

A Satire: Confessions of Recovering Home Economists

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This paper is based on the assumption that, too often, we use quick fix strategies wearing our expert, specialist hats to the exclusion of dealing with deeper meanings behind people's actions and the power relationships in society that keep people exploited and oppressed. The authors developed this satire using the 12-step recovery program for overcoming an addiction. They acknowledge that perceiving yourself as a recovering addict is not a comfortable, or conventional, state in which to be placed.

Foreword

For the past 50 years, a few leading home economics thinkers have been sharing their thoughts about the mission, principles, and vision of the profession and field of study. Their think pieces are often very deep and lengthy due to the philosophical stance they take (Brown, 1983, 1985; Brown & Paolucci, 1978). Philosophy has a language and body of knowledge of its own. To really understand Brown and others, we need a much more in-depth knowledge in philosophy than most of us have. To offset this philosophical knowledge gap, we offer this paper. It provides a way to move forward from the prevailing home economics belief system that has been accepted as the “way to do things” for the past 100 years. Our intent, in the short term, is to take the main ideas set forth by our leading philosophers and place them in lay terms so that people are more inclined to read them and reflect on how they affect their practice. In the long term, we urge people to ask for, prepare, and deliver courses in philosophy, reflective, critical thinking, and transformative leadership.

To aid us in this task, we borrowed from a recent satire that exposes the folly of economists who think they reign supreme (Stanford, 2003). He takes the liberating stance that economists are addicted to their approach to practice, despite its inherent flaws as a discipline, to the detriment of society and the ecosystem. A satire is a written document, which uses ridicule as a means of provoking change. By ridicule, we mean a technique to express an opinion that the ideas or behaviour of others are not normal - may even be an addiction. He implemented this satire by applying the addiction 12-Step Recovery Program. In his case (and ours) he used inflationary satire, a common technique used to take a real life situation and exaggerate it to such a degree that its shortcomings can be seen close up and can be examined (Wikipedia, 2003). His intent was to get economists to start to face up to their inner demons and make their own small contribution to setting things right.

Seeing the potential of using this approach to make the deep philosophical thoughts of home economists more transparent, Sue sent Stanford's (2003) article to a collection of home economists world wide. She asked them to read it and then queried, “Who wants to contribute to writing an article called *Confessions of recovering home economists?*” The premises they were

asked to embrace, as they made their decision, were that (a) most home economists are addicted to the technical mode of practice (to the exclusion of interpretative and emancipatory practice), (b) understanding the technical addiction makes it less attractive, and (c) admitting that one is addicted to a certain way of practice makes people more receptive to expanding their thinking leading to a different mode of practice that includes technical as well as interpretative and emancipatory.

For clarification, practising from a technical approach means we focus on the “how to” questions. It comprises giving people the skills necessary to meet material, day-to-day needs. Delivering technical skills enables families to cope with, or survive, the daily impact of change **but** they do not have to change themselves or analyze the situation; rather, they just learn another skill. Technical action is concerned with accomplishing goals using criteria set by an expert, in our case, a home economist.¹ Practitioners (that’s us) and families often take things as given and do not question them. From a technical perspective, we provide families with the skills to produce or procure physical goods or services required for “the good life” without ever questioning what makes this the preferred way of life or whether it is sustainable. We tend to do things the way we were taught, the way it’s always been done, from fear of being fired, because that is what is in the textbook, because that is what we were told to do, or because everyone does it that way.

Interpretative practice enables people to understand, adapt to, and conform to change instead of just coping or getting by. This practice is achieved by getting families to talk and communicate, within and between families and society, about values, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and meanings and with understanding why they decide to act, or not act, in a certain way.

Finally, emancipatory practice involves self-reflection and self-direction to determine what is, and what we should be doing, so that communities, societies, and the world are a better place. This practice is emancipatory because it frees individuals and families to engage in an evaluation process which allows them to judge the adequacy of their environments against their own needs and goals, and vice versa. It is concerned with understanding power dynamics, which are oppressive or limiting and with helping us to take moral, ethical actions for the good of all people and the environment. We must make it clear at the very beginning of this paper, that we all agree that the technical approach is not bad. But, on its own, it is inadequate for the long-term sustainability of the family as a social institution and basic democratic unit in society.

Sue’s invitation to consider contributing to the article was prefaced with a home economics version of Stanford’s (2003) opening comments in his satire. The refined version is shared below:

It is seventeen days since I have practiced from a technical approach. But, the demon still lurks, untamed, within me. I know it's wrong to feel sorry, but do nothing about the fact, that my particular profession gets so little attention, and is granted so little deserved credibility. I know it's wrong to pretend we can save the profession by changing its name. I know it's wrong to reduce the whole of the human endeavour to the scientific paradigm and the endless pursuit of material prosperity by perpetuating consumerism. Yet still, I yearn for the technical approach to home economics. I savour the feelings of being seen as a competent researcher. I yearn for the power of belonging to that inclusive sect who understands the magical circuits of individual and family well-being (whatever that is). I hunger for the quick fix that I get when I tell families what to do and when I am seen as

¹Home economists have come to see themselves as experts in one specialized field or another (usually some aspect of basic family needs) but not necessarily in the field having to do with families, home economics.

the expert in this activity. I know that life involves many tensions but I long for definitive choices and for someone else to tell me which one is right. Worse yet, I feel good when I tell some family what is the right thing to do, even though they had not say in the choice. I go along with the name change, but I do not change. I do little about the future of the profession, I just worry. Let's face it. Right now, I am a home economist. I will always be a home economist. The best I can do is recognize my affliction to technical practice. Name the hunger that haunts me. Reflect on how to control it, how to keep it at bay. Learn to avoid the events and issues that fan the internal technical flame.

Then, those who responded with interest in authoring this article were sent a draft twelve-step recovery program for recovering home economists and asked to send their input back to Sue. This paper is the result of our five-month electronic, global collaboration. It is an attempt to understand our inherent flaws as a profession, face up to our inner demons, and make our own small contribution to setting things right.

We chose the 12-step program because it is such a controversial application to the issues facing home economics. More important, this application allows us to take ownership of the problem instead of looking for outside reasons from others about why our profession is facing challenges. Those reasons include complaints that: (a) most ideas in the world are viewed and given value through the male lens, (b) people do not take what we do seriously, or (c) the work we do does not get large monetary compensation. These reasons are valid, but not ones we can do much about, in the short term. We are left dealing with ourselves. Only we can own this problem.

We know that perceiving yourself as a recovering addict is not a comfortable state in which to be placed. We admit that not all of us agree with all of the ideas in this paper (although some of us do). Members of the writing team squirmed and wiggled and left them in, though. So, if we shake you up with this paper, then we have succeeded. We shook ourselves up, on many occasions. We feel we have succeeded if we can get you to *even consider* that a 12-step approach can be used for personal, long-term change. Each of us needs to take an inventory of our strengths and our weaknesses, confront our habits and addictions, reach out to others, and recover our power. We can all choose to become recovering home economists. Read on with courage and an open mind.

The Satire: 12-Step Program for Recovering Home Economists

Step 1. Admit you have a problem and take ownership of it.

Like they say at any 12-step recovery program meeting, admitting that we have a problem is half of the solution. Where home economists are concerned, however, allowing that we are part of the problem is easier said than done. Getting a substance abuser to face the facts of their addiction is nothing compared to convincing home economists that we are hooked on just the technical aspect of practice. This technical approach is not wrong, just inappropriate for solving the real problems that families face in every generation, no matter where they live. Home economists refer to these as perennial problems because they keep coming back in a new context. These types of problems are messy and complex, with no ready-made answers. They require thinking and moral justification. They require that we take into consideration the current context and not assume that what we did before will work again. They require that those who are affected by the decision are part of the problem-solving process. Where home economists are concerned, we are talking denial with a capital D. Denial means refusing to accept the truth of a statement, and this denial happens because our comfort level with our current mode of practice

buries us deep within our addiction. We are grounded in patterns of technical behaviour built up through frequent repetitions with little reflection on the relevancy of our practice. We have a habit.

To find our way out of this addiction, recovering home economists would, not only admit we have a problem but, determine the nature, the root, of our problem. Most of us know, in our hearts, that we have a problem. It is usually stated in these ways: loss of programs, low enrolments, loss of members, no one citing our work, price of membership, lack of respect for our work, et cetera. But, these are symptoms rather than the root of the problem, which is our addiction to technical practice and all that this entails. To determine the nature of our problem, we have to evaluate the past so we can pick out what was good as well as uncover what led us down the technical path that is not consistent with our mission and objectives. Technical practice is certainly not a bad thing. It is our reliance on it, in exclusion of the other two approaches to practice (interpretative and emancipatory), that has led us astray.

Step 2. Accept that all your efforts to affect family well-being have not been successful and make a decision to rebuild your practice in a positive way.

In most countries, the family is the holiest symbol in all of home economics. The profession of home economics is dedicated (we give ourselves over to a higher purpose) to the study of individual and family well-being and how the quality of life can be improved. At least, our literature and verbal expressions (our discourse) say we are dedicated. Brown (1993) pointed out that our actions do not match our words. She explains that she thinks we have not always succeeded because we became too focused on the technical way of practice. To be fair, though, this was her learned opinion. In reality, we do not have very many definitive studies that evaluate the effectiveness of our practice, using objective criteria that those outside the field understand. In fact, to address this gap, the AAFCS just released a request for proposals (RFP) to examine this very issue. Once we gather this, and other, feedback, then we can re-evaluate our claim that we improve family and individual well-being. We acknowledge that many of you will take issue with this part of our addiction since we have been working our whole lives as home economists. But, recovering home economists would want to know if they have walked the walk or if they have just been talking while standing still. The integrity of the profession hinges on whether each recovering home economist takes stock of her life's work to see if she got the results she wanted from her actions. But, she will do herself, and those she worked with, a disservice if she only uses criteria relevant to the technical approach to evaluate her practice.

It is interesting to note that our colleagues from Sweden pointed out that, in their practice, the family is not the holiest symbol. They feel that household is the better term because it is more neutral. On the downside, they feel that the term household can also refer to something old-fashioned and dull. But, it is better than the nuclear family label, since 40% of households in Sweden comprise single persons and not family units, per se. Recovering home economists would tender another perspective. Rather than separating the single person from the family of origin, we would agree that even single persons have an extended family to whom they are attached. Persons have a social network that brings stability or chaos to their life—but they are certainly not alone even though they are living alone in their house.

This line of thinking brings us to another problem related to our efforts to affect family well-being. In real life, these idealized families do not fit our theoretical conceptions. An ongoing discussion in the field of home economics centres around what constitutes a family. Should we define them by their structure (what they look like) or their functions as a social unit (what they do, regardless of their structure)? Addicted home economists will lean toward the former which ends up with us labelling families as single parent families, nuclear, extended, same sex, reconstituted (imagine!), blended (sounds like a cooking term), step families (like the fairy tale). We think you

get our point and recommend that you check the demographic statistics in your country for all of the different labels. Our conventional standard is the nuclear family, a convenient and comfortably conservative, middle class standard against which we can compare all others. If families change so that they do not fit that norm, we say “families are in crisis.” A global reality is that the family is a basic surviving social unit in every society (regardless of what it looks like), and some families function more effectively than others.

Moving from the structural definition of the family, we can explore the family function perspective. Focusing on functions, we are less concerned with how family units are configured and more interested in the challenges these units encounter as they strive to fulfill six main social functions: (a) procreation and addition of new members, including adoption and fostering; (b) physical care and maintenance of family members and the home or household; (c) morale, love, relationships, and nurturance; (d) production and consumption of goods and services; (e) social control of members; and, (f) morality as it socializes children into adult roles toward self-formation. If families are challenged as they strive to achieve these key functions, we can say “families are in transition” just like all of the other institutions they interface with on a daily basis - labour markets, government, economy, health care system, market, religion, schools. Anything in transition needs a safety net in place as it moves from one state to another. Recovering home economists would help provide that safety net rather than assume that families can get there on their own.

The challenge for recovering home economists is to find some balance between these two notions of family (in crisis or in transition). Otherwise, relapses will occur as evidenced in the painful backlash to a book review about same sex relationships in the 2000 *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*. Ten letters were sent to the editor in the Op Ed section. Most people were against the idea that same sex relationships constitute a family and a few others were in favour of a more inclusive definition of family. The comments from the dissenters were revealing, given the field’s 100-year-old focus on the family. The following text combines their words to summarize their main objections. “We must speak out against homosexuality since it is contrary to our objective of strengthening families. Our notion of family cannot embrace lesbianism. . . . I strongly support the promotion of family well-being but, on moral grounds, I am unable to perceive same-sex relationships as a form of family.” These letters, most taking moral stands, serve as a powerful illustration of an addiction to an outdated view of what constitutes a family, relative to what today’s reality reflects. Those who wrote letters to the editor, supporting a more inclusive definition of family, based their positions on the functional definition of families: “A narrow definition [of family] negates our ability to fulfill our mission, which is to affect the optimum well-being of families and individuals.”

Though an addiction brings short-term pleasure, there may be long-term consequences in terms of health and welfare. What are the long-term consequences on those families who do not fit some home economists’ definition of family? Where is their voice in research, curricula, policy, and practice? Do we harm them by perceiving them as not being families? Do we harm our profession with this addiction to an outdated standard of what constitutes a family? Recovering home economists would pose these questions and would do well to seek direction from the powerful definition of family set forth by the former American Home Economics Association in 1975 (now AAFCS):

“. . . two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitment to one another over time. The family is that climate that one comes home to and it is this network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption or marriage.”

Aside from how we define family, another addiction recovering home economists are trying to overcome is the field's lack of success in agreeing about what well-being and quality of life are all about. In 1993, Marjorie Brown dared us to take on the task of examining our addiction to the nebulous concepts of well-being and quality of life, chiding that we had failed as a profession when it comes to these two ideas. Then, Margaret Henry (1995) devoted her doctoral study to trying to define well-being for the unique home economics context. Sue McGregor and Liz Goldsmith (1998) attempted to examine this idea in their think piece and then Frances Smith came along (2003) and dropped the gauntlet again, saying that we do not have a shared meaning, a consensus, on what these two concepts mean to our practice. She offered the following explanation. As the profession has become more and more focused on specialized careers, not all professionals endorse affecting the well-being of individuals and families as the desired outcome or valued end of their work. Recovering home economists would closely examine how we understand these two concepts and, preferably, do so in conversations and dialogue with other recovering home economists so a consensus can be reached. Since consensus means "a sense of the meeting," it does not guarantee agreement. But, at least, recovering home economists would agree to disagree, instead of not addressing the issue at all.

Step 3. Turn to your friends, including those in other disciplines, for help.

Home economists can get pretty snobby about people from other disciplines assuming they can practice in the field of home economics. We say, "aren't family and well-being the purview of only home economists?" We see ourselves as elite because we claim family well-being as our mission, vision and raison d'être. We continually tell ourselves that "what we do is different from other disciplines who also deal with aspects of family well-being." We continually fret that they are systematically stealing our stuff, leaving us with nothing. We feel victimized, marginalized, and "hard-done by" (typical signs of the low self-esteem of an addict). We continue to buy into the "us/them" dualism of the scientific paradigm. Recovering home economists would ask other disciplines what they do related to family well-being and then build on the synergy. Instead of seeing related fields as "the other," we would look for common ground and then build on the diversity. Rather than fearing them, we would see them as partners in a community of practice that is focused on families as a valuable social unit. This unit needs to be strengthened so it can fulfill its obligations to the world and benefit from the rights accrued to it by virtue of being a valued social unit.

We do have some contradictory traits as well. For example, in addition to not reaching out to other disciplines as often as we should, it is also commonplace for home economists to ignore their own high fliers. Instead, we fly in, at great expense, the "true experts" to tell us what we already know! We applaud these people vigorously, and at the end of the day reaffirm that we already knew everything they said. But hey, an expert told us, so we feel good about it. Linked with this snobbery is our inability to allow tall "poppies" in our profession. We work hard to bring everyone down to the same level. Recovering home economists would ask, "why are we compelled to put each other down and to oppress personal intellectual growth? What deep-seated fear prevents us from acknowledging shining stars in our profession? Sometimes, it gets very lonely if you are not a member of the clan. The answer becomes obvious when couched in the addiction. Addicts tend to nourish inflated images of themselves to cover a deep-seated sense of worthlessness. They are idealists who set impossible goals which, when unmet, result in guilt because they could not meet the goal to be a perfectionist. If someone else seems to be reaching that goal, the low self-esteem addict feels threatened and put down. As well, recovering home economists would need to acknowledge that we tend to support, or acquiesce to, decisions from the top down. We tend to not give enough attention to ideas from our "rank and file" members, so their ideas do not get the attention they may deserve. When we do pay attention to them, we tend to reward, or give awards to, those who succeed. Remember that

award, reward, and succeed are concepts that stem from the competitive paradigm. Recovering home economists would celebrate the movement forward on ones' professional journey, regardless of the place in the hierarchy of power. In fact, there would not be a hierarchy of power at all but, rather, transformational leadership where anyone can be a leader (to be discussed soon).

This step of the recovery program is about turning to your friends for help. Consider that home economists sometimes hold their conferences in conjunction with other large academic congresses. We have to ask ourselves whether we talk to others while we are there, to foster collaborative research networks or do we try to hold onto our intellectual separatism? By engaging in the latter, we continue to harm the pursuit of knowledge and exaggerate the predisposition of home economists to be blind to their sole reliance on technical thinking. Usually, we hold our conferences separately creating the possibility that we will become too insular and not able to deliver on our rhetoric that we use an interdisciplinary approach. If we do foster collaborative efforts, are these multi or interdisciplinary in nature? The latter are preferred because we could leverage our strengths thereby accelerating our unique development as a profession.

Unfortunately, while we espouse the principles of interdisciplinary, we often practice multidisciplinary, especially in our university programs. We know our programs are designed to draw on courses from other disciplines. But, if we simply mingle disciplines to problem solve, while each discipline maintains its distinctiveness, we are multidisciplinary. We need to ask ourselves, is there a component in all of the courses that bring to the forefront the reason why students "have to take" economics, sociology, and psychology? We never require them to take philosophy, which is a shortcoming of our programs. Are they expected to figure this synergy out for themselves? Are they ever told that these disciplines do not have family well-being as their focus but that they generate volumes of knowledge that is relevant to family well-being? Do we ever tell our students that their role—the special skill as a home economist - is to take that knowledge and reframe it to address the practical perennial problems faced by all families. Recovering home economists would do this!

Furthermore, even if the university program is interdisciplinary in its intention, do all of the professors in these programs embrace the notion of interdisciplinary? Do they understand that, in practice, an interdisciplinary home economics program integrates several disciplines to create a unified outcome or perspective that is sustained and substantial enough to enable a new discipline to develop over time? When our founders called for an interdisciplinary approach to home economics, this is exactly what they had in mind. But, over the past 100 years, the profession has leaned toward multidisciplinary. This course is evident in that we have not been totally successful in training new professionals to be integrative thinkers, able to synthesize the diverse home economics knowledge base that has been accumulating. To the detriment of the interdisciplinary potential of the profession, we have been successful in creating narrowly focused specialists instead of wider thinking generalists. By embracing the specialist, expert mode, we have even created artificial boundaries between different areas of our practice (food and nutrition, housing, family, consumer, and clothing and textiles) leading to the sad reality that, often, we do not collaborate with ourselves, let alone with other disciplines. As well, quoting the work of other disciplines is not enough nor is it enough to get other people to quote our work. Recovering home economists would embark upon a path of fostering short-term multidisciplinary links leading to long term, interdisciplinary, boundary breaking thinking in the profession. This discussion around being interdisciplinary drew heavily from Colin (2002) who was writing about the same issue for the life sciences discipline.

Step 4. Make a list of the situations where you are likely to act like a technical home

economist, and then avoid those situations while attending different, supportive events.

Recovering alcoholics know they must avoid bars. Recovering home economists must similarly avoid any meeting or social gathering where they may be tempted to answer questions, from a technical approach, about the family, individual well-being or “What is home economics, anyway?” Even if we mean well, the damage to both our self, the profession and to our audience could be incalculable. As an addict, we end up defending our practices, making excuses, and rationalizing our behaviour. Addicts tend to have the following character traits: low frustration and low tolerance to endure uncomfortable circumstances and anxiety leading to the fight or flight response. They tend to nourish inflated images of themselves to cover a deep-seated sense of worthlessness. Addicts are idealists who set impossible goals which, when unmet, result in guilt because they could not meet the goal to be a perfectionist. Addicts tend to eventually become loners and feel very isolated. They become overly sensitive, then extremely resentful. Addicts also become defiant because they do not feel that they fit into society anywhere. Finally, they become dependent on others to support their addiction. This collection of traits (Renascent, 2001) is why home economists, recovering from their addiction to technical practice, should avoid situations where they will be exposed while trying to create new habits and ways of thinking. A good place to avoid, for example, is home economics’ staff rooms in schools if the curriculum focuses on the production of cushion covers and chocolate slice, and if this type of technical curriculum is seen as vital to preparing our young people for their changing world by helping them get jobs (worker) and to contribute to the economy (consumer) instead of being a productive citizen in a progressive society.

As a substitute, recovering home economists would accept encouragement to attend support group meetings of others who are committed to letting go of the old technical, scientific paradigm and opting for a holistic, contextual, global paradigm with an emphasis on the ecological approach. Respectively, from this world view, (a) we recognize the connection of all things and the vitality of natural energy. Therefore, we will see everything in relation to everything else. (b) Also, we recognize the importance of context because no decision is apolitical, no action is non-partisan, and no thought is untouched by our previous experiences and a particular view of the world. Therefore, we will accept that what did work before may not work this time because the context has changed. (c) We will realize that we need to be concerned with the impact of our decisions on the environment, those living elsewhere and those not yet born.

Recovering home economists would appreciate that this is a new way for us to practice (unless we have already embraced the human ecosystem approach). It is very different from the technical approach that assumes that persons are out to advance their own self-interest by consuming, competing for jobs and scarce resources, and getting ahead to live the good life. People can take this view of life because they do not see themselves connected to others but rather as alone and isolated, fending for themselves. They resist change and want certainty in their life, the opposite of a contextual view. This is the Newtonian physics, free markets, social Darwinism hangover (sorry, but we could not resist this part of the metaphor). Rather than falling back on just the technical practice, as a way to steady our nerves resulting from this hangover, recovering home economists would seek help through this 12-step program.

So, do not struggle alone. Group members provide encouragement, insight, accountability, and friendship. All this can be a powerful help. We can meet people who offer emotional support during times of temptation and weakness. When we first quit our addiction, we will feel weak at times. In that case, it may be good to go to a support group daily - or even more often. Meeting like-minded people can bring new, emotionally supportive friendships. We can find great power in others who are on the same recovery path as we are. Eventually, recovering home economists would begin to appreciate that people are capable of self-identifying problems they

encounter in their home, family, and community and that they are capable of becoming politically aware and conscious of oppressive situations that are the root causes of their problems. These actions move families from being a victim to being a victor and recovering home economists become facilitators rather than the experts.

If we are feeling really confident in our recovery process, it might even be time to start meeting with groups where there are men, or bravely, where men dominate, unlike the home economics profession, which is heavily female dominated. This strategy is sure to provide another dimension to our understandings of family, well-being, quality of life, and the place of technical skills. But, since men are often the 'other' people in the 'families' we keep trying to define, we may seem to be deviating from our customs if we ask them what they think. This ambiguous relationship with men is an example of a hangover from the technical mode of practice. Consider the possibility that home economics joined the vocational education movement in its infancy because the latter had money and it involved men, both bringing legitimacy to the enterprise. Recovering home economists would begin this conversation about men, the larger patriarchal paradigm, and how they relate to our recovery process. We would be concerned with the ramifications of living in a society where the male viewpoint has authority rather than the female viewpoint. We would at least seek some balance between the two paradigms.

Step 5. Acknowledge that the level of comfort you have with your familiar way of being a home economist will feed your addiction and that you have to choose to practice another way.

An addiction is any thinking or behaviour that is habitual, repetitious, and difficult or impossible to control. Usually, the addiction brings short-term pleasure. But, there may be long-term consequences in terms of one's health and welfare. Some people call addiction a disease. The problem with that word is that it sounds like something we catch, like a virus, rather than something we choose to do. Recovery does not take place until the addict takes responsibility for his or her choices. In the case of recovering home economists, we are addicted to the technical way of practice. In order to overcome our addiction, we have to **choose to practice another way**. This choice means augmenting the technical habit with deeper sources of professional fulfilment. Recovering home economists would appreciate that, whilst we are doing this, we should not throw the baby out with the bath water. There is a time and place for the technical mode of practice within this new paradigm. We need to become aware of where these three approaches to practice all fit together.

Recovering home economists have a huge advantage in that a handful of home economists have been writing and thinking about our philosophical and theoretical framework for years. Taking inspiration from these and other leaders, a determined constituency of home economics activists (we included) is continuing to promote the leaders' alternative ways for consideration. Becoming aware of this collection of ideas is a way for recovering home economists to chip away at the wood block of a technical approach to practice. To increase this awareness, recovering home economists would commit to more education, more readings, more thinking/reflection and more dialogue. Small steps can lead to major transformation in the long term. Practice can change gradually rather than be traumatic. Overcoming an addiction takes time, support and courage. The components of the alternative approach that embraces technical, interpretative and emancipatory practice include (we know other people will have ideas to add to the collection):

- transformative leadership
- transformative learning pedagogy
- reflective human action leadership

- the critical science approach
- a global perspective
- the practical perennial problem approach
- value reasoning
- the system of actions approach
- sustainable development
- community resiliency
- appreciating the nuances of postmodernism on our practice,
- bringing the concept of peace and social justice to our practice
- the human family and the human condition concepts (to augment well-being and wellness)
- the human ecological perspective
- knowledge management
- communities of practice
- consensus and dialogue
- family strengths approach
- applied developmental science re youth development
- developmental contextualism
- critical reflective practice
- new theoretical underpinnings and approaches to research including dialectic theory, which refers to any formal systems of reasoning that arrive at the truth through an exchange of logical arguments.

As we make these new choices about how to practice, recovering home economists would take issue with the current societal trend to see the word “home” and “family” as dirty words because they are not as valued in a consumer, market society, as are money, possessions, profit and competition. Paid work outside the home is valued while unpaid work within the home and community is not valued because others cannot put a dollar figure on it. The word “home” is a dirty word because it refers to care for family members within the home. Family policy initiatives dealing with this aspect of family life have not been very successful either, for the same reasons.

We have been afraid to talk about housework, home design, home care, home decorating et cetera, because we feel they do not seem professional enough. And then, we watch the popularity soar of Martha Stewart, Home and Garden Television (HGTV), Trading Spaces, Changing Spaces, and other home decorating shows and books and wonder where we went wrong. Recovering home economists would remember that these shows and books *entertain* whereas we are far more than that. Then, we have to do something with this insight which takes us to Step Six. No one has trouble defining consumers the way they do defining families and home.

Step 6. Stop putting a price tag on everything you see. Resist commercialization and commodification because they feed your addiction to technical practice.

We live in a consumer society that services the capitalistic, free market driven, corporate led globalization process (the allusion to prostitution is intended). In such a society, everything is commercialized, commodified, assigned a price and put on the market for sale. Home economists have been complicit in this process, with complicit meaning guilty of perpetuating the capitalistic, consumer-oriented mindset. We committed an offence against the very people we exist to “serve” - individuals and families in their communities. We acquiesced, accepted this mindset, this paradigm, without protest - that makes us guilty. As Brown (1993) acknowledged, we may have had other intentions 100 years ago, but they did not materialize in the meantime.

Recovering home economists would hold the profession accountable for its stance over the last century. We cannot move ahead until we do this. This soul searching would include what worked and what did not work and why. It is okay (in fact, a point of pride to some) to represent consumers, to make sure they get a fair deal in the marketplace. It is part of our heritage and our future. But, as time passed, and market values incrementally replaced social and familial values, we did not take this social change to task. That is also part of our heritage and our future. Recovering home economists would learn to balance the current perception that we are entitled to consumer rights with the perception that with any right comes a responsibility as a global citizen. They would call for consumer citizenship and consumer accountability and for a market that values life rather than just money. Recovering home economists would have to struggle to overcome their addiction to the capitalistic free-market economy model. They would have to let go of the assumption that peoples exist for markets (underlying root system of rampant consumerism) and begin to see that markets exist to serve people. A new way to conceive of markets is to see them as mindful markets, moral economies of care, that place people and the environment first and money second. See Korten (1998) for an excellent overview of this idea.

Caught up in the juggernaut of consumerism, countries have started to change the name of the profession so it includes the word consumer. The United States has renamed its profession “Family and **Consumer** Sciences” and the UK has a new “Institute of **Consumer** Science.” In Scandinavia, university programs are choosing new names like Nutrition, **Consumer** Knowledge and Lifestyle. As they struggle for a name, Food and **Consumer** Knowledge is the latest suggestion. This name change is driven by their fear that too much focus on “family” and “care” will put them back 100 years. At a 2001 leadership summit, Canada voted to keep the name home economics for the profession but then continued to present **consumer** and resource management to the public. Recovering home economists would question the implications when the word consumer (a very loaded word) is included in the name of the profession. Was it done to satisfy the specializations within home economics that do not like to deal with the focus on families? Was the name change decision made using voting as a method, which is a technical way of making decisions, not a philosophical one (further evidence of an addiction to technical practice)? Recovering home economists would also appreciate that, in some countries, it can be argued that the profession is still home economics; rather, the university programs have changed their names. After all, many other professions have a different name for their training programs than that by which they are known to the public.

Vincenti and Smith (2004, p. 66) provided justification for the name Family and Consumer Sciences.

In the rationale to change the name of the field from home economics to family and consumer sciences, the term science was used as Brown defined it. She interpreted science . . . to mean a rationally developed body of knowledge and intellectual processes that can be subjected to criticism... not merely those of the natural sciences. In the name change, the concept of “consumer” was deemed appropriate because of . . . the need to examine critically that aspect of individual and family life as well as the societal and global context in which consumers function.

Recovering home economists would feel very comfortable with this explanation. We suggest that much confusion and suspicion over the chosen name could have been mitigated if this explanation had accompanied the announcement of the name change and if home economists had been oriented to this rationale. Recovering home economists would have this dialogue.

From another angle, those countries deciding to keep the name home economics could be faced with continued loss of status. Recovering home economists would learn that the name of the profession—**home** economics—was selected in the late 1800s. The name was chosen at a

time when the term economics had a very different meaning than it does today. Daly (1996) clarifies that Aristotle distinguished between two branches of economics that were to exist in concert. Chremastitics was the branch relating to the political economy that manipulates property and wealth to maximize profit in the short term. It removes the market from the community and seeks unlimited growth. Oikonomia was the branch related to the management of the household with resources to increase value to household members over the long term. It considers the market in light of the needs of individuals and society. When the name 'home economics' was chosen for the field, a much more balanced concept of economics prevailed. There was to be a counterbalance between the market and the household for the good of society. Since the time when the name of our profession was selected, the chremastitics branch has taken over and become more legitimate while the home and household part of economics (our name) has lost power and legitimacy. Recovering home economists who learned this history would tend to not have a problem with the name home economics.

From yet another perspective, recovering home economists who want to keep the name economics in their name, could encounter the argument that home economics places way too much emphasis on "conventional economics" instead of the new economics that are evolving: ecological economics, feminist economics, behavioural economics, post-autistic economics, et cetera. In these new approaches, the laws of economics change. Instead of data and numbers dominating, emotion, psychology, gender, civil society and ecosystems dominate. Recovering home economists need to stop and contemplate what drives their urge to commodify everything and how a name change to consumer fits into this phenomenon. Consider that almost half a century has passed since an ecological perspective was resurrected in home economics, championed, among others, by Margaret Bubolz and Suzanne Sontag (1988, 1991, 1993). Sadly enough, our commitment became only half-hearted in spite of great thinkers and inspirers. For too long now, we have paid lip-service to the socio-biological family ecosystem model. We are still slaves of neoclassical economics and the specialization of sciences, still dominated by the Newtonian paradigm. Our field of vision has been severely reduced and we have, indeed, lost contact with the real world.

Now is the time, truly, to redeem the ecological paradigm and recognise that human beings, like other living things, cannot exist for any length of time without a physical environment that sustains them. Let's pick up, again, the old Aristotelian concept of economics so we can contribute to the "economy for the community" in contrast to subscribing to a pure market economy. In ecological economics, steady state is the norm while unlimited growth is looked upon as an aberration. Growth can, in fact, be considered as an attempt to hide and to fail to take the resource distribution problem seriously. We often believe that, if all are getting a little more, it does not matter that inequality continues to exist. If recovering home economists let the human ecological paradigm guide our work, we will be able to make valuable contributions to the development of a sustainable society considering its ecological, economical, political, and social dimensions.

Step 7. Avoid the temptations to run regressions, even just one (reliance on scientific paradigm)- recognize your shortcomings and strengthen your assets

Just like all of the other disciplines that came into their own during the past 100 years, home economics got caught up in the net of the scientific paradigm, positivism, reductionism, relativism, mechanism, and empiricism. Home economics is at its worst when it relies so heavily on "empirical science" to give itself legitimacy. There is nothing wrong with empirical sciences-- just the exclusive use of them and our tendency to do that. Since the empirical sciences are part of the prevailing technical world paradigm, on the surface, including the word science in the new names of the profession suggests that we are still addicted to the scientific paradigm. This

paradigm assumes that only knowledge that is generated using the scientific method is valid, true, and legitimate. From the standpoint of positivistic rigour, one's work is not reliable if it cannot be replicated. And, it is not valid if the procedures are biased and flawed. This approach to understanding knowledge, one that gives credence only to numbers, facts, and figures proven using statistical methods, leaves no room for other ways of knowing.

Recovering home economists would balance "empirical sciences" with "critical and interpretative sciences" so they can make sense of, and give meaning to, the context of family life. They can learn that, in philosophy, the word science means knowledge. What has happened is that we now use the word science to mean "a way of knowing" instead of "what we know." From the latter understanding, we would forego sole reliance on positivism and the scientific method and embrace other forms of knowledge generated by post-positivistic scholars. We would employ alternative standards and research design strategies to ensure rigour. We would strive for trustworthiness criteria: credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability) and confirmability (instead of objectivity). We would not assume that "progress" and, specifically, "human progress" is at the core of all human endeavours. We would strive to take the context into consideration, to hear the voices of those involved and to examine our own role and our interpretation of those voices.

Step 8. Get off your "expert" pedestal—admit when you are wrong while continuing to recognize your progress

Home economists have come to see themselves as experts. Granted, being an expert means having a high degree of knowledge or skill in a particular field. Our field is home economics. But, positioning ourselves as authorities on the topic of families sets us up for failure because to be an authority means someone has conferred power to us. Who conferred that power? In fact, addicts will confer that power to themselves so they can nourish the inflated images they have of themselves to cover for their deep-seated sense of worthlessness (Renascent, 2001). Consider that reporters and other sources are always trying to call people the *expert in something* and we fall prey to their overtures. Recovering home economists would tell them, "Let me correct you. I am a home economist who can facilitate a discussion about this topic." But, often as not, the adjective of expert still slips into the reporters' stories. It is as if the reporter would undermine the authority of their own reportage by admitting, in print, that they only talked to a run-of-the-mill home economist - not to the expert. Recovering home economists know their inherent worth comes from inside - so they can lose the phony titles.

A very simple way to lose the expert title is to begin to see ourselves as facilitators. Also, instead of calling families "clients that we serve" (strong rhetoric in home economics discourse), try to begin to refer to them as co-partners in the learning and problem-solving processes. Seeing a family as a client or customer conveys an exchange process wherein the client is dependent on the expert. Seeing them as a partner conveys a relationship where each party is interdependent on the other to reach their respective goals. Recovering home economists would know they cannot be experts in an interdependent relationship because, in these relationships, it is assumed that the family member has valuable, legitimate information to bring to the relationship rather than just the expert home economist as the only source of legitimate information and experience. This approach to practice will appeal to recovering home economists who (a) are eager to see the complexity of life as a set of opportunities and potential instead of obstacles and scarcity, (b) want to see people as partners rather than as clients, (c) want to help people build capacity for future success instead of just getting by in a crisis, (d) want to focus on capabilities instead of deficiencies, (e) look for the strength and goodness in people to facilitate empowerment instead of dwelling on the negative, exercised by holding power over someone, (f) believe that everyone has the inherent capacity to grow and change through diversity rather than

seeing people as perpetual victims, and (g) believe that community and context are everything rather than assuming that people are isolated and on their own (Saleebey, 2002).

Recovering home economists would begin to climb down off of this expert pedestal by moving toward transformative leadership and away from the expert mode and transactional (TA) leadership approach. The TA exchange is based on the manager, the expert, specifying what is expected, and helping followers to clearly understand what they will receive, or avoid, if they fulfill those expectations. Examples could be a dietitian, financial counsellor or interior designer prescribing a regime for their clients. If the client does not succeed, they can, in turn, blame the expert for bad advice and the expert can blame them for not following directions - both lose. A transformational leader will facilitate a process so that both they and family members will change inside as they gain more control of their situations. The objective of the transformational approach is for both the family member and the home economist to work together to design and redesign things to make them meaningful and challenging so people can realize their potential. The goal is to facilitate people changing their beliefs about themselves so they have more positive expectations and so they can be more creative and autonomous in the future. Indeed, to facilitate means to make things less difficult for those people in the co-learning relationship. Recovering home economists would also rethink themselves as an 'expert novice'; that is, good at learning new thinking, new skills, new processes, new content, new understandings and so on. In that way, we are never an expert but are always reflecting, rethinking, and renewing. This novel idea was brought to our discourse by Donna Pendergast (2001).

Step 9. Learn from those who went before you by becoming conscious of their teachings and following through with what you learn

Home economists can be arrogantly ahistorical. They tend not to read artifacts from earlier eras to gain insights into the philosophical origins of the profession. If they did, they would discover that the roots of home economics were always inherently ideological as well as pragmatic, a focus that has led to many issues faced by the profession today. Studying the history of home economics is the best way to critique our current addiction to the technical approach to practice and to place the whole profession in a healthier context. Recovering home economists are dealing with the conundrum that emerged during the 100-year subversive history of the profession, meaning that our founders were striving to deal with the impact of the industrial revolution on families and society. We started out as a social movement to right the wrongs of industrialization. At the beginning of our profession, at the Lake Placid Conferences in the North American movement anyway, there were two "camps." There were those who wanted to take the scientific, capitalistic road and there were those who wanted the profession to walk the holistic, global, contextual path. The former camp "won" and the profession unfolded practising from the scientific, empirical paradigm.

Recovering home economists are left grappling with the reality of this legacy in the form of (a) specializations without a central core of competencies, values, and mission, (b) an expert model, and (c) the technical approach to practice. In most ways, we can feel good about our early years. But, we have strayed too far from our founders in terms of philosophy. In fact, some suggest that because of the way we were trained, the nature of our jobs and the patriarchal nature of society, home economists are trapped in their situation. To overcome this addiction to technical practice, and the feeling of being trapped, recovering home economists would have to become familiar with the legacy left by our founders so as to move in a new direction. Understanding of self is a first step to success.

Step 10. Make a list of the countries and people you have harmed and become willing to make amends.

This step, in the twelve-step program, takes us into the realm of international development (ID), part of the legacy of home economics practice. In this instance, recovering home economists would grapple with the fallout of past actions of fellow addicts who imposed western ideology on other countries in their ID activities. Home economists have been complicit in ensuring that this cargo-cult mentality thrives, by taking the superior culture to the inferior so that they can learn our ways. This is called occidental development, meaning that what constitutes development stems from western society and ideology. Occidental development is dehumanizing because it puts the formal, money-driven economy before human quality of life. By imposing a western way of life on other countries, we assume that it is all right to promote the same way of life all over the world. Cataloguing any damage we may have done is an effective and damning first step in tearing down the edifice.

Some home economists argue that, while they imposed some Western ideology in their ID work, they also experienced pressure from the people they worked with to give them Western thoughts because they “want to be like us” and “have what we have.” Another home economist told us that she had inadvertently harmed people in several African countries by (a) teaching family life education using Western management concepts; (b) teaching nutrition with “all of the food groups” when only one food group was available (building in failure); and, (c) taking part in the “green revolution” resulting in tenant evictions, mass unemployment among farm workers, starvation, and ecological destruction. As a counter measure (sorry for the military term), recovering home economists would critically examine how to diffuse the internalization of the notion that the Western way is the right way. Merryfield (2001) provides a useful concept to understand this phenomenon. She suggests that, through the process of colonialization (now referred to as corporate-led globalization), the oppressors imposed their world view so deeply that ensuing generations cannot see it. She urges educators to strive to help people decolonialize their minds. To do this, we would strive to facilitate a discussion of what others see as the right way, once they realize that the Western way is entrenched in their psyche. We would ask non-western cultures what is important to them. To do this, we would embrace the participatory action research paradigm that comes out of critical science. This approach entails active involvement of, and often control by, those people who would be among the objects or beneficiaries of the research or development activity.

As well, we may have done damage in our own countries to subcultures out of ignorance or from using our inadequate knowledge at the time. Perhaps we should make amends at home first and then move onto the international scene. What is significant is that we acknowledge the harm (or lower level of success) we have generated and become willing to make amends.

Step 11. Make amends to those countries and people, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Being willing to make amends leads to actually doing so. Every Twelve-Step program requires recovering addicts to humbly commit to fix-up their own messes. Home economists are no different. This is the time for recovering home economists to step to the front of the room and make personal pledges to undo the damage that has been wrought in their name. We need to commit to studying what is wrong with the occidental approach as opposed to proclaiming how well it is supposed to work. We need to work to empower majority world citizens (the new term for third worlds) instead of dominating them with our apparent, but phony, expertise. We need to start to imagine home economics ideas that could change the world, rather than invoking home economics mumbo-jumbo to justify our continued existence. Finally, we need to listen more.

To that end, recovering home economists would move toward utilizing a participatory action research approach to international development initiatives. As well, we would read the literature from the globalization from the bottom up movement, a literature that is the true voice of those

affected by occidental development. Also, we would read widely in the human and social development literature to learn about alternative approaches to economic development initiatives. Succinctly, economic development is any improvement of the economic subsystem of a society that is concerned with the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services to meet basic human needs. Most economic development models place money first and people second. Social development is concerned with promoting social progress relative to economic progress by building social capital, the context within which human development occurs. Human development is concerned with building human capital through the empowerment of individuals and family units that make up society and are the backbone of the economy. Economic growth focused on social and human development would (a) distribute its benefits equitably (pro-jobs), (b) regenerate the environment rather than destroy it (pro-nature), (c) not marginalize people (pro-people), (d) give priority to the poor, enlarge their choices and opportunities, and (e) provide for participation in decisions that affect their lives (pro-women).

It bears repeating that recovering home economists would also have to struggle to overcome their addiction to the capitalistic free-market economy model so as to further human and social development of families in developed and developing countries. We would have to let go of the assumption that people exist for markets (underlying root system of rampant consumerism) and begin to see that markets exist to serve people. A new way for recovering home economists to conceive of markets would be to see them as mindful markets—moral economies of care that place people and the environment first and money second (Korten, 1998).

Step 12. Help other home economists who come your way and practice your new approach in all your affairs.

Perhaps the scariest thing about the home economics profession is that it seems to be becoming more diluted with time. Home economics departments at universities, by and large, will now hire an entry-level faculty who demonstrates some familiarity with some aspect of home economics thereby undermining the already fragile intellectual scaffolding. Just 20 years ago, there was a whole collection of prima facie home economists in each department, around whom future home economists could congregate. Today, that is rare. There are fewer students than before, too. The numbers are down in many university programs. This is the rationale often used for consolidating departments or downsizing course offerings, thereby diluting the programs. Most progressive-thinking students flee in panic from home economics after their first mind-numbing encounter with the boring, technical, quick fix approach they encountered in public school. They never make it to university programs, which may not be such a bad thing since departments cannot find qualified honest-to-goodness home economists like we had in the past. And, even then, this may be a blessing in disguise since those home economists were almost all trained in the technical approach to practice.

Recovering home economists, of any age, would need help to rediscover their latent humanity and rededicate their energies to the pursuit of things that really matter. None need our assistance and solidarity more than home economics students and lapsed members. Most students are motivated by a gut-level conviction that learning home economics should allow them to do great things for people and the planet. Yet, they are often left to flounder in a curriculum that perpetuates technical skills and competencies more than the ability to critically, reflectively think, to be a leader, a visionary by which the urgent crises of the real world are made visible. As addicts neglect their immediate families, so do we neglect our young aspiring professionals through lack of mentorship. We do this because we are intoxicated with power and status. We tend to allow them to swim or sink and turn round to blame them, instead of starting them with a proper orientation to the profession and mentorship from a seasoned home economist. As recovering home economists, if we encounter people like this, we would stop and

put our hand on their shoulder. Tell them we know how it feels. Help them find alternative sources of home economics inspiration, and places where they can befriend other recovering home economists. Show them that they're not alone and that we have a collective future.

Indeed, a key part of a 12-step recovery program is to inventory our assets and use those as a scaffold for future growth and enlightenment. Many contributors to this paper commented on this part of their life as a home economist. They noted that there are no longer traditional jobs but our unique presence is felt wherever we are employed. Employers comment that we bring a holistic approach to our work. A different dynamic comes into play when home economists are involved. We are seen as the ultimate team player, always can be counted on to do our part (above and beyond what is expected), are supportive of others and always reliable. Recovering home economists would not continue to take these qualities for granted but would foster them as a character set unique to home economists. Furthermore, by networking and working in venues with other groups, we would gain insights into ourselves that our internal groups cannot give us. Recovering home economists would value both our innate and learned character sets and insights from others as we confront our addiction and regain our power.

Some Sort of Conclusion

As we overcome this addition, recovering home economists would move toward a mode of practice that involves the integration of all three of technical, interpretative, and emancipatory practices so that appropriate, inclusionary plans can be made and actions taken to improve any given situation. *We must not forget that home economics is action oriented.* We expect that the actions we take with individuals and families will lead to something better. From this type of practice, recovering home economists are no longer seen as the expert, doling out advice; rather, we provide a safe environment for dialogue and reflection, leading to morally justifiable, ethical, sustainable resource management and problem-solving decisions. Recovering home economists would not give up our technical practice but would augment it with the other two approaches leading to a sustainable practice that can withstand the test of time.

Yes, we know that the approach we took for this paper is radical, with radical meaning both that (a) we are striving to get to the root of things, and (b) we hold views that deviate drastically, and fundamentally, from conventional or traditional beliefs. We know that presenting a satire of our beloved profession is a risky thing to do. We also admit that our intent is to rock the boat, to unsettle those who have become complacent, to make those who read the article shift in their seats a little when they become uncomfortable about how "close to home" the reading really is. We all felt this squirming effect and persevered anyway. We have shared a work in progress and are very eager to continue the dialogue. Please take advantage of this Human Sciences Working Paper Series format to continue this conversation.

Don't get us wrong. Personally, we are very happy to be home economists. We think home economics is a wonderful profession and is the best way for us to make a contribution to human progress and social change. We have enjoyed great personal opportunities because of our career choices. But, lurking in our brains is a nagging awareness that our own personal success was built, at least partly, on the technical coattails of the whole discipline. So, collectively, our profession must come to grips with its technical addiction. We do it every morning when we wake up, look in the mirror, and say out loud: "I am a home economist."

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Endnote

1.Elizabeth Goldsmith (US) reviewed earlier drafts of the paper.