapting stage wherein we work together but do not critique the situation, to the empowerment stage where we critically think before we act using our knowledge, as well as other's indigenous knowledge, so that our collective, morally defensible, actions lead to long term benefits for everyone, now and in the future. The implications of not changing our knowledge base are profound; however, paraphrasing Mattsson's (1985) advice, the deletion of reigning perspectives should not happen easily since they are deeply entrenched in our thinking. Indeed, adoption of a new paradigm for practice could transcend and supplement the reigning paradigms rather than replace them.

The compelling question now is to examine how well the profession's existing view of the world is able to generate theories, practice and policies which create conditions conducive to individuals and families becoming empowered in these times of profound change. On a more personal note, do you, as a practitioner, feel adequately prepared to take on this professional dialogue and responsibility? If not, how do you need to change? Is the call for a new direction for practice of relevance to you? Are members of the profession collectively aware of, and do we share, this new paradigm or are we remaining apathetic or disinterested? Of those who are aware of it, who is embracing the shift in paradigms and why? Who, and to what extent, is resisting the

shift and how organized are they, if at all?

These are normal questions to ponder when people are exposed to change. How we answer these questions affects our future ability to accommodate family and society, which are rapidly and relentlessly changing. We must understand that our past practices were not "wrong"; but, that it is time to move in a different direction as we enter the next millennium taking with us what still works, letting go of parts of old modes of practice and bringing into play new ways to see ourselves in relation to families and the world (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996).

To allay possible misgivings arising from this discussion, note that Smith (1975) clarifies that it is a mistake to assume that there are good and bad or right and wrong paradigms. There are, rather, more or less profitable paradigms; that is, each paradigm gives different insights into a particular phenomenon than do other paradigms. Consider an example shared by Istre and Self (1990). Nutrition, with an emphasis on the requirements for growth and development and health and illness, traditionally has been more scientific than contextual. But telling people what they should do is not enough. From a contextual perspective, a nutritionist would not only be concerned with the four basic food groups and recommended daily requirements, but would also be concerned with the acceptability of food choices, individual differences and capabilities in preparing food, and with eliciting the support of family members also affected by the recommended dietary changes. Both the scientific and contextual viewpoints can contribute valuable insights into what should be done to address the perennial problem of feeding families. Istre and Self also share examples about the other basic needs of: shelter, clothing, consumption, and individual development and family relations.

Conclusion

Ritzer (1975) proposes that the existence of different images of the subject matter, in the minds of those practising in a discipline, is the key to paradigmatic evolution. This paper argues that home economics is no exception. There is growing evidence that a collection of visionaries is expressing a new course of action for home economists to consider which builds on, yet challenges, the current modes of practice. This proposed change is significant since co-existing paradigms, more so than one prevailing paradigm, very much affect our choice of ideologies and assumptions, prevailing value systems, theoretical orientations, problems to be examined, research designs, the resulting data and the interpretations of that data (Karlinsky, 1987) as they relate to perennial, practical familial problems.

The home economics paradigm shift discussed in this paper provides the sustenance and underpinnings for rich dialogue and theoretical development. It challenges us to question the basic assumptions underlying our practice, hopefully leading to an "intellectual evolution" such that great changes can take place in the discipline of home economics, and by association, the world. We will have to question our ideology, assumptions, principles and values, current knowledge base, university curricula, text books, lectures, even research programs, policy recommendations and daily practice with families. More importantly, we will have to deal with the answers generated by this individual and collective reflective process, which will take time (McGregor, 1996b).

Helping individuals and families embrace the future is a leadership imperative we can fulfil if we remain open to new ways of seeing families in relation to the world and in changing the ways we serve families which, according to Brown and Paolucci, authors of the mission of home economics, is supposed to change over time with new insights in the profession. Such

"insights come from critical reflection about human needs, the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge" (1979, p.23). Consideration of the impact of different paradigms on home economics practice is germane to this enlightenment and professional growth and evolution.

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Table 1

Comparison of paradigms, theories and models

Paradigms	Theories	Models
<p>.underlying, unquestioned, often unconscious, assumptions,</p> <p>. controlling, fundamental images of the subject matter and field of practice and study</p> <p>. different views or ways of seeing reality</p> <p>. define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained</p>	<p>. list and define concepts or variables which describe a phenomenon</p> <p>. suggest relationships between variables (propositions) based on paradigmatic assumptions</p> <p>.attempt to explain the reality seen from paradigm</p> <p>.use findings of research to solve problem defined by the paradigm</p>	<p>. are actual diagrams of theoretical concepts and their relationships (often involving boxes, lines and arrows)</p>

Table 2 Overview of family resource management paradigm evolution within home economics (extrapolated from Key & Firebaugh (1989))

1900-mid 1970s and still prevalent (75 years)	mid-1970s - current (20 years)	1980 - future
<p>Micro economic theory - positivistic, scientific empirical, or mechanistic paradigm</p> <p>Striving for personal well-being</p>	<p>Systems theory - organismic or developmental paradigm</p> <p>Striving for familial well-being</p>	<p>Integration of economic and social systems theories - contextual paradigm</p> <p>Striving for societal well-being</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . prior to 1900, families were producers . in early 1900s we began to use economic theory to perceive individuals and families as producers of household commodities and consumers of market goods and services . to deal with incredible technological impact on the field split in two: <i>family economics</i> (resource management decisions within the home) and <i>consumer economics</i> (resource management decisions within the marketplace) . after 1940s another split occurred leading to a third focus: <i>home management</i> (emphasis on psychological and sociological factors affecting management process within the home without resorting to economic theory) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . partly because of the <i>static</i> nature of economic theory, social systems theory was introduced to the field in 1975 as a way to represent family as a set of mutually dependent, <i>dynamically</i> interacting entities (complex relationships between family and its environments) . it allowed researchers to account for the <i>exchange</i> that occurred between families and external systems as they obtained resources (economic theory held this exchange constant while systems theory accounted for the dynamics of input, throughput, output and feedback) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . need to <i>integrate social with economic</i> (before they were separate paradigms) . need to capture the <i>character</i>, developmental <i>change</i> <u>and</u> the <i>context</i> of family resource management . need to address internal and external systems of change simultaneously by appreciating complex reciprocal relationships between families and their micro and macro environments, processes of change and equilibrium, and adaptation . allows us to account for the <i>process</i> and <i>context</i> of resource allocation within and by the family and for the <i>outcome</i> of such allocations

Table 3 New directions: Prescriptions for new professional glasses (McGregor, 1995d)

Old professional glasses	New professional glasses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overreliance on the positivistic, ego-centered paradigm leading to money replacing people; leading to power <u>over</u> not <u>empowerment</u> • incongruent personal and professional philosophical orientations; they are out of sync • justified actions based on facts and numbers; incongruence between definition of home economics and our actual practice: reliance on benevolent model of practice leading to dependency • divergence between professional image and public sanction of our authority: image problem • not perceiving home economics from a human ecology perspective • failure to implement three systems of actions, value reasoning and critical thinking leading to quick fixes and ill reasoned actions • inadequate involvement in policy • acting as change management agent outside the system, managing issues rather than underlying societal ills and ideologies • not perceiving home economics as a social movement • adopting an exchange perspective to practice leading to win/lose mentality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift to a contextual paradigm, an eco-centered, global, critical perspective • strive for congruent personal and professional philosophical identities (ensure that personal beliefs match new directions) • justify our actions in intellectual and ethical/moral terms as well as facts thereby contributing to society; use empowerment model of practice leading to self-reliance • improve public image by complying with norms of social professional conduct • readopt a human ecology perspective of home economics • embrace a system of actions perspective to practice resulting in emancipatory, reflective, critical practice leading to human betterment • become politically active • shape familial change and reshape social institutions via acting as transforming agents from within the system by dealing with values, ideologies and assumptions • readopt a reformist (social movement) perspective in addition to the mission orientation to practice (develop knowledge to use it rather than to just have it) • adopt a relational (social network) perspective to practice leading to win/win mentality