

What We Bring to the Table: Decolonising, Métissage, and Home Economics

Kerry Renwick
University of British Columbia, Canada

Shannon Leddy
University of British Columbia, Canada

KEYWORDS: HOME ECONOMICS, DECOLONISING, MÉTISSAGE, EVERYDAY PRACTICES, CURRICULA PRACTICE

Dr Kerry Renwick is a woman of a predominately Celtic background. She is a fifth-generation settler depending on which branch of the family tree She was born and raised on the traditional and unceded lands of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrong people. Renwick currently lives and works on the traditional and unceded land of the Musqueam people. As a qualified home economist Renwick has experience contributing to professional associations regionally and internationally. In her current role at the University of British Columbia, she has program responsibility for home economics as a teaching specialisation and graduate programs for human ecology and everyday living.

Dr Shannon Leddy is a member of the Métis Nation and of Irish ancestry. She is a Vancouver based educator and writer whose practice focuses on decolonising education through infusing Indigenous content and pedagogies in teacher education. More specifically, she employs arts-based pedagogies that invite educators into dialogue with contemporary Indigenous art in order to develop decolonial literacies that help them avoid reproducing colonial stereotypes and misrepresentation. Leddy is the Co-chair of the Institute for Environmental Learning, a UNESCO Regional Centre of Excellence, through which her focus is to bring more Indigenous voices to the table to expand the discourses of environmental and sustainability education beyond Western tropes.

We live in challenging times. In as much as the trend towards globalisation that began more than 500 years ago has opened our eyes to the world, it has also both created and made evident the many ways in which wealth, power, and influence are unevenly distributed. The colonialist project has been driven a hegemonic position associated with Euro-White men that has relied heavily on the idea of *otherness* to separate out and diminish groups of people based on gender, race and culture. For Indigenous people, their histories after the arrival of colonisers and settlers are replete with examples of marginalisation, discrimination and violations of their human rights. Common elements within the experience include the stealing of traditional lands, loss of language, cultural genocide, reduced health outcomes and a loss of personal and cultural agency. As a way to begin to redress this the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations [UN], 2007) on September 13, 2007.

As a profession home economics has existed for over 100 years. Given its development out of America in a time when understandings about the colonial project were informed by White

Renwick, K., & Leddy, S. (2022). What we bring to the table: Decolonising, Métissage, and Home Economics. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 15(1), 4-9.

Email: Kerry Renwick ✉ kerry.renwick@ubc.ca

© 2022 International Federation for Home Economics

privilege, the potential for the profession to be implicated in colonial practices is significant. Within everyday lives home economists have recognised the unequal distribution of resources necessary to live, making resource management a key content area. In the most recent era intensive competition for resources by some has meant destabilised economies and food insecurity for others. Additionally, the experiences of a global pandemic beginning in 2019 caused by COVID-19 has not only created a considerable health impact, but the associated supply chain disruptions and shortages made it quickly apparent that Home Economics, in both the literal and curricular senses, is worthy of serious consideration.

When offering the call for papers for this issue we argued that there are multiple ways of knowing (Smith, 2016). And that there is more than one perspective to inform our work, with particular attention being given to our local context. We offered two provocations for consideration:

- i) For holistic learning about the everyday there is a need to challenge ethnocentric beliefs and invite Indigenous perspective (Smith, 2016); and
- ii) To claim holistic, interdisciplinary practices within home economics claim to be working for and with families globally decolonisation of our educational practices is necessary (Martin et al., 2020).

In our call for papers, we invited contributors to consider that there is a need to not only recognise what has gone before but to also look to practices that decolonise and act in more inclusive ways that are genuinely about every individual, family and community (CFP, n.p.).

In reading the papers submitted for this special edition we have been reminded of the methodology and intent behind the concept of *métissage*. In their 2009 book *Life writing and literary métissage as an ethos for our time*, Hasebe-Ludt et al. describe this process as “a counternarrative to the grand narratives of our time, a site for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts” (p. 9). Given that our contributors discuss Home Economics in the contexts of North America, Australia, the Middle East and Africa, we see that objective as being fulfilled here.

In his consideration of what it might mean to engage in *Indigenous Métissage*, Donald (2012) points to the notion of “ethical relationality” as “an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 535). This, we feel, is at the heart of asking authors to consider what decolonising approaches to Home Economics might look like and why they are necessary. Although we are aware of the watering down of decolonisation that Tuck and Yang (2012) warn of, we also recognise the way this concept applies in the field of education where we deal with the impacts of colonial curriculum and the formation of personal, local, and national understandings of what it means to live in a colonised country.

Given the focus for this special edition of the journal we felt that there was a need to consider the review process so that there was consideration of the paper submitted by those from within the field of home economics, from Indigenous scholars and from those whose work is undertaken in the regions where an article is positioned. We are grateful to those scholars, for their insights and valued feedback as this journal would not be possible without their support.

To lead us into discussion about home economics and decolonial practices McGregor provides a treatise that systematically explores the theorising of key terms specifically colonisation and imperialism, postcolonialism and decolonialism. The piece begins from a place of loyalty and possibly a sense of outrage around linking the home economics field and profession to being

complicit in colonisation. McGregor's commentary offers insight into her intellectual process to explore the possibilities and probabilities given the profession's focus "on using moral judgements and practical reasoning in its work with, through, and on behalf of individuals and families" (see p. 10). At the end of her piece McGregor recognises that there are challenges in confronting both personal and professional consciousness around decolonising practices. Her work offers key insights into the challenges inherent in such transformative considerations.

Moving from an exploration of whether home economists need to consider decolonising their practices, Renwick (see p.16) offers an exposition about the philosophical framing of the field and therefore the profession. Renwick uses an epistemic frame to discuss how ongoing debates about the name of home economics followed by an exploration of how the profession is positioned through a scientific, colonial, patriarchal and an indigenous lens, and then a consideration of whether the profession need decolonising. Epistemic lives is a philosophic concept about how we come to understand our world through everyday practices. Renwick uses epistemic lives, and therefore different world views, as a way to reconsider home economics' mission to genuinely advocate for all families.

Several of the papers reflect on home economics curriculum as it is practiced in four different countries in three world regions. Each explore possibilities for decolonising curriculum while providing some insight into the local experience of home economics educators. These papers provide insight into how the local curricula are informed by colonial positioning while at the same time exploring ways to decolonise.

As a way to explore our practices as guided by curriculum, Smith begins by describing how language and theory inform the profession. Smith utilises structural theory as a way to expose "colonialism, racisms and microaggressions are social structures" (see p. 32) and how home economics has not been immune from the nature pervasive nature of this form of hegemony. Examples of events from within the classroom provide examples of why reflexive action for decolonising both thought and action is necessary in the work undertaken by home economics professionals in the classroom and research agendas.

In their article "Decolonising Home Economics in Eswatini" (see p. 44), Pinkie Zwane and Moly Mpfu discuss various foci of decolonising curriculum in a post-colonial African context. Through highlighting the importance of regionally and culturally specific considerations around clothing, culinary traditions, and ecological knowledge, the authors make their points clear with a review of historic and contemporary Home Economics curriculum. In this work they show the ways in which decolonising approaches can function to roll back the impacts of oppressive colonial curriculum and pedagogies in order to empower Indigenous citizens and hold up their long-standing and well-reasoned ways of life.

Buttegieg Fiteni offers a grounded glimpse into a Middle Eastern context for Home Economics in her article "Decolonising and Indigenising Home Economics Pedagogies to Advance Gender Roles in UAE" (see p. 55). Although some may argue that the author has conflated decolonisation and gender parity (while also remaining entrenched in a gender binary), the article is ultimately highly successful in offering an important review of literature that paints a clear picture of the need for critical curricular intervention in UAE. Here, decolonising curriculum and pedagogies can have deep and wide-ranging impacts in transforming notions of who can participate in learning for all aspects of family life and daily living. The author provides ample evidence of the ways in which Indigenous and decolonising pedagogies from other parts of the world can serve to break apart colonial, patriarchal, and oppressive aspects of existing and recent Home Economics curriculum.

In the United States, there is heightened level of complexity around colonial practices and possibilities for decolonising education generally, and home economics more specifically. As a part of the colonising process countries such as the US have dispossessed and disadvantaged Indigenous people (Burnette & Figley, 2016) while beginning as a British colony in which practices of Black slavery were routinely argued as economically necessary. Duncan, Holland, Russell, Saboe-Wounded Head and Spangler explore the growing gains in the intricate work of diversity, equity and inclusion (see p.70). An historical exploration of home economics/family and consumer studies in the US highlights ways in which colonial perspectives are evident and the associated impact for people of colour, especially women. Subsequently, the paper presents two collaboratively developed case studies that work through possibilities for decolonising home economics/family and consumer studies.

In her paper (see p. 90), Britto also contends with the impact of colonialism and diaspora. Britto provides vignettes based on what she sees as critical incidents. The first incident is a description of what occurred within her family to investigate the ways in which her family members have responded to and inculcated aspects of colonialism to develop a particular sense of self, identity and a right for inclusion. From this follows a searching for greater understandings about ways to decolonise. The second incident describes an unfulfilled desire for a better understanding about respecting and acknowledging traditional, unceded lands that have by and large been stolen. As Britto points out decolonising work is not easy and it requires ongoing effort. Eurocentric, settler populations have lived through a colonialist positionality so there is a need for the same population to do some considerable “lifting” to both contribute to and live in a decolonised place.

There are three papers that have been submitted by teachers reflecting on the teaching and learning occurring within their classroom and how these can be reviewed in light of decolonising intent and practice. These are not written in a way that holds to a purely academic style. Rather these authors are writing as reflective practitioners (Schön, 2017) and teachers who are researching their practice (Kincheloe, 2003; Loughran, 2004) While the authors draw on academic literature to present their case, they are not driven by a Western, masculinist, positivist, linear, rational research process rather they are putting forward concerns about their practice and engaging in professional inquiry.

The majority of home economics professionals are engaged in work as educators. There are a very small number whose work is positioned within universities with possibilities for research in more formal ways. Further much of the theorising and championing of home economics is tagged to the practical nature of the field. Brown and Paolucci (1979) claimed that the profession support families in the building and maintenance of meaningful systems of action. Bubolz and Sontag (1988) speak to the professional practice, practical reasoning and resolution of practical problems. McGregor et al. (2008) writes about the profession focusing on resolving practical, perennial problems and describing different actions arising out of technical, interpretative and emancipatory practices. Brown (1985) has described the philosophical basis of the profession as having a practical-intellectual heritage and it is this perspective that forms the basis for the contributions from the practising teachers.

As editors we have provided a methodological introduction to these teacher contributions. Our intention is to set the scene for what follows from practitioners in the field by supporting possibilities for different approaches to research that work for home economics and home economists in their role as teachers. We highlight how teachers are researchers (Kincheloe, 2003) as they investigate their professional practices and how self-study and narrative as recognised research methods can be used by educators including those in school contexts to inform and enlarge their professional practice. In homage to Brown’s (1985) practical-intellectual framing of these approaches to research the intention of the methodological

introduction is to allow our practices to be understood through theorising while concurrently developing our theoretical understandings through practice.

In her contribution (see p. 106), Wong writes about grappling with possibilities for racism to exist within her classes. She describes situations in her classrooms where she is engaging with steps towards decolonising her thinking. Wong lays bare the problematising of what for some, could be a benign name for a recipe to explore how it is problematic for others. Reading some of this at times uncomfortable, raw even. However, Wong describes the difficult challenges in rethinking her work through a decolonising lens. It is not necessarily a step-by-step process rather personal, often messy and emotional but it is both important and necessary work.

In Canada teachers are now called upon to include Indigenous content and approaches in their classrooms. As a teacher of home economics, Durnin-Richards considers both personal and professional possibilities for colonial practices through self-reflection (see p. 123). Echoing Smith's point in this issue that decolonising must include our own thoughts and actions, Durnin-Richards provides insights into her own history and perceptions as someone who is of the settler population in Canada. From family, experience as a student and teacher in an education system that until recently has ignored Indigenous perspectives, to a recent experience of working in northern Manitoba with predominately Indigenous families, Durnin-Richards' journey highlights the importance of necessary work that has barely begun. In this piece there is no self-flagellation, no overlaying of guilt; rather, she offers an emotionally mature recognition of the need to learn how to do things better and to genuinely engage with transformative practice.

Continuing the exploration of practices and actions that can emerge from decolonial thinking Leddy and Renwick have provided a paper (see p. 133) that describes a communal knitting project facilitated at their university. The project was inspired by The Tiny Orange Sweater Project, initiated by Jennifer Kent Symons on Facebook in the summer of 2021. More than 589 members across Canada are knitting orange sweaters in remembrance of the children who did not return home from Indian Residential Schools. In Leddy & Renwick's paper, knitting is described as a public pedagogy using Giroux's conceptualisation of public pedagogy as a dynamic space that explores the "relationship among culture, power, and politics" (2004, p. 62). The Orange Sweater Project is a participatory and ongoing action towards reconciliation as it draws our attention towards a tragic and shameful experience in an apparently benign way. Private pedagogy draws from learning in the everyday and is connected to "larger systemic considerations, and through which individuals could imagine themselves as critical and engaged social agents" (Giroux, 2020, p. 246). As a personal activity knitting enables the knitter to engage in a form of meditation while also offering a form of therapy, a creative practice that offers the knitter an intrinsic value. Knitters are able to make a political statement through their craft and for the project described in this paper it also offers a possibility for truth and reconciliation.

As a footnote, the installation will be mounted within the Faculty of Education building in late 2022. It will become focus for greater understanding about the experiences of loss and grief felt by Indigenous people in Canada and serve as an act of public pedagogy and remembrance. The aim is to draw in teacher candidates/pre-service teachers to consider alternate ways to include Indigenous histories in their classrooms.

Taken together, we believe these articles offer an excellent example of the way in which *métissage* can function as a curricular practice that "can be used to resist the priority and authority given to official texts and textual practices" (Donald, p. 537). Particularly because these articles come both from post-secondary scholars as well as those practicing in the field, they offer dialogic provocations that are multi-directional in defiance of academic traditions of hierarchy. In itself, this makes this special edition a powerful site of transformative potential.

Biographies

Kerry Renwick



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2965-7896>

Kerry Renwick co-ordinates the home economics education program at UBC, a teaching specialisation whose content and practice are inherently linked to building and sustaining respectful relationships. Her research focuses on social justice in context of K-12 educational settings.

Kerry's previous research includes health promoting schools; exploring the relationship between school gardens and mental health in youth; and teachers' practice in health and food education. She is currently the Principal Investigator on a SSHRC Partnership Development grant focused on global food literacy education. The Food Literacy International Partnership (FLIP) includes Deakin University, Australia; Sweet Briar College, USA; and Gothenburg University, Sweden.

Shannon Leddy



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8519-6553>

Dr Shannon Leddy (Métis) is a Vancouver based teacher and writer. Her PhD research at Simon Fraser University focused on contemporary Indigenous art as a dialogic prompt for decolonising. She is an Associate Professor of Teaching at UBC and Co-Chair of the Institute for Environmental Learning.

References

- Brown, M. (1985). *Philosophical Studies of Home Economics in the United States: Our Practical-Intellectual Heritage* (Vol. 1) (290-292). Michigan State University.
- Brown, M., & Paolucci, B. (1979). *Home Economics: A Definition*. American Home Economics Association.
- Bubolz, M. M., & Sontag, M. S. (1988). Integration in home economics and human ecology. *Journal of Consumer Studies & Home Economics*, 12(1), 1-14.
- Burnette, C. E., & Figley, C. R. (2016). Historical oppression, resilience, and transcendence: can a holistic framework help explain violence experienced by indigenous people? *Social work*, 62(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/sww065>
- Donald, D. (2012). Indigenous Métissage: A decolonizing research sensibility. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(5), 533-555.
- Giroux, H. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 59-79.
- Giroux, H. (2020). *On critical pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Springer.
- Hasebe-Ludt, E., Chambers, C., & Leggo, C. D. (2009). *Life writing and literary métissage as an ethos for our time* (Vol. 27). Peter Lang.
- Kincheloe, J. (2003). *Teachers as Researchers* (2nd ed.). RoutledgeFalmer
- Loughran, J. J. (2004). A history and context of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 7-39). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Martin, B., Stewart, G., Watson, B. K. I., Silva, O. K., Teisina, J., Matapo, J., & Mika, C. (2020). Situating decolonization: an Indigenous dilemma. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52(3), 312-321.
- McGregor, S. L., Pendergast, D., Seniuk, E., Eghan, F., & Engberg, L. (2008). Choosing our future: Ideologies matter in the home economics profession. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 1(1), 43-62.
- Schön, D. A. (2017). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Routledge.
- Smith, T. (2016). Make space for indigeneity: Decolonizing education. *SELU Research Review Journal*, 1(2), 49-59.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Tabula Rasa*, 2021(38), 61-111.
- United Nations. (2007). *Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf