

**McGregor, S.L.T. (2009). Meta-review of IJCS home economics-related book reviews. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33(4), 515-520.**



Posted with Permission

I became Book Review Editor for IJCS in 2000. Since then, I have reviewed 13 home economics-related books for the Journal (see Table 1). Emma Collins (the Editor of this Special Issue) and I agreed that it would be appropriate for me to undertake a meta-review of the book reviews to date. The intent is to profile the ideas contained in this collection of books so we can speculate about what new ideas are needed for the future. A meta-review is a process or technique of synthesizing research results to retrieve, select, and combine results from previous separate but related studies, leading to a summary of the pooled results. A variation of this concept is a systematic review, defined as the application of strategies that limit bias in the assembly, critical appraisal, and synthesis of all relevant studies of a specific topic (Chalmers, Hedges & Cooper, 2002). In this case, I selected all books that dealt directly with home economics philosophy and leadership, excluding consumer-focused books, or those dealing with research methods and methodologies. As explained in the decade review of the Journal, intentionally reviewing books with a focus on leadership and philosophy respected the Journal’s original roots in home economics (McGregor 2007, see also McGregor, 2009a).

Table 1 13 home economics-related books about leadership and philosophy that were reviewed in IJCS (see Appendix One for more information)

Date reviewed in IJCS	Title of book and year of publication	Country of Origin
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human perspectives on sustainable future (2006)</li> </ul>	Finland (with international contributions)
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International family studies: Developing curricula and teaching tools (2006)</li> <li>• Home economics science and arts (2006)</li> </ul>	United States Germany
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home economics now (A tribute to scholarship of Eleanor Vaines) (2004)</li> </ul>	Canada (with international contributions)
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A philosophy of home economics (1977, 2004 Translation)</li> </ul>	Japan
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic leadership of the profession: Agenda for change (1998)</li> <li>• Toward a theory of family well-being II (1998)</li> </ul>	United States United States (with contributions from Australia)

2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective Human Action: Introduction and course syllabus (2001)</li> <li>• Leadership: Reflective Human Action online supplemental text (2001)</li> <li>• Beatrice Paolucci: Shaping destiny through everyday life (2002)</li> <li>• Virginal mothers, groovy chicks &amp; blokey blokes: Rethinking home economics (and) teaching bodies (2001)</li> <li>• Rethinking home economics: Women and the history of a profession (1997)</li> </ul>	United States United States  United States Australia  United States
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and consumer sciences curriculum: Toward a critical science approach [Yearbook 19] (1999)</li> </ul>	United States

This collection of 13 books was written between 1997 and 2006 (spanning a decade). Authors/editors are from United States (62%), Canada, Australia, Japan and Finland. Most books were stand-alone, one- or-two author contributions but five were edited collections (four conference proceedings and one yearbook). A careful scan of the titles reveals a concern for: leadership, rethinking home economics, theory, philosophy, and curriculum/pedagogy. These foci are to be expected for home economics, which is both a practicing profession and an academic discipline.

Familiar themes were found within this collection including the need to continually: strive for personal transformation and growth, endeavor to foster leadership within home economics, focus on family well-being and quality of life, engage in curriculum and pedagogical innovation, develop new theories for the profession, and commit to philosophical growth and enrichment. Often, several of these themes appeared together, reflecting the necessary integration of competencies and skill sets (see McGregor & MacCleave, 2007). There were also ideas that can serve as stepping stones for new directions (presented below in no particular order). As a caveat, I am not going to reference these books, focusing instead on clean lines of thinking for new synergy and intellectual fresh air.

#### **Re-envisioning at a Convergent Moment**

Foremost is Donna Pendergast's assertion that the profession is at a convergent moment and that what we do *right now* will determine the future positioning of the entire profession. While we usually call for a re-thinking of home economics (including Donna), I agree with her that a more creative approach is to re-envision home economics. *Re-envisioning* entails imagining a different future for the profession, a *preferred* future rather than one that is happenstance and reactionary. The latter happens when we stand within our lament that we are marginalized, ignored and dismissed. I love Rosemarie von Schweitzer's idea that our mission is to make the case for an everyday culture of solidarity! Future visionaries concerned with the fallout of our ongoing persistence to perceive ourselves as marginalized can turn to the recent monograph on positioning the profession beyond patriarchy (Pendergast & McGregor, 2007).

#### **Philosophical Diversity and Integration**

When referencing home economics philosophy, most of the scholars in this collection mentioned one philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. Intellectual contributions around critical theory and systems of action were predicated on this German philosopher, mostly by American scholars. But, there were refreshing new philosophical directions to which we need to really stop and pay attention. The most obvious is the book prepared in Japan drawing on another German philosopher, Otto Bollnow. While Habermas was concerned with power and communication (an understatement, I know), Bollnow tendered the concept of protectedness, the home as a place of security to ensure the development of humanness. Home economics scholars in Finland use yet another collection of philosophers to inform their work, a French scholar, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and two other German/Austrian philosophers, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (see especially Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008, a book I intend to review for the Journal). Merleau-Ponty gives us the notion of consciousness, Husserl, the idea of life-world (the taken-for-granted world of everyday lives), and Heidegger, the

notion of *being-in-the-world* (human nature's connection to time). Home economics could benefit profoundly from more philosophical diversity and integration. There is a continued need for deep philosophical roots to ensure rigour and timelessness of our messages.

### **Cross-cultural/national Philosophical and Theoretical Collaborations**

Hand-in-hand with this recommendation is the corollary that we become more aware of what other scholars in the field are doing regarding theoretical, intellectual and philosophical innovations. A deeply compelling example is now shared. In the seventies, Brown and Paolucci (1978) conceived the *systems of action* approach, the Japanese scholars came up with the principles of *human protection* and the house as a place for humanity, and scholars in England developed the idea of home economics as a *social-practical field* (nearly a mirror image of systems of action). All three initiatives were predicated on the belief that home economics should engage in practical action that deliberately deals with value issues, beliefs, and the 'oughts and shoulds' of morals and ethics (see McGregor 2009a for more details). None of them gave any indication they were aware of the others' initiatives. Look at the synergy that was lost.

In a recent attempt to gauge global initiatives to rethink home economics, I was able to create five very different vignettes profiling our thinkers in Europe, Asia, United States, Canada and Australia (McGregor, 2009b). Again, while more aware of each other's work than in the past (in part due to better communication technologies), there is no coordinated effort to bring these intellectual contributions together. The need remains for cross-national/cultural collaboration so our insights gain synergy and strength - no more writing and thinking in isolation.

### **Transdisciplinary Inquiry**

Throughout the books, there is repeated reference to our interdisciplinary orientation, which has served us so well for the past century. On two occasions, I found reference to transdisciplinarity, an exciting new direction for the field. Both of those were in 2006, one by von Schweitzer (Germany) and the other in a paper in the proceedings from the Finnish conference (Patrick Dillon from the University of Exeter, UK). While interdisciplinarity removes the boundaries among disciplines within the academy (creating a *disciplinary interface*), transdisciplinarity removes the boundaries between the academy and civil society (*academy-society interface*). While interdisciplinarity solves complicated problems using synergy created by weaving together various disciplinary insights, transdisciplinarity addresses the complex, emergent problems of humanity by creating new knowledge within an evolving, chaotic (in a good way) network of relationships, information creation and problem solving. It is considered to be a new methodology in its own right (supplanting our familiar Newtonian (scientific), interpretive and critical methodologies). Originally presented as a new direction for the field by Marjorie Brown (1993), an American home economics philosopher, and even earlier by a British scholar (Daniels, 1980), transdisciplinarity has not been adopted. We have stubbornly clung to being interdisciplinary. Or, we hyphenate *inter-trans* as if they were the same thing. Since 2004, I have been actively promoting the validity of embracing transdisciplinarity, and I continue to do so (e.g., see McGregor, 2009c).

### **Integral Leadership**

Part-and-parcel of the transdisciplinary approach is integral leadership. Many of the books dealt with leadership within home economics, the most notable being the Reflective Human Action (RHA) theory leadership model, and the monograph on strategic leadership for change (both from Kappa Omicron Nu). The RHA theory is a marriage of authentic leadership and leadership within the new sciences of chaos theory, quantum physics and living systems theory. A natural progression for the profession is to consider integral leadership, also stemming from the new sciences. Integral leaders focus on complex, emergent world problems, and do so by valuing both external, material factors shaping the leadership process (behaviors, skills, strategies, structures, and processes) and internal consciousness factors (thinking, feeling and values). Their *integral vision* includes the integration of science, art, morals, and religion, and it weaves matter, body, mind, soul and spirit all together, a Living Totality (Wilber, 2000).

People who lead from this perspective appreciate that the horizon constantly retreats as they approach it, a disconcerting fact of integral life. Better yet, people approach the horizon journeying along a spiral path rather than a straight path. Progress unfolds as a series of unfolding,

interconnected, overlapping events (waves) rather than distinct steps. And integral leaders are less concerned with having followers behind them on this path as they are with following their own higher selves (known as moral courage). They break down the walls between leaders and followers by being in sync with others. Integral leaders respond to immediate needs, working with one person at a time, rather than striving for efficiencies or the ethics of utilitarianism (the greatest happiness for the greatest number). They are more concerned with dignity than great visions of success. They are on a journey, not aiming for a destination. They believe that everything happens in relationship to everything else. As well, integral leaders are open and able to modify their value constellations, often resulting in changing their entire life purpose. Their life is their message. They are engaged in an ongoing Human Consciousness Project, a cross-cultural mapping of human development (read the *Theory of Everything* by Ken Wilber, 2000).

No one has brought this line of thinking to home economics yet. I am working on it. Mitstifer and her colleagues introduced us to a mode of leadership that could readily evolve into integral leadership because their RHA model is also predicated on the new sciences, as is Wilber's work. My book on *Transformative Practice* is also a beginning (McGregor, 2006), because it contains chapters on transdisciplinarity, and the holomovement principle applied to home economics practice.

### **The Human Family and Human Condition**

Family well-being, wellness, quality of life – familiar lingo that rings in our ears. It is our mantra, ringing so loud that we seem unable to hear anything else. I am also guilty of reinforcing this 100-year old message. Harken back to Donna - we are at a convergent moment. Many things are coming together into the center, ready to burst out in new directions. If we can embrace transdisciplinarity and integral leadership, then I suggest we can embrace shifting from family well-being and quality of life to a focus on the human family and the human condition. von Schweitzer urged us to deal with *the human potential problem*. Although wellness and well-being are usually used in conjunction with individuals and families (and communities), the notion of condition is usually associated with all of humanity. The human condition refers to the current state of affairs of a collective people - the human family. It is the result of cumulative everyday (as well as political) events that created current realities and is approached from a normative perspective. Instead of *describing* the economic, social, physical and emotional states or conditions of families and individuals (dimensions of well-being), we would go further and *interpret* those conditions using concepts such as: justice, equity, fairness, freedom, human rights, human security, resiliency, participation, power, responsibility, and interests (Brown, 1993).

Ellie Vaines and home economists from Europe have embraced the idea of *the sacredness of everyday life*. What a powerful mantra. It is not easy to manage everyday life, the routines and practices found in the ordinary course of events. This management presupposes cognitive, social, emotional and practice skills that are locked away in people's consciousness and need to be revealed, articulated, respected, and studied by home economists. Everyday life, the culture and quality of day-to-day activities, is paramount to humanity (Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008). Thirty years ago, Marjorie East profoundly stated that home economics should be "focussed on the home in order to improve humanity. Humanity? Yes... the ultimate goal is to make life successively better for each following generation" (1979, p.141). Time to let go of well-being and embrace a bigger vision of the world and our responsibilities in it as a profession - the human condition.

### **Emergence (Rather than Conclusions)**

The intent of this meta-review was to profile the ideas contained in this collection of 13 books so we can speculate about what new ideas are needed for our future. The world is so complex now, and changing so fast. Home economists must find a way to think that deals with uncertainty and unknowns. We need ongoing innovations to our body of knowledge and philosophical grounding that respect the emergent and healthy tension that holds things together as they continually evolve - order in chaos. No more balance, harmony and equilibrium. To that end, this meta-review has prompted me to offer several large ideas. We need to re-envision the profession (re-imagine ourselves), practice beyond patriarchy (on and beyond the margins), achieve philosophical diversity and integration, commit to richer cross-cultural/national philosophical and theoretical collaborations, discover transdisciplinary inquiry, embrace integral leadership and practice, and accept the

relevance of shaping the human condition, respecting the sacredness of everyday life.

In short - there are many ways of knowing home economics, and they should no longer stand in isolation. We are at a convergent moment in our collective history. We have to find the moral courage to leave our comfort zone. Only through the practice of intellectual and philosophical risk taking, and experiencing the incompleteness of our practice as it emerges, will we be able to move forward and upward as a profession (from the wisdom of Donna Pendergast).

### References

- Brown, M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, College of Human Ecology.
- Brown, M., & Paolucci, B. (1978). *Home economics: A definition [mimeograph]*. Washington, DC: American Home Economics Association.
- Chalmers I., Hedges L. V., & Cooper, H. (2002). A brief history of research synthesis. *Evaluation and the Health Professions*, 25, 12-37.
- Daniels, C. E. J. (1980). The organizational structure of home economics: A consideration of terminology. *The Journal of Home Economics and Consumer Studies*, 4(4), 323-339.
- East, M. (1979). Comments on the paper 'Home Economics: A Definition'. In M. Brown and B. Paolucci, *Home economics: A definition [mimeograph]* (pp.136-142). Washington, DC: American Home Economics Association.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2006). *Transformative practice*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2007). International Journal of Consumer Studies: Decade review (1997-2006). *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(1), 2-18.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2009a). Historical presence of home economics in IJCS. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33(3), 349-355.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2009b). International conceptualizations of a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision of the profession. *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM*, 18(1), <http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/18-1/mcgregor.html>
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2009c, March). Transdisciplinary consumer citizenship education. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> *Consumer Citizenship Network Conference at the Technical University of Berlin, Germany* (pp. 107-121). Hamar, Norway: Hedmark University <https://www.hihm.no/content/download/10881/98014/file/Papers%20Berlin,%20full%20text.doc>
- McGregor, S.L.T., & MacCleave, A. (2007). Analysis to determine Canadian, American, and Australian agreement about home economics/family and consumer sciences professional competency domains. *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM*, 17(2), [http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/17-2/home\\_economics\\_professional\\_competency\\_domains.html](http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/17-2/home_economics_professional_competency_domains.html)
- Pendergast, D., & McGregor, S.L.T. (2007, December). *Positioning the profession beyond patriarchy* [Monograph]. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu. Retrieved April 22, 2009 from [http://www.kon.org/patriarchy\\_monograph.pdf](http://www.kon.org/patriarchy_monograph.pdf)
- Tuomi-Gröhn, T. (Ed.). (2008). *Reinventing art of everyday making*. Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Wilber, K. (2000). *The theory of everything*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

### Appendix One

#### Citation Information for Home Economics-Related Books Reviewed in IJCS

#### 2008

A-L. Rauma, S. Pöllänen and P. Seitamaa-Hakkarainen (Eds). (2006). Human perspectives on sustainable future. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 32(1), 99-100.

#### 2007

Raeann Hamon (Ed.). (2006). International family studies: Developing curricula and teaching tools. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(2), 187-188.

Rosemarie von Schweitzer. (2006). Home economics science and arts. *International Journal of*

- Consumer Studies*, 31(1), 122-123.
- 2006**  
Gale Smith, Linda Peterat and Mary Leah de Zwart (Eds.) (2004). Home economics now: Transformative practice, ecology, and everyday life (a tribute to the scholarship of Eleanore Vaines). *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(4), 398-399.
- 2005**  
Sekiguchi Fusa et al. (Eds.) (2004). A philosophy of home economics. Fukushima, Japan: Koriyama Women's University Press. In *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 29(6), 530-532.
- 2004**  
Mitstifer, D., & Miller, J. (1998). Strategic leadership of the profession: Agenda for change. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu. In *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 28(1), 93.
- 2003**  
Henry, M., Mitstifer, D., & Smith, F. (1998). Toward a theory of family well-being. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu. in *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 28(1), 93-94.
- Stratton, S., & Mitstifer, D. (2001). Reflective human action: Introduction and course syllabus at [http://www.kon.org/rha\\_online\\_files/rha\\_online.htm](http://www.kon.org/rha_online_files/rha_online.htm)
- Andrews, F., Mitstifer, D., Rehm, M., & Vaughn, G. (2001). Leadership: Reflective Human Action online supplemental text. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu. In *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(5), 412-413.
- Margaret Bubolz (Editor). (2002). Beatrice Paolucci: Shaping destiny through everyday life. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(2), 176.
- Donna Pendergast. (2001). Virginal Mothers, Groovy Chicks & Blokey Blokes: Re-thinking Home Economics (and) Teaching Bodies. Sydney: Australian Academic Press in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(2), 176-177.
- Sarah Stage and Virginia Vincenti (Eds). (1997). Rethinking home economics: Women and the history of a profession. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 27(2), 177.
- 2001**  
Johnson, Julie and Fedji, Cheryl (Eds). (1999). Family and consumer sciences curriculum: Toward a critical science approach [Yearbook 19]. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 25 (1), 77-78.