

Envisioning Our Collective Journey Into the Next Millennium
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The objective of this paper is to facilitate a common understanding of and dialogue about the main ideas or building blocks which make up the knowledge base we use to practice. The goal is to facilitate our journey into the next century so we can continue to honour our commitment to the well-being of individuals, families, communities and society. In reality, because personal background experiences and academic and professional training are different for each of us, home economists tend to attach different meanings to the old and new ideas of home economics, ideas which develop slowly and build cumulatively over time with no assurances that they are reviewed and examined in light of societal and familial changes (Chamberlain & Kelly, 1981; McGregor & Humble, in press).

The profession of home economics/human ecology has a mission statement which is ripe with directions for our future practice. This paper will pull out some of the key ideas in the mission statement (in italics) which have incredible potential to change the way we practice from day-to-day, if we only remain open minded to the necessity for ongoing professional and personal reflection and growth. It is hoped that everyone reading the article will find something they did not know before or find validation for what they are already doing such that we can indeed move collectively into the next century¹.

Mission Oriented Profession

Home economics and human ecology are mission oriented professions implying that practitioners generate knowledge *to use it to help families help themselves* rather than simply to accumulate a body of knowledge for knowledge's sake (Vaines, 1980).

The mission of home economics is to enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of actions which lead (1) to maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them. To fulfil this mission home economists engage in the provision of services (directly or indirectly) to families. These services involve the solution of [practical] problems of families ... and these services change over time with new insights in the profession. Such insights come from critical reflection about human needs and the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge. (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p.23)

The mission of human ecology incorporates the mission of home economics as defined by Brown and Paolucci: ... and extends [it] to incorporate the global interdependence of individuals, families and communities with the resources of natural, constructed and behavioral environments for the purpose of wise decision making and use of resources essential to human development and the quality of life and the environment. Human ecology views the family as a major source of nurturance and renewal of its members. ...

¹ On a personal note, my students tell me this is their favourite article in the professional development course (it is affectionately called "speaking the lingo") and that they use it repeatedly as they move through their undergraduate and graduate degrees; I hope the same thing will be said by other practitioners.

The core of human ecology is the human ecosystem: the reciprocal relations of individuals and families with their near environments. (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, p.3)

Family Structures and Functions

Our reason d'etre is to serve the *needs of families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution*. The term social institution means an established, stable and secure organization in the social, daily life of a people (Brown & Paolucci, 1979), much like the family, marketplace, church, workplace or government. Melson (1980) admits that "[p]erhaps the thorniest issue for any [discussion] about the family is the deceptively simple question: What is a family?" (p.3). Vincenti (1982) argues that the definitions of the family have become so broad and encompassing in recent years that, as an ideal of the profession, the meaning of family is obscure. The scramble to define the family is occurring because of the rampant changes in the composition or structure of families and the diverse changes in their living arrangements. At issue is what arrangement of individuals constitutes a family and what are the economic, political and social implications of this definition? This issue is far from being resolved but its final resolution will dictate our practice because it will define the identity and needs of our client and our resultant professional service whether we be employed in education, government, business or the community.

Families can be defined by what they look like or what they do. Structurally, individual Canadian family units are diverse: nuclear family; blended (remarried after divorce); separated or divorced; single parents (usually headed by women); common law couples; childfree or childless (by choice or not); dual earner or dual career, often in the sandwich generation; and same sex couples, to name the most prevalent (Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA), 1996; The Vanier Institute of the Family (VIF), 1994). The VIF (1992) further suggests that families fulfil several key functions as a social institution, *regardless* of what they look like: (a) procreation and addition of new members, including adoption and fostering; (b) physical care and maintenance of family members and the home or household; (c) morale, love, relationships and nurturance; (d) production and consumption of goods and services; (e) social control of members; and, (f) morality as it socializes children into adult roles towards self-formation. In its recent adoption of the United Nations definition of the family, the CHEA sanctioned a *functional definition* of families:

The family is referred to as the basic unit of society; it is appreciated for the important socio-economic functions that it performs. In spite of many changes in society that have altered its role and functions it continues to provide the natural framework for the emotional, financial, and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly infants and children, and for the care the other dependents, including the elderly, disabled and infirmed. The family remains a vital means of preserving and transmitting cultural values. In the broader sense, it can, and often does, educate, train, motivate and support its individual members, thereby investing in their future growth and acting as a vital resource for development. (CHEA, 1994, p.1)

Human Ecology Perspective

Home economics is the recognized name of our profession, nationally and internationally. A recent thrust in professional preparation and practice is the move to adopt a human ecology perspective with the programs at Manitoba, Mount Saint Vincent University, and Alberta recently changing their names to the Human Ecology Department to reflect this new

direction. What is human ecology and how does the individual family or the family as a social institution fit into the human ecology perspective? Basically, we can view families as a system, as a living ecosystem and in a larger ecosystem. Each of these will be discussed with Table 1 describing the subtle transition in terminology from the concept of system, ecosystem and human ecology.

Insert Table 1 about here

Families as a System

Since the early seventies, the profession has used systems theory to understand and provide a frame of reference for analyzing the goal-directed behaviour of and interaction between individuals and families as they address and manage the dynamic context of their day-to-day lives (Key & Firebaugh, 1989). Within the family system, there is a personal subsystem for value clarification, goal setting and nurturing and a managerial sub-system which provides a way to maintain the personal subsystem through the acquisition and use of resources. Through systems theory, home economists can focus on helping families (a) maintain balance, (b) meet the internal and external demands on their daily lives (input), (c) make decisions about the acquisition, use, and disposal of available resources (material and human), (d) take actions to deal with these demands (including planning, implementing and evaluating), (e) cope with, analyze and take action (output) based on the results of their daily activities and decisions as well as deal productively with the impact of the results on the family (feedback). The family system is a holistic concept that enables practitioners to focus on the cohesiveness, adaptability, goal directedness, interpersonal dynamics, and relationship maintenance in a family's day-to-day life (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988).

Families as a Living Ecosystem

From an ecosystem perspective, everything is connected and interdependent. Whereas systems theory allows us to conceive the family as a self-directed system or unit, the ecosystem perspective enables us to examine the interaction between this unit and other systems. The mission of human ecology notes that *the core of human ecology is the 'human' ecosystem: the reciprocal relations of individuals and families with their near environments*. The interplay of individual and family systems with all external systems is the focus of an ecosystem perspective (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988). "By viewing the family *as an* ecosystem, one can begin to understand how family life may be both the product of environmental forces and a significant creative force in itself. The ecosystem approach allows students of the family... to focus on the relationships between a changing environment and a changing family... so as to better understand and manage the impact of this change upon families" (Melson, 1980, pp.1-2).

Families in a Larger Ecosystem

The human ecosystem perspective perceives the family, made up of mutually dependent autonomous units, as a living organism in interaction with and affecting its near environments - they are in an ecosystem. (Bubolz, 1990; Bubolz, Eicher & Sontag, 1979; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993; Touliatos & Compton, 1988) (see Table 1). As the mission statements notes, *from a human ecology perspective, we view families as a nurturing source and view their environments as the sources of the resources needed to fulfil this nurturing role*. Home economists enable families to fulfil this nurturing function by appreciating that families have a reciprocal relationship between themselves and their environments from which they access, generate, use and restore resources to meet basic needs. It is this reciprocal relationship between families and

environments that is central to the human ecology perspective.

Levels of environments. *The mission of human ecology incorporates three levels of environments:* (a) the natural, physical- biological environments as they exist in nature; (b) the human built environment comprised of housing, roads, consumer products et cetera made by altering and transforming the natural resources; and (c) the socio-cultural environment which is comprised of collections of other humans; social and cultural elements such as values, language and laws; and social, political and economic institutions including: the marketplace and the economy, governments, community, the education system, the judicial and legal system, the church and the workplace (Bubolz, 1990; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993). Families exist to fulfil several key functions as a social institution and as individual units and they need resources from their environments to fulfil these functions and meet basic needs (Bailey, Firebaugh, Haley & Nickols, 1993; Goldsmith, 1996).

Others have contributed to the development of the concept of levels of environment over the last twenty years (Bubolz, Eicher & Sontag, 1979; Deacon & Firebaugh; 1988; Melson, 1980; Touliatos & Compton, 1988). Seminal work in this area was conducted by Bronfenbrenner (1976) who described a taxonomy of environments from which the other researchers embarked: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. The microsystem contains the family or individual (home, work setting); the mesosystem consists of the microsystems that the individual often interacts with (church, bus, factory); the exosystem consists of the major institutions including the marketplace, government agencies, mass media, and community or neighbourhood); the macrosystem consists of the overarching institutions of a particular culture including the economic, political (judicial and legal), social, religious, educational, technological and ecological systems impacting on the family and vice versa.

Systems of Actions Approach To Practice

The mission statements of home economics and human ecology charges us to *enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of actions.* "Action, [in this case], is a mental process which is based on examination of principles appropriate to a particular situation and is a response to external and internal stimuli through reasoning rather than reaction or habit" (Vaines, 1980, p. 111).

There are three such actions which, when used in combination, comprise a system of overlapping ways of thinking about any given familial situation or problem: technical action; interpretative or communicative action; and, emancipatory, critical, empowerment action. The underlying premise is that we should not assume that any two problems can be solved the same way because the people and the context will have changed. Home economists would help an individual or family solve a practical, perennial problem (to be discussed shortly) using a combination or "system" of the three different actions, depending on the needs and resources of the particular individual or family at a particular moment in time. The goal is to understand each action and use the appropriate combination for each particular situation (Vaines, 1980). Each of these three actions will be discussed briefly.

Technical Action

Technical action is often called the "how to" approach to practice: how to do a budget, how to sew a dress, how to make a cake; it comprises the skills necessary to meet material, day-to-day needs. Delivering technical skills enables families to cope with or survive the daily impact of change but they do not have to change themselves or analyze the situation; rather, they

just learn another skill. Technical action is concerned with accomplishing goals using criteria set by an expert, in this case, a home economist. From this perspective, practitioners and families often take things as given and do not question them. We tend to do things the way we were taught, the way it's always been done, from fear of being fired, or because everyone does it that way. From a technical perspective, we provide families with the skills to produce or procure physical goods or services required for "the good life" without ever questioning what makes this the preferred way of life or whether it is sustainable (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992); Vaines, 1980, 1992).

Interpretative Action

Interpretative action is often called the "talking or language" practice since it involves individuals and families discussing *why* they feel a certain way about something in the hopes that this understanding will lead to personal change or a change within the family unit. Engaging in interpretative or communicative practice enables families to understand, adapt to and conform to change instead of just coping or getting by. Interpretative action is concerned with talking and communication within and between families and society about values, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, feelings and meanings and with understanding *why* they decide to act, or not act, in a certain way. This interaction within the family and with social groups helps them reach an understanding of their perception of "what is the good life"? and why they think this is so. Families can understand why they do things and then change themselves. This practice allows people to see where they are, how they got there, predict what will happen and decide what to do to change themselves, but not necessarily change things so others are better off (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992; Vaines, 1980, 1992).

Emancipatory Action

Emancipatory action is often called the "empowerment or take action" practice which leads to changes in societal values and morals such that everyone is better off. Using an emancipatory approach to practice leads to the ability to affect or shape familial and institutional change to benefit society at large. Critical emancipatory action encourages self-reflection and self-direction to determine what is and what we should be doing so that communities, societies and the world are a better place; it is concerned with morals, ethics and value judgements (to be discussed shortly). Emancipatory practice frees the individual and family to examine other and new notions of what constitutes "the good life", for individuals, families and society at large. This entails an evaluation process which allows people to judge the adequacy of their environments against their own needs and goals, and vice versa. From this type of practice, we are no longer seen as the expert, doling out advice; rather, we provide a safe environment for dialogue and reflection leading to morally justifiable, ethical, sustainable resource management decisions (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992; Touliatos & Compton, 1988; Vaines, 1980, 1992).

Arcus (1980) and Brown and Paolucci (1979) declare that possession of the skill to analyze each situation to determine which combination of actions is appropriate is crucial if we are to empower families to help themselves and if we are to ethically deliver services to families using emancipatory actions. If we possess the ability to think critically or deliver services from several perspectives, we can create a supportive environment where families can solve practical, perennial (generational) problems using ever changing combinations of technical, interpretative and emancipatory actions. We could help families cope with, adapt to and affect change that is

threatening the maintenance of their good life, making them question or understand their notion of a good life, and/or enticing them to examine other notions of what the 'good life' should be, for themselves and others.

Quality Of Life And Well-Being

The concept of 'the good life' raises images of quality of life, standard of living and family well-being. The mission of human ecology called for *wise decision making and use of resources essential to human development and the quality of life*. Engberg (1996a) and Melson (1980) report that one of the basic components of family well-being is the concept of quality of life. Quality of life is relative and differs between individuals but it can be perceived as the level of satisfaction or confidence with one's conditions, relationships and surroundings relative to the available alternatives (Goldsmith, 1996; Jacoby & Olson, 1986). Quality of life consists of, among other things: hope for the future, land, adequate food, clothing, shelter, income, employment opportunities, maternal and child health, and family and social welfare (Melson).

On the other hand, "...well-being is a state of being where all members of a community have economic security; are respected, valued and have personal worth; feel connected to those around them; are able to access necessary resources; and are able to participate in the decision-making process affecting them" (Marshall, McMullin, Ballantyne, Daciuk & Wigdor, 1995, p.1). Brown's (1993) model collapses the four conventional aspects of well-being into two categories: (a) efficiency in management and control over things and people living in the home (economic and physical well-being), and (b) interpersonal relations between family members and the intellectual, personality development of each family member (social and psychological well-being); this entails providing every opportunity to be personally happy and successful, to be contented and to feel close or connected to all other family members (Fleck, 1980). Henry (1995) and McGregor and Goldsmith (in press) proposes three other aspects of well-being, environmental, political (self empowerment) and spiritual, which are all concerned with an individual's locus of control, sense of connectedness and the moral and ethical dimensions of their life management decisions.

In their discussion of the impact of professional home economists, Touliatos and Compton (1988) suggest that "the end result, the final mission, is the impact that these professionals make on the *quality of life* in terms of improved physical, economic, psychological and social *well-being* of the families and consumers they serve [italics added]" (p.20). "Human ecology focuses on the individual and ... reciprocal relationships with other [individuals] and technology in the settings most critical for human development: the family, home and community. Its basic mission is to improve the *quality of human life*;... for the ways in which [people] live, eat, spend their money, and raise their children determine not only individual and family *well being*, but the welfare and stability of society as well [italics added]" (Compton & Hall, 1972, p.4).

Practical, Perennial Problems

The mission statement of home economics noted that practitioners and families will be involved in *the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them*. Also, the mission stated that our *services involve the solution of [practical] problems of families ... and these services change over time with new insights in the profession*. The task of achieving social goals implies that families have to deal with problems which entails both overcoming obstacles or dealing with an existing state of affairs that somehow is not as it should be (Brown

& Paolucci, 1979).

Practical Problems

Brown and Paolucci (1979) recognize and distinguish between two types of problems: practical and perennial. The term practical problem can refer to the technical problems families face in their everyday lives to meet material needs (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992). Practical problems can also be compared to technical and theoretical problems. Technical problems require a prescribed solution of how to do something; theoretical problems require an explanation or description. Practical problems require reasoned thought, judgement and action (AHEA, 1989; Brown & Paolucci, 1979). To solve these types of problems, practitioners have to use judgement based on an understanding of all the variables of each particular situation (Vaines, 1980). As well, they should rely on reasoned value judgements rather than predetermined systems of making decisions on the basis of dogmatic beliefs, habit or unexamined decision rules (Nova Scotia Department of Education); that is, they need to engage in critical reflective practice and value reasoning.

Value reasoning. Value reasoning is arriving at reasoned judgements through the examination of underlying values as well as superficial facts. Through this process, home economists can rationally decide what should be done to solve a practical, perennial problem by using not only facts but also values (Kieren, Vaines, & Badir, 1984; McGregor, 1996a). Part of this reasoning process involves asking several challenging questions: would you change places based on your proposed solution to the problem?; (b) what would happen if everyone did what you proposed?; and (c) would the same decision hold in another case? (Mayer, n.d.). Deliberating the morality of an action and examining the underlying values driving behaviour guards against the likelihood that a lack of morality and adherence to individualistic and materialistic values continues to be the prevailing ideology shaping societal behaviour (Taylor, 1992). The practitioner adopting a moral, value driven perspective (a) sees all people as having equal moral worth; (b) values ameliorating life conditions of all people; and (c) makes decisions based on "good reasons" rather than force, self interest, fear, punishment and so forth. This approach means: (a) dealing with both personal, individual change and social change; (b) balancing personal interests with general, universal interests; and, (c) balancing the betterment of our own daily lives with bettering the lives of others (Smith, 1993).

Perennial Problems

A practical problem that endures from one generation to another generation is called a perennial problem and is often related to perpetual family needs of shelter, nourishment, clothing, consumption, and personal development and family relations. Perennial problems include: poverty, health, child care, parenting, aging, abuse and violence, marriage, and resource management. Although each generation deals with these problems differently, they are enduring problems with which home economists must be concerned. Perennial practical problems are also concerned with situations for which critical reflective decision making is required leading to thoughtful action (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992).

Critical Reflective Practice

The mission of home economics strives to lead families *to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them...* [using] *critical reflection about human needs and the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge.* If we want to move beyond solving every problem by doing what we have

always done, doing the "safe" thing or neglecting to challenge the status quo, we will not be engaging in critical reflective practice. The latter requires a new way of thinking about ourselves in the world. It means we have to seriously ponder and deliberate on meanings, norms and values leading to revelations which direct our actions; this versus acting from habit or simply providing a family with technical information to solve the problem. It means we have to take into consideration the context of the situation as we help families solve problems; this rather than doing things based on habit, custom or fear (Vaines & Wilson, 1986). We must respect different values and support empowerment and autonomy of the individual and family during different points in time. We can no longer assume that what worked before will work again since both the family and their context will have changed (Vaines & Wilson). We have to move beyond the "taken for granted" and habitual to the realization that we do have choices and these should be well reasoned and thought out, in full awareness of short and long term consequences on ourselves, our communities and the global village. This leads to enlightened citizens who are able to carefully consider and consciously choose actions; the opposite of enlightenment is living in the habitual mode, never questioning anything (Vaines, 1988).

Critical Thinking

It is important to realize as a practitioner that to be enlightened means that families can change themselves; they do not need us to continually provide information on "how to do things" (Vaines, 1988). To do this, we and members of families need to be able to think critically rather than make decisions by blind acceptance, impulse or on a whim. Key elements to critical thinking are dialogue, reflection and questioning. This process entails asking probing questions of significance in an atmosphere of mutual support and cooperation leading to analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Jones & Safrit, 1992). This type of thinking entails: (a) identifying values and environmental factors related to the context of the problems caused by our consumption and production decisions; (b) considering global consequences of alternatives to current management and life decisions; (c) evaluating the adequacy and reliability of information used to make family resource management decisions; and, (d) analyzing the moral acceptability of solutions to a problem caused by our consumption and resource management decisions (Crawford, 1993; Engberg, 1993). We need to move beyond acting from habit or simply providing a family with technical information to solve the problem. This can be facilitated by embracing a *critical, reflective approach to practice* which means we have to seriously ponder and deliberate on meanings, norms and values leading to revelations which direct our ethical actions (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Morgaine, 1992; Vaines, 1990).

Practical Problem Solving Approach

An integral component related to critical reflective practice is the practical problem solving approach (PPSA) to helping families help themselves. The major goal of the PPSA is to enlighten ourselves and family members about the ways in which larger society has created conditions which make daily life difficult and to enable all individuals to participate fully in working towards changes for the better. Within this task, our role as practitioners is to generate and engage in critical reflective thinking and actions which develop the capabilities of individuals to make judgements, perform family and community functions and improve social and economic conditions for the good of all. As practitioners we need to embrace a moral and ethical vision of what life should be (IFHE, 1993).

Adopting a *practical problem solving approach* to serving families provides a

perspective from which we can enlighten ourselves and family members about the ways in which larger society and citizen behaviour is creating havoc on society resulting in conditions which make daily life difficult. Taylor (1992) convincingly argues that people do not understand why they are living the way they are because they do not question their behaviour, their actions or the consequences. A practical problem approach enables us to conceive that all individuals are capable of participating fully in working towards changes for the better for all. This takes us beyond the technical and theoretical approaches to solving problems which involves doing things for or showing people how to do things and explaining why things are the way they are without any critique or dialogue (Brown & Baldwin, 1995; Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Engberg, 1994; Hultgren & Wilcoz, 1985).

Engberg (1990) suggests that practical problem solving involves six steps: (a) deciding what to do and believe rather than acting from habit or fear, (b) continuously questioning rather than accepting things as given, (c) searching for new information, (d) evaluating or judging this information, (e) continuously deciding about alternatives, and (f) continually dialoguing with who is involved before coming to conclusions about *what to do*. She further notes that we need to learn or begin to practice six skills to embrace this new perspective: critical thinking; investigative skills to help discover indigenous knowledge, synthesizing skills to integrate this indigenous qualitative knowledge with scientific, thinking holistically, asking new questions and questioning the answers, taking philosophical positions, then conducting research as you develop different strategies for change, and focusing on problems which emerge where households and their environments overlap.

Empowerment

The role of a home economist is to strive to *enable families to understand and to help themselves be empowered to solve practical, perennial problems* (Istre & Self, 1990; Morgaine, 1993). To be enabled means one is provided the means to do something; however, to be empowered entails instilling the perception that one has the authority to take action (Webster's dictionary). But, Benerbaum reminds us that "empowerment is more complex than the dictionary definitions suggest" and then proposes that "it needs to be defined by the people concerned" (1995, p.47). Generally, though, she agrees that the more people are encouraged and enabled to do things and to think, the more their abilities and competence increase and the more self-reliant they become; that is, they become empowered because they perceive themselves as having the power to take action and control of conditions affecting their day-to-day lives. Empowerment is acting with integrity to create the environment in which we and others can develop character, competence and synergy (Covey, Merrill & Merrill, 1994).

If home economists practice using the Empowerment Model, we see people as victims of problems and conditions created by society but appreciate that these people are able to be active in solving their own needs by building on their energy, networks, and strengths. Delivering empowering practice means we build on what they bring to the situation, we incorporate them into the solution, we facilitate participation and collaboration, and we develop interactive interventions. If we, instead, use the Benevolent Model when we practice, (a) we see the victim responsible for the problem and the solution; (b) we act as an expert with power and knowledge to help those who lack resources; (c) or we perceive people as creating problems from their own ignorance, problems that they can solve if we provide them with information. This model for practice is not empowering because it ignores their strengths and competencies and it does not

facilitate self analysis of needs, problems and solutions (Gue, 1993; Vaines & Mitstifer, 1993). The empowerment approach requires recognition of, sharing of and dealing with a range of information, meanings, interpretations and perceived barriers to solving the problem *prior to taking action* with individuals, families and communities (Vaines, 1988; Vaines & Wilson, 1986).

Transforming Agent to Bring About Changes in Social Values

To achieve *enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them* means we have to change the values which others have towards families so families do not continue to face the same on-going problems and life conditions. If we work outside the system, fixing problems which are symptoms of larger social ills, we are change agents managing issues. Helping people manage change outside the system so they can cope with or adapt to what is happening in society is not enough (Baldwin, 1991). If, however, we work from within the system to change (transform) the values and challenge the ideologies shaping policy and trade decisions, we should be able to create conditions more conducive to family well-being and quality of life; that is, we become transforming agents changing societal values towards the family as a social institution (McGregor, 1996a). The resultant institutional change should enhance human betterment by attaining the four universal values of greater justice, freedom, power, and access to resources (Bubolz, 1990).

To transform something is to evolve into or towards something new, especially into maturity, autonomy and responsibility (Brown & Paolucci, 1979). It entails restructuring and reorganizing institutions so they value families more than they do now, institutions such as schools, religion, government, judicial and legal systems, the marketplace, workplace, and community (Vaines, 1988). They are capable of being rearranged and recomposed so that families are emancipated and empowered to be independent and self forming. A home economist fulfilling the role of a transforming actor helps people by working *within* "the system" to affect change and improvement to benefit family well-being. This approach affects change in society by making things happen rather than just adapting to what is happening although, in some instances, adaptation is a very necessary skill (Melson, 1980). A transformative approach to practice means we are interested in improving the human condition by making tacit and hidden assumptions more visible and transparent (Smith, 1996); one cannot challenge what cannot be seen. A prerequisite skill to social and value transformation is leadership (Roberts, 1985).

Leadership

We need to be leaders since the mission compels us to help families engage in *enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them*. Rapid and insidious social change *is* commonplace as society approaches the next millennium and we are indeed challenged as we strive to help individuals and families gain a sense that they can take control of their own lives and make a difference for themselves and others. Helping individuals and families embrace the future is a leadership imperative we can continue to fulfil if we persist in adopting new ways of seeing families in relation to the world and in changing the way we serve families (McGregor, in press).

The metaphor for leadership is a journey, from the root *lead* meaning go, travel or guide. Leadership takes one into unexplored territory and guides one to a new direction. Management

comes from the root *manage* meaning hand. Management is about handling things versus going places (Andrews, Mitstifer, Rehm, & Vaughn, 1996). Covey (1992) made a similar distinction between leadership and management. Fundamentally, leaders provide direction for transformation based on principles while managers provide control of resources used in transactions based on methods and procedures. Leaders adapt to situations, striving to share power while strengthening people. Managers react to situations, striving to maintain power while minimizing costs and maximizing benefits. Leaders work on changing the system and the infrastructures by looking at the lens and saying it is right for us. Managers work within the system and structures by looking through the lens, directing the producers to do the work. Both roles are necessary, sometimes done in tandem by the same person or via a team approach. On a daily basis, individuals and families *manage* their resources to fulfil basic functions as a social institution and as separate, diverse units; our role as *leaders* is to enable them to improve their quality of life through this resource management process (Goldsmith, 1996).

Management and Leadership for Diversity

As leaders, we must have knowledge and mechanisms for empowerment to help strengthen and improve the quality of life for all families, including minority families. On this premise, leadership for and in a culturally diverse society is being advocated as a new direction for practice ("Diversity", 1997). Intense globalization has resulted in multiculturalism which can be positive and invigorating yet threatening and negative if not managed properly (O'Neal & Burdette, 1995). In Canada, over the coming decade, the immigrant population is predicted to shift from a predominantly European background to one of more cultural diversity, notably from Asia, the Commonwealth Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. These new Canadians are dispersed across Canada comprising one third of the population (Hall, Trovato & Driedger, 1990).

Management and leadership for diversity is based on the premise that, since our professional commitment has been to enhance the well-being for all peoples, we need to recognize the cultural differences currently pervasive in family life (Newkirk, 1995). Canadian home economists traditionally have expressed concern for multiculturalism (Roberts, 1985) so it is a logical to continue to enrich our practice so that we embrace leadership for cultural diversity. Learning to affirm differences rather than deny them is the essence of what a multicultural perspective to leadership is about and involves learning to see reality from a variety of perspectives as we confront our own biases, learn new things and unlearn some of the old (Andrews, Paschall & Mitstifer, 1993).

Political Activity

Achievement of the mission of home economics implies not only leadership but also political activity: *enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them*. We need both general and focused participation in public policy formation in the interest of family well-being (McGregor, 1989; McGregor & Mayan, in press). McGregor (1996b) suggests that this can be achieved on three different levels and can be explained using a three tiered political participation hierarchy. A home economist could be: (a) a spectator who is passive yet a receptive onlooker to policy activity impacting families; (b) an advocate by interacting between families, the profession and political arena for family well-being; or, (c) an activist who assumes a role directly in the political arena on behalf of individuals and families. A practitioner could actually assume various combinations of these

roles depending on the issue and one's own personal convictions but, in general, Canadian home economists tend to be spectators and contented with this degree of political involvement (McGregor, 1996b). Our degree of political involvement ultimately dictates the cumulative benefits to the individual practitioner, the profession, to individuals and families, and society at large. We have a real challenge ahead of us as we move into the next millennium if we are to achieve this aspect of our mission statement. The result of our collective effort should be the reality of family sensitive policy in the mainstream of the Canadian political culture (McGregor, 1997).

Hestian Metaphor for Political Activity

To address this potential reality, McGregor (1994), drawing on Thompson (1988), poses the suggestion that we may better shape and influence policy if we assume a Hestian rather than an Hermean perspective to familial and household issues. This means that when we are asked to respond to a request from or when we take a familial issue to policy makers, we advocate for an empowerment and emancipation approach to policy rather than for control and power. We do this by calling for entrenchment of the values of caring, relationships and connections versus efficiency and manipulation and power "over" people. We petition that policy makers deal with real, perennial problems in a collaborative, partnership mode rather than in the abstract or in isolation from stakeholders; we press for intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic, monetary rewards; we reinforce human betterment values rather than just monetary values; we champion domestic life rather than public life; and we acknowledge that home economists work within a cyclical time frame (anticipate results in the long term) rather than a linear time frame with a quick fix (expect results in the short run, as do politicians).

Spheres of Influence Metaphor for Political Activity

Vaines (1994) expanded on this premise by extending the dualistic hestian/hermean metaphor to encompass eight spheres of influence ranging through: the cosmos, the biosphere, the power sphere (politics and business), the public sphere (community and neighbourhood), the private sphere (home as factory, interrelationships and moral center), the inner sphere (self), and the unknown and the unknowable spheres. These eight spheres constitute the whole ecosystem within which individuals and families live and interact. The language we use to function or refer to each of these spheres is quite unique in its own right. For example, those practising in the power sphere often speak of power over, competition, efficiency and profits while those working in or on behalf of the public sphere of the community would refer to connectedness, harmony, balance, stewardship and sustainability. Increasing our sensitivity to different perspectives, ideologies and metaphors which are used to influence and understand local and world events better ensures that our message representing family well-being and quality of life is heard by those who develop, implement and evaluate policy impacting families. Vaines argues that conceiving families as being influenced by eight different interrelated sub-systems, rather than just the public, private and biospheres, enables us to better accommodate the increasing complex social reality of families living in a global context.

Global Perspective

The mission of human ecology extends the mission [of home economics] to incorporate the global interdependence of individuals, families and communities. Attention to world interdependence has been on the increase in education in general, and more recently, in home economics education (Smith, 1989). At that time, she suggested that "global concepts are a part

of home economics but their place in home economics curricula needs further defining" (p.112). To that end, Smith and Peterat (1992) published a valuable document that provides a comprehensive yet easy to use and understand conceptualization of what a global perspective means to home economics (14 global principles, see McGregor, 1996c). Succinctly, a global perspective consists "of the information, attitudes, awareness, and skills which taken together, can help individuals understand the world, how they affect others, and how others affect them" (Babich as cited in Smith, 1993, p.19).

Engberg (1993) explains that a global perspective helps us understand the family or household as an ecosystem, an environment where decisions are taken which can lead to better quality of life for all. This is possible because families are seen as dynamic systems that can adapt and change themselves. They can be socialized to care for each other and the earth; to appreciate that living in harmony with environments demands ethical judgements about how to live differently; and to see the merits of embracing stewardship rather than exploitation. Engberg assumes that, with our help, individuals and families can critically question consumption, production, distribution and institutional practices that shape the world and take action to better this world. McGregor (1996c) applies the global perspective to consumer education. Her discussion takes this idea further, suggesting that we cannot resist this change in practice much longer if we want to embrace the mission by *providing services (directly or indirectly) to families with these services involving the solution of [practical] problems of families with these services changing over time with new insights in the profession.*

Participatory Action Research

Practising from a global perspective and respecting cultural diversity entails a new approach to research. Vaines affirms that "a long familiar past is ending which requires a new way of thinking about ourselves in the world" (1988, p.5). The mission statement reminds us that *insights to changes in our practice come from critical reflection about human needs and the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge.* A very new call for action to facilitate the generation of this knowledge is that we embrace a participatory action research (PAR) strategy because "it calls for the active involvement of, and often control by, those people who would be among the objects or beneficiaries of the research. Their roles should include defining the questions, controlling the process, and interpreting the findings, ideally as originators, proponents, and executors of the research" (Green et al., as cited in Peterat, 1996, p.68). Peterat clarifies that participatory action research (PAR) can enable us to work within different assumptions of knowledge, in different kinds of relationships with families; we are engaging in research *with others* rather than research on or for others. This approach to practice and research assumes that every person is capable of knowing, interpreting and giving meaning to information - they are able to be empowered. People do not "have to" accept answers offered by experts (Engberg, 1996b). She clarifies that PAR is intended to empower people through a process of constructing and using *their own* knowledge, rather than, or in combination with, someone else's knowledge. "The process of participation and dialogue generates confidence, the identification of genuine problems, and the capacity to change social structures and conditions" (p.B7).

Dialectic Theory

Participatory action research is a powerful new approach to generating new knowledge from which to practice and solve practical, perennial problems. It takes us into the realm of

dialectic theory for home economics practice. Brown and Baldwin (1995) urge us to remember that new theory enters our daily practice when we stop our ordinary interaction with families temporarily to gain reflective insight. Indeed, the mission charges us to appreciate that our *services to individuals and families changes over time with new insights in the profession... shaped by reflection about human needs and the human condition*. Dialectic theory, in comparison to the scientific paradigm or no theoretical orientation at all, is a perspective which would (a) "take into account everyday life with its common-sense meanings in which the family is emersed ... (b) respect the meanings that things in the home [and community] have for family members... (c) analyze and criticize social conditions and cultural traditions to reveal their constraints on internal and external [individual and familial] freedom and on justice... and (d) help us see families in a totality of relationships enmeshed in conditions of power which influence their self-interpretations of the situation and empowerment to improve their own lives" (pp. 28-29).

Summary

The mission statement of the profession is indeed full of ideas for new directions! As we move into the next century, we are challenged to define our client structurally and functionally and embrace the idea of the family as a system, as an ecosystem and in an ecosystem accessing resources from different levels of environments (human ecology perspective). We are asked to practice from a system of actions perspective which is ornate language for creating a safe environment within which families can be enabled and empowered to cope with change, change themselves and change the world so others are better off. We are challenged to help families make wise, optimal decisions so they can live a quality of life that ensures their well-being, both of which are continually challenged by practical, perennial problems. We are asked to move beyond always doing things the same way towards critically reflecting on the appropriateness of our service delivery to and for families, always striving for their self-maturation and self-formation as individual households and as a stable, social institution. We are compelled to influence policy which impacts on family quality of life and well-being by working, not only as change agents by fixing the symptoms of problems but, also, as transforming agents so other social institutions place more value on the family (e.g., government, labour, business).

As we do all of this, we are to adopt a practical problem solving approach and think critically meaning we try to enlighten families and ourselves about the way larger society has created problems which are affecting the day-to-day lives of individuals and families. If we do this well, we and they will be empowered to challenge the decisions of government and other social institutions, like the church, the education system and the labour market, which create conditions which can make family life more difficult. We are asked to face the challenge of managing diverse cultural realities and to conduct research *with* people rather than on or for people. To do all of this, finally, we are challenged to be leaders forging the way to a new future, at home and abroad in the global village.

Asking the Hard Questions - Using a New Metaphor

In the presence of such a profound and complex call for new practice, we need to ask some hard questions about our practice with and for families with some of the most difficult ones being, "Is this call for new ideas and directions stemming from the mission statement of home economics of relevance to me? Do I, as a person and a practitioner, feel adequately prepared to take on this professional dialogue and responsibility? If not, how do I need to change and what

do I need to learn? Can I or do I want to change?" We often take our existing knowledge base and way of practice for granted and never question them; hence, when we are challenged to examine the way we do things with a view to changing, we often get angry, confused or frustrated or we ignore the task, asking ourselves, "What is wrong with the way things are?" (Schneider, 1994). These are normal reactions when people are exposed to change, but reactions which cannot be sustained if we want to be able to accommodate family and society which are rapidly and relentlessly changing. We must understand that our past practices were not "wrong"; but, it is time to move in a different direction as we enter the next millennium taking with us what still works, letting go of old modes of practice and bringing into play new ways to see ourselves in relation to the world (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996).

Call for a Shift to a New Knowledge Base

The profession has been criticized for relying too much on the scientific knowledge base or paradigm during the last 100 years of practice without questioning the relevance of this knowledge to the context of today's family life. Badir (1991), Baldwin (1991), Bateman-Ellison and McGregor (1996), Brown and Baldwin (1995), Engberg (1993), Istre and Self (1990) and Key & Firebaugh (1989) are calling for a shift from our concurrent reliance on both the scientific and the developmental (life cycle), organismic paradigms to a new global, critical reflective, contextual paradigm (comprised of all of the components described in this paper). Do not quit reading just yet☺; let us use one last metaphor to understand this proposed shift in our knowledge base, a flower vase.

From the scientific, positivistic, empirical or mechanistic paradigm, home economists assume that the family is an empty vessel waiting to be filled up with expert advise. We decide there should be a vase, shape it, decide on its colour, size and decorations and then decide what goes into the vase. Families accept our recommendations as expert advise, usually questioning nothing.

From the developmental and organismic paradigm we assume that individuals and families are living organisms interacting with their near environments and with others as they move through predictable, goal directed stages of life. The home economist still decides that there will be a vase and they choose its shape and design. BUT, they now work with families to decide what goes into the vase including the tasks they need to learn to be able to move onto the next life cycle stage. Families depend on home economists to continue to help them redesign the vase and change the content as they progress through predictable life cycle stages; however, there is no critique or analysis of the design or of the changing context within which families are living out their daily lives.

Finally, practising from a global, critical reflective, contextual view of the world means that our new knowledge base necessitates that we to "let go of the expert role". Families decide if there should be a vase, depending on what is going on in *their* life, their home and in their other environments at this particular moment in time. If yes, they decide its shape, colour and design, what goes in, when and why, with us providing a safe environment for the discussion and critique of the design, the building and the filling up of that vase. The family owns the vase and any future problems with it. The summary of this paper provides an overview of what our practice would look like if we used this knowledge base as we delivered services to families.

Embarking on the Journey

Rapid and insidious social change *is* commonplace as society approaches the next

century and we are indeed challenged as we strive to help individuals and families gain a sense that they can take control of their own lives and make a difference for themselves and others. We will have to question our ideology, assumptions, principles and values, current knowledge base, university curricula, text books, lectures, even research programs, policy recommendations and daily practice with families. Helping individuals and families embrace the future is a leadership imperative we can fulfil if we remain open to new ways of seeing families in relation to the world and in changing the ways we serve families (McGregor, in press) which, according to the mission, is *supposed to change over time with new insights in the profession. Such insights come from critical reflection about human needs, the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge* - the intent of this paper. Have a good journey!

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Table 1**Comparison of system, ecosystem and human ecosystem terms**

Any <i>non-living system</i> (e.g., business, marketing, economic, political, or educational system)	A <i>living system</i> is called an eco-system (e.g., fish pond, rain forest, biosphere)	a <i>human living system</i> is called a human ecosystem (e.g., a family)
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