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Kaiser-Friedrich-Straße 13
53113 Bonn
Fon +49 (0)228 9212590
Fax +49 (0)228 9212591
E-Mail office@ifhe.org

www.ifhe.org



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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
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Editorial

We did not set out to theme this Issue of the International Journal of Home Economics however a connection between the published articles has emerged—that of home economics and national development.

In this Issue we welcome a Provocation paper from Professor Sue McGregor. This is the first of this style of paper published in the International Journal of Home Economics and it provides an interesting discussion prompt on the topic of the contribution of home economics to national development to stimulate thinking about this topic. Prompted by a media conference during the IFHE Annual meeting, Professor McGregor makes the connection to the origin of the field and leaves us wondering and being challenged to think about contribution to national contribution.

In line with national impact of the profession, the remaining peer reviewed papers attend to issues and challenges, opportunities and possibilities that might impact national contexts. Topics such as holism, identity and professionalism, spiritual health and welling, go beyond nationalism to global relevance.

We welcome your feedback on this provocation—please send comments to the IJHE email at: intjournalhomeeconomics@gmail.com

Professor Donna Pendergast

Editor, IJHE

Discussion/Provocation Papers

Home Economics Contributions to National Development

Sue L. T. McGregor
www.consultmcmgregor.com

Abstract

This discussion paper asserts that home economics has a unique role to play in national development. With knowledge of both their nation’s respective human condition and national development plans and strategies, home economists can be effective change agents acting as a catalyst between families and governments. Families are integral to national development; secure and thriving families mean a more secure and thriving nation, which in turn bolsters the human condition thereby setting up a positive reciprocal relationship.

KEYWORDS: NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, HOME ECONOMICS, CHANGE AGENT, CATALYST, FAMILIES

Introduction

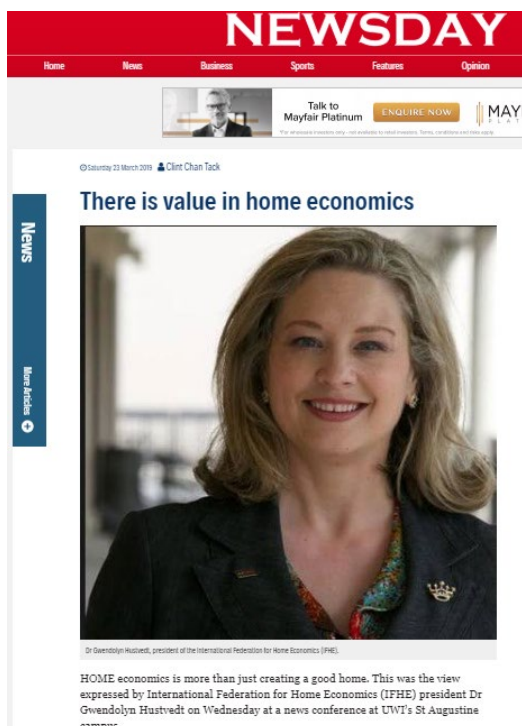


Figure 1 Trinidad-Tobago Newsday article about 2019 IFHE meeting

This discussion paper was inspired by comments from both the current and a previous president of the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE). At the 2019 IFHE meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, current President Gwendolyn Hustvedt and Past President Geraldene Hodeln took part in a news conference at the University of West Indies’ (UWI) St. Augustine campus to promote IFHE and the profession (Tack, 2019) (see Figure 1). Their comments about the role home economists¹ can play in national development inspired me to explore in more detail what this compelling association means for our profession and the impact we can have. For clarification, discussion papers involve the author locating, analyzing and synthesizing people’s exchanges about a topic or issue. Ideally, the balanced coverage of others’ perspectives will become part of a larger conversation (McGregor, 2018).

Home economists practicing in the developed world do not normally associate home economics with ‘the development of nations.’ They focus instead on development within the individual, family, home and community. But IFHE’s presidents are onto something. As Hodeln said, “home economics does not only improve a country but can improve regions” (Tack, 2019).

Interestingly, in the founding days of the profession, Ellen Swallow Richards saw a similar connection. She advocated for *municipal housekeeping*, a construct dealing with secure and healthy cities and towns; the welfare of a municipality directly influences the welfare of homes (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017; Scarbrough, 2015).

¹ The ideas in this paper pertain to home economics, human ecology, human sciences, home sciences, consumer sciences, and family and consumer sciences (and other names for the profession).

By association, home economists should focus on the health and welfare of the wider public arena, including nations, because it impacts individual and familial well-being and quality of life. Their focus would be on how national politics, goals, priorities and strategies impact such things as food security, health, public hygiene, sanitation, safe water, housing, infrastructure and poverty (Scarborough, 2015). A secure and thriving nation means more secure and thriving families; conversely, the health of families is key to national prosperity (Degala, 2018; "Home economics education," 2017).

National Development

To influence national development, home economists must be aware of what it comprises and their key role in its success. The concept of national development applies to both developed and developing countries. It is based on eight dimensions: "the economy, entrepreneurship and opportunity, governance, education, health, safety and security, personal freedom, and social capital" (Global Sherpa, 2012, para. 10). The home economics literature in the Global North eschews reference to national development, which has a macropolitical nature (i.e., very large scale politics). Conversely, home economists in the Global South seem to more fully appreciate the crucial link between the development of the nation relative to that of individuals and families.

Crucial Link between Home Economics and National Development

For example, home economists in the Philippines recently commented that "home economics has a very significant role in nation building. The health of a family is fundamental to the growth and development of a [nation]" (Degala, 2018, para. 3). Others concur, with a Jamaican representative asserting that home economics "plays a critical role in nation building [because it] provides the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for healthy family life and community living, which are regarded as integral for national development" ("Home economics education," 2017, para. 1).

Zambian home economist Kambangala (2014, para. 1) posited that home economics contributes to national development because it "addresses issues of national concern." These issues include gender and equality, health and HIV education, nutrition and food security, reproductive health, human rights, democracy, entrepreneurship, life and values education, and environmental issues (Kambangala, 2014). Nigerian colleagues reported that home economists' actions were affecting national development and progress (Funmilayo & Larai, 2015).

Helpfully, Gabriel (1998), from the Philippines, clarified that "home economics does not by itself produce the desirable changes necessary for national development to occur" (p. 4). Instead, "the primary change agent is the government which sets the national direction and strategies for development" (p. 7). Home economists act as a bridge and catalyst between families and governments. Their role is to "translate macro-level policies to micro-level implementation" (p. 7). She argued that if home economists diligently work with and for families and gather "baseline data" about their circumstances (i.e., their human condition), they are "ideal persons to draft programs of action" (p. 7) that can feed into national development plans.

National Development Plans

By association, home economists have to be on top of their respective nation's development plans, goals and strategies (Kwawu, 1993; Nkungula, 1990). National development plans are usually consultative in nature and strive to inventory and effectively utilize available resources to achieve well-researched and well-reasoned goals and objectives that benefit the nation and its citizens (Alweendo, 2017). National leaders have to develop clear mandates and policies, improve their management capacities and capabilities, develop and monitor national performance indicators, and effectively use revenue sources (Kwawu, 1993). Home economists are encouraged to build capacity in vetting and critiquing these development plans vis-à-vis their potential impact on individuals and families and vice versa (Kwawu, 1993). To that end, a Zimbabwean home economist urged us to keep abreast of national developments and remain alert to changes (Nkungula, 1990).

Developing a nation involves the growth and expansion of industries and agriculture as well as key education, social, health, religious and cultural institutions. This is best achieved through the balanced development of key facets of any nation including political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material (Bawa, n.d.). When developing their national development plans, most countries try to include four basic criteria: (a) public ownership, (b) stakeholder involvement (i.e.,

good governance), (c) a long-term vision ensuring continuity, and (d) a balance between structural/social and macroeconomic/financial concerns. The latter ensures representation of social, economic and environmental dimensions in national plans. Public ownership pertains to clarity about baselines and assumptions informing the plan, the promise to provide development indices, and the provision of goods and services to help implement the plan (United Nations Climate Change Secretariat [UNCCS], 2013).

A critical reading of many different countries' development plans located at the United Nations Regional Observatory on Planning and Development's (2019) website yielded a roster of goals and themes normally entrenched in national development documents (see Figure 2). They appear to meet the UNCCS' (2013) aforementioned key national development criteria. Home economists interested in influencing national development must concern themselves with the larger political picture (Kwawu, 1993; Nkungula, 1990) especially economic, social and environmental development as reflected in national policies, laws, regulations, directives, codes, standards and programs.

poverty alleviation	focus on income and non income dimensions of poverty: women, disaster victims, Indigenous peoples, social services, social capital, social protection of vulnerable groups, health risks, educational opportunities, economic growth, infrastructure, housing
employment generation	job creation, sector development, private and foreign investments, labour market training, inculcation of work attitudes and ethic, less reliance on informal labour markets, favouring full-time formal sectors instead
human resource development and people empowerment	nurturing people and families as a national asset; focus on: culture, moral values (to strengthen the moral fibre of nation), children and elders, gender-responsive concerns, disabled, consumer credit and debt behaviour, entrepreneurship and work, family mobility
Nation-building	build a <i>national identity</i> (i.e., a sense of the nation as a cohesive whole) that unifies and politically stabilizes the nation
good governance	establishing and using inclusive political processes in and amongst diverse actors
national productivity	<i>infrastructure</i> (water, sanitation, housing, energy, public utilities, roads, natural disaster management); <i>transportation</i> (roads, railways, airports, ports, waterways, bridges and tunnels, public transit, cycling); and <i>information communication technologies (ICT)</i> infrastructure (internet networks, computers, hardware, software, broadband, mobile technologies)
globally, internationally competitive businesses via macroeconomic stability	work opportunities, global workforce, economic growth, inflation control, currencies, public finances, industry, trade and investment, exports and imports, innovation, entrepreneurship
environmental sustainability at the center of national, social and economic development	governance, management, policies, regulations, standards, climate action, green and clean energy, compliance to international commitments, natural resource management and stewarding

Figure 2 Typical national development plan goals and themes

Home Economists Influencing National Development

Home economists can assume three stances as they engage with and influence national development; they can be stimulus, adaptive and stability agents of change. In these roles, they serve as catalysts that make things happen while remaining stable themselves during the process (Matsushima, 1989).

Stimulating Agent

First, home economists can speed up national development by initiating and *stimulating* positive changes in individuals and families. This can involve providing information and skills training that families can use to improve both their health status and living conditions, earn a living, and advocate for the value and capabilities of women (Gabriel, 1998). Strengthening women and families contributes to a nation's "international competitiveness and . . . development" (Gabriel, 1998, p. 5). This is important because national development depends on individuals and families being involved in developing, administering and evaluating strategies to ensure national prosperity (Badir, 1989).

Adaptation Agent

Second, respecting that some national development strategies can cause stress for individuals and families (Chiappetta, 1965; Gabriel, 1998), home economists can help the latter cope with and *adapt* to these changes. Home economists would rely on their aforementioned baseline data for the nation's human condition. Their initiatives could include identifying the most appropriate use of technological innovations by critically evaluating their impact on familial well-being and women's and households' needs and circumstances. They also could ensure capacity building for family entrepreneurs, which includes helping them turn the "principles of good home management into small-scale, home-based" enterprises (Gabriel, 1998, p. 6; see also Tack, 2019).

Stabilizing Agent

Third, home economists can intentionally study society. Upon identifying the repercussions arising from the absence or implementation of national development plans, they can work to invoke *stability* in individuals, families and society. This stability can arise from teaching people how to participate in their own development (via empowerment) by fostering critical thinking (Matsushima, 1989). The latter skillset helps people to both question and challenge the power base in the nation and "make defensible decisions and to participate in social decision-making" (Gabriel, 1998, p. 7). The development of the nation also depends on home economists focusing on culturally based food security. And it involves instilling and fostering the preservation of family values in concert with valuing the family "as primary socializing agents" (Gabriel, 1998, p. 7).

Home Economics' Unique Contributions to National Development Plans

Gamawa (2015), from Nigeria, affirmed the unique role home economists can play in national development plans. Home economists focus on family economic advancement, advocate for entrepreneurship and microcredit, and teach food self-sufficiency leading to food security. Successful home economics interventions can achieve "the upliftment of human dignity" (p. 326), which in turn bolsters national development. They do this by employing best practices focused on household resource management, nutrition and food production skills, family relations, human development, gender equality, safe sanitation and water use, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurship (Gamawa, 2015).

Indeed, "home economics has a unique role to play in [national] development, a role which goes well beyond its direct contribution related to the well-known skills and knowledge it embraces" (Chiappetta, 1965, p. 222). Our special contribution is to break down patterns that prevent people (especially women) from fully participating in society and national politics. As well, national development plans can make serious demands on society and its members. Strategies and initiatives often require long-term changes in values, behaviours and attitudes. Home economists are well equipped to strengthen and stabilize citizens so they can contribute to national development strategies (Chiappetta, 1965; Matsushima, 1989).

India is one example of how home economics (home science) can effect these changes. Architects of the home sciences bachelor program at Lady Irwin College (Delhi) recently attested that the discipline "has contributed a great deal toward national development by training students to take up leadership

roles [and teaching them to] promote capacity building of individuals and communities for social and economic empowerment” (2018, p. 1). Using an ecological approach, home economists foster a sense of social responsibility in people and help them to appreciate how their well-being, strength, fortitude and entrepreneurial spirit can contribute to national development (Lady Irwin College, 2018).

Others concur that home economists can and must make a “significant contribution towards family life and stability [so that people can face] the challenges of contemporary living” (“Home economics education,” 2017), which are both induced and addressed by national development (Chiappetta, 1965; “Home economics education,” 2017). IFHE President Hustvedt countenanced that teaching people how to face today’s challenges “can serve as the basis for economic development” and past President Hodelin opined that “home economics [can] improve a country” (Tack, 2019, para. 5, para. 9).

Overall, there seems to be agreement that home economists can be strong contributors to national development initiatives and strategies (Mberengwa & Mthombeni, 2012; Murray & Prehm, 1989) especially because they work with and for families, which are key “vehicles for development” (Blumberg, 1994, p. 1). “Families are engines of the economic and social development process” (United Nations, 1992, p. 6). They also play a vital role in community development and, when so empowered, can be active participants in poverty reduction and the mitigation of social and economic inequality in concert with expanding economic development (Cass & Cappel, 1995; Gamawa, 2015).

Conclusions

In order for individuals and families to reach their potential in this political arena, home economists are asked to expand the scope of their practice to include sustained and critical evaluation of their nation’s development plans. They have to be cognizant of the national macropolitical arena so they can work more effectively in the local micro-familial arena so the two are reciprocally beneficial. With deeper knowledge of and richer insights into their nation’s development plans, home economists can better ensure that their work contributes to national development as well as familial well-being and security (Gabriel, 1998; “Home economics education,” 2017; Kwawu, 1993; Matsushima, 1989; Nkungula, 1990).

As Ellen Swallow Richards asserted more than 115 years ago, a secure and thriving nation means more secure and thriving individuals and families and vice versa (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017). By association, home economists must give more credence to national development while appreciating that their fundamental role is awareness of their nation’s human condition while acting as a bridge and catalyst between families and governments (Gabriel, 1998; Matsushima, 1989).

Biography

Sue L. T. McGregor (PhD, IPHE, Professor Emerita MSVU) is an active independent researcher and scholar in the areas of home economics philosophy and leadership, transdisciplinarity, consumer education, and research paradigms and methodologies. She recently published Understanding and Evaluating Research (SAGE, 2018). Her scholarship is at her professional website: www.consultmcgregor.com

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Peer-reviewed papers

Taste as a constitutive element of meaning in food education

Jacob H. Christensen
Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark

Abstract

Food education is a broad term for educational activities within the field of home economics in which children acquire cooking skills and develop a critical awareness of food. This can be part of a subject at schools, and often involves students being instructed in how to follow recipes. This teaching method has positive potential. However, it also faces challenges because students are not encouraged to reflect independently on what they are doing and because their sense of taste is not activated in the learning process. This article presents a study of a specific Danish competition: the Danish championship in food education (DCFÉ). In this competition, the teaching methods are centred on participation and innovation, thereby activating the sense of taste to a higher degree than most teaching within this educational field. The article argues that taste can be viewed as a constitutive element of meaning which is vital for students' learning processes in connection with food education.

KEYWORDS: FOOD EDUCATION, TASTE, TEACHING, LEARNING, MEANING, HOME ECONOMICS

Introduction

The concept of food education comprises learning about food, cooking, food culture, nutrition and health etc. (Benn, 2014). Often as an independent subject, or as part of a more general subject at primary and lower-secondary schools, with many different designs depending on the geographical context, associated school culture and traditions of the country in question. This means that the subject name, content, objectives and teaching methods also vary (Pendergast, Garvis, & Kanasa, 2011). However, one common characteristic is often the intention to teach students to be able to cook a healthy meal independently: a competence relating to their everyday lives which they can make use of throughout their lifetime. As a result, both teachers and educational researchers within this field are interested in how children can be taught so they acquire knowledge about food and food preparation skills and develop preferences for healthy food. Basically, the focal point of this interest involves finding the most suitable teaching methods. With regard to food education, the obvious choice for many teachers is to use recipes as a teaching method. Recipes function as an instructional tool, with the teacher selecting a healthy dish and the teaching being based on giving students guidelines in the form of how to prepare the dish. The recipe is then followed obediently by the students from start to finish in the teaching session. There are advantages with this teaching method: students receive clear and easily understandable instructions, so they have no doubt about what they need to do, and they can always use the recipe as support (Wang, Tsai & Tsai, 2016). Furthermore, the ability to follow a recipe in a kitchen can be regarded as an essential life skill (McGowan et al., 2017). These are just a few of the advantages of using recipes as a teaching method. However, this method is not without its problems. If the recipe is followed obediently, the taste of the food will largely be determined in advance, and this may diverge from the students' own taste preferences. Consequently, there is a risk that the students will not like the food. Moreover, the students are not involved in the choice of recipe, or in how the food is prepared. So there is a risk that the teaching will be meaningless for the students because they do not like the food and cannot see it as a potential part of their everyday diet. In this article, I will, therefore, investigate specific teaching methods which didactically incorporate the relationship between taste and meaning in food education. Specifically, my research interest is to explore how the sense of taste can be utilised in a

Christensen, J. H. (2019). Taste as a constitutive element of meaning in food education. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 12(2), 9-19.

meaningful way when teaching the subject of food education. Furthermore, it is my intention to study the challenges that relate to this kind of utilisation. The Danish championship in food education is one example of a teaching practice that intends to develop teaching methods in which the students' sense of taste is regarded as essential in combination with other didactic elements. Consequently, this teaching practice will be used as the empirical foundation of the investigation presented in this article.

The Danish championship in food education (DCFE)

The overall objective of the DCFE is to develop the content of food education in Denmark, and to develop new and innovative subject-related teaching methods. The DCFE was launched in 2012, and every year there are four different phases. In the first phase organisers select an ingredient and a theme for the year ('grain' and 'health', for instance; or 'cabbage' and 'food culture'). Then teaching material is produced by educational experts within the field. The second phase consists of training courses for teachers during which they are provided with inspiration for teaching activities related to the ingredient selected for the year and the associated theme. In the third phase all the teachers that participated in the training courses carry out a course with their own students at their local primary or lower-secondary school. With regard to the teaching methods, student involvement and participation is vital in combination with innovative and experimental learning processes in which, within the theme, students have to work together to develop new dishes containing the ingredient of the year. The objective is to engage the students so that they achieve better learning outcomes because they decide which products to make rather than making products decided by the teacher. Using the sense of taste actively is also an essential part of the teaching method, as explained below.

The fourth phase of the concept is that the course of teaching is documented and submitted as an application for the competition itself. Based on descriptions in the applications, a number of school classes are selected to participate in a local semi-final, after which two successful classes go on to the national final. At these competitive events students present their dishes and the teaching process they have been through. The panel of judges consists of a variety of experts who finally select Denmark's best team in the subject of food education. The element of competition is, of course, very prominent. However, the project is not intended to be exclusively a cooking competition. Instead, the objective is to facilitate educational courses that differ from most traditional teaching within the subject, and to potentially improve students' learning outcomes.

Taste is not one of the main didactic elements in the DCFE. However, taste is included as a theme with associated workshops and exercises. So students are encouraged to investigate and evaluate different flavours and tastes in relation to the ingredient and theme defined for each year. In this way taste becomes an incorporated part of the teaching methods. In the following section I will elaborate on the concept of taste and explain why this concept can be considered essential when teaching the subject of food education.

Taste

Taste is often defined differently in different subject areas: for example, physics, pedagogics, anthropology, sensorics, media studies, etc. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to formulate an interdisciplinary definition of taste (Wistoft & Qvortrup, 2019). In rather simple terms, it can be deduced that natural science disciplines focus primarily on taste as a multi-sensory process in which the sense of taste is one of the five senses: sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste (Lycan, 2017). In this context, the sense of taste is described physiologically, as a process in which humans taste through the stimulation of specific senses and sensory receptors. There are different receptors in the membranes of the taste cells, and these are sensitive to the five different basic tastes: sour, sweet, salty, bitter and umami. When chemical irritants are recognised and bound to the receptors, a series of biochemical processes trigger an electrical signal, which is transmitted to the brain resulting in taste experiences for the individual (Erickson, 2008).

The humanities and social sciences present a variety of other definitions of the concept of taste, considering taste as something more than just a physiological phenomenon (Christensen & Wistoft, 2016). These definitions generally focus on the importance and function ascribed to taste in specific contexts, and how taste is involved in social and cultural communication systems. One of the more influential taste theories was propounded by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his book *La distinction*. Bourdieu's point is that taste does not reflect the individual's unique physiological taste

as it is presented in the natural sciences, but rather reflects the individual's social position and background (Bourdieu, 1979). Bourdieu's analysis has subsequently been criticised because his understanding of taste leaves little room for change, individual agency and mobility (Warde, 1997 pp. 5-21). A more contemporary human and social-scientific understanding considers taste to be something that is created in the relation between individual memory or experience and collective structures (Wistoft & Qvortrup, 2019). Another aspect of taste which operates within both natural sciences and the humanities is the concept of taste *preferences*.

Children are born with a preference for sweet and fat food. This helps secure their survival, because nutritionally it is essential that the small child's diet ensures good growth conditions. On the other hand, most babies are disgusted by acidic and bitter food. The biological explanation for this is that food with these flavours is associated with poisons and rotten food. In other words, food that is potentially harmful to the human organism (Prescott, 2012). These embedded taste preferences are the result of thousands of years of human evolution. Nature has endowed children with limited taste preferences acquired at birth. All other flavours will naturally entail some degree of disgust, but preferences for these can be acquired through upbringing and the course of life. The acquisition of new preferences is particularly widespread in 1- to 2-year-olds, when the child is curious and most parents experience that children are eager to taste almost any food put before them. After this, there usually follows a more selective period, during which the child's selectivity is often referred to as fussiness or picky eating. The intensity and duration of this period varies a great deal from one child to the next (Ventura & Mennella, 2011).

Positioning in relation to existing research

Much research has been carried out to examine how children's taste and eating preferences can be modified (Wistoft & Leer, 2018). The majority of this research, and the educational initiatives on which it is based, relates to ways in which parents and educational staff can change and control children's dietary habits so that they eat more healthy food. Implicitly, there is a normative imperative about what the individual should eat, and, thus, which taste preferences should be acquired (Wistoft & Leer, 2018). Such research and educational initiatives have the best intentions in terms of securing healthy lives for children. However, one of the problems involved is that the use of control in a health-educational context is difficult because it can easily be perceived as paternalistic and judgemental. There is a risk that the individual will resist efforts to control their diet, which would be counter-productive in terms of the goals in question. Instead, educational efforts targeting preferences should be based on the reflexivity of the individual (Wistoft, 2010). Another problem is the risk of overshadowing all the other advantages of working with taste. Taste can be a way to get to know the world without necessarily learning about health (Soh, Roth-Johnson, Levis-Fitzgerald, & Rowat, 2015; Uinn, 1981). Taste is very much a part of being social (Stewart, 2013). Taste can mediate between the social and the cultural (Højlund, 2015). Taste affects the individual's behaviour as a consumer in society (Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, & Snyder, 1998). There is a risk that all these perspectives are neglected in the prevailing approach to food education, which focuses primarily on health and nutrition.

In continuation of the above, it is scientifically interesting that the DCFE offers a radically different approach to the idea of using taste in food education. In particular, the DCFE incorporates taste as a didactic element without taking control as its educational point of departure. I do not mean to imply that the DCFE adopts a *laissez-faire* approach without any framework or goals and without caring what the students learn or develop preferences for. In fact, the DCFE offers a form of food education which combines taste with other central didactic elements. Existing research indicates that taste can be an obvious didactic element to incorporate in food education because it can increase student learning outcomes (Christensen & Wistoft, 2016). But how do students' taste preferences influence teaching in the subject of food education, and how can teachers manage such complexity? My intention in this article is to present a variety of empirically based perspectives on the connection between taste, teaching and learning.

Methodology

Over a three-year period, I carried out a mixed-methods research project with the DCFE as my empirical field. To be more specific, I employed a multiphase research design that combines document analyses, questionnaires, interviews and field observations. The overall aim was to provide a scientifically derived didactic perspective on teaching the subject of food education with the

teaching methods of the DCFE as the main focus. The research project was designed to gather knowledge about students (11-15 year-olds) and teachers' experiences of the DCFE and its teaching methods. Moreover, I examined students' self-assessed learning outcomes, as well as teachers' didactic reflections in relation to planning, carrying out and evaluating DCFE teaching (Christensen, 2017). In the following I will explain the use of the various methods and how they contributed to the overall research project.

The first part of the research project involved identifying the teaching methods that were central to the DCFE by gathering all the documents that officially described these teaching methods. These documents consisted of teaching materials, project descriptions, teacher guides and a website transcription. All the documents were analysed with the intention of mapping out teaching methods. They were all read, and any descriptions of specific teaching methods they contained were coded. After extracting all these codes, it could be concluded that the DCFE mainly operates with *innovation*, *student participation*, *competition* and *taste* as didactic elements constituting the foundation of the teaching methods used.

These four didactic elements were operationalised in a questionnaire given to 769 students who participated in the DCFE teaching. The focus in this part of the research project was to investigate the correlation between the students' experiences of the didactic elements and their learning outcomes. The results of this study have already been published and indicate that the DCFE teaching methods have the potential to enhance student learning within the subject of food education. The most interesting result arising from this study was that taste as a didactic element seems to have just as much potential (or even greater potential) to enhance student learning outcomes as other well-known, effective teaching methods (Christensen & Wistoft, 2016).

To provide a deeper understanding of the results indicated in the questionnaire, a qualitative inquiry that combined interviews and field observations was carried out. A total of 21 focus group interviews with students, six interviews with teachers and 21 teaching sessions were observed. The main focus was to investigate the four didactic elements and provide plausible explanations for the quantitative results. In this article the qualitative data related to the didactic element of taste will be presented and analysed.

Data analysis

In the following sections, I will present an analysis of selected qualitative data from the research project. I intend to analyse how the DCFE teaching methods relating to taste can be regarded as radically different teaching methods than the traditional approach involving recipe-based teaching. Furthermore, I will point out what educational opportunities and challenges are implied. Initially, I gain an understanding of how the element of taste in the DCFE can facilitate learning. Please note that all the quotations were originally in Danish, and that the translations are my own.

Taste and learning in food education

One essential prerequisite ensuring that teaching activities lead to learning is that teaching is perceived as meaningful by students (Anderson, 1977; Black-Hawkins, 2010; Luhmann & Schorr, 2000). Here I will apply a systems-theoretical understanding of meaning, in which the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann defines meaning as the distinction between actuality and possibility (Luhmann, 1995, pp. 65-66). My argument is that taste can be regarded as a constitutive element of meaning in food education because it connects actuality and possibility. I derive this argument from the empirical data, which can be represented by the following typical student comment:

It's fun that I can now use, that I know a lot about taste, for preparing food. (...) For example, I can taste a sauce and think that it needs to be slightly more sour, and then I can just adjust it a little. I've never cooked food like this before.

This quotation describes and actualises a specific taste experience ("For example, I can taste a sauce..."), as well as revealing a new horizon of possibilities ("and think that it needs to be slightly more sour, and then I can just adjust it a little"). In relation to teaching and learning, it is important to distinguish between the system references. Thoughts connected to the taste of the sauce belong to the psychological system, while tasting and adjustment are actions that can be observed in the social system. In this way a systems-theoretical perspective makes it possible to distinguish between taste as an experience, and taste as something students do when they taste. In continuation of this,

meaning is coupled to experience and action, while the emergence of meaning is always a recursive operation which arises via self-reference (Luhmann, 1995). Interpreting this in relation to the quotation above, we can conclude that the taste experience is coupled self-referentially to previously acquired knowledge about taste, through which thoughts emerge about possible actions relating to adjusting the taste of a sauce.

The operation of learning and meaning-making through tasting outlined above can perhaps be regarded as uncomplicated. Nevertheless, it is important to note the sentence: “I’ve never cooked food like this before”. For this student, this experience and way of acting is entirely new in relation to cooking. It is also very likely that students are used to following a recipe in cookery classes - a teaching method in which taste and tasting are often reserved for the meal itself and are not involved in the preparation of the food. In such a context, taste risks being reduced to almost exclusively expressing a final judgement; and learning risks being reduced to whether or not the student likes the food. I will argue that a different learning potential appears when taste is used as an active part of cookery classes. If this is done, a connection can be established between the taste experience (which initiates thinking) and subsequent actions. These actions will initiate new experiences, and so the process continues. This is an example of how taste can be perceived as a constitutive element of meaning in food education, and thus how taste can potentially promote learning. However, such a learning process is affected by a variety of factors, and my empirical data indicates some central themes relating to these factors - as explained in the following sections.

Taste and preferences

Taste preferences are crucial for students’ learning processes with regard to food education. One example of this is the following quotation, in which the statement links to how a student finds meaning in gaining more knowledge about cabbage:

I didn’t know that there were so many different kinds of cabbage. (...) I can tell the difference between them by remembering which ones I like. I just forget about all the others. Then I can cook food that I like.

The quote shows that this student has tasted various varieties of cabbage and decided which variety of cabbage tastes best. Furthermore, there is an indication of learning here as well: “I didn’t know that there were so many different kinds of cabbage.” The student also finds it meaningful to remember the types of cabbage he likes and forgets the other varieties. Hence, I will argue that in this context, it is taste preferences that constitute the horizon of meaning within which the student selects the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Taste preferences can thus affect how students choose to participate in teaching, which means that teachers need to ensure that their own intentions are matched by the students’ preferences. This reflects an understanding that it may be challenging to teach students in food education when the intended learning is about ingredients that students dislike. One teacher gave an example of this:

At first it was difficult to get the students on board with the idea of cabbage. They weren’t exactly enthusiastic. But once we got started, they really began to see that it could be interesting.

This quote demonstrates that even though taste can be a barrier, this barrier can also be overcome and students may experience positive results despite their initial scepticism. So the scientifically relevant question is how can teachers appropriately manage students’ disgust for certain ingredients when teaching the subject of food education? Similar epistemological interests have been examined in detail in existing taste research, and there are many studies of how children’s preferences can be managed, controlled and modified (Wistoft & Leer, 2018). In this context, I would like to point to one scientifically proven method: *repeated taste exposure*. This is based on evidence that children need to experience a new and unknown taste up to ten times before they develop a preference for it (Caton et al., 2014). The research is primarily anchored in sensory science, but an educational ideology is also implied because the point of departure is the overriding goal of changing children’s preferences to ensure that they comply with society’s desire for healthy living. It is common sense that many parents can relate to this ideology—they want their children to eat healthy food. As a result, the mantra at family mealtimes often includes the rule that the child *must* at least taste the food served (Heath, Houston-Price, & Kennedy, 2011). Although the intention is praiseworthy, I will argue that it also involves problems. If a child is forced or manipulated into tasting something they don’t like ten times, they will be exposed to potentially ten negative experiences before the intended learning can (perhaps) be achieved. Negative experiences are a strongly limiting factor to learning,

motivation and well-being, so the approach is inappropriate educationally speaking. Repeated taste exposure can actually have a negative impact if the method is applied without the appropriate pedagogical reflection (Tuorila & Mustonen, 2010). Moreover, I will argue, this approach aims to manage and control taste preferences rather than developing the individual's own taste integrity. This is in the understanding that the individual's own meaning making are not rendered any value, unless they are in accordance with the dictates of what is imperatively correct to eat. However, as I have previously pointed out, if connections to teaching are to be established, it is essential that teaching is perceived as meaningful. Teachers cannot control what their students are thinking. So when a teacher encounters challenges regarding students' disgust with an ingredient, a different educational approach is required instead of changing taste preferences through repeated exposure. The empirical data in this study provides many examples of this - for instance the following quote:

I love burgers, and actually, adding a little cabbage to them was not bad. In fact it made them better. I'd never have believed it. (...) it was actually good to try something different that still tasted good.

This quote is an example of a student starting with something familiar, which is a significant factor in relation to learning (Luhmann & Schorr, 2000). The familiarity is expressed as a preference for burgers, which in this context is the known reference in the self-referential process of learning. There is an experience-based expectation that cabbage will make food taste worse. There is something disgusting about the taste of cabbage for this student. However, the student is surprised by the taste experience ("I'd never have believed it"). This shows that the student has had a positive experience regarding the taste of cabbage. In this respect, an important distinction is the difference between experience and surprise. In a systems-theoretical perspective, surprises can be defined as thoughts in which negative expectations are offset by positive experiences. In this particular instance, there is a specific learning potential. And the example also demonstrates that it is essential for teachers to reflect on how their teaching is planned so that negative expectations about food can be met by positive taste experiences. However, this is not without its problems. The quotation above also implies a challenge regarding tasting something unknown. This student is used to new food being associated with something that doesn't taste good ("it was actually good to try something different that still tasted good"). Just as positive taste experiences can facilitate learning, so can taste also be a barrier. Take this quote from an interview with a student, for instance:

I think it was great fun to have to combine a taste with an ingredient, or, you know, a type of food. (...) Because you really didn't know what you were tasting, but then I found out that I actually liked something that I didn't think I liked (...) If I'd known what it was, I wouldn't have dared to taste it, because I thought I didn't like it.

One potential barrier to learning is that this student does not dare to taste something they might not like. This kind of advance judgement on taste limits student participation and potential learning processes. However, it is interesting that as soon as students overcome this barrier, they are surprised that their negative expectations are so easily confounded. Suddenly, taste is not a barrier to learning, but rather the opposite. The context in which this occurs is a teaching situation that is organised with didactic reflection about how it is possible to challenge students' courage in terms of taste (their courage to taste something new and unknown). However, it is also evident that such an approach can evoke negative experiences. Thus, there appears to be a paradox requiring didactic reflection when teaching food education. In this context, it is important to point out that negative experiences can also be very educational, and that negative experiences are also a fundamental part of being human (Bollnow, 1968; Kapur, 2008). Education and didactic reflection are therefore not about shielding children from anything that can lead to negative experiences. It is important to challenge the individual - although not to the extent that they lose all sense of motivation. As a result, teachers need didactic competences to reflect on these positions with regard to teaching taste. Furthermore, the empirical data indicates that there is a pedagogically complementary connection between student participation and the experimental didactics and taste didactics that I have described until now. Whereas repeated taste exposure is about students receiving the same dictated taste experience repeatedly, something else happens in an experimental approach to teaching taste, as seen in the DCFE. Here, students are exploratory and continuously developing their own dishes. The same ingredients may be tasted repeatedly, but there are small taste variations, depending on how students themselves choose to prepare the ingredients prior to each taste experience. On the basis of students' own meaning makings, new possibilities for participation arise in the teaching, which can facilitate new taste experiences and learning. I regard this as an

educational approach which is radically different from control and management. However, the experimental didactics are not without problems in relation to taste, as explained below.

Student participation, innovation and taste as teaching methods

Innovation is one of the central teaching methods in the DCFE, where the intention is that students should develop and experiment with different ingredients and dishes. This development and experimentation can aim at a variety of elements in the food. It could be innovation in aesthetics. It could be the level of food safety. It could be sustainability, etc. However, the taste of the food is often an important element and the subject of experimentation. To give some examples of this, taste is often linked with aesthetics, because we also taste with our eyes (Hurling & Shepherd, 2003). Attempts to innovate so that food is healthier often also influence what the food tastes like (Verbeke, 2006), and developing a more sustainable approach to food also affects its taste (Perullo, 2016 p. 83). Therefore, I would argue that taste is an unavoidable part of experimental cooking and innovation as a teaching method in the subject of food education. The empirical data from my observational studies also indicates that taste can have a significant influence on how students work experimentally in connection with food education. As an example, I have included the following description of a teaching situation:

A group of three students who have just made a smoothie are blending different ingredients. Now they are tasting the result:

Student 1: It tastes a bit too much of cabbage!

Student 2: Yes, but that's what we wanted, isn't it?

Student 1: Yes, but it doesn't taste very nice!

Student 3: We could try to put something else in so that it gets a different taste! It tastes very bitter, so perhaps we need something sweet! What about sugar?

Student 2: No, that's too easy, and it's unhealthy. What about trying some sweet fruit?

Student 3: "We've got loads of berries. Why don't we try some of them?"

They agree to try blackcurrants, blueberries and cranberries. Then they try one berry at a time in their smoothie. They start with cranberries, after which the conversation continues:

Student 1: I think it tastes much better than before!

Student 3: I still think tastes like cabbage!

Student 2: But we probably can't do anything about that! Shall we try with some blueberries too?

The students agree to try blending some blueberries into their smoothie, after which they all stick a spoon into the blender and taste the smoothie:

Student 1: It's a bit better now!

Student 3: But I still don't really like it, even though it does taste a little bit better.

This example illustrates how the students go on trying to find the right recipe for their smoothie using different ingredients. Note that they use their sense of taste to evaluate the results and subsequently to select how the product should be adjusted. This illustrates the model outlined above, explaining how learning can be achieved as a result of meaningful interchange between action and taste experience. However, this example also illustrates one other key challenge relating to the didactics of the teaching methods in the DCFE. For many students, innovation is about getting the dish to taste very little of the ingredient that the intended learning is about. In this case cabbage. I assess that this challenge was particularly pronounced in the DCFE during the year when the theme was cabbage and food culture. Another example of this comes from an interview with a student:

Interviewee: Now it tastes good.

Interviewer: Could you try to put into words how it tastes good?

Interviewee: Yes, because we almost got rid of the taste of cabbage.

Many students apparently had negative prejudices and expectations in relation to cabbage as an ingredient, and empirically this cannot be observed to the same extent for other raw materials in the DCFE in the three-year period of data collection. The empirical data demonstrates how students try to eliminate the taste of cabbage in their dishes. Consequently, the level of learning produced by such a process can be questioned. The students' preference for cabbage (or lack of it) has apparently not been changed significantly, but it is also worth pointing out that this is not one of the primary intentions of the DCFE programme. Conversely, many students have probably been through an educational process in which experimenting with different tastes characterised their teaching, and potentially challenged their courage to taste. As described above, simply tasting something unknown can be a challenge for some students. However, my analysis of the data indicates that the combination of the experimental and students' co-determination creates an educational environment in which students can wonder at, investigate and experience different taste impressions. At the same time, it is fundamental to the teaching methods in DCFE to accept that students have prior preferences, and that they are allowed to work with these as their point of departure without any controlling expectation that these preferences must necessarily be changed. Hence, this taste didactic is not based on management and control, but has a different focus. Here is another example from the observation study:

Two students are standing by a cooker and preparing food. The observer walks over to them, and the dialogue starts:

Observer: Hi. Can I ask what you're cooking?

Student 1: We're cooking shepherds' pie.

Observer: OK. But there isn't usually cabbage in shepherds' pie?

Student 2: No, but we have chosen to put cabbage in our mashed potato to make it more healthy.

Observer: Do you like it?

Student 2: Yes, it tastes delicious!

Observer: Will you be doing the same in the future when you cook food at home?

Student 1: No, I don't think so!

Student 2: No, I don't think I will either.

Observer: Why not?

Student 2: Because it tastes better without cabbage!

This empirical example illustrates two students who have experimented with their mashed potato. They have modified the original recipe, and they have added cabbage. Apparently, they learn that cabbage can taste good in mashed potato. The students are aware that this version of mashed potato is healthier than the version they are used to. However, they do not arrive at the conclusion that this recipe for a dish with cabbage can form part of their daily diet. Taste is highlighted as a barrier to this, because they are used to something that, in their perception, tastes better. From an educational perspective involving managing, controlling and modifying eating habits, this would be regarded as a failure. However, I would argue that such a conclusion overlooks some key aspects. My point is that the experimental cooking, combined with a high degree of student participation, apparently increases students' awareness of taste and their willingness to taste. This has value in itself, and the objective should not only be the change of taste preferences. Instead, it is important that students experiment with and experience different taste impressions in order to determine and reflect on their own preferences, which is a fundamental element in developing taste integrity (Wistoft & Leer, 2018). Such an approach is also likely to increase students' general courage to try new tastes.

Logically, more taste experiences will make positive taste experience more likely; and as an added bonus, this may expand taste preferences even though this is not the primary learning objective.

Taste: A didactic supplement

Taste as an active element in food education is not a matter of course. The data collected in this research project includes empirical examples of situations in which students do not think about tasting and seasoning the food they are preparing until they are encouraged to do so. For example:

Yes, it's hard because we usually just do what the recipe says. But now we're being forced to think a bit more about how we can reach the result. (...) I usually just taste the food when I've finished the recipe, and then I just eat it as it is. But now we've learned how we can always make the food better by tasting as we cook. It's as if it's easier to cook food you also like. (...) for example, if we're not sure about something, we usually just ask our teacher what to do. But now it's like she won't give us an answer when we ask. (...) Yes, she's always saying that we need to taste our cooking as we go.

Note that this quotation reveals how some students experience most of their teaching in food education. If they are not sure about something, they ask the teacher and receive an answer directing their actions. However, when the opposite occurs, and the teacher does not give an answer, another level of reflection emerges, as shown in the words "But now we're being forced to think a bit more about how we can reach the result." My point is that if the teacher does not consciously encourage students to taste and season the food, there is a risk of pacifying the sense of taste through the food preparation processes in the teaching activity. On the other hand, there are examples of the opposite. This is a quote by a teacher:

To start with, the students worked on the basis of an indicative recipe. In other words, they could choose for themselves whether they wanted to add grated red cabbage or white cabbage: they could experiment and find out what tastes or works best.

This teacher reflected didactically on how taste can be used as an active element in teaching. At the same time, the teacher reflects on how progression can be generated, so that teaching goes from a well-known format based on recipes to a more experimental approach in which tasting is the essence of how the students find their way to meaningful results. There are various similar examples of didactic reflection in the empirical data. As a result, it can be deduced that taste is an active element within a lot of DCFE teaching. However, there is also a tendency for recipe-based teaching to dominate teaching within the subject of food education. This is not a problem in itself; but it will become a problem if taste and tasting are not incorporated, as this could reduce the learning potential. My own quantitative studies within the field also indicate that students taking part in the DCFE have different experiences of the extent to which they have worked with taste (Christensen & Wistoft, 2016). There is, therefore, a group of students with very limited experience of working with taste, and this can be considered educationally inappropriate owing to the potentials that are lost in this connection.

Discussion of implications

The findings presented in this article show that using taste as an active part of teaching the subject of food education can potentially lead to more meaningful learning processes for students. This raises the question of the implications of these findings for teachers and their teaching practices. It may be a good idea to reduce the use of recipe-based teaching within food education in favour of more experiential practices with a higher degree of student participation. In light of the results presented in this article, such an approach to teaching food education would be a way of utilising the sense of taste to a higher extent than is the case in more traditional recipe-based teaching. However, I would like to point out that recipe-based teaching still has positive elements, as highlighted in the introduction. So with regard to some teaching purposes, using recipes will probably still be a suitable approach. In other words, the results of this article do not imply that teachers should exclude one of these teaching methods. Instead, it is essential for teachers to reflect didactically on how the sense of taste can be activated when teaching the subject of food education. One simple example relates to the content of the recipes that a teacher chooses to use. There is a difference between giving a recipe which tells students to add one teaspoon of salt, and a recipe which tells them to season the dish with salt. In the first example, the student only needs to know what a teaspoon is, which is an adequate level of complexity for some students. But the idea of seasoning a dish with salt increases the level of complexity. It opens up for a more experimental approach, with the awareness of taste

being used to examine and reflect on the final product. Hence, one of the essential points of this article is that teachers should make didactic choices about how to utilise the sense of taste no matter which teaching method is applied.

Conclusion

The empirical data of this study indicates that the teaching methods of the DCFE have a learning potential which is different from that of recipe-based teaching. When taste is used actively in teaching the subject of food education, a process emerges in which taste experiences lead to thinking and decisions regarding actions related to the preparation of food. These actions are followed by new taste experiences, and so the process continues. Because decisions related to taste are made self-referentially by students, the learning process can become more meaningful to the individual, which is a positive factor in relation to students' learning outcome. One fundamental challenge in this context is that students' taste preferences affect how they choose to participate in the teaching, and preferences can have both negative and positive effects in this regard. Teaching which encourages students to taste may have a particular learning potential in situations where positive surprises occur despite the students' negative expectations. However, establishing the framework for such learning requires a teacher who is able to challenge the students' courage to taste without challenging them so much that there are decidedly negative consequences for their experiences and learning process. Teaching students to use their sense of taste should not be founded on management and control with a normative ideal of what the individual ought to eat. Rather, teaching should take its didactic starting point elsewhere; and I conclude that the teaching methods of the DCFE are one possible option. The taste education presented in this context is characterised in particular by the incorporation and combination of experimental didactic reflections with student participation. The intention is that students should taste as they cook by investigating and taking small manageable steps with regard to taste. The normative taste ideal about what must and should be eaten is less prominent in the DCFE, and this allows the students to develop their own taste integrity. Furthermore, I conclude that students do not always take the initiative to use their sense of taste when participating in food education. So, working with taste and continuously activating the sense of taste are not a matter of course. Therefore, one essential point in teaching food education is that taste and tasting cannot be taken for granted by the teacher. On the contrary, it is important to reflect on taste didactically and incorporate it actively. This can lead to the positive effects documented in this article: taste can become a constitutive element of meaning when students are taught the subject of food education.

Biography

Jacob Højgaard Christensen holds a PhD in didactics, and currently he is working as an assistant professor at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark, where he also function as vice center director of the Danish National Center for School Research. His expertise is within the field of school research, where he has been concentrated on health pedagogy, food education, performance culture and wellbeing in primary to upper-secondary school. He has researched the effectiveness of teaching plans and didactic programs with a view to developing and improving learning environments and teaching practices. Methodologically and theoretically he is mostly oriented towards Mixed Methods and systems theory. E-mail: jach@edu.au.dk

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Assessing Home Economists' spiritual health and wellbeing: A case for further study

Jay R. Deagon
CQUniversity, Queensland, Australia

Donna Pendergast
Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Abstract

The spiritual health dimension is a generally accepted feature of holistic or whole person health and wellbeing in Home Economics arenas. An unexamined area is the spiritual health and wellbeing of Home Economics professionals themselves. This small-scale pilot study assessed the four domains of spiritual health and wellbeing (personal, communal, environmental, transcendental) of sixty-six Home Economists from cross-cultural backgrounds via an anonymous online survey. Analysis revealed that Home Economists identified most with communal aspects of spiritual health and wellbeing including a love of other people, service to others, the importance of family and friendships, and respect for others. As an aspect of Home Economics, spiritual health and wellbeing was acknowledged as important to these Home Economists. There is potential for rich applications in Home Economics; however, very little professional development is focused on this area. This paper argues the case for deeper investigations of spiritual health and wellbeing and the creation of professional development materials.

KEYWORDS: HOME ECONOMICS, SERVICE, SHALOM, SPIRITUAL, HEALTH, WELLBEING

Spiritual foundations—culturally sensitive futures

The origins and directions of Home Economics vary from country to country. In Westernised countries, it is widely acknowledged that the genesis of the profession was the American Lake Placid Conferences, held between the years 1899 and 1908. Early Home Economists recognised that homes and families were multilogical meaning that approaches toward individual, family and community challenges need “special methods” because families are influenced by a complex array of factors including social class, religious beliefs, municipal environment, health and education status (Andrews, 1907, p. 152). Founding Home Economists also asserted that whole person and family development occurred within complex sociocultural contexts including the physical, social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual conditions of the home (Andrews, 1907; Talbot, 1902). Activities within the family and community promoted or impeded active participation in society. Religious and spiritual beliefs and values often directed activities.

Embedded Anglo-Christian beliefs and values influenced the direction of the Home Economics profession. For example, *service* was an important Christian concept (Richards, 1904). Richards (1906) recognised that Home Economics education could inspire the educated classes with a desire to first secure their own basic needs and then those of others. Insightfully, early Home Economists were also aware of both positive and negative impacts that natural and human-made environments had on an individual's or family's spiritual development (Woods, 1902). Not surprisingly, given the historical context within which the early Home Economics profession occurred, Americanised Christian beliefs and values were culturally embedded in all the historical documents analysed (Deagon & Pendergast, 2015).

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Correspondence: Jay R. Deagon ✉ j.deagon@cqu.edu.au

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Head, heart and soul of Home Economics

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) (2001) summarised the *essence* of the Home Economics profession in three words—*head, heart, soul*—and explained these three pillars of Family and Consumer Science (FACS) wherein the:

...profession's body of knowledge is the intellectual foundation or the head. The heart is the mission to improve quality of life, which reflects our passion, caring, and compassion as professionals. Soul puts us in touch with the 'whys' of our being, that which inspires, motivates us, and gives meaning to our work. (p. 1)

For the authors, this metaphorical trinity of head/heart/soul alludes to spiritual aspects of the Home Economics profession and its professionals. Definitions of spiritual or spirituality are deliberately not defined at this stage in this paper and it will become apparent why definitions have been suspended. The focus of this paper is to situate where spiritual health and wellbeing (SHW) may fit within contemporary Home Economics and report the results of administering the Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measure (SHALOM) survey to Home Economics practitioners.

In brief, this paper first explains that our study explored ways to materialise an *essence* of Home Economics into a more tangible construct. Next, we outline the framework used to locate and administer a culturally inclusive instrument that measured the SHW of an international cohort of Home Economists. The existing measure known as SHALOM was adapted and administered via an anonymous online platform. This work was conducted as one aspect of a more comprehensive small-scale qualitative study into Home Economics' views and perceptions of SHW in Home Economics contexts (Deagon, 2013). The instrument used in the larger study contained six parts, with Part Two focused on Demographics and Part Five on SHALOM. Those two sets of results are reported in this paper.

Study purpose, context and research questions

One purpose of the aforementioned more comprehensive study was to make visible assumptions about connections between Home Economics and spirituality. This was achieved by exploring which characteristics of existing spirituality frameworks resonate most with Home Economists and those specifically related to an individual's perception of SHW. A sub-section of the study was guided by two questions of inquiry: (1) What is the spiritual health and wellbeing of a cohort of Home Economists and (2) Is there dissonance between *ideal* spiritual health and wellbeing and the *lived experience* of Home Economists? In order to undertake this work, the context was framed to provide constraint where methodology and methods were selected to reflect the complexity of the study's questions about SHW.

Within a contemporary and international context, Home Economics is an umbrella term used to describe a broad field of study that is variously known as Family and Consumer Sciences/Studies; Human Ecology; and Home Management, among other nomenclature. The choice of name tends to be geographically aligned with a particular approach to the field and reflects philosophy and elements that might be more prominent in that region. In this study, we have chosen to utilise the term *Home Economics* as an acknowledgment of the globally accepted term for the field, reflected in the title of the only international professional association representing individuals in this field - the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE). Given the international and cross-cultural intent of the study, the authors felt that Home Economics was the appropriate construct to explore.

IFHE (2008) states that the primary concern of Home Economics is the "empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and of facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work; and living situations" (p. 1). The overarching purpose of Home Economics is to assist people within local and global (known together as *glocal*) contexts to acquire the skills and knowledge required to participate actively and efficaciously in everyday life. Through the delivery of this work, Home Economics curricula have some identified synergies with SHW frameworks (Deagon & Pendergast, 2012, 2014). This point of alignment is of interest to this study.

For the last decade, as researchers and authors, both independently and collaboratively, we have monitored research, internet conversations, news articles, and blogs for Home Economics related

discourse. We have observed that Home Economists often affirm that their jobs are *a calling, a vocation or a way of life*. Important for keeping vitality in the Home Economics profession, these affirmations have been linked with personal and professional identity (Green, 2001; Nickols, 2001; Pendergast, 2008; Turkki, 2005). Supporting this observation, Nickols (2001, p. 43) revealed that established and new-to-the-field Home Economists believed that becoming a Home Economist is “more of a calling” where “spiritual renewal... comes from knowing that [Home Economics] makes a difference to others.” Spiritual renewal may mean personal and professional satisfaction derived through working with individuals, families, communities and other Home Economists.

As a professional career choice, Home Economists, much like nurses and teachers, are sometimes described as nurturers. We consider a nurturer as someone who values the role of taking care of someone else by assisting individuals and families to reach their full potential toward achieving quality lives. In many ways, these features of Home Economists’ professionalism relate to spirituality; however, it is unusual for Home Economists to privilege discussion around spirituality, including in curriculum domains. Especially, the politicised separation of church from state has stifled discussion because of a perception that spirituality is a religion-exclusive topic.

Indeed, exploring spirituality as an aspect of personal and professional identity may be challenging for Home Economists and the profession with various understandings of what this may mean. Barriers to discussion are often surrounded by a lack of clarity about meanings for spiritual terminology and meanings specific to Home Economics contexts. In order to situate SHW within Home Economics contexts, it was fundamental to explore what may be acceptable to consider as the *essentials* of contemporary Home Economics.

Framework of essential Home Economics concepts

The authors acknowledge that synthesising a body of knowledge into an essence or essentials is problematic; however, it was considered necessary in order to frame the research problem. The IFHE (2008) Position Statement was used as the basis for this synthesis because it described certain fundamental or central characteristics of Home Economics for contemporary times. Essential means ‘absolutely necessary, extremely important’ (‘Essential’, 2018.) and stems from the Latin *essentia* meaning ‘in the highest degree’ (‘Essentia’, n.d.). Essence is a derivative word of essential and means ‘intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, which determines its character’ (‘Essence’, 2018). Using this ‘essential essence’ idea to complement and capture the highest order characteristics of SHW, the authors extracted the absolutely necessary and extremely important intrinsic qualities of Home Economics from the literature.

The process of adapting and refining Deagon and Pendergast’s (2014, pp. 3-4) analysis of Home Economics literature revealed *four essential elements of Home Economics*:

- **Individuals:** meaning each unique member of the human family. For Home Economics this means teachers, students, industry professionals and clients as well as both individuals external to immediate circles of influence and unfamiliar persons.
- **Families and communities:** meaning self-defined families, family units, consumers, and locally and globally defined communities and groups. For Home Economics this includes families within immediate circles of influence to an individual, communities of practice, school communities, volunteer and humanitarian organisations, local and international businesses, government agencies and corporations.
- **Environment and sustainable futures:** meaning stewardship and care for living and non-living environments including self-definitions of the home, built spaces, sacred places, natural landscapes, natural and human-made resources, ecosystems, organic life forms and inorganic material, creatures, space, outer-space, air and water.
- **Glocal citizens operating in a global community to connect with a larger reality:** meaning transcending beyond immediate needs of self and material reality to connect and interact with a larger reality in everyday life on Earth and beyond—past, present and future.

These four elements helped us determine certain characteristics and strengths of the discipline and allowed us to locate comparative relationships with an existing SHW framework. This Home Economics framework directed the selection of methodology and methods to explore SHW of Home Economists.

Methodology used to situate SHW within Home Economics

Strategies of bricolage facilitated selection of an appropriate online survey to reveal final lines of inquiry. Within the Creative Arts discipline, a bricolage is used when an artist makes something from whatever materials happen to be available. Bricolage is also a contemporary research strategy that allows researchers to treat data organically and in creative and innovative ways, yet retain rigor and validity (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). Employing Kincheloe et al.'s (2011) Bricolage approach enabled the four essential elements of Home Economics to be juxtaposed intuitively with Fisher's (2011) four domains of SHW model, respectively, personal, communal, environmental and transcendental. From the perspectives of Home Economist, educator and researcher, bricolage allowed a confluent and interdisciplinary *weaving* of theory, methodology, data and analysis to seek patterns and follow intuitions (Kincheloe, 2005).

Bricolage in action: contemporary context of Home Economics and SHW

In the spirit of Bricolage as a research strategy, this section identifies the bits and pieces found and used to position spirituality within Home Economics. Despite historical connections to entrenched European Christian religious ideology (Deagon & Pendergast, 2015), spirituality remains a relatively unexplored element of Home Economics. Mitstifer (1996, p. 28) stated that "this sacred dimension, the ultimate meaning of our existence, cannot be found in any one of the organized religions, a broader spirituality is possible if the common roots can be found."

Three research articles were located that explicitly explored spirituality within the Home Economics field. An examination of some educators' views about *wellbeing* found that spirituality was variously understood but identified as important (Henry, 1995). DuVernet (2007) hinted that textiles education may have consequences for increased recognition of spiritual development in Australian secondary school students. Finally, interviews with a small sample of American FACS university students revealed that an awareness of personal spirituality may have consequences for increased resilience and adaptation to change strategies (Rehm & Allison, 2009).

Other literature in the Home Economics field referred to spirituality in rhetorical, ideological, theoretical or philosophical ways (Deagon & Pendergast, 2012; McGregor & Chesworth, 2005; McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998; Mitstifer, 1996; Nickols-Richardson, 2001; Turkki, 2012). The reviewed literature made tentative links between Home Economics curriculum and spirituality, but no substantial clarification or in-depth studies have previously been conducted. Paucity of Home Economics-related literature made spirituality a worthy candidate for further investigation.

Introducing a possible framework for SHW and Home Economics—making the silent visible

The criteria for selecting a diverse framework for understanding SHW included: (a) inclusivity for a broad spectrum of human experience and the human condition; (b) the ability for a model to be applied to human beings operating in non-religious and religious contexts; and (c) demonstrating an ecological or holistic view of human beings living within complex social, cultural and environmental contexts. Aligning with a targeted international cohort of Home Economists for the sample frame, a balanced and culturally inclusive framework for SHW was sought. For these reasons, Fisher's (2011) four domain model for spiritual health and wellbeing (4DSHW) was chosen as an appropriate framework to apply to the study.

As noted, the 4DSHW comprises personal, communal, environmental and transcendental domains. Fisher (2009a, p. 273) described SHW as "... a, if not THE, fundamental, dynamic state of health shown by the extent to which people live in harmony within relationships in up to four domains." This means the quality of the relationship with self (personal domain), others (communal domain), the environment (environmental domain) and/or Transcendent Other (transcendental domain) reflects the SHW in each of these four domains.

Adapting the work of Fisher (2011), Deagon and Pendergast (2014, p.4) presented a visual representation of theoretical relationships between the four essential elements of Home Economics (individuals; families and communities; environments and sustainable futures; global citizens) and

the four domains of SHW (personal, communal, environmental, transcendental) (Figure 1). This ‘essentials’ framework was the platform from which the next phase of inquiry to assess the SHW of individual Home Economists commenced.

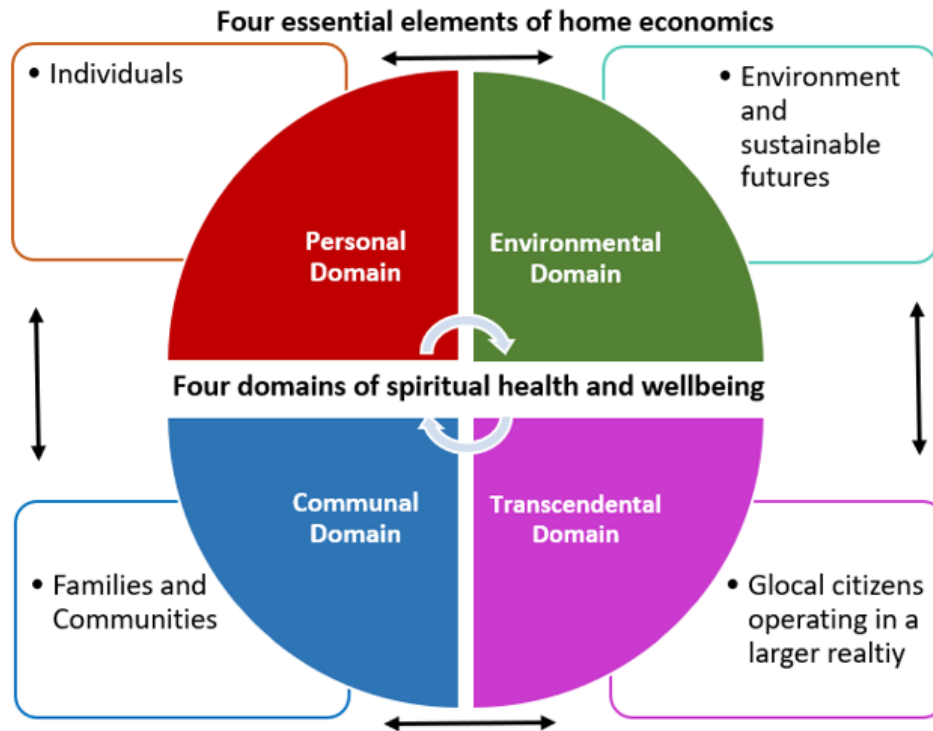


Figure 1 Revised Version of Deagon and Pendergast's (2014) Model Representing Relationships between the Four Essential Elements of Home Economics and the Four Domains of SHW

Method

This quantitative pilot study employed a previously validated self-rated instrument to survey an international cohort of Home Economists using an online data collection platform. Results were analysed using descriptive statistics and a factor analysis (inferential statistics).

Instrument

A formal, validated instrument, the *Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measure* (SHALOM), comprising two spiritual wellbeing measures, was selected and adapted for online administration. The Spiritual Health Measure (SHM) is the *lived experience* (how they ‘feel’ each item reflected their personal experience most of the time) component and the [Spiritual] Life-Orientation Measure (LOM) comprises respondents’ *ideals* (how important they thought each item was for an ‘ideal’ state of spiritual health and wellbeing). These two combined measures are known by the acronym SHALOM (Fisher, 2013). This self-rated scale instrument measures an individual’s SHW across four domains (personal, communal, environmental and transcendental). SHALOM comprises 20 questions with five questions for each of the four SHW domains (see Table 1). SHALOM does not presume an individual to be ‘spiritually healthy’ or otherwise; rather, in our study, the survey was used as an indication of individual Home Economist’s *ideals* (ideal) compared with their *lived experience* (feel) within 4DSHW (Fisher, 2011). Using this instrument assisted in identifying certain SHW characteristics with which survey respondents most resonated.

Personal	Communal
A sense of identity	A love of other people
Self-awareness	Forgiveness towards others
Joy in life	Trust between individuals
Inner peace	Respect for others
Meaning in life	Kindness towards other people
Environmental	Transcendental
Connection with nature	Personal relationship with Transcendent Other
Awe at a breathtaking view	Worship of Transcendent Other
Oneness with nature	Oneness with Transcendent Other
Harmony with the environment	Peace with Transcendent Other
Sense of 'magic' in the environment	Prayer life

Table 1 Five concepts assessed for each of the four domains of SHW

SHALOM was used to elicit Home Economists' views on two aspects of SHW relative to 20 items (e.g., personal relationship with Transcendent Other, connection to nature, self-awareness, inner peace, meaning of life, and joy in life). Table 1 further demonstrates the multidimensional and complex approach identified by the selection criteria for the model for SHW used in the study. It will be recalled that the authors had refrained from defining SHW. The reason for this holdback was that constructing one universally acceptable definition for spiritual health and wellbeing is most likely impossible (Chuengsatiansup, 2003; Hand, 2003). Consequently, the authors ventured that a framework for understanding is more appropriate.

Regarding instrument validity and reliability, although measuring SHW is still a contested area of research (O'Connell & Skevington, 2007), the psychometric properties of SHALOM (and its various adaptations) have been tested in a number of studies that confirmed, with clear limitations, the instrument has consistently been found to be valid and reliable (Fisher, 2004, 2013; Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2000, 2002; Gomez & Fisher, 2003, 2005a, 2005b). To summarise studies where this instrument has been administered Fisher (2012) reported five studies with secondary school students; two studies with teachers in Australia and Hong Kong; six studies with university students in Australia, Hong Kong, UK, Northern Ireland and Turkey; five studies on healthcare workers and patients from Australia, Canada and Scotland; two community studies report on workers from Australia and Iran; and church-attenders from Australia. SHALOM had also been used in additional studies with people in schools, universities, businesses and community in Australia, Canada, Germany, Portugal, South Africa and UK (Fisher, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011, 2012, 2013; Fisher & Brumley, 2008; Fisher et al., 2000, 2002; Fisher & Ng, 2017; Gomez & Fisher, 2003, 2005a, 2005b). Additionally, SHALOM has been independently identified as a potentially useful, culturally diverse and inclusive way to measure spirituality as a universal human experience (de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2010).

Survey construction

Regarding survey construction, the first section of the survey contained an informed content statement consisting of assurances of voluntary participation, anonymity, investigator and institution contact details, definitions for key concepts, and a statement of purpose for the study. It also included demographic questions (Eysenbach, 2004). Parts two and three of the survey were designed specifically to elicit views and perceptions about spirituality and SHW within Home Economics contexts. This component of the research has been reported elsewhere (Deagon & Pendergast, 2014).

Qualtrics Online Survey Software (<http://www.qualtrics.com/>) was selected as the platform from which to build and administer the survey. Using the features available in *Qualtrics*, SHALOM was reproduced as closely as possible to the print format.

Ethics approval

Ethical approval for a four-part survey to be administered was granted through the Griffith University Ethics Committee under protocol number EPS/07/10/HREC.

Sample frame and data collection

The number of Home Economics teachers and professionals worldwide with access to the Internet was estimated to be 50,000, indicating the potential pool of target respondents. It was anticipated that the online survey would go *viral* or *snowball* (Creswell, 2005) through a range of networks. Dissemination and recruitment strategies included direct contact; email and word-of-mouth networking; print material in Home Economics association's newsletters; and advertising on social media sites including a purposely built research website, Facebook, Twitter and WordPress. No incentives were offered to participants. Despite these multimethod dissemination strategies, the recruitment strategy did not attract as many respondents as anticipated. Challenges with recruitment will be discussed further in the Limitation section of this paper.

Data analysis

The survey data were downloaded from Qualtrics by conversion into a .csv file for use in Excel and also saved as an SPSS file for uploading into the computer assisted analysis program SPSS. Data were cleaned after being entered into the worksheet in Excel, as follows. Coding values on a coding sheet were assigned. Individual numbers were assigned to each respondent. Internet Protocol (IP) addresses were used to identify duplicate entries and removed or consolidated into one respondent number where necessary.

Descriptive statistics were predominately used in the analysis. Descriptive statistics, which recognise patterns in the data, include frequencies, central tendency (mean, median, mode), variability (variance, range, standard deviation), and relative standing (percentages). When reproducing tables and graphs, sample size (n) and/or total population size (N) for that variable is always stated. Correlation statistics (factor analysis) were used to analyse SHALOM (inferential statistics). The free-text questions (i.e., open ended) were analyzed by using descriptive statistics (numerically and by commentary). The latter entails creating narrative to further describe the numbers.

Results

The results section is organized into three sections: (a) demographics, (b) responses to questions focused on spirituality and Home Economics, and (c) responses to the two questions in the survey dealing explicitly with SHALOM (i.e., respondents' answers to two questions aligned with 20 items capturing ideal and lived experience).

As a caveat, the very low full survey completed response rate (10.7%, $n = 11$ out of 103 who downloaded the instrument) prompted the authors to develop a unique reporting convention that flouts the accepted use of N (total sample frame, population for the study), n (number within the sample) and f (frequency). They developed a key to help readers interpret the data for specific survey questions and items within those questions.

(Q#:N) refers to question number + total cleaned and useable responses for *that* question. For example: (Q8:88) means 88 usable responses were collected for *Question 8: In what country do you live and work?* Lower case (n) stands for subpopulation of usable data within a particular survey question.

Demographics

Reported here are the gender, age, and country of origin and respondents who completed the two SHALOM questions about how 20 items resonated with them on ideal and lived experience. The majority (92.4%, $n = 61$) of the respondents were female. Age range varied from 19 to 71+ years. Half of the respondents were within the age ranges 41 to 50 ($n = 16$) and 51 to 61 ($n = 17$) (50%, $n = 33$) followed with 61 to 70 age group (20%, $n = 13$), 25- to years (16%, $n = 11$), a small contingent were aged 19 to 24 (10%, $n = 7$) and two respondents were 71+ years.

Respondents indicated, on a drop-down menu, the country in which they lived and worked (Q8). Twenty-one countries ($n = 21$) were represented (Q8:88), but Australian and Euro-American

respondents dominated the sample frame. The four countries most represented were Australia ($n = 25$), Canada ($n = 11$), United States ($n = 11$) and Ireland ($n = 10$). Other countries represented, organised by frequency, were United Kingdom ($n = 4$), Malta ($n = 4$), Finland ($n = 3$), Pakistan ($n = 3$), Puerto Rico ($n = 3$), Sweden ($n = 2$), Netherlands ($n = 2$), Barbados ($n = 1$), China ($n = 1$), Estonia ($n = 1$), Fiji ($n = 1$), Germany ($n = 1$), Kenya ($n = 1$), South Africa ($n = 1$), Spain ($n = 1$), Trinidad and Tobago ($n = 1$), United Arab Emirates ($n = 1$). National identity, ethnicity and cultural background questions were not included in the survey because of space and time constraints, and these concepts were conceded as also highly subjective and problematic.

Spiritually and Home Economics questions

Two questions were designed to solicit responses about their perceptions about Home Economics and spiritual wellbeing. Regarding (Q14:85), two thirds (62%) responded 'yes' to the question *Do you think spirituality to be a legitimate area of concern for Home Economics?* and 38% responded 'no'. When asked (Q15:85): *Do you feel you receive sufficient support and guidance to address spirituality as an aspect of Home Economics?* 88% responded 'no' and 18% responded 'yes.' In other words, respondents said they perceived SHW to be an aspect of Home Economics but they lacked official or professional support and guidance to address spirituality in their practice.

Religious affiliation and beliefs

As a preamble to answering the two SHALOM-specific questions (Q27 and 28), respondents were asked about their religious affiliation and beliefs about a Transcendent Other. Respondents identified with a variety of religious and non-religious groups (Q25:71). Just over half (54%, $n = 36$) identified as Christian. The next largest group ($n = 15$) reported 'no religion' (23%). Eight percent ($n = 5$) self-identified as Atheist. Five reported that they affiliated with 'a mixture' of beliefs including 'Christianity and Buddhism' and 'Christianity and Agnostic.' Three respondents affiliated with Islam and two reported 'other.'

When asked if they believed that something or someone beyond the human level, which could be called a Transcendental Other, held an external influence on their life (Q23:70), 71% percent of participants ($n=50$) responded yes. The remaining 29% ($n = 20$) did not believe in a Transcendental Other. Respondents used various terms to identify a Transcendent Other (Q24:71). 'God' (59%, $n = 39$) was the term most often used. Other responses included 'other' ($n=17$), 'matter and energy' ($n = 5$), Divine ($n = 3$), Allah ($n = 2$), and 'universe' ($n = 2$). Various language-in-use were reported in a free-text section (Q25:71) to describe a Transcendent Other including: 'all that is,' 'I don't know the name, I just know there is something bigger than you or me,' 'human beings,' 'no name,' 'me and you,' and 'you.'

A few Atheists named the Transcendent Other 'God,' but others preferred the name 'matter and energy.' Those respondents who reported 'a mixture' of beliefs and identified as 'Christian and Buddhist' also called the Transcendental Other 'matter and energy.' Only one participant indicated that 'I'm spiritual but not religious' (Q26:free-text).

SHALOM Results

Two questions focused on respondents' opinions of the importance of 20 items on their ideal state of spiritual health (Q27) relative to their lived, personal experience (Q28) with it. Individual item scores of the 20-item "ideal" section of SHALOM (Q27:66) revealed three items at play. *Respect for others* ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 0.52$), *kindness towards others* ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 0.55$), and *trust between individuals* ($M = 4.53$; $SD = 0.59$) all situated within the communal domain. They had the highest means and closest standard deviations (see Table 2).

Four Domains	Ideal M	SD	Lived experience M	SD
Personal	4.53	0.43	4.04	0.64
Communal	4.56	0.43	4.05	0.56
Environmental	3.82	0.82	3.5	0.78
Transcendental	3.42	1.3	2.93	1.12

Table 2 Comparison Between “Ideal” And “Lived Experience” As Mean (M) And Standard Deviation (SD) Values Across All Factors Aligned To The Corresponding Four Domains Of SWB (Q27:66 And Q28:66)

However, the item scores in the ‘lived experience’ section revealed dissonance between their ideal and how they felt. ‘Lived experience’ scores were slightly lower than the ‘ideals’ *where kindness towards others* ($M = 4.29$; $SD = 0.70$), *respect for others* ($M = 4.26$; $SD = 0.69$), and *a sense of identity* ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.81$) scored the highest means and moderate variations in perception. The lowest scores in both ‘ideal’ and ‘lived experience’ factors were reported in the transcendental domain. This pattern was consistent with previous studies (Table 3) which utilised the SHALOM survey (Fisher, 2008, 2011; Fisher, et al., 2000; Gomez & Fisher, 2003).

Table 3 Comparisons Of 4DSHW Between Other Study Samples And Home Economists Sample

Fisher’s compilation of mean (SD) values for lived experience in four domains of SHW across various combined education, health and community samples								Current Survey
	1st Tr	Stu	Tr	Uni	Hlt	Cty	Chu	Hme Ec
N	146	3876	966	2963	975	539	494	66
Per	4.36 (.54)	3.67 (.72)	4.05 (.60)	4.05 (.66)	4.07 (.66)	4.20 (.85)	3.87 (.72)	4.04 (.64)
Com	4.38 (.53)	3.76 (.70)	4.19 (.56)	4.21 (.62)	3.93 (.57)	4.25 (.76)	4.05 (.61)	4.05 (.56)
Env	3.60 (.77)	3.15 (.87)	3.57 (.86)	3.43 (.81)	3.66 (.85)	3.99 (.94)	3.34 (.95)	3.50 (.78)
Tra	3.67 (1.01)	3.14 (1.07)	3.62 (1.07)	2.97 (1.13)	2.98 (1.28)	3.88 (1.05)	3.99 (.81)	2.93 (1.12)

Note: N = total sample. Per = Personal, Com = Communal, Env = Environment, Tra = Transcendental. 1st Tr = 1st year teachers, Stu = students, Tr = teachers, Uni = university, Hlt = health studies, Cty = community studies, Chu = church-attenders, Hme Ec = Home Economists

While comparative data is problematic, to situate the participants in our study amongst other similar SHALOM studies, descriptive statistics can be useful for identifying patterns in the data for further investigation. The comparison data (Table 3) was compiled from published studies in which Fisher self-reported to have been directly involved. In comparison with other studies, Home Economists ($n = 66$) scored similarly to teacher and university populations for the personal and environment domains. The communal domain was similarly scored to church-attenders. The closest population in the transcendental domain scores was the university population. Comparisons were made between the cohort of Home Economists and other studies (Table 3).

Discussion

This study determined that because of the highly complex nature of SHW, SHALOM did not provide a detailed assessment of an individual’s ideal and lived experience of SHW across the four domains. Results affirm that SHALOM offers a sound means of obtaining an indication of Home Economists’ SHW that could direct and justify further qualitative investigations. The main insights derived from administering SHALOM were that, for this cohort of Home Economists, the communal domain was the most significant in relation to ideals and lived experience across the four SHW domains and correlates well with other communal and service-orientated themes that describe Home Economists (Nickols, 2001). Factors such as *respect for others*, *kindness towards others*, and *trust between individuals* all situate within the communal domain of SHW. These service-oriented concepts resonated with the Home Economist respondents.

The transcendental domain was the least significant. The low scores in the transcendental domain are consistent with previous studies that utilised the SHALOM survey (Fisher, 2008, 2011; Fisher, et al., 2000; Gomez & Fisher, 2003). While comparative data are problematic, situating our study respondents amongst other similar SHALOM studies using descriptive statistics can be useful for identifying patterns in the data for further investigation. Table 3 was compiled by analysing and comparing studies in which Fisher self-reported being directly involved. In comparison with other studies, Home Economists ($n = 66$) scored similarly to teacher and university populations for the personal and environment domains. The communal domain was similarly scored to church-attenders. The closest population in the transcendental domain scores was the university population. These are interesting phenomena, but correlations are impossible to determine without further qualitative investigation.

To explain the low scores in the transcendental domain, Fisher (2012) also noted that because of the kaleidoscope of views and perceptions in relation to notions of a relationship with the Transcendent Other, *rationalists* will report low scores on ideal and lived experience in the transcendental domain. This is because if they have no belief in a Transcendent Other then they are actually in harmony with their ideals and there is no dissonance. Alternatively, *religionists* who report a very strong quality relationship with God will 'wonder how anyone could not desire the same' (Fisher, 2013, p. 7). In our study, the majority (71%) of respondents said they believed in a Transcendent Other but scored low in the transcendental domain. To provide an explanation, Fisher (2013) offers a possible reason why this may be a notable phenomenon is because individuals who spend time contemplating their worldview are more likely to explain their relationship within the world as having a connection or some informed understanding of a Transcendent Other; however, this can only be partially verified using the free-text offered in the survey from respondents in our study. The results may indicate that the majority of Home Economists surveyed may identify as *rationalists* with a few *globalists*, but this will require further investigation to establish a clearer link. In the interim, a useful theme from the free-text analysis revealed a connection between 'being in the world' and the Transcendent Domain (Deagon, 2013, pp. 201-204, 212-226). Respondents were positioned into one of four categories. These categories made connections between worldview and the Transcendent domain: (1) *clarity* and a well-defined worldview; (2) *uncertainty* and a developing worldview; (3) *faith-based* centralised on God; and (4) *limited* response. For some participants religion and faith-based worldviews informed their ideas about social justice, service to others and basis for personal reflection. Alternatively, well-defined worldviews or *globalists*, included quality relationships that encompassed all four domains of the Home Economics framework and SHW framework. To illustrate an exemplar response, one participant explained:

I believe spiritual health and wellbeing involves the reasons why we are motivated to get out of bed each day. That could be because we have a sense of purpose relevant to the future. For example for me it involves trying to be a good parent so that me and my children become compassionate, empathetic, global citizens who understand that the decisions we make effect others in the world. It involves a concern for the environment including the built environment, a concern for a sense of community, a concern for improving the emotional and social wellbeing of all so that our communities are positive, safe and caring. For me it involves an [sic] continuing need to get in touch with who I am and what I or who I should be, and the types of links I have to others including those beyond my immediate environment.

In this excerpt this Home Economist made connections with the personal (individual), communal (families and communities), environment (the environment) and transcendental (glocal realities) conceptual framework. However, this was an exemplary response and not indicative. Nonetheless, the survey revealed that although important, majority (82%) of respondents said they did not feel sufficiently supported to address spirituality in Home Economics. Without education and guidance and a clearer conceptualisation of spirituality in Home Economics, uncertainty and lack of confidence are likely to remain the status quo. As one aspect of SHW, Hawks (1994) points out that a worldview is developed over time and with exposure to different events and experience. A key insight from our study was that when enacted in ideal and intended ways, balanced home economics curricula that encompasses all four domains of the framework presented in this paper, may provide an avenue to inspire and motive, through spiritual engagement. Our research suggests that Home Economists believe SHW to be important but require assistance to develop balanced real-world or classroom experiences for themselves and for those whom they care for.

To this effect, our study makes a significant contribution toward locating shared meaning for SHW in Home Economics contexts and forms the foundation for further study. Two thirds of respondents said spirituality is legitimate area of concern for Home Economics intimating that future studies need to focus on building that meaning. Recall Mitstifer's (1996) statement regarding the importance of shared meaning for spirituality amongst Home Economists. She stated that common meaning and shared identity "can form a covenant that transcends all differences between people concerned... A broader spirituality is possible if the common roots can be found" (Mitstifer, 1996, p. 28).

As most Home Economists work directly with individuals, families and communities, respect for diversity and cultural sensitivity are real concerns for the profession. What this may mean for Home Economics is that professional may need to engage in some courageous deep personal reflection. For

example, by engaging in reflection about the historical foundations of Home Economics (hegemony of Christianity) *and* acknowledging that this perspective may not be appropriate for all circumstances and all people in a globalised world: *this knowledge may assist in bringing forth appropriate socially respectful practice*. This may enable deeper connections and quality relationships with those that our profession serves.

Home Economics Study Limitations

The survey was administered via an online platform. Not all Home Economists have access to computers or the internet. As a consequence of inequity, developed countries were overrepresented and developing and underdeveloped countries were unrepresented in the sample frame. More specifically, European, American and Australian respondents dominated meaning future studies need to expand recruitment to include *in situ* and paper-based data collection.

The analysis did not use such inferential statistics as ANOVA, Chi-Square Analysis or Pearson correlation coefficients because the small sample size precluded eliciting reliable quantitative data for the purpose of hypothesis testing or causality. Having stated this, with expert assistance, correlation statistics (factor analysis) were used to analyse SHALOM using the SPSS program. Correlational data cannot prove causality only associations, which is useful because these can lead to future hypotheses. Also, the results only provide particulars for a small cohort of Home Economists and may not be taken as representative of the target population. Future studies should strive to obtain a larger sample size.

Response and completion rates were low and drop off rates were high. To illustrate, Qualtrics statistical data showed that while 103 respondents opened the link to the survey only 11 participants (10.7%) completed the whole survey. To account for missing data, survey items with a majority of Likert scale scores missing were deleted. Where the variable was categorical (for example, a 5-item Likert scale), missing data were treated by substituting the blank entry with the rounded up mean score of that variable. Creswell (2005) suggested that missing data can be ethically treated this way if the substitutions were less than 15% of the data, which they were.

Accounting for cross-cultural differences in survey item responses was problematic. The reviewed literature around the topic of cross-cultural difference in survey responses was considered (see Dolnicar & Grün, 2007; McSherry & Jamieson, 2011; Sawatzky, Ratner, & Chiu, 2005). We acknowledge that national identity, ethnicity and cultural background are of high importance for the formation of spiritual, religious and personal beliefs; however, omitting national identity, ethnicity and cultural background questions from the survey was a deliberate methodological decision because the demographic questions intentionally focused on the study inquiry questions about spiritual, religious and personal beliefs. Future studies are encouraged to include identity demographics in the survey design.

Conclusions

The study respondents indicated clearly that spirituality is a legitimate area of concern for Home Economics. It is not surprising that the communal domain was the most prominent relative to personal, environmental and transcendent regardless of age, religious or non-religious orientation. To describe some Home Economists as nurturers seems an accurate characterisation. The Home Economics profession has focused on social reform and service for over a century. Home Economists not only seem to idealise, but also experience, deep connections with the individuals, families, communities, and other Home Economists with whom they work.

Future studies should focus on examining what might be involved in Home Economist's making the environmental domain resonate more strongly given our discipline focus on sustainability and ecosystems (IFHE, 2008). Research is also recommended around the issue of the Transcendent Other domain given that Home Economists around the world work in different contexts with varying degrees of value for something bigger than themselves. The overarching purpose of Home Economics is to assist people within *glocal* contexts to acquire the skills and knowledge required to efficaciously take part in everyday life (Deagon & Pendergast, 2014). Connecting with the transcendent is part of that and we should be comfortable with this aspect of practice (which is different from but related to religion).

Dissonance was located between ideals and life experiences across the four domains of SHW along 20 items. This result has implications for Home Economists reflecting on their personal and professional identities. For this cohort of Home Economists, one driving force that may provide spiritual renewal is service to other people through active participation in the profession of Home Economics as it addresses many of the needs of today's society. Future studies need to address this dissonance because any disconnect between lived experiences and preferred ideal has implications for gendering spirituality in Home Economics practice.

Professional associations and higher education programs could turn their attention to the spiritual (not religious) aspects of Home Economics practice and redesign professional development offerings that provide support and guidance to address spirituality as an aspect of practice. Currently there is very little professional development available to Home Economists to address this important aspect of practice. The Home Economics profession would be remiss to continue to view SHW as a taken-for-granted and embedded ideology in Home Economics. Acknowledging the existence of spirituality in conjunction with further study of SHW has the potential to provide Home Economists with personal and professional renewal.

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We wish to thank Dr John Fisher from Federation University Australia who granted permission to use SHALOM and assisted with SPSS data analysis. For interested researchers wishing to adopt the SHALOM instrument, although not necessary for this Home Economics report, an SPSS regression analysis of contributing factors to the four domains suffered from such a small sample size and very little data of consequence was revealed. Despite this, a factor analysis revealed good values for the SHW factors. Factor analysis showed that the four 5-item sets cohered well to yield measures of personal SHW, communal SHW, environmental SHW and transcendental SHW. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, which is a measure of sampling adequacy, revealed values of personal (.79), communal (.79), environmental (.69) and transcendental (.84). Values above .6 are taken as acceptable.

Biography

Jay Deagon is the Senior Lecturer of Home Economics at CQUniversity, Australia where she supports pre-service teachers to learn about Home Economics content and implement authentic professional practice strategies. Jay has published several peer-reviewed book chapters and journal articles; and presented at several national and international conferences. Jay is passionate about empowering people in difficult circumstances to find solutions to their own unique and complex life challenges.

Professor Donna Pendergast is Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. Her field of research expertise is educational transformation and efficacy, with a focus on middle year's education and student engagement, initial and professional teacher education, and school reform. Donna is a home economist with masters and doctoral studies investigating the value of home economics. In 2015, Donna received the Research Supervision Award in the Griffith University Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Awards, and in 2017, a National Commendation from the Australian Council of Graduate Research for Excellence in Graduate Research Supervision. In 2018, she was awarded the Australian Council for Educational Leadership Miller-Grassie Award of Outstanding Leadership in Education.

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The Power of a Home Economics Professional Identity and Professionalism

Sue L. T. McGregor
www.consultmcgregor.com

KEYWORDS: HOME ECONOMICS, PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, PROFESSIONALISM, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Abstract

This paper develops a case for the idea that the world's image and respect for the home economics profession can be better assured if we can all become grounded in a strong affiliation with and accountability to the profession and each other, fuelled by a strong home economics professional identity and deep professionalism which are sustained with continual professional learning about philosophy, knowledge and practice.

Introduction

At a time when the need for the home economics profession is high but worldwide demand and recognition is lower than desired, it is time for a conversation around the strong relationship among four powerful professional ideas: the attributes of a profession, identifying with that profession, professionalism and the depths to which that identity reaches, and fostering identity and professionalism through professional learning. Taken together, these aspects of professional practice provide a compelling framework for envisioning and ensuring public sanction of, and practitioner allegiance and accountability to, the home economics profession.

Figure 1 captures the logic used to make this point. With an appreciation of what constitutes a profession, home economics practitioners can more fully realize the need to identify with the profession because this identity impacts their professionalism and how others come to see our value and potential. This relationship must be reinforced with professional development and learning so members of the profession can continually re(learn) about our knowledge, practice and philosophy. People who have found their *home economics self*, and fully aligned with, and are accountable to, the profession, are our best ambassadors (Green, 1982; McGregor, 2008). To do this, they need to appreciate the power of a home economics professional identity and deep professionalism.

This is one of the few attempts in the home economics literature to weave together these four particular ideas to make a case for how to gain worldwide recognition for the profession. Despite a concerted effort to draw mostly on home economics literature, it was encouraging to note that other professions are grappling with the same connections (e.g., medicine, engineers, education, social work, law, information science, and administrative sciences). This serendipitous insight affirms the contemporary need for a profession-wide conversation about the power of professional identity and professionalism as they relate to the world's valuing of the profession.

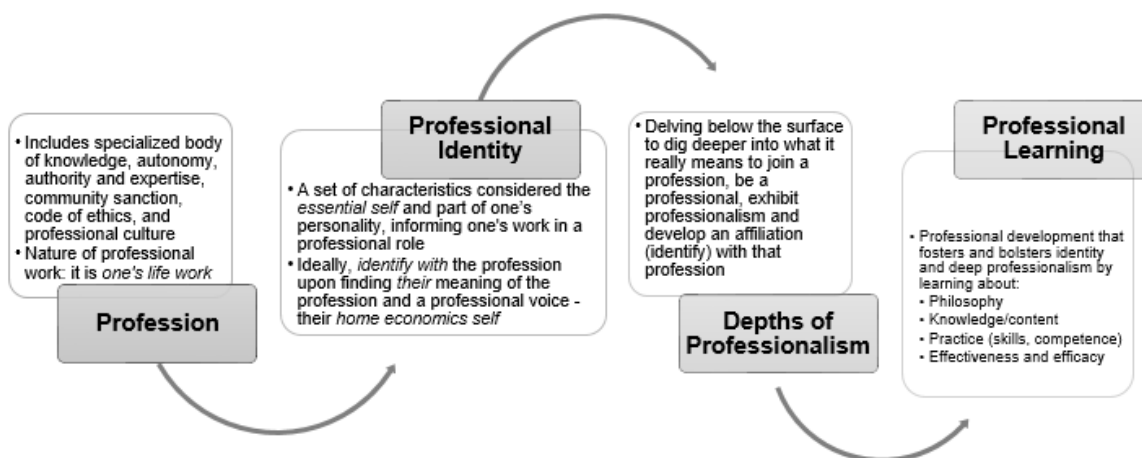


Figure 1 Key Components of Home Economics Professional Practice

Professions and the nature of professional work

McGregor (2011b) believed that a strong professional identity with the home economics profession is a powerful tool to future proof the profession. But what is a profession and what is the nature of work within a profession? Succinctly, a profession is “a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to high ethical standards and uphold themselves to, and are accepted by, the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised, organised body of learning derived from education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and these skills in the interests of others” (Professions Australia, 2000, para. 1).

The Professional Standards Councils (Australia) (2018) identified five elements (5 Es) of professionalism: education, ethics, experience and expertise, examination (certification and regulation), and entity (professional associations). Greenwood (1957, 1966) had previously teased these out as five attributes of a profession (see Table 1). He maintained that each profession is placed on a continuum depending on the composite rating on all five elements. Different occupations will possess these attributes in varying degrees, ranging from the maximum degree for well-recognized and undisputed professions (doctors, lawyers), through moderate to low degrees (sales clerk, farm labourer).

Table 1 Attributes of a Profession (Greenwood, 1957, 1966)

Systematic body of theory (specialized body of knowledge)	Internally consistent fund of knowledge organized into a body of theory (also a body of knowledge). This theory provides the <i>basis</i> for providing service, and the skills and practice competencies are the <i>means</i> of providing service
Autonomy	Legitimate control over its work; freedom to set educational requirements to enter and practice in the profession and set the requisite standards of work
Authority and expertise	Power and confidence to influence thought and action, ensured through moral judgements respecting that practice could harm the public
Community sanction	In addition to claiming authority and expertise, the public has to recognize the profession as having that expertise. A lack of collegial and public trust (or even knowledge of the profession) can undermine the profession’s work. Community sanction is expedited by professional organizations, accreditation, licensing standards, registration, laws, regulations and directives, apprenticeships, internships, and revalidation to ensure fitness to practice
Code of ethics	Means (principles) for profession to discipline its members who could harm the public through their unethical service; practitioners have to use their sanctioned (trusted) authority with responsibility
Professional culture	The values, beliefs, norms (ways to join, meet, act), common jargon/language, and symbols/images/insignia/lore common to people belonging to the profession; includes professional associations (a formal group or entity), stereotypes of the profession, and perceiving the profession as ‘one’s life work’

Kieren, Vaines, and Badir (1984) and Weigley (1976) applied these attributes to home economics in North America. Since then, their concerns about a code of ethics and self-regulation have been addressed. Issues around community sanction and some aspects of professional culture (especially lingering stereotypes) still persist, likely positioning us close to the professional pole of the continuum but not as far as doctors and lawyers. This positioning possibly affects professional identity because people's professionalism constitutes a combination of factors, which range from what they do and how, using what knowledge and content, informed by what beliefs and attitudes to being governed by codes of behaviour for their sanctioned authority as they strive to ethically deliver competent, quality services and practice to the public, steeped in a supportive professional culture (Evans, 2015).

Nature of Professional Work

Worth mentioning (per professional culture in Table 1) is how professionals tend to view *work* as an end in itself as well as a means to an end. Aspects of work tend to influence many facets of a professional's life to the point that the home economics profession can become "one's life work" (Anderson, 1976, p. 3). Greenwood (1966) believed that absorption in this work is complete and results in total personal involvement—work becomes life. The prime purpose of this professional work is to render a service to the public, achieved using high standards of practice and conduct based in specialized knowledge ensured by a commitment to continued study (i.e., professional development and learning) (Cooper, Lowe, & Ridler, 2004).

Brown and Paolucci (1979) clarified that 'home economics work' pertains to specific individuals and family households as well as families as a social institution. Respectively, we focus on the micro level for the good of both the latter and society. This work could be with government (includes extension), private enterprise (includes entrepreneurial), non-governmental organizations, human services, media, education, or international development (McGregor, 2011a). In effect, although all professionals provide services and benefits to members of society, home economics' particular foci are individuals and families in society. As an end result, home economists "enable families to function in their own strength" (Green, 1982, p.42).

Indeed, the agreed-to sphere of concern for home economics' *work* is the everyday life of *humans as it is lived out in families and the home* (or wherever people find themselves at any given point in time). Of special focus are the problems and opportunities that people encounter *at the home and household level* versus at the community, workplace, business or government level. The concern for the latter manifests in how it impinges on an individual and family's encounter with societal pressures (Paolucci, 1977).

Paolucci (1977) suggested that part of our professional identity is an abiding concern for both (a) a critical analysis of the everyday operations of *a household, home and family* and (b) the development of alternative ways to improve the everyday life of all humans and their living conditions while meeting the essential needs of each family and its household and home. On a cautionary note, perceiving the profession as 'one's life work' raises unique challenges in the form of potential burnout, necessitating a balance between work and life (e.g., personal, relational and family life, social activities, community involvement) (McGregor, 2005). That balance would be part of a home economics professional identity.

Home Economics professional identity

An *identity* is considered to be the *essential self*, the set of characteristics that someone recognizes as belonging uniquely to him or herself, constituting their individual personality. The phrase *to identify with* means to feel a strong bond with something or someone and sense of sharing and understanding its nature or concerns (Anderson, 2014). A professional identity arises from aligning with a profession (see previous section) and then developing an *essential self* grounded in that profession. Schein (1978) described *professional identity* as the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences by which people define them self in a professional role. When one has achieved a professional identity (regardless of the particular profession), work has become so much a part of the self (inextricable) that the person cannot be defined without the work (Anderson, 1976).

A professional identity emerges from a continuous life-long and career-long developmental process, forming and evolving over time (East, 1975; Ibarra, 1999; Kieren et al., 1984). If people 'identify with

a profession,' they see themselves as sharing the same characteristics or thinking as others practicing in the profession (Anderson, 2014). Practitioners who have "attained the professional identity of home economics" (a) value their work as professional home economists, (b) are committed to the profession in a long-term relationship, and (c) contribute to fulfilling the profession's mission and goals (Anderson, 1976, p. 9).

This home economics professional identity is not tied with age; rather, people who identify with the profession "are typified by their committed attitudes to the field, what it is about, and their particular role" (Vaines, 1979, p. 14). They will have found both their meaning of home economics and their home economics voice (i.e., their *home economics self*), which they nurture and use to help make the profession united and strong (Engberg, 1997). Practitioners with a healthy home economics professional identity will have a strong sense of personal worth and value as a person. Their self-esteem will help them help others help themselves (Vaines, 1979).

While pondering the role of self-esteem in a home economist's professional identity, East (as cited in Anderson, 1976) was inspired by the psychological concept of *ego strength*, which refers to the cultivated resiliency or strength of someone's core sense of self. It is the extent to which people learn to face and grow from challenging events or persons in their lives in ways that strengthen their relationships with themselves and others and enrich their lives with meaning. A person's ego-strength is an integral part of their development, their sense of self (self-esteem) (Staik, 2017). East coined the term *professional ego strength* explaining that it contributes to "a firm feeling of identity as home economists" (as cited in Anderson, 1976, p. 9).

These strong and confident practitioners bolster their professional identity by doing what they are good at with joyful enthusiasm. Through honest and fearless examination of the profession, they have found the essential meaning of home economics for themselves and remain committed to this personal meaning (East as cited in Anderson, 1976). Through personal self-awareness and reflection, individual practitioners are able to "personalize professionalism," increasing their inclination to commit to the growth and development of themselves and the profession (Cooper et al., 2004, p. 8; see Boyd, 2015).

In her contribution to the 11th Lake Placid Conference held in the early seventies, East (1975) profiled a new breed of practitioners that embraced a powerful home economics professional identity. "They know they are involved in a continuous, lifelong professional education process" (p.3) that helps them (a) develop the maturity needed to wield political power and influence, (b) hone their appreciation of systems and ecosystems thinking, (c) become assertive, confident and willing to reason and argue, and (d) gain power in society and learn how to use it for the benefit of individuals and families. With this professional identity, home economists would be willing to take on major responsibilities in a sustained and rewarding fashion.

Drawing on Flexner's (1915) century-old musings, Green (1982) identified several other characteristics of a home economics professional identity, including three key ideas. First, the activities of professionals are *intellectual in character* because the real work of home economists is 'the thinking process' applied to identifying and addressing pressing family and societal issues. East (1973) explained that part of becoming a home economist is learning how to "think like home economists" (p. 24), which entails learnings concepts, how to put them together (integrative synthesis), and how to internalize this learning so it becomes part of one's professional competency. Second, the professional home economist has a *learned character* revitalized by continually engaging in professional learning and renewal. Third, a home economics professional's activities have an *altruistic character* in that they have a higher purpose that is met through responsible, risk-oriented and morally grounded practice.

Professionalism

Professional is from the Latin *professionem*, "a public declaration, to declare openly" (Harper, 2018). A *professional* is someone who has impressive competence in a particular activity and, ideally, acts professionally (Anderson, 2014). Indeed, once people align their identity with a profession, they must exhibit and maintain *professionalism*; that is, responsibly and accountably, with integrity, use the expertise, competence or skills *expected* of a professional in that profession. Unprofessional behaviour runs contrary to or below the standard expected of a particular profession (Anderson, 2014; King, 2015). "The difference between a talented amateur and a professional [exhibiting

professionalism is that the latter] is willing to be accountable to the profession” (King, 2015, para. 7).

Professionalism lies at the heart of what professionals do (Tomain, 2001). “At the core of professional practice is the self-directed development of [one’s] expertise [to ensure professionalism]” (King, 2015, para. 12). Hand-in-hand, professional training programs (e.g., university degree programs) and associations have the responsibility of defining professionalism and setting *expectations* regarding acceptable professional behaviour (Sullivan et al., 2014). Appreciating that many professions lack a clear definition of professionalism and what it entails (Sullivan et al., 2014), Figure 2 is an adaptation of their model of attributes and assurances of professionalism, tailored to home economics.



Figure 2 Attributes and Assurances of Home Economics Professionalism

The UK Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2015-2017) recently had an online discussion about being a professional or ‘being professional.’ Contributors to the discussion basically concurred that one can act professionally without being a professional. The latter refers especially to “being qualified (however defined) and practising in a definable area, having expertise based on a deep level of knowledge, and having a commitment to the area of practice. ...This is essentially about occupational identity.” (para. 2) *Being* a professional is especially about judgements, principles and ethics in one’s actions to ensure the latter are accountable to the profession (CIPD, 2015-2017; King, 2015). But, how far are people willing to go to exhibit and maintain professionalism? What is involved in “taking on a more professional approach to” practice (King, 2015, para. 10)?

Depths of Professionalism

Nearly 20 years ago, both Tomain (2001) and Clarfield (2003) referred to ‘plumbing the depths of professionalism.’ But recently, Herlocker (2016) identified *professional depths* as a new concept for professional and personal development. Depth contrasts with shallowness with the latter referring to not being capable of or requiring serious thought and intellect. It means superficially in that people lack great understanding or perception. Depth refers to both complexity and profundity of thought (penetrating deeply) along with incredibly intense concentration, passion and comprehensive study. Deep means extending a long way down, back or inward (Anderson, 2014).

Reynolds and Piirto (2009) posited that anyone striving for higher inspiration in their life, higher than that dictated by the lay public, must enter into their own psyche, delving below the apparent surface to the depths below. Their virtue and virtuous behaviour always have their home in these depths. They called this depth psychology. If people’s professionalism is shallow, their behaviour may be as

well. Herlocker (2016) commented on the process of delving below the surface of a professional culture to navigate the depths of professionalism, which can be a conduct, an aim, and a character trait (Anderson, 2014). Badges of success, such as wealth and status, operate at the surface level. Deeper measures of work-related success and professionalism are revealed when professionals break through the surface culture and get down to the heart of matters that impact them professionally. Given that professionals spend a third of their lives working, going to such depths helps ensure sustainable and vitalizing professional contributions to society (Herlocker, 2016).

Professional home economists may have to draw on the depths of professionalism they did not even know they possessed, or needed to possess. After sharing an insightful discussion of professionals developing depth, Evans (2010) concluded that depth comes from learning from professional and personal struggles, those things people have to work harder on to succeed. With depth comes more comfort and expertise, which help professionals grow and develop while taking risks, trying new things, and stretching beyond what they had previously done or known.

In a bid for deeper professionalism, home economists should court challenges by taking risks and pushing their capabilities and limits so they can keep growing. Part of this depth attainment entails watching others work so valuable lessons can be learned from them. In the process, practitioners should continually examine their own values and judgements rather than defer to external yardsticks (Kates, 1985). All of these challenging professional experiences will become some of their greatest accomplishments, adding to professional depth, deeper professionalism and a healthier professional identity (Evans, 2010).

Only real experiences, coupled with continual professional development, teach practitioners the subtleties of the complex aspects of service with and for others (Houle, 1980). To that end, Reis (1979) argued for both breadth and depth in professional work, cautioning practitioners to avoid too much breadth (shallow) because they could become known as someone who is “‘a mile wide and an inch deep’” (p. 96). Professionals need to be known for something that is important and unique—the depth. However, breadth is also necessary because it (a) creates a possibility to develop additional expertise, (b) increases exposure to collaborative opportunities and (c) places professional work in the larger context thereby creating more meaning and compelling justification and support for it (Reis, 1979).

That being said, professional depth matters the most with a key component being a home economics professional identity. Lacking such an identity paves the way for shallower professionalism. If practitioners do not identify with the profession, they have fewer obligations to be true to its mission and purpose and be accountable to it. The more non-identifiers there are, the more shallow the profession in perception and reality—and lower the world’s view of our value and potential. After all, “a true professional will identify with the profession, both when it is praised and when it is criticized” (McGregor, 2005, p. 13). This steadfast allegiance is more likely if home economists have developed a deep affinity for, and identity with, the profession. This is where professional learning comes into play because it provides a bulwark against discourse that diminishes the profession and its value in the 21st century.

Professional learning

Professional identity involves professionalism (and its depth) with both tied directly to professional *learning* (Evans, 2015). Professionalism and identity come about through professional learning, both informal learning as well as formal university programs and in-service offerings (Houle, 1980). It goes without saying that once professionals have obtained their credentials, they have to continue to learn. Learning is defined as acquiring knowledge or skills through systematic study, being taught, trial and error, or osmosis (the gradual, often unconscious, absorption of knowledge or ideas through continual exposure rather than deliberate learning) (Anderson, 2014; Houle, 1980). Learning usually results in psychological changes including behaviour modification, attitude analysis and clarification, belief shifts, and paradigm changes.

Professional learning provides practitioners with the tools to avoid simplifications and thus better prepare individuals and families to engage in today’s complex world (Patrick, Gulayets, & Peck, 2017). Also known as professional development (PD) (Evans, 2015), professional learning has been defined as “on-going opportunities that are focused, sustained, and aligned to [professional] needs” (Office of Professional Learning, 2017, para. 1). From this perspective, professional learning is not

an event; rather, it is continual opportunities for professionals to “participate in ongoing development through learning that is connected to their practice and allows for collaboration and reflection” (Office of Professional Learning, 2017, para. 2). The focus of professional learning is professionalism (i.e., meeting expected standards in a given profession). The learning can be done deliberately to people or it can creep up on them unawares, shaping their thinking and attitudes, manifesting as an invisible and imperceptible but indelible force (Evans, 2015).

Our profession has defined professional learning as the improvement of (a) professional knowledge, (b) competence and skills, and (c) attitudes, values and beliefs (philosophy). Kieren et al. (1984) presented these as a systems view of the “essential parts of home economics” (p. 24) (see Figure 3). Similarity, Evans (2015), respectively, conceptualized professionalism as comprising intellectual, behavioural (practice), and attitudinal components (see also “Professional development,” 2013).

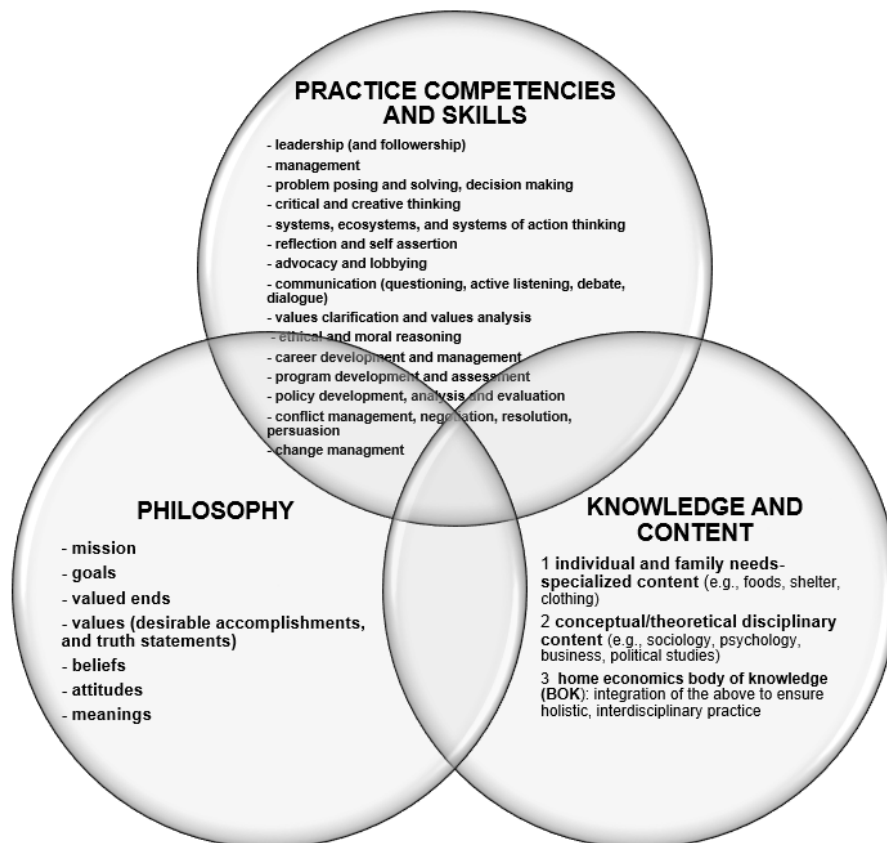


Figure 3 Three Elements of Home Economics Professional Learning

Body of Knowledge (Intellectual)

Kieren et al. (1984) likened professional knowledge with our *body of knowledge*. The latter is defined as a profession’s common intellectual ground, shared by everyone in the profession, regardless of specialties, sub-disciplines or career paths (McGregor, 2015). In conjunction with (a) prerequisite conceptual bases (e.g., sociology, psychology, economics), (b) individual and family need- and relationship-specific content (e.g., foods, clothing, shelter, family dynamics) constitute the home economics body of knowledge. The key role of home economists is to integrate any pertinent knowledge about the individual and family to a particular context, using a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to practice (Kieren et al., 1984; McGregor, 2011b); that is, think like a home economist (East, 1973).

Practice (Behavioural)

Kieren et al. (1984) explained that *practice* comprises home economics-related competencies and skills necessary for practitioners to serve individuals and families. They proposed that it is replete with thoughtful, reasoned and reflective responses to a situation, taken before any action (see also

Brown & Paolucci, 1979). Also, each professional home economist has, because of personalized role competencies, a (a) natural affiliation with the field's beliefs and values, (b) repertoire of service delivery processes and skills (e.g., content, problem solving, communication) and (c) unique role to play in the profession (e.g., educator, entrepreneur, policy analyst). These role competencies depend on a "synthesis of knowledge, attitudes and skills in order to deliver services which are truly helpful for people" (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 41).

Philosophy (Attitudinal)

The third component of home economics professional learning is *philosophy*, comprising the profession's goals, values, and purpose (mission). "Without a mission, the meaning of the services provided by home economists would be lost" (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 35). Philosophy is from the Greek *philosophia*, "love of wisdom" (Harper, 2018). Philosophies guide people's behaviour, serving as an anchor for practice decisions. A philosophy of practice helps practitioners make decisions that lead to the formation of ethically consistent, morally defensible practice. Without a philosophy of practice, home economists cannot know what is motivating them to make very large decisions with moral overtones (i.e., the wrong decision can harm people). A philosophy keeps practitioners aware of what they are doing and why. A professional philosophy arises from philosophical learning because the latter identifies and solidifies goals, values and attitudes for which to strive (McGregor, 2014).

Identity formation and enrichment

Professional learning about philosophy, knowledge and practice should inspire home economists to want to engage with the profession. The more often they engage in professional work, the higher the likelihood they will self-identify with the profession and acquire a concept of themselves as a member of the profession. This is all part of "professional identity formation [by which people] come to define themselves as members of the profession" (Weedman, 1998, para. 15). Once practitioners have carved out a home economics professional identity, they can consciously strive to continually dig deeper through professional learning, all the while committing to deep professional growth and practice that sustain their identity—their *home economics self*.

Aside from the identity formation inherent in the socialization process during university degree programs (McGregor, 2011b), both professional associations and individual practitioners have roles to play in professional identity development. How deep that identity becomes, and how the resultant identity impacts professional depth and professionalism, is key to our ability to work together to increase worldwide acknowledgement of and respect for the profession.

Professional Organizations' Responsibilities to Professional Identity

The aforementioned 'home economics character' that makes up a home economics professional identity is best achieved and nurtured by viewing the profession as a fraternity, a group of people sharing common, professional interests. Flexner (1915) called it a brotherhood, which is a feeling of kinship among a community of people. Green (1982) made a strong case for home economics professional associations to be the most effective instrument of this fraternity, which "sets the qualifications, polices its own ranks and sets the standards for performance" (p. 42). Home economics professional associations (a) serve as a spokesperson for the profession; (b) articulate a mission (now) and vision (future); (c) mentor, critic and applaud practitioners; and (d) act as both an advocate and prophet for the profession, identifying new directions, advancing philosophical beliefs, and suggesting best and next practice (Green, 1982).

As well, home economics associations should (e) promote both a research base and knowledge base, usually through conferences, meetings, position and working papers, briefs, and journals. They should (f) strive to set admission and practice standards and competencies, and (g) self regulate and self govern via a code of ethics and accreditation or registration. Finally, professional associations are (h) the connecting link among members of the profession, stakeholders (e.g., policy, education, community, corporations), and individuals and families (Cooper et al., 2004; Green, 1982; Kieren et al., 1984). By meeting these eight obligations to members of the profession, associations can contribute to home economists building a deeper professional identity and professionalism, and an abiding connection to the profession, association, and each other.

Personal Responsibilities to Professional Identity

People often join home economics professional associations for professional updating and because they have a sense of professional commitment and obligation (Culhane, 1987). Accepting that home economics is a profession and that professional associations exist to serve it, Green (1982) asked, “What does this mean for me, a member?” (p. 42). She concluded that she had to “pay the rent... for the space I occupy in the profession” (p. 42). This rent includes joining the profession and associations and then paying dues, “both literally and figuratively” (p. 42). Green saw association membership as “an obligation to give” (1982, p. 42) by contributing expertise to the research and knowledge bases and sacrificing for the greater good. She asserted that none of this can happen unless association members communicate and collaborate with fellow colleagues about the issues of the time, all the while engaging in professional learning to reinforce their commitment to a home economics professional identity. Cooper et al. (2004) added that professional membership and commitment can raise professional status amongst peers and the public, a solid payback for dues payment.

Effective and efficacious practice

People who identify strongly with the home economics profession will want to provide effective and efficacious practice, which can take place progressively when practitioners pull together and commit themselves fully. Such practice is enhanced and realized when (a) there are good relations between colleagues and professional associations (i.e., the fraternity), (b) practitioners are enthusiastic and competent and, most important, (c) practice ambience is favorable and auspicious, with a good chance of success (Chili, 2014).

Professional learning improves professional effectiveness and efficacy (“Professional development,” 2013). They both have the Latin root *efficere*, “to complete” (Harper, 2018). Effectiveness means doing the right thing and efficacy means feeling like one has made a difference as intended (Anderson, 2014). Respectively, they mean completing something with a sense of completion and satisfaction (Bueno, 2015). If home economists are *effective*, they provide a service that follows expected qualities and attributes, respecting the relevant conditions as much as possible when responding to individuals and families’ needs (Bueno, 2015). To be effective, home economics practitioners must discern (with individuals and families) what goals or valued ends are to be achieved (Geelan, 2013). If an end is valued, it is important to someone rather than predetermined as important by someone else, called a given end. If a particular initiative or intervention works in practice (i.e., achieves the valued end), it is deemed to be *effective* (Seldon, 1993).

That being said, if home economists *feel* that their actions made a difference, they have achieved efficacy, Latin *efficere*, “accomplish” (Harper, 2018). Efficacious is defined as having the power to produce a desired effect (Anderson, 2014) and almost always points toward satisfaction and quality service (Bueno, 2015). With ongoing exposure to professional learning, home economists have the chance to internalize the values, norms, mores and normalized behaviours of the profession at the same time they gain more knowledge, hone their practice competencies, and enrich their philosophical base. Through this dynamic, developmental process, they gain a professional identity (Hurt, 1996; Kaye, 1995) and are more predisposed to deliver effective and efficacious practice, anchored in deep professionalism.

Conclusion

The world’s image of and receptiveness to the home economics profession can be better assured if we can all become grounded in a strong affiliation with and accountability to the profession and each other, fuelled by a strong home economics professional identity and deep professionalism that are sustained with continual professional learning about philosophy, knowledge and practice.

Biography

Sue L. T. McGregor (PhD, IPHE, Professor Emerita MSVU) is an active independent researcher and scholar in the areas of home economics philosophy and leadership, transdisciplinarity, consumer education, and research paradigms and methodologies. She recently published *Understanding and Evaluating Research* (SAGE, 2018). Her scholarship is at her professional website: www.consultmcgregor.com

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Influence of Women's Empowerment on Household Food Security

M. Funke Olumakaiye, B. Rachael Popoola, and Blessing Abioye
Department of Family, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Abstract

Food security is one of the major elements of development and poverty alleviation and has been the goal of many international and national public organizations. The extent to which gender inequalities in general and the gender gaps in empowerment in particular, thwart attainment of this priority goal is a key concern, given the vital role of women in household food security. This study was conducted to assess the influence of empowerment on household food security among women in Obafemi Awolowo University community. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit relevant information from 540 women in the university community using simple random sampling technique. Women Empowerment (WE) was assessed using Women Decision-making (WDM) ability from Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). Household Food Security (HFS) was also assessed using the accessibility component of food security (physical, social and economic access to food). Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that 28.9% and 20.0% of the women were rated high in WDM (WE) and HFS respectively. The decisions mostly taken by women were food related (73.3%), while the least was purchase of household gadgets like electronics (25.2%). Having a backyard garden as physical access to food (55.6%) and earning salary only as economic access to food (60.7%) had the highest form of access to food. Level of education had a positive and significant relationship with HFS ($p = 0.014$). Those with secondary education are twice more likely to have access to food ($OR = 2.865$, $CI = 0.247-33.254$) than those with other levels of education. Significant association existed between WDM (WE) ability and HFS ($\chi^2 = 43.7$, $p = 0.013$). It was concluded that education and decision-making ability of women are key to women's empowerment and household food security, which has implication on gender related issues.

KEYWORDS: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, HOUSEHOLD, FOOD SECURITY, DECISION-MAKING

Introduction

Globally, food security and hunger eradication are among the top priorities on the international agenda today, in view of the global economic crises and food price spikes (De Schutter, 2013). Food security has re-emerged as a major issue in global governance. The recent food price crises exacerbated an already deteriorating world food security situation. The global trend of malnourished people is increasing with world hunger continuously on the rise (Margulis, 2013). In Canada, hunger is an outcome of unemployment, low incomes, and inadequate welfare, springs also from the failure to recognize and implement the human right to food. Food security has, however, largely been ignored by progressive social policy analysis. The neglect by the Federal and Provincial Governments of their obligations to guarantee the domestic right to food as expressed in international human rights law is a barrier to food security (Riches, 1999; Jarosz, 2011).

The extent to which gender inequalities in general and the gender gaps in empowerment in particular, thwart attainment of these twin priority goals is a key concern, given the vital role of women in household food security. There is a strong relationship between gender-based discrimination and the different channels through which households and individuals access food—through own-production, access to waged employment, or social protection (De Schutter, 2013).

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Correspondence: M. Funke Olumakaiye ✉ mfolumakaiye@gmail.com © 2019 International Federation for Home Economics

Food security is one of the major elements of development and poverty alleviation and has been the goal of many international and national public organizations. The issue is so important that according to the state of food insecurity in the world 2012 published by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2012), around 870 million people (out of which 852 million from developing countries) are estimated to have been undernourished in the period 2010-12. Although the phrase *Food Security* is being used widely, the definition and concept of food security is elusive and being evolved and expanded over time.

Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2006). Household food security is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern.

There are three components of food security, they are availability, accessibility and utilization. Recently, stability or lack of it can affect any or all of these three components of food security (Napoli, De Muro, & Mazziotta, 2011; Bajagai, 2013). For the purpose of this study, accessibility (food access) was emphasised as a dimension of food security, which encompasses physical, economic and social access to food (Bajagai, 2013). Food access addresses whether the households have enough resources to acquire an appropriate quantity of quality foods.

Women's role in household food security has been underestimated and their work has long been invisible. While policy makers have targeted population, health and nutrition programs to women in their reproductive roles, they have neglected them as productive agents (Olumakaiye & Ajayi, 2006).

For women to be regarded as productive agents, they need to be empowered. Empowerment is a broad concept that has been used differently by various writers, depending on the context or circumstance (Alkire, Meinzen-Dick, Peterman, Quisumbing, Seymoure & Vaz, 2013). Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland (2006) described empowerment as an individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform them into desired actions and outcomes. The key terms most often included in defining empowerment are; option, choice, control and power. These most often refer to women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families, which is *decision-making*. Control over one's own life and over resources is often stressed (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002).

Women's empowerment, increase in women's education and improvement in women's status over the past century have contributed to more than half of the reduction in the rate of child malnutrition. Evidence shows that increase in women's education accounted for 43% of the total reduction in child malnutrition followed by improvement in food availability, which contributed 26% (Smith, El Obeidb, & Jensenm 2000). Increasing women's education is a key to women's empowerment (Olumakaiye & Ajayi, 2006).

Many studies have documented food security at the national level in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2011; Ahmed, Eugene, & Abah, 2015; Ayodeji, 2010; Dauda, 2006; Davies, 2009), role of women in food security (FAO, 2011; Gillespie, Harris, & Kadiyala, 2012; Malapit, Suneetha, Quisumbing, Cunningham, & Tyagi, 2013; Alkire et. al, 2013; United Nations Development Programme, 2012; van den Bold, Quisumbing, & Gillespie, 2013; World Bank, 2009), the importance of women's education for its impact on child's schooling and nutrition (Abuya, Ciera, & Kimani-Murage, 2012; Alderman & Headey, 2017), women's empowerment and rural household food security, however, such studies did not emphasise the importance or association of women's education and their empowerment for household food security in urban community. There is a paucity of data and lack of empirical evidence showing the influence of women's empowerment on household food security, especially in the urban setting.

Therefore, this study aimed at investigating how women's empowerment influences household food security. Specifically, women's empowerment status and level of household food security were assessed in a university community.

Methods

Study area and sampling procedure

The study was carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Southwestern Nigeria. The University is a comprehensive public institution established in 1962 and is situated on a vast expanse of land totalling 11,861 hectares. It has a latitude of 7.520767 and the longitude is 4.530315 with the global positioning system (GPS) coordinates of 7° 31' 14.7612" N and 4° 31' 49.1340" E. Obafemi Awolowo University has a population of about 40,000 people out of which about 30,000 were students and 7000 staff and 3000 casual workers. Obafemi Awolowo is a community on its own. The study was conducted among women either employed by the university or living in the university community.

Sampling method and size

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 540 women from all the faculties, markets, and business centres within the university community. Research Advisor (2006) table for sample size determination was used at 95% confidence interval and 5% margin error. A minimum sample size of 378 was obtained out of the 30,000 population. Data were collected from 575 respondents but 540 were included for analysis after removal of outliers. The sample size was divided into the faculty areas, business areas and residential quarters within the community and respondents were randomly selected.

Research instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information on socio-economics status (SES), Women Empowerment (WE) and Household Food Security (HFS).

Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Peterman et al., 2012; Sraboni, Malapit, Quisumbing, & Ahmed, 2014) was adapted for the purpose of this study, which contains five domains; production, time, income, resources, and leadership. All of which have decision-making indicators. For this study, two questions were asked from each domain to sum up to 10 decision-making questions, which were later used to determine the Women Decision-making (WDM) index which was used as a proxy for WE.

The women were asked who took decisions on the issues raised, whether the woman, husband or any other household member. If the women responded in the affirmative to each of the questions, a score of 1 was allotted. The maximum obtainable score for the Women Empowerment was 10 while the minimum was 0.

HFS has four components; Availability, Accessibility, Utilization and Stability. Only accessibility component was adapted and used to determine HFS which consists of the physical, social and economic access to food. 12 questions were asked for the women to indicate their means of access to food. The total point obtainable was 12 while the minimum was zero.

Data analysis

Data was entered and processed using SPSS version 22.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Chicago, IL, USA) for analysis involving descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The frequency of occurrence and percentages on the various parameters were presented in tables and figures. Chi-square and logistic regression were used for inferences. All inferences were made at less than 0.05 level of significance.

Validity and reliability of research instrument

Overall content validity was carried out to ensure that the whole questionnaire contained and measured the information required within the framework of the research objectives. The pilot method was used to determine reliability. This was carried out in a separate population, analyzed and faults were detected, then corrections were made before carrying out the research in the target population. The coefficient was 0.75, which showed the reliability of the instrument.

Results

Socioeconomic characteristics of the women

The age range of the women in the study area was between 23 and 68 years with a mean value of 40.70 ± 10.09 , with respondents between ages 30 to 39 years accounting for one third (33.3%) of the women. The majority (86.7%) were married with mean household size of 5.65 ± 2.94 ; those with less than six people were 83.0%. Those with tertiary education had the highest rating of about 72.6%. For the monthly income, 43.0% earned more than 60,000 Naira which is equivalent to 166.80 USD and 8 USD per day, which is far above the poverty threshold of 1 USD per day. The smallest income was 2.70 USD per day and was earned by 15.6% of the women.

Table 1 Socioeconomic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency N = 540	Percentage
Age		
<30	80	14.8
30-39	180	33.3
40-49	152	28.2
50-59	116	21.5
60 and above	12	2.2
Mean = 40.70 ± 10.09		
Marital Status		
Single	28	5.2
Married	468	86.7
Divorced	8	1.5
Widowed	36	6.7
Household Size		
≤ 6	448	83
7-12c	76	14
>12	16	3
Educational level		
Primary	20	3.7
Secondary	128	23.7
Tertiary	392	72.6
Income (#)		
<20,000	84	15.6
20,000-39,000	148	27.4
40,000-59,000	76	14
>60,000	232	43

Women's decision-making (women's empowerment)

On the decision-making ability of the women (Table 2), which was used as a component of empowerment, decisions on food related matters were made by about 70% of the women while decisions on health issues were taken by about half of the women in the study area. Other decisions on acquisition of household properties and schooling were the least involved by the women. The decision-making was scored to determine the level of decision-making; out of the 10 points obtainable, 156 (28.9%) were rated high, almost half of the women were rated average 256 (47.4%) and 128 (23.7%) were rated low. The mean score was 5.37 ± 3.10 (Figure 1).

Table 2 Decision-making by women

Decision-making	Percentage
Type of food to be purchased	67.4
What food to prepare	73.3
Whether or not to buy household electronics	25.2
What to do in case a child becomes ill	56.3
Whether or not to buy medication for a family member that is ill	54.1
When to start antenatal clinic	49.6
When a child should start school	44.4
Whether or not the woman should seek employment	65.9
When or not to have another child	45.9
Whether or not to visit friends and relations	54.8

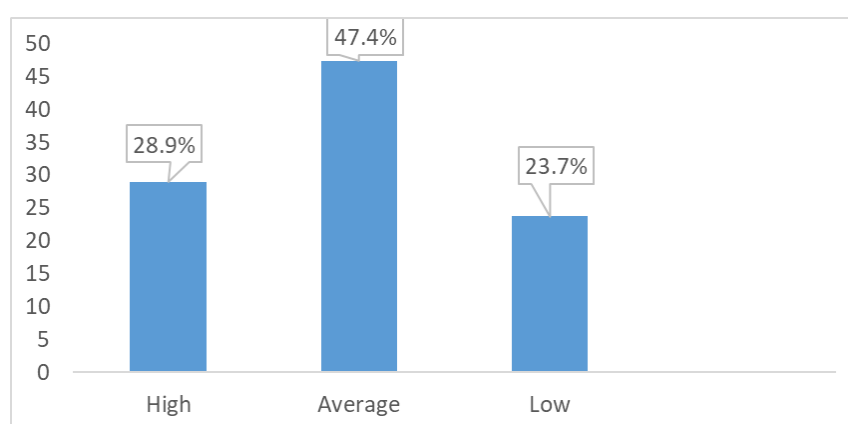


Figure 1 Level of decision-making among women

Household Food Security

For the household food security, physical, social and economic access to food were examined (Table 3). Half of the women indicated that they had physical access to food in terms of owning agricultural land (51.9%) and vegetable gardens (55.6%). One third had social access to food by indicating that they had people they could turn to for help when there was a shortage of food at home. In terms of economic access, 60.7% had regular income from salary alone, while 10.4% had other sources aside salary, making a total of about 80% of the women having a regular source of monthly income. The aggregate of physical, social and economic access was calculated and data showed that only 20% had good access to food, 42.2% moderate and 37.8% were rated poor (Figure 2)

Table 3 Access to Food by Women

Physical access to food	Frequency	%
Ownership of agricultural land	280	51.9
Backyard garden	300	55.6
Livestock rearing (goat)	132	24.4
Livestock rearing (chicken)	248	45.9
Social access to food		
Ever had no food or not enough food at home	256	47.4
Someone to turn to for help	208	38.5
Economic access to food (source of income)		

Physical access to food	Frequency	%
Business only	100	18.5
Business + other sources	28	5.2
Salary only	328	60.7
Salary + other sources	56	10.4
Farming only	20	3.7
Farming + other sources	8	1.5

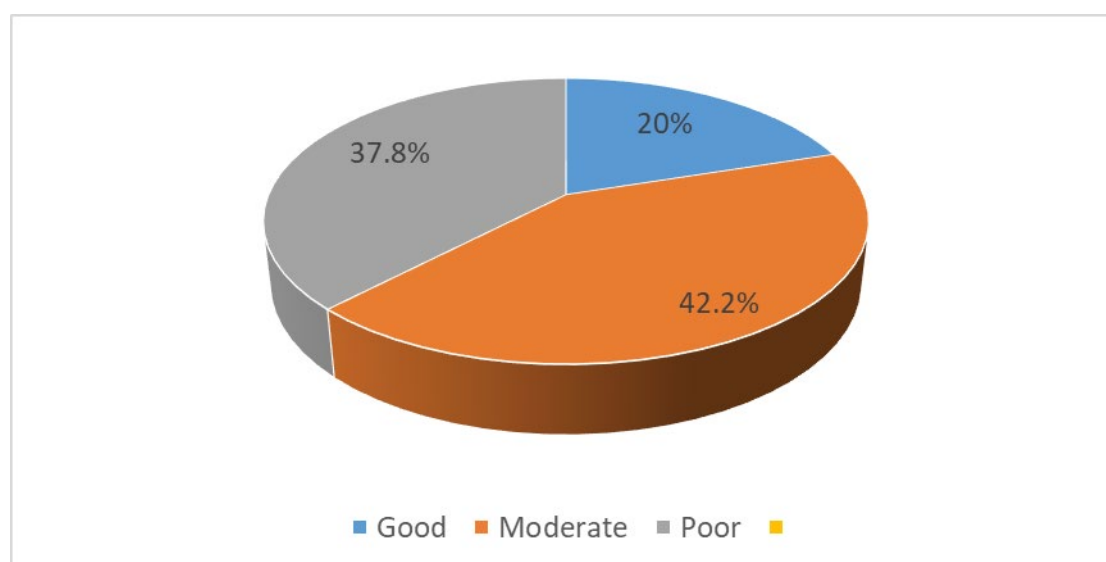


Figure 2 Level of Access to Food by Women

Relationship between socioeconomic status and Household Food Security

From the logistic regression analysis as presented in Table 4, out of the five socioeconomic variables used, only education level was significant with household food security ($p = 0.014$). Those with secondary education are twice more likely to have access to food compared to those with other levels of education ($OR = 2.865$, $CI = 0.247, 33.254$). However, from the chi square analysis, in Table 5, there was a significant relationship between decision-making ability and household food access ($\chi^2 = 43.7$; $p = 0.013$) in the study area. Those that had high level of decision-making had good household food security.

Table 4 Multivariate odds ratios and 95% confidence interval for socioeconomic variables and household food access

Variables	OR	95% CI	p-Value
Age			
<30 (ref)	1		
30-39	0.151	0.008-2.865	
40-49	0.462	0.26-8.286	0.769
50-59	0.397	0.021-7.323	
60 and above	0.373	0.022-6.462	
Marital status			
Single (ref)	1		
Married	0.16	0.014-1.861	
Divorced	0.403	0.074-2.210	0.7
Widowed	0.288	0.10-8.133	

Variables	OR	95% CI	p-Value
Household size			
≤6 (ref)	1		
7-Dec	0.522	0.049-5.574	0.651
>12	0.625	0.052-7.577	
Educational level			
Primary (ref)	1		
Secondary	2.865	0.247-33.254	0.014*
Tertiary	0.991	0.377-2.602	
Income			
<20,000 (ref)	1		
20,000-39,000	1.178	0.332-4.179	
40,000-59,000	0.911	0.355-2.334	0.072
>60,000	0.783	0.260-2.355	

Table 5 Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between women decision-making and household access to food

Decision-making level	Household food security level (%)				
	Good	Moderate	Poor	x ²	p-value
High	35.9	41	23.1		
Average	14.1	45.3	40.6	43.7	0.013*
Low	28.1	35.5	37.4		

Discussion

All the women in the study population were in their productive age of 20 to 60 years, only 2.2% were above 60 years of age. This corroborates the study conducted among women in Nigeria (Olumakaiye & Ajayi, 2006). Marriage is a respected value in the study area and this is responsible for the majority that was married. In Africa, procreative marriage is highly valued (Kyalo, 2012). The average household size of 5.65 people is similar to the study conducted by Olayemi (2012) in Osun State, Nigeria. Better educated women are more capable of obtaining gainful employment than those less educated in Bangladesh (Sultana, 2011), this is in agreement with findings from this study, which indicated that all the women were employed in the university community but with different educational levels (Sultana, 2011).

Studies have shown that married men relied on their wives to make nutrition and health decisions for the family (James, 2004; Wang, Naidoo, Ferzacca, Reddy, & Van Dam, 2014; Raskind et al., 2017). Half of the women in the study area indicated that they took decisions on child and family health issues. This agrees with other studies that large body of evidence demonstrates a strong link between women's education and child survival (Chen & Li, 2009; Rowe, de Savigny, Lanata, & Victora, 2005; LeVine, LeVine, Rowe, & Schnell-Anzola, 2004). Women were more likely than men to be aware of the health benefits of foods and nutrients (James, 2004). Also, there is evidence that reflects the importance of maternal education for enabling women to negotiate health services more effectively (Jones, Walsh, & Buse, 2008). Likewise, money in the hands of women is spent mostly on household foods and health-related matters (Beardsworth et al., 2002; Flagg, Sen, Kilgore, & Locher, 2014). This current study did not deviate from these other studies.

Meanwhile, research conducted by Hadi (2001), observed that the participation of women in economic activities and their ability to contribute financially to the family can increase their role in the household decision-making process. Sultana (2011), reported that education appeared to play a significant role in raising women's perception in decision-making power.

In a study conducted in Bangladesh (Bushamuka et al., 2005), women who participated in homestead gardens all year round generated income which was spent on food. Some other studies recognize the positive impacts of home gardens towards addressing food insecurity and malnutrition as well as providing additional benefits such as income and livelihood opportunities (Galhena, Freed, & Maredia, 2013). In this current study, half of the women indicated that they had access to a backyard garden. This has the likelihood of reducing the amount of money spent on food especially vegetables which could give them the opportunity of spending their money on other things like health.

In a similar study also in Bangladesh, women's empowerment had a positive impact on household dietary diversity (Sraboni et al., 2014). Women empowerment especially economically without men's mediation could positively improve health, nutrition and education of family members (Fletschner & Kenney, 2014).

Implications

Women's Empowerment is still a major determinant of Household Food Security. In developing countries including the country of this study and the study area, women empowerment has been measured by and limited to ability of women to earn income either through agricultural activities (Bushamuka et al., 2005; Sraboni et al., 2014), skill acquisition (Galhena et al., 2013) or improved educational status (Olumakaiye & Ajayi, 2006). This current study narrowed down women's empowerment to decision-making ability. For a woman to have a say in terms of decision-making in other activities of the households that could improve the household food security is of importance. In this study, decision-making was used as a proxy for women's empowerment which was adapted from Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Peterman et al., 2012). Generally, women determine the types and quality of foods provided for the members of the households, if they are empowered to make some decisions at the household level, the whole household will benefit in terms of food security. Decision-making in other non-food related areas of the household will encourage the woman to make informed decisions on household food-related issues without fear and prejudice. This study indicated that a significant relationship existed between decision-making and Household Food Security, likewise education. This also has implication on gender-related issues for household food security in the study area.

The study also has implications for researchers. There is a need to further investigate if there is a difference in the well-being of household members especially the vulnerable groups judged by nutritional status between households headed by women who have the absolute prerogative to take decisions and households headed by men where the decision-making power is absolutely arrogated to the man. This will assist to ascertain the importance of women's decision-making in household food security.

Conclusion

Decision-making and Level of education played a significant role in household food security, which implies that empowering women through education and involvement in decision-making at household level will impact positively on HFS. This corroborates the findings in the study conducted by (Wekwete, 2014) that giving women same access to education, employment, assets and opportunities is a key to empowered societies.

Gender inequality continues to be a major challenge in Africa. Women contribute immensely to Household Food Security. Initiatives identified to improve women's economic empowerment should be intensified. It is therefore recommended that women should be more empowered to achieve food security and eradicate hunger within households. More gender-sensitive empowerment programmes should be introduced.

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Valuing the Holistic Approach

Sue L. T. McGregor
www.consultmgregor.com

Abstract

This think piece strives to make more transparent the significance of the longstanding home economics mantra: “We engage in holistic practice.” It clarifies the idea of what constitutes a holistic approach in home economics, prefaced with a brief overview of both holism and holistic practice, including key holistic principles. The line of thinking (i.e., the persuasive argument) developed herein draws on two idioms: “Can’t see the forest for the trees” and “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Holistic practice mitigates the chance of insufficiently accounting for significant interrelated aspects of life that impact well-being. For this and other reasons, gaining richer understandings of what constitutes holistic practice is presented as a timely initiative for the profession as it faces the complexity of the new century.

KEYWORDS: HOLISTIC, HOLISTIC PRACTICE, HOME ECONOMICS, SYSTEMS THINKING, REDUCTIONISM, WICKED PROBLEMS

Introduction

The problems facing humanity are increasingly complex compelling home economics¹ to value a holistic approach to practice (i.e., a focus on the whole instead of the parts). Humanity is facing pandemic climate change, daunting unsustainability, unprecedented, insidious violence, and severe challenges to the human condition (e.g., poverty, health and food insecurity, lack of potable water, loss of arable land, inadequate shelter), called wicked problems, see next (McGregor, 2012b). At the same time, there are growing enclaves of resilience, nonviolence, solidarity, fraternity, civic responsibility and hope (McGregor, 2012a; Pendergast, McGregor, & Turkki, 2012).

The quality of life, well-being and standard of living of individuals, families and communities are profoundly impacted by this contemporary collection of wicked problems and hopeful opportunities. Respectively, wicked problems are messy, vicious and aggressive social, political, economic and environmental issues. They are difficult to define, have complex interdependencies (i.e., are not straight forward due to overt and hidden interconnections) and are hard to solve because they are contextual (i.e., pervasive to all humans but manifesting differently in different situations). Ironically, the more people do, the worse things get—yet *something* has to be done (McGregor, 2012b).

On the other hand, being hopeful conveys confidence in and a connection to the future and provides vital inputs for well-being and quality of life (Roldan, 2016). The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) affirms that “hope enables an optimism and agency that the future can be made and that the present can be changed by human action collectively” (2016, p.1). With hope, challenging situations can be alleviated or mitigated—opportunities become visible and possible (Roldan, 2016). Holistic practice is thought to be a panacea for wicked problems and their hopeful solutions (Edington & Pitts, 2016).

Encouragingly, home economics has historically employed “a holistic view on what happens in everyday life with a focus on the home” (Panider as cited in Olafsdottire, Juniusdottir, & Olafsdottir, 2017, p. 180). Turkki (2008) also recognizes that the profession has embraced holism (originating

¹ This article uses the globally recognized name of home economics fully respecting that some countries have opted for other names: family and consumer sciences, consumer sciences, family studies, family ecology, human ecology, and human sciences.

outside our field) and its relevance for understanding family, home and household. However, she cautions that we did so “without understanding all [of the] principles behind it” (Turkki, 2008, p. 37). She further advises that “it is not sufficient that we examine various factors of the household as comprehensively as possible. [We must] understand it in all its dimensions and properties” (Turkki, 1997, p. 164). She acknowledges that higher education programs orient home economists to think holistically but she questions whether we recognize this knowledge and whether we recognize how (if) we value it (Turkki, 2008).

In that spirit, this think piece strives to clarify the idea of what constitutes a holistic approach in home economics, prefaced with a brief overview of both holism and holistic practice in general. A think piece serves to stimulate others’ thinking about a new argument or line of thinking. The intent of this paper was to use a well-reasoned argument to raise questions, challenge and expand current thinking about holistic practice, which is a crucial concept in the field. Per conventions for preparing think pieces, it represents an amalgamation of the author’s intellectual insights and relevant literature. The typical format for an argumentative essay was employed: (a) thesis (position to be endorsed or argued for), (b) defense of this thesis in light of counterpoints (antithesis), and (c) a strong closing that convincingly restates the thesis and recaps the main arguments (synthesis) (McGregor, 2018b).

As a caveat, think pieces are often developed “without the benefit of empirical evidence ... anticipat[ing] future validation of the ideas” (McGregor, 2018b, p. 475). Given the implied significance of holistic practice, other home economics scholars are encouraged to undertake primary research to determine the relevance of the idea to today’s and tomorrow’s practitioners.

Holistic

Holistic is Greek *holos*, “whole, entire, all, total” (Harper, 2019). It refers to taking into consideration a *whole* system of factors rather than the analysis of, treatment of or dissection into *separate* factors. It ties in with the concept of “wholeness” (i.e., completeness, unity, fullness, comprehensiveness, and entirety) (McGregor, 2018a). Smuts (1926) first coined *holism* as an academic term nearly 100 years ago, calling it a principle pertaining to the origin and progress of wholes in the universe. Turkki (2008) proposes that home economists need to appreciate that “to keep the whole as a whole requires some special knowledge of how to deal with the whole” (p. 36). Part of that process involves recognizing when wholeness is absent.

Reductionism

Reductionism is the opposite of holism (Fang & Casadevall, 2011; McEvoy & Duffy, 2008). Reductionism stems from the Latin *reducere*, “revert to a simpler form” (Harper, 2019). While holism assumes all things are fundamentally interconnected and cannot be understood in isolation, reductionism assumes that complex systems can best be understood by analyzing each separate part. It holds that knowledge about the parts can be applied to make general predictions; knowledge of the whole is not necessary. Each difficult situation should be divided into as many parts as possible and necessary to find a solution or gain understanding. For this reason, reductionism runs the risk of not recognizing important relationships among system components (Fang & Casadevall, 2011). “Reduction of the whole to its constitutive elements eliminates some factors which are present only when a being is seen as a whole” (Kaufmann, 2018, para. 3).

That being said, “a combination of reductionistic and holistic approaches can be synergistic” (Fang & Casadevall, 2011, p. 1403). They can be reconciled by taking insights gained from analyzing separate parts and testing their predictive power or relevance in more complex settings (e.g., a study about a microbe infecting a host cell could be expanded to include infection of a host animal). And, some insights into a system are only possible because of earlier reductionist work (e.g., earlier advances in molecular biology enabled systems biology to develop). People are also encouraged to closely examine each unique situation to determine which (combination) of reductionism and holism will yield the most useful solution. Both approaches can coexist if one is not arbitrarily privileged over the other.

Holistic Practice

The previous section discussed holistic as a concept. McEvoy and Duffy (2008) explore *holistic practice* as a concept. Succinctly, this means that once an obstacle or challenge has been identified, people intent on addressing it would take a step back and think about the big picture so they can understand the whole situation. The holistic approach entails viewing and appreciating the landscape in its entirety. Only then can practitioners avoid looking at the trees while at the same time missing the entire forest (i.e., Heywood's (1546) idiom—*cannot see the forest for the trees*).

This idiom implies that being too close to a situation prevents people from gaining perspective. They can become so focused on the details that they are unable to see the whole and how it is holding things together—shaping everything. This can mean that people are unable to see the situation as it really is because they are in the midst of it. They will only be able to see the forest (the whole) when they get out of the trees (separate parts). This idiom can also mean that practitioners may lose their perspective when they are too heavily invested in their way of doing things (myopic). They can end up not questioning or listening enough or both (Tanner, 2018). The result is non-holistic practice.

A key principle shaping holistic practice is that what presents as an issue is often not the *root* of the issue. Only through thoughtful consideration of the entire (whole) situation can a viable solution(s) be identified or deeper understanding gained, can the underlying cause(s) be 'rooted out' and laid on the table. Holistic practice helps people reset the scene so everything is taken into account. In this process, holistic practitioners come to appreciate that everyone has different information about and interpretations of the situation, meaning all impacted voices need to be involved in problem posing and solving (Ameritech College of Health Care, 2016; McEvoy & Duffy, 2008), especially when confronting wicked situations rife with complexity and invisible undercurrents; that is, subdued emotional qualities underlying a statement (Anderson, 2014). Figure 1 provides an overview of other key holistic principles that are examined in more detail in the next section.

Figure 1 Overview of holistic principles

Holistic Practice in Home Economics

Although lay notions of holistic practice often carry medical and health overtones, it takes on a broader meaning in home economics. Respectively, holistic health practitioners assume that the whole person should be treated representing a concern for the interconnectedness among body, mind and soul (e.g., mental, social, emotional, spiritual, cultural, physical, financial) (McEvoy & Duffy, 2008). Home economics is also concerned with holistic wellness as it pertains to health (Baldwin, 1996). But we expand this idea to mean *all* aspects of life, not just health.

Bubolz and Sontag (1988) explain that home economics has consistently viewed *all* "phenomena holistically as a complex system of interdependent parts, bounded through co-ordinated interaction and functional relationships" (p. 4). Turkki (2008) is convinced that holism must remain part of our practice. She explains that families and households (not necessarily family members) are whole units with various interrelated parts. She asserted that everyday life is full of examples of holism. To illustrate, when a family member gets sickly or in trouble, the whole family (household) unit feels the ramifications because they are all connected through relationships, which inform and are informed by their interactions within the home and household and with external environments (human-built and natural) (Turkki, 1997).

To persuasively develop the argument threaded throughout this think piece, the following text addresses six overarching topics that contribute to an understanding of what holistic practice looks like within home economics: (a) the whole as anchor, (b) interconnected and interrelated as they pertain to the whole, (c) systems thinking and the whole, (d) human ecosystems and holism, (e) Aristotle's holistic idiom ('the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'), and (f) home economics Aristotelean human action.

- the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

- some factors are present only when something is seen as a whole

- examining the whole lets people identify complex connections

- what presents as an issue is often not the root of the issue

- the system (the whole) determines how the parts behave

- the entirety (whole) has specific properties that none of the parts possess

- the actions of individual parts have farreaching affects on the whole

- life exists in and forms integrated webs of wholeness, often beyond direct perception or observation

- the whole has a synergy generated by mutual interactions among its constituents

- because everything is connected, any change to one part affects the whole and any change in the whole affects the parts

- some things simply do not become apparent unless people can appreciate that these things are connected to something larger, which gives them meaning

- to understand the interrelations and interconnections (overt and hidden) in a whole system, people have to stand back and look at the whole picture not just the individual parts (i.e., the forest *and* the trees)

The Whole as Anchor

Turkki (1997) explains that it is necessary to know the governing laws and principles of the whole system before one can appreciate the characteristics and modes of action of its constituent parts. These governing principles determine how the parts interact with each other. She asserts that “if we know the purpose (goal) of the whole, it is possible to better understand why its parts function as they do” (p. 164). In this way, the whole serves as an anchor “enabling us to see the meaning of the separate factors as part of the whole and to understand the relationships between these factors” (p. 164). Their meaning cannot be fully understood without reference to the whole from which the parts arise (i.e., are anchored).

To illustrate this principle, Turkki (1997) uses the example of preparing a meal. What this activity *means* for people will vary depending on how they are anchored to the family system. They can draw on three different personal knowledge systems or some combination thereof: (a) rational knowledge (scientifically verified information); (b) empirical knowledge (their own observations and experiences of life); (c) and esthetical knowledge (previous emotional experiences with, feelings about and instincts related to the phenomenon). These individual knowledge systems are an integral part of the family system to which the person is anchored. That system and any connections to it give meaning

to an individual's actions and lived experiences. The latter cannot be fully understood without knowledge of and appreciation for the whole system. From a holistic perspective, home economists would thus go inside the home, family and household system and try to understand the activities within as they are understood and experienced by its members (Turkki, 1997). A single thing (e.g., a person) does have intrinsic meaning but it has a different meaning when viewed in relation to the whole (e.g., a family).

Interconnected and Interrelated

To push the aforementioned forest and tree metaphor further, the invisible underground roots of all of the trees in the forest can represent the connections among the separate parts of the system. Upon accepting Bubolz and Sontag (1988) and Turkki's (2008) assertion that home economics is holistic, practitioners would appreciate that all aspects of people's lives lived out in systems are *interconnected* and *interrelated*, terms identified by McEvoy and Duffy (2008) as surrogate terms for holistic. Respectively, *interconnected* means there is a link (i.e., things are bound and related to each other). When home economists embrace the idea that aspects of people's lives are *interrelated*, they gain both an awareness of these connections (links) and an ability to see the challenges and potentials (opportunities) arising from these connections.

To illustrate, the home economics profession has had an enduring concern for contemporary social concerns (Apple, 2015) also called practical perennial problems (i.e., occurring every generation, requiring reasoned thought) (Brown & Paolucci, 1979). Examples include poverty, sustainability, food and housing security, and healthy human development. Because these wicked issues are "interrelated in complicated ways in daily life" (Nickols & Kay, 2015, p. 30), the profession needs a holistic approach to address the inherent complexity.

Examining the whole lets us identify complex connections as well as connections that make things more complex and complicated (Turkki, 2008). Holism enables us to see both challenges and opportunities in the system, minimizing the chance of missing key things. Achieving overall well-being for individuals and families thus depends on ensuring that a full range of interconnected aspects of a problem are dealt with or else the solution(s) will not be holistic (i.e., important connections can go missing due to reductionism) (Turkki, 1997).

Systems Thinking and the Whole

A comprehensive solution to a contemporary social problem or perennial issue is more likely if home economists also choose to embrace systems thinking (closely aligned with holism). They would view the individual or family's situation as a whole networked *system* of *interconnected* and *interrelated* parts instead of a *collection* (pile) of *separate* parts. Fortunately, systems thinking has been a mainstay of home economics practice for nearly a century (Bubolz, 1990; McGregor, 2010). Turkki (2008) uses the idea of *systems intelligence* to conceptualize the connection between systems thinking and a holistic sensitivity to a systemic environment (i.e., the ability to relate to a system as a whole). Systems thinking involves viewing individuals and families as able to

- (a) maintain balance, (b) meet internal and external demands on their daily lives (input), (c) make decisions about the acquisition, use, and disposal of resources (material and human), (d) take actions to deal with internal and external demands (including planning, implementing, and evaluating—throughput), and (e) cope with, analyze, and take action (output) based on their daily activities and decisions as well as (f) deal productively with the impact on the family (feedback). (McGregor, 2010, p. 50)

Human Ecosystems and Holism

Holistic sensitivity to a systemic environment—the ability to relate to a system as a whole (Turkki, 2008)—is better ensured using *ecosystem* thinking. An ecosystem is a community of living organisms interacting with each other and their nonliving environments. Ecosystems are complex networks (systems) of interconnections. Fortuitously, appreciating that humans are in reciprocal, enduring relationships with their near environments (human, human built and natural) has become an integral part of home economics' holistic perspective (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988), springboarding from the aforementioned systems thinking (Bubolz, Eicher, Evers, & Sontag, 1980). The latter enables the

profession to view humans as more than isolated entities; they exist in systems of relationships that form a whole (Bubolz, 1996).

With sporadic but influential beginnings in the sixties and seventies (Bubolz, 1990), home economists more fully embraced the family and human ecosystem approaches in the eighties and nineties (McGregor, 2010; Nickols & Kay, 2015). For clarification, systems thinking is often applied to understand nonliving systems (e.g., economic, political or health care systems). The term ecosystem is used when discussing living but nonhuman systems in relation to near environments (e.g., river or forest ecosystems). Human ecosystem pertains to human beings (e.g., individuals and families) living in concert with their living and nonliving near environments (McGregor, 2010).

When combining the holistic approach with human ecosystem thinking (i.e., the whole family system in relationship with its environments), home economists would strive to ensure that individual and family systems are able to act according to their goals in the circumstances and environments in which they are living (McEvoy & Duffy, 2008; Medin & Alexanderson as cited in Olafsdottir et al., 2017). Reductionism (i.e., focusing on just the parts, separate from the whole) would be valued but minimized thereby making room for the revelation of complex overt and hidden connections and interrelationships among individuals' family members and wider networks (like the roots in the proverbial forest).

Aristotle's Holistic Idiom

Still related to holistic systems thinking is the popular idiom 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' It originated in Greek philosophy, first introduced by Aristotle over a thousand years ago in his philosophical works, *Metaphysics* (Turkki, 2008). This idiom represents several critical ideas (see Figure 1). It means that the system as a whole determines how the parts behave. The entirety (whole) has specific properties that none of the parts possess. Life exists in and forms integrated webs of hidden wholeness, often beyond direct perception or observation (Kaufmann, 2018; Turkki, 1997, 2008). And, "the whole has a synergy generated by mutual interactions among its constituents" (Kaufmann, 2018). Synergy (Latin *synergia*, "joint work") (Harper, 2019) means the result of combined actions is greater than the sum of individual actions.

A powerful example of Aristotle's famous idiom is a jazz ensemble, which comprises individual musicians performing on their own with the group's combined performance reflecting the synergy emergent when individuals interact with each other while performing. The entire performance is more than the sum of each individual's performance (McGregor, 2018a). And, because everything is connected, any change to one part affects the whole and vice versa (Ameritech College of Health Care, 2016). The audience can best appreciate the jazz performance if it listens for the underlying currents among the collection of musicians; that is, the relationships (overt and hidden) among the separate parts. A solo jazz trumpet performance can be stirring. An entire jazz band even more so because of the energy and power emanating from the *whole* ensemble. This metaphor is easily applied to the family and household.

Home Economics Aristotelean Human Action

Renwick (2015) illustrates further significance of Aristotle's philosophy by suggesting that holistic practice is a form of home economics Aristotelean human action. By way of explanation, these actions are voluntary, intentional and fundamentally singular. They require prior mental acts of deliberation and choice (assuming humans are free and unique beings). The actions of humans are necessary for both life (survival) and the Good life (flourish), which is a moral life of virtue (Younkins, 2003). There are three Aristotelean human actions: *techné*, *episteme* and *phronesis*. Respectively, they serve to (a) produce something (*techné*—pragmatic action), (b) seek truth (*episteme*—contemplative action), and (c) do the right thing (*phronesis*—morally committed action). More holistic practice is ensured if all three forms of thought are combined when addressing contemporary, wicked, practical perennial problems (Renwick, 2015).

Renwick's (2015) approach resonates with Brown and Paolucci's (1979) earlier concept of three systems of actions for home economics practice also predicated on Aristotelean thinking. They encourage us to assess each individual and family's *system* to discern the overt and hidden dynamics among the parts and then determine what combination of (a) fix it/cope (technical), (b) talk about it (interpretive) and (c) change it (critical empowerment) is appropriate given current circumstances

(especially resources) and future goals (Medin & Alexanderson as cited in Olafsdottir et al., 2017). This approach is necessary because prevailing perennial problems require reasoned thought to address them. That thought process is enriched if informed by holistic thinking.

Conclusions

The premise of this think piece was that although home economics has long embraced the notion of holistic practice, practitioners may not have consciously stepped back to appreciate what this really means for their work (Turkki, 2008). To develop this understanding and augment deeper value for holism, this think piece first discussed holism followed with a general overview of holistic practice and then a more detailed examination of holistic practice in home economics. A powerful takeaway from this paper is that a family unit or household “cannot be described by a very simple and *reduced* [emphasis added] model.” Instead, home economists must strive to “understand the dynamic essence” of families as they live their lives within the boundaries of a systemic network of relationships and environments (Turkki, 1997, p. 168).

Another takeaway is that significant connections among factors shaping well-being and quality of life are much more *visible* when viewed through a holistic perspective. Some things simply do not become apparent unless one can appreciate how they are connected to something bigger. Holistic practice mitigates the chance of insufficiently accounting for significant interrelated aspects of life that impact well-being. This reality behoves home economists to know exactly what they mean when they say “I engage in *holistic* practice.” This is a longstanding mantra, something repeated without thinking about what it really means. More transparency around its true meaning (see Figure 1) empowers more practitioners to affirm or change their practice accordingly.

Professional growth of this nature will serve the profession well as it faces the wicked complexity of the new century evidenced in the plethora of wicked problems and what is involved in addressing them. With this compelling context in mind, IFHE (2016) urges members of the profession to “promote the pursuit of hope in order to harness curiosity, resilience, relentlessness, inventiveness and ingenuity so that the future can be improved” (p.1). We need to be equal to the imperatives of the times (i.e., the import of complex, wicked scenarios); practicing from a holistic perspective serves that need, bringing hope to humanity. But we must appreciate what holistic really means in order to do it justice.

Biography

Sue L. T. McGregor (PhD, IPHE, Professor Emerita MSVU) is an active independent researcher and scholar in the areas of home economics philosophy and leadership, transdisciplinarity, consumer education, and research paradigms and methodologies. She recently published Understanding and Evaluating Research (SAGE, 2018). Her scholarship is at her professional website: www.consultmgregor.com

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McGregor, S. L. T. (2019). Alice Ravenhill: Never Say Die [Book Review]. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 12(2), 56-64.

Correspondence: Sue L. T. McGregor ✉ sue.mcgregor@msvu.ca

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Alice Ravenhill: Never say die



Mary Leah de Zwart. (2016). *Alice Ravenhill: Never say die* [e-book]. Vancouver, BC: Ormsby Review Press.

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Sue L. T. McGregor
McGregor Consulting Group

The e-book is a testament to the power of one committed home economist (Alice Ravenhill, 1859-1954) whose influence was felt on two continents and in three countries at a time when the profession was emerging as a future force of change and empowerment. The e-book is available at no cost at <http://bcbooklook.com>, a company focused on the literary culture of British Columbia (BC) where, until recently, Canadian home economist Mary Leah de Zwart lived when she researched and wrote the book. She formatted it into eight online chapters, each available at its own separate URL (see Figure 1) at this web page: <https://bcbooklook.com/category/the-ormsby-review-press/> The entire book is not available in its entirety—each chapter has to be printed off individually.

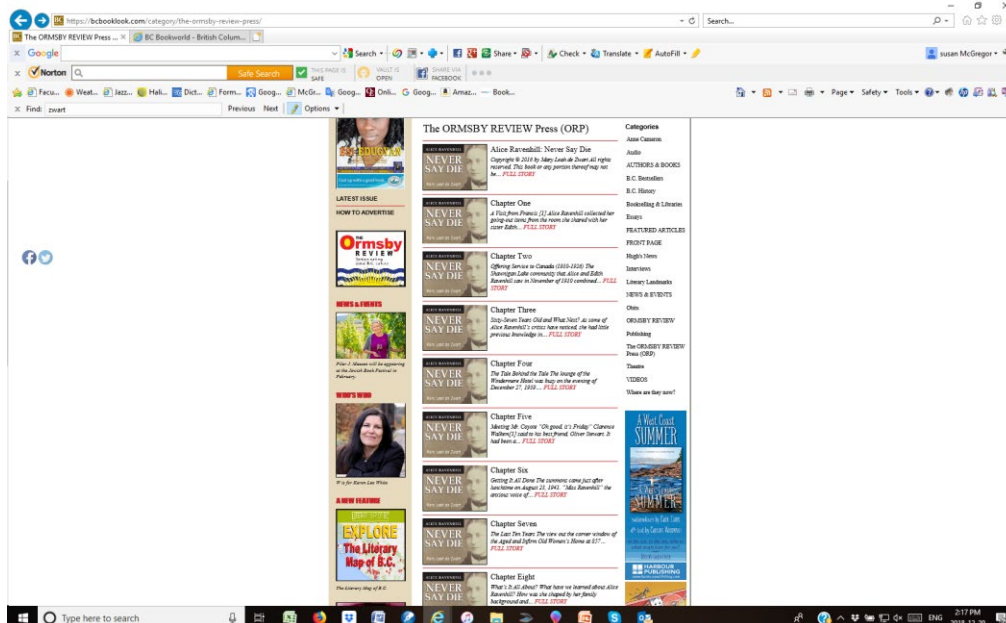


Figure 1 Eight online chapters

McGregor, S. L. T. (2019). Alice Ravenhill: Never Say Die [Book Review]. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 12(2), 66-68.

Correspondence: Sue L. T. McGregor ✉ sue.mcgregor@msvu.ca

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Each chapter averages 12 pages in length, is fully referenced, rich with quotations from Ravenhill's letters and correspondence, and contains period pictures and images. de Zwart's writing style is easy, smooth and engaging. She builds Ravenhill's story around compelling life trajectories. This book review focuses on Ravenhill's home economics life but readers will be just as intrigued with her immediate family's events that so poignantly shaped her professional life.

Ravenhill was born, lived and worked in England until she immigrated to Canada at age 50. In the first half of her life, Dr. Ravenhill (honorary PhD from the UBC *in absentia* in 1948) made significant contributions to home economics in Britain where her British colleagues recognized her as a leader in the newly formed field of home economics. She focused on health and hygiene in addition to home economics. Chapter 1 (*A Visit from Francis*) recounts this part of her life. de Zwart's research revealed that it was while attending a 1900 conference on sanitary health and hygiene in Paris that Ravenhill was first introduced to the new field of home economics, concurrently being developed in United States and Canada at the Lake Placid Conferences lead by Ellen Swallow Richards (the founder of home economics in North America).

When, upon returning to England, Ravenhill took the initiative to write a special report for her Board of Education urging them to investigate this new discipline, they surprised her by asking her to go to the States to gather information about home economics. When she arrived in 1901, Ellen Swallow Richards herself organized a three-month tour and arranged for introductions along the way. While she was there, Ravenhill attended the third Lake Placid home economics conference and presented a paper on health and hygiene. She also made a short trip into Canada where she met Adelaide Hoodless, considered one of the founders of home economics in Canada. Remember this is 1901 when the most common modes of transportation were train where upon arrival, people transferred to horse and carriage. A 'short trip' from New York to Ontario was anything but short by today's standards. Her commitment to home economics was evident.

When she returned to England (by ship), Ravenhill remained active in home economics, health and hygiene, culminating in a series of books including *Lessons in Practical Hygiene for Use in Schools* (1907), *Instruction and Training in Girls' Elementary Schools in England* (1908), *Eugenic Education for Women and Girls* (1909) and *Household Administration, its Place in the Higher Education of Women* (1910). She was instrumental in creating the first Household Science course at the University of London in 1908 and taught there for two years until she relocated to Canada in 1910 (Chapter 1).

With her sister Edith, she immigrated to Canada in 1910 (age 50) to live with her recently divorced brother and 25-year old nephew on a homestead in Shawnigan, BC where they lived until moving to the mainland (Victoria, BC) in 1919. She had expected this foray into Canada to last only three years; she eventually died there 44 years later. I must confess that I was drawn to this part of her story as I was familiar with her name being associated with home economics in Canada, especially in the province of BC (but not so much with her influence in Britain and her contributions to the founding of the American profession). Chapter 2 (*Offering Service to Canada -1910-1926*) recounts this part of her life.

de Zwart recounts interesting tales of how Alice struggled with culture shock when she arrived in Canada—related to her efforts to continue what she had started in England about home economics, hygiene and health. Her views about education and home management were “received with great suspicion” by fellow (relatively wealthy) homesteaders and educational authorities but more favourably by the Women's Institute (WI), started by Adelaide Hoodless. Three years after arriving in Canada, a woman she met at the 1901 Lake Placid conference (Annie Laird) was instrumental in securing an invitation for Ravenhill to speak at the 1913 official opening of the household science building at the University of Toronto (Ontario). Ravenhill considered this invitation to be “one of the greatest accomplishments of her life.”

In the same time frame, inspired by her success at creating the first home economics degree course at London University, Ravenhill lobbied to have a similar program created at the proposed UBC. Her efforts were thwarted by an anti-home ec Nova Scotian education activist (Evlyn Farris) who argued that “home economics at the university level would harm women's intellectual development and cause philosophical learning to decline” (Chapter 2). Incredibly, this opinion prevailed for the next 30 years until a home economics school was finally established at UBC in 1943. Ravenhill died in 1954 (age 95) so she did live to see the realization of this forward-looking vision.

After living in Canada and working on home economics-related issues, her interests shifted in 1926 (age 67) to supporting and advocating for British Columbia Indigenous rights, arts and crafts (which she did for nearly 30 more years). Chapters 3 through 7 recount this part of her life, which began in 1919 after she “gave up on home economics after a tough experience in Utah” (Chapter 8). After a six-month, six-state American mid-West speaking tour about home economics in 1917, she accepted a two-year position to reorganize and expand the Department of Household Economics at the State College in Logan, Utah. However, the cultural divide was again too great and she tendered her resignation and moved back to Canada in January of 1919. “The years between 1919 and 1926 were a hiatus for her. When she gave her books to UBC in 1923, she gave [away] most of her life in home economics... too. There were some small forays into public speaking about home economics, but her heart was no longer in it” (Chapter 2). This ended her career as an international home economics lecturer but opened the door for the “second half of her life.”

Ravenhill went on to create and leave behind a legacy of well-acknowledged influential impact on BC Indigenous rights, arts and crafts, spreading the word about and respect for their culture and history. To this initiative, as with home economics, she “did what she had done so well in England: to speak and lecture publically, organize like-minded people, and write books” (Foreword). Her contributions to home economics in Britain and North America were as considerable and lasting. She was instrumental in creating the first home economics degree course at London University. And, as a woman from Britain, Ravenhill was named one of the ten Founders of the *American Home Economics Association* (AHEA) and made the first Honorary Member of the *Canadian Home Economics Foundation* (CHEF) in 1941 (Chapter 7).

I appreciate that this was less of a review of de Zwart’s book and more of a tight summary of Ravenhill’s contributions to the founding and strengthening of the profession. But that summary would not be possible without the thorough investigation of her life—the compelling narrative created by de Zwart. This approach to sharing home economics history—preparing an e-book with well-crafted chronological chapters threaded with vigorously researched and documented information and insights—is an inspiration for everyone in the profession. I commend and thank Dr. de Zwart for this initiative and laud her sound scholarship and riveting story-telling. I hope others follow in her footsteps.

Sue L. T. McGregor PhD, Professor Emerita, IPHE

McGregor Consulting Group (Canada)

sue.mcgregor@msvu.ca

www.consultmcmgregor.com

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Professor Donna Pendergast, PhD, is Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. Donna researches and writes about Home Economics philosophy, education and practice.

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