

POSITIONING HOME ECONOMICS ON THE VANGUARD OF SUSTAINABILITY

Keynote Address HEIA 2005 Conference
Hobart, Tasmania (Australia)

Sue L.T. McGregor PhD, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Mount Saint Vincent University
Principal Consultant for McGregor Consulting Group
sue.mcgregor@msvu.ca
[Http://www.consultmcgregor.com](http://www.consultmcgregor.com)

Introduction

It is an honor to be here and I do not say that lightly. I feel that the role of a keynote speaker (actually, this is more of an endnote) is to raise the bar, so to say, to push the boundaries, to get you to think differently. So, you must know, up front, that I am not assuming that you are going to leave the conference and readily be able to integrate this information into your existing mental structure. Instead, my role is to challenge you to change your existing mind set as a result of listening and reflecting on these ideas and after reading the paper and references in more detail. I felt this should be said right up front because you deserve to know that you are going to be nudged out of your comfort zone. For some of you it may be validation of paths you have already started to walk, a different journey. Also, while I admit that I cannot do justice to all of these ideas in an hour or less, I trust that your attendance at this conference infers you are ready for some new ideas and that you will get to them in your own time. That is what matters. Sustainability is not about maintaining the status quo but rather about the directions for change and the implications of change.

First, I will distinguish between sustainable consumption, production and development, with a focus on development. This material will be comfortable for most of you because it is information about ongoing UN initiatives related to sustainability. Second, I will offer a collection of ideas for a new home economics mind set to better prepare us for work related to sustainability. This will likely make you a bit less comfortable because it refers to a change in perspectives, a harder thing to change than just gaining more information. I have provided case studies, when appropriate, to place the ideas in context. Third, I offer a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, collection of practice ideas to help you begin to change your mind and work differently for sustainability.

Most of the sessions at this conference have focused on either sustainable consumption or sustainable production. The former deals with the demand side of the market equation and the latter deals with the supply side. The demand side focuses on consumers' choice of goods and services to fulfil basic needs and improve quality of life while the supply side focuses on the economic, social, and environmental impact of production processes. Sustainable *development* deals with all actors in society. For clarification, development often is brought in from the outside while economic growth is usually initiated from within a country. For development to be sustainable, it must integrate environmental stewardship, economic development and the well-being of all people-not just for today but for countless generations to come. Indeed, the quest for sustainable development requires an integrated and holistic approach instead of fragmented, single discipline approach (UNESCO, 2002).

This is the challenge facing governments, non-governmental organizations, private

enterprises, communities, families and individuals. Home economists have a special role to play in sustainable development because our focus is on the quality of daily life and well-being of individuals and families from an interdisciplinary, integrative, holistic perspective.

If the profession of home economics wants to position itself on the vanguard of sustainability, it has to become more complex and do so from a holistic perspective. Being in the vanguard is where we need to be because *the vanguard* is any creative group active in the innovation and application of new concepts and techniques in a given field, in our case home economics. To be holistic refers to the tendency to form new wholes through creative evolution. I suggest that our profession will only continue to evolve if it considers creative, leading edge ideas for leadership, practice and scholarship.

UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO declared 2005-2015 to be the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The main tenet of this decade is that education, in all its forms, is the key to a sustainable future and to positive societal transformation. UNESCO (2004, p.9) holds that sustainability relates to a way of thinking which then help form practice that leads to:

- ethical, empowered and personally fulfilled individuals;
- communities built on collaborative engagement, tolerance and equity;
- social systems and institutions that are participatory, transparent and just; and,
- environmental practices that value and sustain biodiversity and life-supporting ecological processes.

Furthermore, the UNESCO DESD initiative is based on 15 perspectives, condensed in the list below:

- human rights
- peace and human security
- gender equality
- cultural diversity and intercultural understanding
- health and HIV/AIDS
- governance (transparency, full citizen expression of opinion, free debate and broad policy input)
- protection of natural resources and biodiversity
- climate change
- rural and urban transformation
- disaster risk prevention and self-help strategies
- poverty reduction
- corporate responsibility and accountability
- market economy and regulatory environment that shapes education
- many spaces for learning (rather than just public school education)

More significantly, the UNESCO DESD is explicitly linked to two other UN initiatives, the Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Education for All Initiative (UNESCO, 2004). Each of these will now be profiled.

Millennium Development Goals

The world decided, in the year 2000, to launch a concerted attack on poverty and the problems of illiteracy, hunger, discrimination against women, unsafe drinking water and a degraded environment. Meeting at the United Nations at the dawn of the new Millennium, leaders from virtually all countries agreed to a set of eight ambitious goals and eighteen targets. Together, these Millennium Development Goals constitute an overarching framework for international development cooperation, agreed at the level of the United Nations. By the year 2015, 191 United Nations member states have pledged to meet these eight goals, marking their progress against the human condition in 1990. The first seven Goals concern direct improvements in human well-being. The eighth Goal includes steps that developed countries need to take in support of the campaigns of developing countries to win the first round in the fight to ultimately eradicate poverty.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal, free primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women (especially by allowing girls to go to school and entrench women in parliaments)
4. Reduce child mortality (especially under five years of age)
5. Improve maternal health (especially giving birth)
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, including TB
7. Ensure environmental sustainability (including access to drinking water, sanitation, and slum living conditions)
8. Develop a global partnership for development (six targets, including youth employment, good governance, debt problems of states, access to affordable drugs and more accessible technologies)

Education for All Initiative

In 2000 a conference was held in Dakar, Senegal to review basic advances in education since the Thailand World Forum for Education for All in 1990. Those who attended the Forum in Dakar adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, *Education for All*. This framework *commits governments* to achieving quality basic education for all by 2015 or earlier. They collectively committed themselves to the attainment of the following goals (UNESCO, 2001):

- (i) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- ii) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (iii) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs;
- (iv) achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (v) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and,
- (vi) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

UNESCO Culture of Peace Decade

Although the DESD documents make several references to the links between sustainability and issues like rights, security, peace, violence and conflict, UNESCO (2004) does not have an explicit link with the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) (UNESCO, 2000). I am adding this UN initiative to this discussion because it was designed to foster a culture of peace through education by revising the educational curricula to promote qualitative values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace, including peaceful conflict-resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence.

Such an educational approach should be geared also to:

- *promote sustainable economic and social development* by reducing economic and social inequalities, by eradicating poverty and by assuring sustainable food security, social justice, durable solutions to debt problems, empowerment of women, special measures for groups with special needs, environmental sustainability
- *promote respect for all human rights* - human rights and a culture of peace are complementary: whenever war and violence dominate, there is no possibility to ensure human rights; at the same time, without human rights, in all their dimensions, there can be no culture of peace
- *ensure equality between women and men* through full participation of women in economic, social and political decision-making, elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, support and assistance to women in need
- *foster democratic participation* - indispensable foundations for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security are democratic principles, practices and participation in all sectors of society, a transparent and accountable governance and administration, the combat against terrorism, organized crime, corruption, illicit drugs and money laundering
- *advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity* to abolish war and violent conflicts we need to transcend and overcome enemy images with understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all peoples and cultures. Learning from our differences, through dialogue and the exchange of information, is an enriching process.
- *support participatory communication and the free flow of information* and knowledge which are indispensable for a culture of peace. However, measures need to be taken to address the issue of violence in the media, including new information and communication technologies
- *promote international peace and security* - the gains in human security and disarmament in recent years, including nuclear weapons treaties and the treaty banning land mines, should encourage us to increase our efforts in negotiation of peaceful settlements, elimination of production and traffic of arms and weapons, humanitarian solutions in conflict situations, post-conflict (UNESCO, 2000).

Comparative Analysis of Four UN Initiatives

Table 1 provides a list of all of the principles or values that all four initiatives are trying to respect with a comparative analysis. This chart was compiled after I conducted a content analysis of documents related to each initiative, with itinerant readings. Of the 25 principles or values noted in the analysis, four of them (16%) were mentioned by all four UN initiatives: gender equity, cultural diversity and tolerance, poverty reduction and education. Seven more were noted three times by all four initiatives (28%): good governance, justice, human rights,

peace, security, environmental integrity and third world debt solutions. Twelve other principles were noted twice each (48%) including: individual capacity and full potential in a resilient community, health and HIV/AIDS, non-violence, solidarity and the role of corporations and the

Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Four UN Initiatives related to Sustainable Development

	Education for Sustainable Development	Millennium Development Goals	Education for All Dakar	Culture of Peace and Non-violence
individual capacity and potential	–			–
resilient communities	–			–
participatory, transparent, democratic governance	–	–		–
Justice	–	–		–
human rights, dignity freedom	–	–		–
peace	–	–		–
human security	–	–		–
gender equity	–	–	–	–
cultural diversity and tolerance	–	–	–	–
health	–	_child, mother		
HIV/AIDS	–	_affordable drugs		
environmental integrity	–	–		–
urban and rural transformation	–			
disaster prevention and self-help strategies	–			
poverty reduction	–	–	–	–
corporate social responsibility	–			–
role of the economy	–			
sustainable consumption	–			–
education	_All venues	_primary	_early childhood, primary, multiple literacy for all	–
third world debt solutions	–	–		–
global partnerships		_ Esp LDC. Africa, small islands, landlocked; youth employment		
access to, and benefit from, new technology		–		–

solidarity		–		–
communication and free flow of information		_ Local info		–
non-violence (and address violence)		_ against women		–

world economy. Although only mentioned once each, the transformation of urban and rural areas, self-help strategies and disaster prevention, as well as access to technologies and the free flow of information, are all intricate components of holistic sustainability.

I share this analysis with you to illustrate the vastness of the scope of sustainable development. It relates to economic, social, human and environmental perspectives of development. While most people are familiar with the terms economic development and environmental development, I will share the UN definitions of human and social development before we move on. While social development is concerned with promoting social progress relative to economic progress, human development is concerned with the empowerment of individuals and family units that make up society and are the backbone of the economy. More on this topic is available at McGregor (2002).

Human Development

Introduced in 1990, by the United Nations, “sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women" (United Nations, 1994, p.iii).

Social Development

Social development refers to the context within which human development occurs and implies, not only that individuals gain improved skills, increased knowledge and higher levels of physical well-being [human development], but also that they enjoy equal opportunity to employ their skills productively, and a sufficient degree of economic security to make possible stability and satisfaction in their lives. Similarly, social development is related to political freedom and stability, but is much more than formal constitutional democracy. Social development implies not only that people have a voice in government, but also that they enjoy certain basic human rights, that they live in equitable and just societies, that they are free to make choices in their personal lives, and that they are able to carry out their daily activities free from fear of persecution or crime. (UNRISD, 1993, web citation)

For clarification, home economics has a different appreciation for *development* than does the UN. The UN is referring to the *development process* of the *infrastructure* of an entire country wherein an entire nation’s people are affected by government policies and decisions as well as those practices of foreign aid lenders and private lenders. Our profession understands human and social development to comprise the development process of individual people, and their interaction with members of groups, as they evolve through their life cycle. We are concerned with the dynamics of individual human beings developing within the context of their family and community. We focus on parent child relations, families as systems, family processes, early

childhood development processes, etc. If we begin to appreciate the differences, and powerful synergy, between these two approaches to development, we can see a place for home economics in sustainable human and social development. In order for the infrastructure of a country to be solid and sustainable, the family as a democratic unit needs to be sustained. In the future, home economists would not limit their practice to just the family within the home but would extend their work and thinking to individuals and families as the focus of countrywide development work.

Interim Summary

I think it is very evident that there is a place for every home economist in sustainability work if we can raise to the challenge of exploring our practice within the goals and principles of all of these four UN initiatives. Every imaginable facet of family well-being and wellness is evident in the UN work related to sustainability: economic, social, personal, financial, physical, occupational/work, spiritual, environmental, intellectual, and personal autonomy (again refer to Table 1). The second half of this paper is going to spell out some aspects for a more *holistic home economics mind-set* that may provide strong support for the sustainability of the profession and better position us to get on with this work. But, before I begin, I want to introduce you to the idea of philosophical well being (McGregor, 2004b). The sustainability ethic, proposed by Earth Day (2001), recognizes that holistic sustainability cannot be achieved without philosophical processes.

Philosophical well-being

A *well-lived professional life* is contingent on philosophical well-being (Russell, 1987). While a collection of scholars is chipping away at codifying the philosophy of the profession (including the preferred paradigm for practice), it is the responsibility of each individual to clarify, and continually refine, her own philosophical well-being. This refers to the healthy state of our intellect, with intellect referring to our ability to think, reason, acquire, critique and apply knowledge and paradigms? The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2004) defines philosophy as the act of constantly improving one's understanding by way of thinking and discussion. The Philosophy Dictionary (2002) defines philosophy as, literally, a love of wisdom. Philosophy is careful thought about the fundamental nature of the world, the grounds for human knowledge, and the evaluation of human conduct.

Plato defined *philosophical well-being* as the preservation of one's soul, claiming that it is better to be at odds with the whole world than to be at odds with, and contradicted by, oneself (Folks, 2002). In order to be in a state of harmony with oneself, one has to question one's life on a regular basis. A home economist needs to ask herself, "Why am I doing what I do, and what is the impact of those actions? What are the underpinnings of my practice? Am I philosophically sick or well?" Being *philosophically well* means one would always consider how one's practice might need to change to reflect the insights gained from constantly improving one's wisdom, defined as deep, thorough and mature understandings of life. This self-questioning entails questioning the prevailing world view and pondering the impact of practicing by using the theories and models stemming from that world view.

Being philosophically "well" also means always making morally responsible decisions that benefit all humanity and nature. This is possible because a philosopher has an extraordinary rich repertoire of theoretical and paradigm perspectives at their disposal due to their ongoing reflection. Therefore, they are especially adept at seeing the implications and assumptions behind the thinking that guides their practice and the world within which they live and work (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2004). McGregor (2004b) spells this concept out in more detail. Right now, I

invite you to think about your philosophical well-being, and how your practice might change as you reflect on the insights gained from this conference, about how your improved wisdom about sustainability will impact on your practice.

Ideas for a Sustainable Platform for Home Economics Work

I will now return to the development of a more holistic mind-set that will, I believe, provide a sustainable platform for our work. I will identify major new lines of thinking that can inform our thinking but I do not have time, in a hour, to lay out a detailed outline of how our daily practice will change. I can suggest some working examples. Two earlier papers set out my formative thinking about the elements of this professional mind-set (McGregor, 1997a,b). A recent paper profiles past practices with current approaches and suggests new perspectives that need to be considered as part of our repertoire (McGregor et al., 2004). An even more recent paper (McGregor, in press), adds even more ideas about how to enrich our practice. I will limit my talk today to six of these key *new* elements: the human condition concept, the critical science approach, transformative leadership, transdisciplinary practice, Reflective Human Action theory and consumerism as structural violence.

While I still totally believe in the elements of a professional mind set outlined in earlier pieces that I wrote (see Table 2), I chose these six elements for my talk today because I believe they represent the vanguard of home economics thinking, the foremost or leading position in a trend or movement. Real sustainability is about decision making. If we can move on all these fronts, we will be moving toward a sustainable profession that is able to engage in active participation toward sustainable futures. As the conference title says: “The choice is ours.” The way we make decisions, whether conscious or unconscious, is the key factor to sustainability. It is for this reason that I now turn to this powerful collection of perspectives that will hopefully affect your future decisions about how to approach your work related to sustainability.

Table 2 Earlier thinking about elements of a home economics professional mind set (McGregor, 1997a,b, McGregor et al., 2004)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">· a global perspective· contextual practice· the practical, perennial problem solving approach· value reasoning· the three systems of action approach (cope, adapt and power)· the human ecological perspective· critical reflective practice· dialectic theory, dialogue and consensus· quality of life and well-being concepts· empowerment and emancipatory approaches· change agent· political participation· participatory action and action research
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The Human Condition

This idea is still a work in progress, but I wanted to share what I have conceived so far. Brown (1993) maintains that home economists, who do not see the world holistically, have a mind full of little islands with no bridges between them (p.109). They assume that, “because the world is fragmented, well-being is to be achieved by individuals and families separately and independently from other persons and from society”(p.106). To rectify this stance, she suggests that we move from seeing well-being comprising any number of different dimensions to seeing it as based in very basic normative concepts and principles (p.111). By normative, Brown means stating how things *ought to be* as opposed to being positive wherein one states, factually, how things are. For example, instead of *describing* the economic, social, physical and emotional states or conditions of families and individuals, we would go further and interpret those conditions using universal principles such as justice, equity, fairness, freedom, human rights, human security, resilient communities, participation, power, responsibility, interests, et cetera.

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

Eight Distinct Dimensions of the Concepts of Personal Wellness and Well-being	A Holistic, integrated perspective - Wholeness	The functional definition of the family as a basic democratic institution (six functions)	Universal normative principles or values that help us think about “what ought to be”
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Using the concept of the human condition, (a) home economists would deal with each dimension of wellness or well-being (b) from the assumption that one cannot address one separate element of wellness without considering the impact on other elements (holistic). Home economists would cease to see wellness as the purview of individuals or specific family units or family *types* and (c) begin to be concerned with the wholeness of the global human family and the main functions this family fulfils as a basic social institution. And, the biggest change would be embracing the normative approach to practice wherein, instead of simply *describing* the state or condition of families and individuals, home economists (d) would go further and *interpret* those conditions using the universal principles and values related to peace, justice, equity, fairness etc.

Here is a simple but effective example of how our work would change. Take the issue of children, for example. The UNICEF 2005 report card for the State of the World’s Children reports that:

- FACT - every second child in the world is living in poverty
- FACT - 10.6 million children die before they reach the age of five (*daily* toll - 29,000 kids)
- FACT - child born in Japan lives to age 83. Child born in Zambia lives to the age of 33 (50 years less)

- FACT - 15 Million children, worldwide, have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. That is equivalent to all of the children living in Canada.
- FACT - the number of kids trafficked each year is the number of children living in Australia (1.2 million)
- FACT - the number of children in the sex industry - twice the number of children living in Australia

When applying the human condition concept we would go far beyond just stating the facts. We would dig for the underlying power relations, ideologies and value premises that allow these FACTS to exist. Why does the world tolerate these inhumane conditions of the future generation of the species? It is not enough to document that it exists and then describe the daily life of children in this condition, save to sensitize people to their plight. If we want to improve the daily condition of their lives and our entire species, if we want them to have a future, we have to USE the facts to expose the injustices, insecurity, inequities etc that result because of the underlying power relations, ideologies and value premises at play in that particular context. Once we have exposed the state of the human condition, we have to work to get the big picture things changed - personal and world wide paradigm shifts, international laws and policies, different economic, social and political infrastructures etc. This is hard, big-picture, no quick fix work. This is the work that leads to sustainability.

Critical Science Approach

Critical science is concerned with revealing power relationships, especially distorted power relations, that make it easy for the elite to oppress others by controlling knowledge, access to power, meanings and daily practices. Unpeeling the beliefs, attitudes and actions that contribute to subordination of most people by a very few (elite), reveals the current power relations that are creating the current human condition. Once these power relations are exposed, it is easier to challenge the patterns of domination, and to change the balance of power, so people no longer “buy into” a false consciousness. Their awareness can now be continually fed by ongoing exposure of political and economic decisions that keep them down so that the elite interests can be served (Rehm, 1999). Each society needs critics to idealize a higher order of freedom than that which is currently attained under the prevailing ideology (McGregor, 2003c). We can be those critics! We can help raise the consciousness of people about deep ethical and ideological issues so that the human condition is grounded in security, freedom, rights, justice and peace.

Recognizing that not all of you are teachers, but you are no doubt all educators, I do encourage the teachers in the audience to think about how you can handle this in the classroom. Home economics contexts are excellent for adolescents to explore power relations (fashion industry, food advertising etc). I note that HEIA has already have explored some strategies in its pedagogy booklet, *Home economics education—Making it work*. I encourage you to think about how you might use the ideas of ‘social inquiry’ and ‘empowerment practice’ as described in the booklet to help students think about power relations. It involves using a thematic approach, developing learning plans instead of lesson plans and focusing on issues instead of just content.

Transformative Leaders

If we chose to embrace the role of being a critical analyst of the human condition, we can also chose to embrace the transformative leadership approach. For clarification, the opposite of a transformative leader is a transactional leader. These types of leaders wield power “over” someone or some process. Power-over means directing, regulating, managing and controlling people using influence and authority. Subordinates, when controlled by a transactional boss, are

expected to get promotions, raises or positive reinforcement if they do well and criticism and sanctions if they do not do well. Because people will do only what they are rewarded for, or avoid doing what they will be punished for, they begin to avoid taking risks and things become stale, stagnated and static. TA leaders also recognize and use praise, recognition and the delegation of responsibilities from the top down. TA leaders tend to: (a) wait passively for mistakes and then correct them, (b) take no action until a problem occurs and then met out punishment, or (c) avoid leadership all together.

From a transformative leadership perspective, a leader can be *anyone*, regardless of formal position, who serves as an effective social change agent (Astin & Astin, 2000). In this sense, every single person in the home economics profession has the potential to be a leader. Leadership does not have to be relegated to any one person, committee or working group anymore. Transformative leaders succeed in: (a) articulating powerful change agendas over a long period of time; (b) getting people to change inside as they embrace this new agenda; (c) accepting the idea of power through people instead of power over them; (d) grounding people in a moral dimension; (e) striving for them to exceed their own expectations, reach their fullest potential; and, (f) getting them to challenge the status quo. These people will be able to deal with uncertainties and ambiguity rather than concentrate their efforts on maintaining the status quo (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2001). TF leaders will give up needing to know everything (they are no longer the expert) and, instead, hunger for the insight and input of others (Bass, 1985). They will communicate their vision in compelling ways so that people embrace it and make it their own. *Transformational leaders are willing to stand in the centre of new ideas and amass energy around it* (Dantley, 2002; Stokes, 2003). I am on my own journey to transformational leadership.

Again, an example helps illustrate this concept in action. Every since 1994, I have been involved with one particular aspect of Canada's bankruptcy legislation, writing the course that people take to counsel bankrupts (insolvency counselling directive). When I became involved with this work, I did not question the government's assumption that bankruptcy legislation is often a response to the deviant behaviour of individuals who need treatment so they can learn the proper norms of credit behaviour. This response reflects the assumption that the consumer has failed in the system rather than the system failing them. From a transactional leadership perspective, it makes sense to accept this assumption because TA leaders assume that those who fail deserve punishment and those who succeed deserve the praise. TA leaders do not tap into their subordinate or clients' creativity. From this uncritical perspective, it should not surprise anyone that I was blind to the fact that I had embraced this notion of failure instead of stepping back to wonder why our legislation was based on the perception of debtors as deviant members of society? In hindsight, this view seems warped, does not serve families or society and leaves me wondering how I could have let this happen so naively. I was the expert, received recognition for my work in this policy area (even received two awards) and I got my quick fix. I had power over something and was seen as the expert.

Recently, I was contracted to renew and update this course that people have to take if they want to counsel bankrupts. I took this as a chance to *stand in the centre of new ideas and amass energy around it*. I was successful in convincing people that the underpinning of the entire course should be the fallout of living in a consumer society. To that end, they agreed to change the terms debtor and bankrupt (powerful labels) to "counselling participant." The whole tone of the course changed when we did that. Also, the team of writers began to change the way they perceived debtors (three of them were counselors themselves). They gained courage from these insights to dare to challenge the status quo that debtors are failures in a consumer society. We

built in a self-learning gauge to help learners take control of their own learning process. We assumed that what they knew already was valid and said this repeatedly. We assumed that anyone can be a leader and that we may have paved the way for change in the Canadian system, down the road.

Transdisciplinary practice

If home economists chose to keep their personal and professional philosophy healthy, to critique and challenge the current conditions of humanity and do so from a transformative leadership stance, they will be ready to consider practicing from a transdisciplinary approach. I have been told by many people, when they are exposed to this idea, “oh, we have been doing transdisciplinary all along.” When I hear this, little red flags go up. We use the word but often equate it with interdisciplinary, worse yet, multidisciplinary. Which ever one we do, it will greatly affect the nature and results of our work for sustainability. If we do multidisciplinary work, we stay within our own small areas of expertise. If we simply mingle disciplines to problem solve, while each discipline maintains its distinctiveness, we are multidisciplinary. This is reflected in specializations in our profession, separate subject areas in schools, separate disciplines at universities, separate fields of study etc.

If we engage in interdisciplinary work, we move beyond working in the roots of one discipline (e.g., economics, politics etc OR food, clothing, housing etc) and work with others so we can *transfer* methods from one discipline to another either for: (a) new applications, (b) new analyses, or (c) the generation of entire new disciplines. When solving problems from the interdisciplinary approach, the people involved offer parallel analysis of *parts* of a problem. Granted, synergy forms so new solutions can be sought for the particular complex problem in that world, say children’s poverty. But, this is not transdisciplinary work.

I recommend that you read a much longer and detailed version of this idea at McGregor (2004c). In the meantime, I have taken the self-inventory guide at the end of that paper and presented it here in paragraph form so you can get a better sense of what your practice would look like. The ultimate agenda of transdisciplinary work is to understand the world in all of its complexities instead of just bits and pieces of it. To begin to reach this level of understanding, people who know about the bits and pieces will agree to work and mutually learn together.

Someone initiates the collaborative work and explains that the work will be happening in the fertile space between and beyond the disciplines (instead of assuming that the space between things is empty). The walls between the disciplines will have to come down so the fertile space can grow and expand and so the people coming from different walks of life can also grow together, moving beyond the separate disciplines to a new, collective space and mind set.

People from more than one discipline meet with non-academics (dance, music, arts, et cetera) to solve complex, intricate problems. This melding of the thoughts of people from different walks of life is what makes this approach unique. Academic minds are trained differently than the minds of artists, poets, dancers and musicians. They see the world differently and those differences will be used to come up with patterns of similarities that will ground the work. The diversity brings eventual unity. The nature of this mutual learning is quite unique - it involves always questioning assumptions, always building bridges (no separate paths or roads) and always seeking to find out what has conditioned us to be the way we are. People will continually work on how to be with others while continually working on finding one’s own potential and inner core. And, they will always strive for creativity and sharing rather than selfish retainment of “my” knowledge.

Conversations and contributions brought to the fertile space by each person(s) are put forth knowing they will be melded with all of the others (there can be no ownership of separate bits of information). People have to know they are going to have to let go of what they brought to “the table.” To arrive at a level of comfort with this letting go, people involved in these initiatives may want to create a website where they can add and edit their ideas freely as they evolve. This is called a virtual creative commons and there is software that facilitates copylefting. It seems appropriate to call this emerging knowledge “outerspace knowledge” because it is created in hyperspace!

The nature of the problems dealt with in this space is unique - each problem is a rich weave of societal structures and functions and cannot be seen as a single entity. For example, pollution, disease, population growth and lack of peace are all linked together. Addressing just one of them is not enough. Indeed, those working together will know the difference between a *complicated* problem and a *complex* problem, with that difference being the property of emergence. Simply put, as people work together, new ideas and insights will continue to appear and bubble up as conversations simmer and perk over time. Because people are changing in this interactive net of relationships, so does the energy flow change, with solutions to the social problem emerging, grounded in embodied knowledge. Embodied means people have made it part of them. They cannot see the world the same way anymore because they have “put on” a new set of glasses with new lenses. They have different stories to tell now, shared stories. They have learned new dance steps, new patterns. The inquiry into the social issue will not stop with the first *best* answer because everyone present appreciates that the issue is profoundly complex and linked to other issues that are also complex. They will continue to dig deeper, dance longer, in unison, knowing that their collaborative efforts will pay off. They know that their dialogue about the many layers of social issues will gradually unfold while never losing sight of the “wholeness” of the issue. The result will be new, embodied, outerspace knowledge that can be applied to solve the many layers of the social problem.

To aid in this problem solving process, the people who come to these “meetings” know that the intent is to create a new space where everyone’s credible ideas will be integrated into a new “whole.” In order for this integration to occur, the people involved have to bravely walk out of their zone of resistance into a common zone of acceptance. From then on, those people involved will not see things as “her idea versus my idea” because they are no longer standing in their safety zone. They have entered the fertile space that is constantly in flux - their sound footing is no longer there. They have to learn to work in uncertainty, knowing that something will emerge that all can support and that will support all involved.

If people from different disciplines, and from civil society, have no way to talk to each other then the people at these meetings will have to respect the power of metaphors and narratives/stories/dance, et cetera. They will be open to using these as tools to create a temporary language to help everyone navigate the unfamiliar space between their respective disciplines, like I am doing in this self-orientation tool. Everyone attending these problem solving/posing sessions will have to learn to accept that what they think is true is only true until they encounter someone else’s interpretation of the issue. This open-mindedness to many different realities prepares the way for a shared truth to emerge from the work being done in the fertile space.

The people working (dancing) in the fertile space will know in their hearts that they have to move beyond creating *teams* that are only temporary and work toward creating concepts that form the foundation of the dance floor. These concepts (which are ideas that exist in peoples’ minds) are formed by everyone actively looking for common patterns so that a common

language can be formed that helps people express themselves as they work in the fertile space. Although the people who develop these concepts came to the fertile space with ideas from their respective disciplines (or civil society activities), all of these old ideas will eventually be altered.

People working in this fertile space will appreciate the strength of patterns as grounding concepts. Imagine a pattern for making a dress. While many people may make different dresses using the same pattern, there will be similarities because the foundation, the basic pattern, is what makes the dresses similar. A pattern can also be defined as an activity done without thinking. After working in the fertile space, the people involved will develop patterns of relating to each other and mutually learning, that will become second nature to them, strengthening their ability to eventually understand the world in all its complexities.

As people work together in this space, they will be constantly weaving ideas back and forth until the original yarn (contributions) is left behind and a new fabric takes shape. This new fabric will be a richer approach to addressing the social problem and will bring them closer to understanding the world as a whole. Many new pieces of cloth will be created and, eventually, even the yarn being used will be different because people will be using the new concepts as their starting point! Or, continuing to use the dance metaphor, as people work in this space, they will constantly weave back and forth in the dance, changing partners until their original contributions are left behind and new patterns and partners emerge. There will be new dances, with new steps, new patterns that are continually emerging.

A rich example of the transdisciplinary principle of *uniting knowledge* in the space between the disciplines is the powerful new leadership theory developed for home economics by Andrews, Mitstifer, Rehm, & Vaughn (2001). They worked in that fertile middle ground between disciplines, crisscrossing between authentic leadership, quantum physics, chaos theory and living systems theory and created a new leadership model for the profession. They called it reflective human action theory and suggested, for the first time in home economics, a way to see ourselves as leaders being shaped by the principles of the new science. This theory is described below.

Reflective Human Action Theory

If we value the critical examination of the nuances of the human condition from a transdisciplinary, transformative practice, we can learn a lot from a new leadership theory developed *for* the profession by members *of* the profession. This new approach is called reflective human action theory (Andrews et al., 1995).

First, they suggest that we have to first appreciate that *any* action taken by a human is comprised of seven features which are present whether the person knows it or not: mission, meaning, existence, resources, structure, power and fulfilment. Succinctly, any human activity is inherently shaped by a larger purpose, is done because it has meaning for the person, happens in a historical context, is affected by the level of available resources, plans and strategies and involves a commitment of power and spirit to see it through to completion.

Second, there are also three features of human action that is *reflective*: (a) being true to one's own self (authenticity); (b) being ethically, intellectually and morally responsible (ethical sensibility); and, (c) acting with spirituality (universal human capacity for passion and purpose) (Andrews et al., 1995). RHA is a theory that helps us see leadership as intellectually and morally defensible.

Third, Andrews et al. (1995) also clarify that the reflective human action theory of leadership for home economics promotes four principles:

1. accepting chaos - despite new and chaotic information, we have an unerring ability to find order leading to the personal ability to change and renew;
2. sharing information - people need to share information to be find creative, consensual solutions. Information is the invisible workings of creativity, the primary life force of the universe and it must be shared not hoarded;
3. embracing a vision - we derive clarity, purpose and a sense of direction from shared values and a vision; and
4. developing relationships - we grow and construct ourselves through our relationships since nothing is known except in relation to persons, ideas and events.

Fourth, RHA assumes that there will be a web of inclusion, which is pulses of energy that continually evolve and assume shifting shapes as the various elements interact. The web reconfigures with each new set of ideas and thus is in a continual state of adaptation.

Leaders who appreciate that order will come of chaos, if one stays with one's commitment to sharing information, developing relationships and gaining consensus of vision, are better able to see home economics from a holistic perspective. I have already used the RHA theory to frame a case study describing the policy experiences I had while working with Industry Canada on the bankruptcy legislation (McGregor, 1998). Succinctly, I was part of a six member working group. Despite new and chaotic information, there was an unerring ability to find order within the Working Group. Shared information was the invisible workings of the Working Group's creativity. The WG derived clarity and purpose from shared values and a vision. The WG grew and constructed itself through its relationships. Information was usually given without regard for position and a "right to know," adding a sense of security and building morale. The connections between many members of the web were maintained as the 1994 Working Group was disbanded and the 1995 Task Force to write the course was assembled. The web of inclusion expanded to include collaborative efforts with counselling entities in United States.

Members of the Working Group felt that they shared power appreciating that the final decisions rested with the Superintendent. This relative decentralization of power paid off, since the Superintendent adopted every recommendation except advocating for consumer education in the public school system. The members of the Working Group did not explicitly search for meaning, as is expected during reflective human action, but they did appreciate and accommodate the uncertainty inherent in any policy analysis process. Finally, the task assigned to the Working Group was more important than the position of each member on the WG, epitomizing a truly functional web of inclusion. This happened even though it was not a true organizational effort but rather a collaborative effort comprising of several key stakeholders acting on behalf of the ultimate stakeholder, the bankrupt.

Consumerism as Structural Violence

On a final note, I would like to direct you to the monograph I wrote, as a Kappa Omicron Nu (KON) Research Fellow, that develops the idea that home economics and peace are two fields of study that have profound synergy (McGregor, 2001). After writing this monograph, I continued to think about peace, violence, home economics and consumerism. The result is papers about consumerism and a culture of peace (McGregor, 2003b) and an another recent work about consumerism as a source of structural violence (McGregor, 2003a) and as a form of entitlement (McGregor, 2004a)

When a society is built in such a way that people end up being ostracized, excluded, exploited, impoverished, collectively humiliated, marginalized, discriminated against, oppressed

and lacking opportunities- we have structural violence. Structural violence is almost invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and our regular experiences. Because they are longstanding, these structural inequities usually seem ordinary, the way things are and always have been done. Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care or to legal standing are all forms of structural violence (Winter & Leighton, 1999). The people most affected by structural violence are women, children, elders and those from different ethnic, racial and religious groups and sexual orientations.

We have to reflect more deeply on how the profession conceptualizes consumerism and whether its members are part of the problem or part of the solution to ending structural violence in the marketplace. Strong and unsustainable consumption patterns have developed and have been unchallenged over a long period of time. We are now at the point that consumerism and structural violence represent dominant forces in human social interaction and these forces are transforming human life in powerful and destructive ways (Santi Pracha Dammha Institute, 2001). Consumers living in a consumer society live a comfortable life at the expense of the violence imposed on impoverished labourers and fragile ecosystems in other countries. Consumerism is the drug that causes people to fall into moral sleep and remain silent on all kinds of public matters, including the possibility that their behaviour constitutes violence. As long as their little world of peace and relative prosperity is not disturbed, they are happy not to get involved. It is against this background of consumer complacency that all kinds of moral relaxation can arise (Benton, 1998). Consumerism accentuates and accelerates human fragmentation, isolation and exclusion for the profit of the few, contributing significantly to violence. Society has ignored the “new slavery” and the resultant *disposable people* through ignoring the implications of consumption decisions on third world citizens, the next generation and those not yet born (Sankofa, 2003).

The symptoms of violence in a society structured around consumerism are everywhere: the killing of youth-by-youth for brand name running shoes or jackets; the violence present in advertisements, video games, music, videos and children’s programming on television; the not-so silent violence in the home due to dual income and single parents working to meet increasing costs of living; and, latch key kids, underfunded daycare and escalating violence in schools. To be on the vanguard of sustainability, home economists have to change the way they understand consumerism and see it as violence. They then have to link this new understanding with the concepts of the human condition, the critical approach of power relations and transformative and transdisciplinary approaches to practice.

Comparing This New Home Economics Mind-Set to the UNESCO DESD

It is very obvious, to me anyway, that sustainability, as defined by UNESCO DESD and all of its related initiatives, correlates very closely with what I am proposing for a new mind set for home economics. Table 3 sets out just a few examples of this synergy. It positions the three principles of the DESD, as well as the information in the preamble (see page two of this paper) against the seven perspectives suggested for the new mind set for home economics. Practice from this mind set would be profoundly world altering and amazingly self fulfilling. I urge you to read more deeply about the proposed new mind set and add more ideas for synergy to Table 3. I will help!

Conclusion

I really, really believe that home economists can make a lasting and significant impact on sustainability if we focus on keeping the profession sustainable. I encourage you to take the time

to focus on the sustainability of home economics. If we want to commit ourselves to sustainable consumption, production and development, we must take care of ourselves. We must nurture our

Table 3 Comparison of elements of UNESCO DESD to the home economics mind -set

UNESCO definition ethical, empowered and personally fulfilled individuals	UNESCO definition communities built on collaborative engagement, tolerance and equity	UNESCO definition social systems and institutions that are participatory, transparent and just (including governance)	UNESCO definition human rights, human security and peace, CSR, poverty reduction, the economy and marketplace
<p><i>RHA:</i> ethical sensibility, authenticity and acting with passion and purpose</p> <p><i>Critical science</i> once people are aware of what is keeping them oppressed (found their inner voice), they can take social action to redress power imbalance</p> <p><i>Transformative leadership:</i> strive to get people to exceed their own expectations to reach their fullest potential</p>	<p><i>Transformative leadership:</i> focus on collaboration towards a common vision</p> <p><i>Transdisciplinary:</i> civil society and academics dance the dance to facilitate cross fertilization of ideas to solve the problems of the world</p> <p><i>RHA:</i> order will come of chaos, if one stays with one's commitment to sharing information, developing relationships and gaining consensus of vision</p>	<p><i>Critical science:</i> focus on unequal power relations</p> <p><i>Transformative leadership:</i> focus on gaining insights and input from others to ensure moral societal stance</p> <p><i>Consumerism as structural violence:</i> shift focus to participatory consumerism wherein people see themselves as citizen-consumers</p>	<p><i>RHA:</i> moral responsibility</p> <p><i>Consumerism as Structural Violence in the marketplace:</i> focus on impact on human rights, security, meeting basic needs and lack of consumer accountability. Accept that consumerism is related to peace.</p> <p><i>Human condition:</i> focus on interpreting the current state of families using normative universal principles and then taking social action</p> <p><i>Transformative leadership:</i> ground people in a moral dimension and prepare them for a long journey for radical (getting at the roots of), social change</p>

own philosophical well-being at the same time that we dialogue about the future mind-set of perspectives relevant for the entire profession.

I say again, sustainable development is not about maintaining the status quo but rather about the directions for change and the implications of change (UNESCO, 2004). To that end, here are some suggestions for things to do in the future (research, policy, consulting, teaching, personal growth etc):

- advance growing global awareness of holistic sustainability by becoming an advocate for the cause. Spread the vision of a peaceful world that respects people and nature
- liaison with people working on community development and resiliency
- read widely, form opinions and then link with others who are taking action to impact the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities (justice, poverty, equity)

- create an inventory of, and then make yourself available for interaction and coordination with, many agencies and agents who are intervening at the local, regional and global levels for sustainability
- work with others to plan a series of when-service learning opportunities to move closer to the mind-set for home economics set out in this paper
- create a global network of home economists working on sustainability and generate a series of think pieces and working papers that spell out how our approach is unique and valuable (transformative, transdisciplinary, critical, human focused, etc). Share these with the governments, educational institutions, NGO's, the media etc.
- conduct research that can inform policy - *evidenced based* policy making
- become familiar, and offer to work, with those initiatives which are calling for mindful markets and economies of care - part of the alter-globalization movement
- commit yourself to work on becoming philosophically well, building your intellectual and reasoning capabilities
- continue to become familiar with the issues and principles related to sustainability so you can arrange for consulting and input into policy decisions related to human, social, economic and environmental development
- expand your understanding of education beyond the scope of public, secondary and tertiary school. Now consider that "spaces of learning" exist in non-formal settings, in community based organizations and local civil society, the workplace, bureaucrats, legislative and policy making bodies. Take your voice to these learning spaces.
- commit to learning more about futures education, global citizenship education and peace education so you can bring these perspectives into your practice network with home economists all over the world using e-mail and chat rooms
- give an enhanced profile to the central role of education and learning in the common pursuit of sustainable development
- facilitate links and networking, exchange and interaction among stakeholders (partners, networks or alliances) who are working on sustainability, especially within DESD
- provide a space and opportunity for refining and promoting the vision of, and transition to, sustainable development – through all forms of learning and public awareness
- foster increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development develop strategies at every level to strengthen capacity for education for sustainable development
- work with indigenous peoples, because of their particular and long-term links to specific environments and because of threats to their living and future. They are stakeholders both in the active and passive sense, but more especially represent a fund of knowledge in balancing the use and preservation of natural environments and holistic approaches to life.
- work with mainstream and the alternative media to help build a groundswell of public opinion that will result in an understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of sustainable development and therefore an engagement with educational and informational initiatives

offer to *train the trainers* working in many venues (private, public and NGO sectors) about in the new home economics mind-set proposed in this paper. Then, they will see the merit of consulting and working with us.

We will become *the* “go-to” profession for sustainability!

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