

Features

Understanding Ignorance as It Informs Family and Consumers Sciences' Future

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Reputable scholars are developing typologies of ignorance for different reasons including philosophizing about ignorance as well as understanding ignorance within professions, the scientific endeavour, and women's health (discussed herein). These four agnotological typologies (i.e., the study of ignorance) proved useful for revealing and understanding various aspects of our own and others' veils of ignorance about family and consumer sciences (FCS) and home economics. This suggests that other typologies and future theories of ignorance may be helpful as well. Unchallenged ignorance will continue to compromise a century-old profession's potential to strengthen individuals and families for their own good and that of humanity. Thus, FCS and home economics theorists, researchers, and practitioners are strongly encouraged to engage the comprehensive, complex, and politicized notion of ignorance as it informs our future viability and perceived legitimacy.

Introduction

Renwick (2017) argued that "just because the profession believes in its value does not necessarily make this belief evident to others ... Keeping home economics visible is an important aspect of our work" (pp. 170–171). To that end, she maintained that the discipline and profession must respect the role of ignorance (lacking knowledge or awareness) because many "forms of ignorance ... have been used to work against home economics" (p. 167). Although not using the ignorance concept, McGregor (2022) concurred in her recent piece about the profession's history of fighting a war of attrition instead of a war of ideas about home economics¹ — ideological and paradigmatic ideas stemming from people's ignorance of the discipline and profession (whether innate or engineered).

This is a position paper about understanding ignorance as it informs the future of the family and consumer sciences (FCS) and home economics profession. In position papers, the author asserts a personal statement about an issue and then uses a well-reasoned argument to convince others of the idea's merit and that it is worth pursuing. Authors integrate their opinions and reasoned arguments with background information (i.e., data, a literature review, or both)

(McGregor, 2018b; McLean, 2011). This position paper combined the author's thoughts with a literature review.

Ignorance is defined and distinguished from related constructs, and then four typologies of ignorance are presented. The attendant discussion illustrates that FCS practitioners and home economists can use these typologies to expand their understanding of the role of ignorance as it informs the profession's future viability and perceived legitimacy. Renwick (2017) was convinced that this knowledge enhances our "possibilities to redress the prescribed ignorance [that undermines the profession] and situate ... home economics as both viable and important ways of knowing" (p. 164).

Ignorance Defined

Ignorance is Latin *ignorare*, 'not know' and *ignorantia*, 'want of knowledge' (Harper, 2024). In simple terms, when someone is ignorant, they lack information and want knowledge about or awareness of something. But "The Standard View" of ignorance (Nottelmann, 2016, p. 34) (i.e., lack of knowledge) is being challenged by the "New View [whereby] ignorance is lack of or absence of true belief" (Nottelmann, 2016, p. 12) (to be discussed) (see also Le Morvan & Peels, 2016). Furthermore, people often conflate

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1 The ideas herein are relevant for family and consumer sciences (FCS), home economics, human ecology, home sciences, human sciences, household sciences, home ecology, family studies, and consumer sciences.

ignorance with other things, which must be acknowledged and addressed.

Conflated Terms

First, people often equate ignorance (lack of knowledge) with stupidity (French *stupidité*), which actually means lacking common sense and intelligence (i.e., the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills) instead of lacking knowledge (Anderson, 2014; Harper, 2024). Second, when people *doubt* something, they think (believe) it may be false (i.e., thus they assign a truth-value). But with *ignorance*, they cannot assign truth-values because they know nothing of it (Hoek et al., 2004; Smithson, 2010).

Third, while ignorance is a lack of knowledge, *uncertainty* is a “lack of knowledge clarity. [It is] a byproduct of imperfect, limited or missing information” (Birkenholtz & Simon, 2022, p. 156). Fourth, ignorance and *ignore* are different. Ignorance implies that people want to know. Ignore implies that they do not want to know. Respectively, they may (a) be unaware of alternative views or their usefulness for addressing a problem (ignorance) or (b) intentionally turn away from ideas (ignore things) and dismiss the problem (Smithson, 2010).

Innate versus Engineered Ignorance

Everyone is ignorant just in different ways and of different things (Abbott, 2010). Also, “the causes of ignorance are multiple and diverse” (Proctor, 2008, p. 2). Thus, a multipronged approach to ignorance is more productive than The Standard View (Abbott, 2010; Nottelmann, 2016), which assumes people lack information and knowledge. Ignorance is more than passively being born or innately not knowing something, which can be addressed by gaining knowledge or skills (like learning to walk, talk, or read). Ignorance can also be actively produced. It can be allowed, constructed, cultivated, maintained, sustained, and disseminated (Proctor, 1995, 2008; Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008; Tuana, 2004).

Powerful examples of the latter include the (a) tobacco industry's manufacturing of doubt about the cancerous hazards of smoking; (b) oil industry's manipulations regarding hydrocarbon emissions and climate change; and (c) proliferation of secrets in trade, academia (peer review), journalism (protect sources), and the military (Fforde, 2020; Proctor, 1995, 2008). Keeping people in the dark, mistrustful, silent, uncertain, and doubtful keeps them ignorant (Tuana, 2004).

The automatic follow-up question is “Who is privileged and disadvantaged by such knowledge/ignorance” (Tuana, 2004, p. 196). This question matters because the politics of ignorance is just as significant as the politics of knowledge. Who is disadvantaged from ignorance? Who benefits? Respectively, ignorance can lead to exploitation, blind spots, harm, preconceptions, misconceptions, and negative viewing of human affairs (Tuana, 2004). But ignorance can also be beneficial for some people. It can preserve privilege, traditional values, and stereotypes to someone's advantage (Abbott, 2010).

In these instances, ignorance is chosen on purpose; it is not always unwanted (Seese, 2014; Smithson, 2010). Some people have “vested interests in ignorance and uncertainty ... and reasons for not knowing and not wanting to know [and not wanting others to know]. People get things done with ignorance [which] is not always a disadvantage for the ‘ignoramus.’... Knowledge is power, but so is ignorance” (Smithson, 2010, p. 84). Ignorance can be leveraged (a) “to increase ambiguity, cause controversy and/or delay action [and (b) as] political cover and/or to exculpate certain parties” (Smithson, 2010, p. 157). It can also be leveraged (c) to “promote a particular political agenda [to] advance desired and often profitable management outcomes” (Birkenholtz & Simon, 2022, p. 158).

Self-Ignorance versus Others' Ignorance

People themselves can be ignorant, or they can also face others' ignorance of them or their situation and context (Nottelmann, 2016; Smithson, 2010). Regarding the former, self-ignorance can be innate or chosen on purpose. Indeed, Sesse (2014) suggested that some people may choose to ignore things (i.e., remain ignorant on purpose) because it serves one of several needs. Ignorance then becomes a warped sense of inner power. He identified six types of ignorance with attendant consequences.

To elaborate, some facts reveal ugly truths that people cannot face. (a) By ignoring these facts, they can avoid acting against injustice, insecurity, inequalities, and such. (b) Ignoring connections between people helps avoid dealing with uncomfortable or unfamiliar emotions and scenarios. Unfortunately, this type of chosen ignorance compromises a key source of life-sustaining energy. (c) Ignoring history means people can avoid dealing with past failures. But in the process, they lose context, lessons learned, and the ability to know where they are headed (Seese, 2014).

(d) Ignoring warning signs means they can avoid facing what is happening to them. To illustrate, remaining ignorant of health, climate, monetary, relationship, and other imminent problems places people at risk, but they erroneously view ignorance as bliss as they avoid being accountable or responsible. (e) Remaining ignorant of their potential means they can avoid dealing with an uncertain future. This type of ignorance is selfish and shortsighted. (f) Ignoring the consequences of their actions may be reckless, but it removes layers and layers of complex, moral decision making and personal accountability. As Sesse concluded, “the purpose of ignorance is not so blissful after all” (2014, last paragraph).

People may also be dealing with others' ignorance of them. Renwick (2017) and McGregor (2022) acknowledged this when they discussed how FCS and home economics have been undermined (removed or reduced) due to misconceptions, stereotypes, biases, and discrimination fed by ignorance of whom we are and what we are intended to achieve. Renwick referred to “the wholesale writing out of Home Economics from the official curriculum” (2017, p. 164) because of various forms of ignorance of the profession. McGregor (2022) provided powerful scenarios of others' ideological and paradigmatic ignorance about the

profession leading to the “dismissal of (unworthy of consideration), disregard for (lack of attention), and disrespect for (lack of esteem and recognition) home economics” (p. 40).

Citing Apple (2003), the author of *The State and Politics of Knowledge*, Renwick (2017) believed that home economists and FCS practitioners should address the state and politics of ignorance as it informs the discipline and profession's future viability and perceived legitimacy. It can be very difficult to stave off and confront ignorance to improve one's advantage. But Renwick believed this more achievable if home economists became aware of conceptualizations of and theories about ignorance.

Typologies of Ignorance Applied to FCS and Home Economics

Compared to theories about epistemology (i.e., how we know), the ignorance phenomenon, or “‘how or why we don't know,’ ... is remarkably undertheorized” (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008, p. vii; see also Fforde, 2020). Fortunately, dictionary definitions are being supplanted with typologies and taxonomies of ignorance if not actual theories (Haider & Rödl, 2023). A typology “breaks down an overarching concept into component dimensions and types” (Collier et al., 2012, p. 223). The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* is a popular example. It catalogues 16 personality types based on four dimensions (Myers & Myers, 1980).

Typologies do not always accurately and completely capture a phenomenon, however, and may even oversimplify it, but they are useful for helping researchers and practitioners “organize their thinking as [they engage] the question ‘What is this?’” (McGregor, 2018b, p. 54). Abbott (2010) said, “ignorance is an enduring project [but there is a] rarity [of scholarship on the study of] ignorance” (p. 171). Nearly 15 years later, this has flipped. “There are not only countless typologies of ignorance in different fields of research, but also just as many criteria on which they are based, since they are also closely linked to disciplinary conditions and empirical interests, theoretical assumptions and methodological possibilities” (Haider & Rödl, 2023, p. 2).

Gross and McGoey's (2022) recent update on the status of the study of resistance identified enduring topics: re-making the philosophy of ignorance; the pragmatics of ignorance; forbidden knowledge; knowledge resistance; ignorance as a resource and a strength; ignorance as it ties in with uncertainty and doubt; ignorance in science, industry, organizations, and social movements; and willful ignorance. The four typologies profiled herein (see [Table 1](#)) were selected because they (a) reflect many of these enduring topics; (b) are considered seminal, vanguard, or award-winning contributions to ignorance studies; and (c) were judged useful for demonstrating how home economists and FCS can gain insights into how ignorance affects the discipline and profession.

The typologies in [Table 1](#) are presented chronologically starting with Proctor's (1995, 2008) seminal work, which others often acknowledge as a source of inspiration for their work. Robert Proctor created the academic field that studies ignorance and called it *agnotology*. As each typology is dis-

cussed, it is applied to better understand ignorance within and about FCS and home economics.

Proctor's Typology of Ignorance

This section expands on Renwick's (2017) use of Proctor's (2008) typology to examine ignorance within and about home economics. While collaborating with a linguist in 2005, Proctor coined the neologism *agnotology*, which is Greek *agnōsis*, ‘not knowing’ and *logia*, ‘study of’ (Palmer, 2005). Agnotology is, thus, the study of ignorance (i.e., why we do not know what we do not know). It is located within the field of epistemology (i.e., the study of how we know) (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008). Agnotology is now recognized as a legitimate field of study (Fforde, 2020; Gross & McGoey, 2022; Peels & Blaauw, 2016). Proctor (2008) proposed four *types* of ignorance: native state, selective choice, strategic ploy, and virtuous. Most of his examples dealt with scientific research and scientific investigations.

Ignorance as a Native State

Proctor (2008) used the term *native state* ignorance for instances “where knowledge has not yet penetrated. Ignorance is ... knowledge in its infancy” (p. 4). In this instance, native is associated with a place of birth (Anderson, 2014). Proctor viewed ignorance as “a kind of *infantile absence* ... a dearth or cavity that is rectified (filled) by growth or birth” (2008, p. 5). Also called “‘originary’ state” ignorance (p. 4), it is valued because it becomes a resource (i.e., it can be drawn on to accomplish something). With *originary* meaning the origin of something, originary state ignorance becomes the origin of knowledge. Elliott (2012) described it as a starting point.

To elaborate, this type of ignorance is “a kind of rejuvenating force, since it is only by asking the right questions — by knowing wherein fruitful (that is, eradicable) ignorance lies — that we can ever come to knowledge. [It is] a spur or challenge or prompt [needed to] fuel our knowledge engines” (Proctor, 2008, p. 5). This kind of ignorance is not “a negative state [but instead motivates] us to want to know more or differently” (Renwick, 2017, p. 167). Proctor (2008) said native state ignorance is crucial for fuelling scientific investigations and discoveries. Referencing Proctor's work, Birkenholtz and Simon (2022) concurred that ignorance can “serve as a basis for new information, ideas and solutions” (p. 158).

In her discussion of native state ignorance, Renwick (2017) recommended that home economists view their awareness of others' ignorance about the discipline and profession as “liberatory moments” (p. 167). This contrasts with alienating moments that can make them feel isolated and without support. Liberatory moments create a space where people can embrace difficult and painful insights and appreciate that liberation from ignorance has transformative potential. Liberatory situations (i.e., confronting and unveiling ignorance) can be the origins of home economists finding a new political consciousness and altering their discourse and counter messages about the profession (Van Allen, 2000), which McGregor (2022) recommended.

Table 1. Four Typologies of Ignorance

Proctor (2008) (created agnotology in 2005)	Tuana (2006)	Abbot (2010)	Nottelmann (2016)
<i>Science and Scientific Inquiry</i>	<i>Women's Health</i>	<i>Within Professions</i>	<i>Epistemological and Philosophical</i>
native state ignorance (resource to stimulate knowing; origins of knowledge)	knowing what we do not know, but not caring to know	amateur ignorance	factual ignorance
selective choice ignorance (ignores something by default)	we do not know what we do not know	expert ignorance	practical or procedural ignorance (know-how, how-to)
strategic ploy ignorance (intentionally engineered)	they do not want us to know	professional ignorance: - nonspeciality - core literature - in-speciality	objectual ignorance (unacquainted with objects or entities)
virtuous ignorance (it's better not to know)	they do not know, and they do not want to know; willful ignorance loving ignorance (a positive attitude toward what cannot be shared thus cannot be known)		erotetic ignorance (ignorance of answers to questions)

Ignorance as Selective Choice

Proctor (2008) maintained that most forms of inquiry are *selective*. By choosing to look at one thing, we automatically ignore or not pay attention to something else (ignorance by default). "Ignorance is [thus] a product of inattention.... 'A way of seeing is always a way of not seeing — a focus on object A involves the neglect of object B'" (p. 7). The ignorance resulting from *selective choices* is very political in nature. "It has a political geography, prompting us to ask: Who knows not? And why not? Where is there ignorance and why?" (p. 6). Tuana (2006) agreed, asserting that ignorance is a complex, situated, and politicized phenomenon. She said, "understanding the various manifestations of ignorance and how they intersect with power requires attention to the permutations of ignorance in its different contexts" (p. 3).

With selective choice ignorance, people decide more than what to study (i.e., what to pay attention to). They also make choices about (and by association ignore) what questions to ask; which theories, research methodologies, and research methods to use; and what language and discourse to use when reporting results/findings and describing phenomena (Elliott, 2012). "Insofar as these choices draw attention to some features of the phenomena rather than others, they perpetuate selective research, understanding, [practice], and policy making" (Elliott, 2012, p. 296).

Proctor (2008) characterized selective choice ignorance as a "passive construct [and insightfully called it] ignorance of the lost realm" (p. 6) by which he meant if something is passed over (ignored) due to inquiry choices, it may never receive attention. People would remain ignorant (i.e., have no knowledge) of any lost or missed knowledge. Renwick (2017) said that curriculum decisions to pay attention to subjects other than home economics exemplify selective choice ignorance. Eventually, people will not even know

that home economics was an option. Ignorance by default, however, is different from intentionally excluding home economics via strategic ploy ignorance.

Ignorance as Strategic Ploy

People can actively produce ignorance as a deliberate part of their strategy (Proctor, 2008). This is called intentionally engineered ignorance "in the form of strategies to deceive" (p. 8). People actively "work to organize doubt or uncertainty or misinformation to help maintain (your) ignorance" (p. 8). This works to their advantage. A key example is the tobacco industry's manufacturing of doubt about whether smoking their product causes cancer. Rather than a passive construct (as is selective choice ignorance), strategic ploy ignorance is an active construct undertaken intentionally. People actively create ignorance and then work to maintain it to their advantage (Proctor, 2008).

In FCS and home economics, parties embracing nonfamily friendly ideologies and paradigms are given licence to intentionally remain strategically ignorant of home economics and its societal contributions (McGregor, 2022; Renwick, 2017). The "Neoliberal focus on small governments, globalisation and free markets raises the notion that we don't need nor want home economics with its focus on family" (Renwick, 2017, p. 167). This idea is nonsensical given that people daily traverse the public and private spheres with both needing the other for survival. Yet strategic ploy ignorance prevails in home economics (McGregor, 2022; Renwick, 2017).

Worse, Elliott (2013) suggested that selective choice ignorance can sometimes combine with strategic ploy ignorance like when intentionally studying the beneficial or neutral effects of something while avoiding research that might yield negative information. This plays out in home economics as well where the public sphere (e.g., economy, labour market, and government institutions) depends on

the private sphere acting as consumers yet avoids accepting families as a key democratic social institution with the same currency as themselves (McGregor, 2022; Renwick, 2017). In this case, selective choice ignorance serves strategic ploy ignorance.

Virtuous Ignorance

Finally, virtuous ignorance is a form of strategic ploy ignorance (i.e., intentionally engineered). Sometimes there are “things ‘we’ don’t want to know — and many more we’d rather have others not know about us” (Proctor, 2008, p. 20). Sometimes it is better that people do not know certain things — they should be kept in the dark for their own good (Harper, 2024). Virtuous ignorance is thus “moral caution ... sanctioned ignorance” (Proctor, 2008, p. 20) that prevents people from being exposed to dangerous knowledge or helps them resist if exposed (see also Kourany & Carrier, 2020).

In short, “there are things we do not want to know so we resist [or are prevented from] knowing or [we] use moral caution” (Renwick, 2017, p. 168). Indeed, sometimes it is morally right to engage in “organized duplicity” (Proctor, 2008, p. 24) because once released, it can be difficult to “put the knowledge Genie back in the bottle” (p. 24). Juries are kept ignorant to minimize bias. Because people are entitled to privacy, police must have warrants to invade that privacy. Revealed information and knowledge can reduce police ignorance (Proctor, 2008).

Virtuous ignorance assumes that certain types of knowledge can be a combination of too dangerous, biased, undesirable, or restrictive. Thus, the adage “less is more” tends to apply as does “don’t let this knowledge fall into the wrong hands.” In these cases, virtuous ignorance is warranted. Think of knowledge gained by improper or unethical means or of something like the atomic bomb technology. People would be better off ignorant of this knowledge — it is virtuous ignorance, which is “actively constructed, or at least allowed to exist and respected” (Kourany & Carrier, 2020, p. 9). It is sanctioned ignorance.

Renwick (2017) commented on how some home economists and consumers are willing to remain ignorant of how aspects of their food, clothing, textiles, transportation, and shelter are produced. They cannot face the moral dilemmas. They do not want to know, so they resist relevant information. They assume the government or someone else is dealing with this moral conundrum. Unfortunately, they become complicit in the negative consequences (e.g., child labour, and loss of biodiversity) of their actively constructed virtuous ignorance that they created to shield themselves from the vagaries of the modern marketplace. To confront this type of ignorance, FCS and home economics practitioners must ensure that home economics is taught, and that morally laden topics are part of the official curriculum.

Tuana’s Typology of Ignorance

Nancy Tuana is a Penn State *DuPont/Class of 1949 Professor of Philosophy* renowned for her work on epistemologies

of ignorance. Tuana (2006) identified six types of ignorance based mainly on privilege, oppression, exclusion, injustice, and inequities in the realm of women’s health. She was inspired by Proctor’s argument that we must “study the social construction of ignorance. The persistence of controversy is often not a natural consequence of imperfect knowledge but a political consequence of conflicting interests and structural apathies. Controversy can be engineered: ignorance and uncertainty can be manufactured, maintained, and disseminated” (Proctor, 1995, p. 8).

Tuana (2006) called her approach a taxonomy, but it is really a typology. She catalogued six *types* of ignorance with the intention of “shedding light on the nature of their production [to better] understand how to identify, critique, and transform ignorance” (p. 3). She admitted that “while I do not claim that my taxonomy lists all possible forms of ignorance, it provides a helpful framework for beginning the work of developing epistemologies of ignorance” (p. 16), which Proctor and Schiebinger (2008) characterized as “remarkably undertheorized” (p. vii).

In short, Tuana (2006) identified (a) knowing that we do not know, but not caring to know; (b) we do not even know that we do not know; (c) they do not want us to know; (d) they do not know, and they do not want to know (i.e., willful, cultivated ignorance; e.g., about racism); (e) ignorance produced by the construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities (i.e., particular groups are deemed untrustworthy [e.g., rape and incest victims, holocaust survivors, or criminals]); and (f) loving ignorance (i.e., a positive attitude of accepting what cannot be shared thus cannot be known).

The first five types of ignorance are “focused on those things that we could know but for various reasons ignored” (Tuana, 2006, p. 15). Loving ignorance instead “involves the realization that although much experience can be shared there will always be experiences that cannot” (p. 16); hence, they cannot be known, and ignorance manifests. But people accept and respect this particular type of not knowing.

The most damning type is others’ cultivation of willful ignorance about home economics. People often have no idea what they do not know about home economics, and they have no desire to learn otherwise. They depend on stereotypes, biases, unfounded assumptions, paradigmatic blinders, and so on. Hand in hand is Tuana’s (2006) “we do not even know that we do not know” type of ignorance. Home economists’ ideological naivety means they cannot fathom why others summarily dismiss us. Their reasoning makes no sense to us (Renwick, 2017).

McGregor (2022) tendered useful advice for countering willful ignorance. She was convinced that home economists (by whatever name) must become ideologically savvy, so they can recognize when willful ignorance manifests and counter it with effective messaging to better ensure that our curricula are not excluded, and the discipline and profession are not dismissed.

Abbott’s Typology of Ignorance

Exposing and confronting ignorance can contribute to future proofing professions and organizations (Abbott,

1988, 2010). Andrew Abbott won the 1991 *American Sociological Association (ASA) Sorokin Award* for this typology of ignorance within professions. He proposed that amateur, professional, and expert ignorance (three types) differ along three dimensions: ignorance of (a) facts about the profession, (b) literature (works written by and about the profession) and (c) thinking skills for professionals (Abbott, 2010).

To explain the dimensions, facts can pertain to the profession's history, practice, demography, organizations, and licensing and regulation. Literature includes histories, chronicles, research and studies, polemics (debates and critiques), and institutional analyses. Thinking skills include moral reasoning and judgements, empirical judgements, rigor, consilience (linking disciplinary knowledge together), open mindedness, active listening, and willingness for theoretical change if warranted (Abbott, 2010).

To elaborate the types, Abbott proposed that *amateurs* are not necessarily ignorant of the facts or the professional literature, but they lack the professional's specialized thinking skills (especially knowledge of theory and rigor) required to evaluate and order the facts and the literature (i.e., they lack synthetic power). *Expert ignorance* pertains to a particular person working within a profession. Also called *synthetic ignorance*, it refers to experts being ignorant of things they once knew. Their prolonged engagement with the profession (facts, literature, and thinking) has led to "too much synthetic power rather than too little" (2010, p. 186), which occurs with amateurism. Their very memory prevents experts from learning — keeps them ignorant.

Professional ignorance has three subtypes. A professional with *nonspeciality* ignorance has facts and thinking skills but lacks knowledge of adjacent literature in other specialities. *Core-literature* ignorance pertains less to facts and thinking skills and more to lack of knowledge of the core literature in the field. These professionals treat core literature superficially if at all. *In-speciality* ignorance is not so much thinking skills or literature but ignorance of facts within one's speciality area of expertise. These professionals rely on facts that even amateurs may know instead of facts generated by peers (Abbott, 2010).

The FCS and home economics profession can use this typology as it encounters ignorance within and externally. To illustrate, when negatively impacted by amateurs espousing and applying knowledge germane to our field, we moved to certification (accreditation) and/or legislation. These initiatives ensure, respectively, that (a) our higher education programs and lifelong learning initiatives keep professional knowledge current; or (b) people who use our name or engage in similar but regulated practice can be legally penalized (similar to protection afforded social workers, doctors, lawyers, and engineers) (McGregor, 1995; Pucciarelli et al., 2016).

Expert ignorance might have been problematic within home economics and FCS in the recent past (i.e., many people had been practicing for so long that they forgot what they used to know) but not anymore. With a rapidly aging cohort not being replaced at sufficient levels with appropriately trained people (McGregor, 2018a), the real problem is

novice ignorance (coined for this paper) especially their lack of knowledge of both facts and literature about the profession. Hampered by this ignorance, so-called novices are ill equipped to successfully argue for the inclusion of home economics and FCS in the official curriculum and to assert the discipline and profession's legitimacy and relevance.

Professional ignorance (especially nonspeciality, and core literature ignorance) runs rampant in home economics and FCS because of hyperspecialization (Brown, 1993; McGregor, 2023). This too compromises professionals' inclination and incentive to successfully argue for the inclusion of official home economics and FCS curricula as well as assert the profession's rightful place in the multidimensional political milieu.

Nottelmann's Typology of Ignorance

On a final note, Nikolaj Nottelmann (Danish philosopher) tendered his typology of ignorance to "present in a fair light the most important debates [about contemporary epistemology, philosophical semantics, and the philosophy of mind], and guide the reader to a firmer understanding of the philosophical stakes involved" (2016, p. 34). His contribution is part of a Cambridge University Press collection of "important tools that can be fruitfully used in debates within and beyond philosophy" (Peels & Blaauw, 2016, Front matter).

Nottelmann (2016) posited that ignorance varies along three dimensions (i.e., kind, degree, and order) leading to four types. First, the *kind* dimension refers to what a person is ignorant of knowing including facts, know-how, answers to questions, objects, people, events, and properties. Second, ignorance can also vary by *degree* or the extent or amount to which it is present (i.e., people are more or less ignorant). For example, deep ignorance means someone has never, ever engaged with an idea. They have no knowledge of it whatsoever nor have they ever been interested. Shallow ignorance might mean they had entertained or considered the idea but remained ignorant of it. With several people, one person might be least ignorant of an idea.

Finally, *order* refers to the transparency or opaqueness of someone's awareness of ignorance (whether it is what they know themselves or what others think they know about them). Specifically, first-order (Socratic) ignorance (transparent) means someone is ignorant of something, and they know it. Second-order (less transparent) means someone is ignorant of their ignorance. Third-order (opaque) is someone ignorant of the fact that they are ignorant of the fact that they are ignorant of a fact. They don't know that they don't know what they don't know (Nottelmann, 2016).

Using this conceptualization, Nottelmann (2016) proposed four types of ignorance with detailed discussion along the three dimensions. Succinctly, he suggested (a) *factual ignorance* (lack of facts), which is different from lack of truth or belief expressed in propositions about facts; (b) *practical or procedural ignorance* (lack of how-to and know-how); (c) *objectual ignorance* (lack of acquaintance with an object or an entity — person, city, experience, place, or property); and (d) *erotetic ignorance* (Greek *erōtētikós*, 'per-

taining to questions') (e.g., if Jane does not know how to sew, she does not know any correct answer to questions of how to sew). Erotetic ignorance can be complete or partial with the latter referring to not knowing some part of the answer to a question. Vogt (2017) advised Nottelmann to consider *normative ignorance* (what should be done, what is better/worse, right/wrong) and *deliberative ignorance* (what to do versus how to do).

Without question, Nottelmann's (2016) four types of ignorance impact home economics. First, others take impactful actions against home economics based on their ignorance of facts about us (e.g., history, philosophy, knowledge base, and competencies). Second, because others devalue our status as an applied field that chose to draw on hard and soft sciences, they remain ignorant of our import for societal resiliency. Third, others are ignorant of the rigour of our university training as an academic discipline, and they disregard our professional status (objectual) deferring instead to specific specializations and untrained amateurs, respectively. Fourth, they know so little of us that they cannot field questions about home economics thus making it easier to marginalize or exclude it from official curricula.

Using Nottelmann's (2016) insights, home economists and FCS can better counter any prevailing initiatives related to the "discrete and wholesale writing out of Home Economics from the official curriculum" (Renwick, 2017,

p. 164). Her choice of the adjective *discrete* is revealing in that it means separate and distinct (Anderson, 2014); policy makers are separating out FCS and home economics and removing it from the curriculum.

Conclusion

Reputable, highly recognized scholars have begun to develop typologies of ignorance for varied reasons including philosophizing about ignorance (Nottelmann, 2016) as well as understanding ignorance in the scientific endeavour (Proctor, 2008), within professions (Abbott, 2010), and in women's health (Tuana, 2006) (see [Table 1](#)). Each typology proved useful for revealing various aspects of our own and others' veils of ignorance about home economics and FCS. This suggests that other typologies and future theories of ignorance will be helpful as well.

Left in place, unchallenged ignorance will continue to compromise the potential of a century-old profession created to strengthen individuals and families for their own good and that of humanity. Theorists, researchers, and practitioners are, thus, strongly encouraged to engage the comprehensive, complex, and politicized notion of ignorance as it informs the home economics and FCS profession's future viability and perceived legitimacy.

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