

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295918651>

Home Economics as professional practice

Article · January 2015

CITATIONS

3

READS

4,166

1 author:



Kerry Renwick

University of British Columbia - Vancouver

24 PUBLICATIONS 53 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Context and content of health education curriculum [View project](#)

Home Economics as professional practice

Kerry Renwick

The University of British Columbia

Abstract

When professionals engage in and with their professional practice they assert a claim of extraordinary knowledge. Within Home Economics such a claim is a challenge when everyday lived experiences are in and of themselves ordinary, of which everyone apparently has knowledge of. Professional application of knowledge has an explicit focus on the wellbeing of others and therefore is what constitutes professional practice. Home Economics educators engage in professional practice when we connect with students and their families to build capacity for a life well lived.

This paper considers the professional practice of Home Economics education using Aristotle's consideration of human action through the dispositions of techné, episteme and phronesis. Each provides unique understandings about the relationship between ideology and action, and therefore professional practice. Using these three dispositions to understanding professional practice is a positioning that is different to current market ideology that pervades every social and cultural institution, especially schools. Using McGregor's (2010) eight unique contributions of Home Economics enables discussion about the professional practice of Home Economics in a market-orientated era. The paper concludes with a discussion about what the three dispositions for human action offers Home Economics educators as they focus on what they do with their students in classrooms that also has meaning outside the school gates and beyond the school years.

Introduction

There has been much consideration and dialogue around the value of educators being reflective practitioners but there remains something of a void when it comes to the profession or a field within the education profession seeking to reflect upon its purpose, intent and presence within the broader context of education. Engaging in reflection of achievements, thinking of them as challenges and opportunities, is an important aspect of professional practice. When educators reflect on their professional practice they need to consider the adequacy of their professional knowledge as it relates to both social needs and problems (Schön, 1995).

This paper explores what professional practice is within the field of Home Economics as it is an important debate to be had for purposes of both evolving our field and to keeping it relevant in changing social circumstances and contexts. Within this paper this is set out in three moves:

- i. an initial discussion that describes the relationship between the professional and practice,
- ii. consideration of professional practice as human action in Aristotelian terms, and
- iii. analysis of McGregor's (2010) unique contributions of Home Economics as forms of Aristotelian human action and therefore professional practice.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE, 2008, p. 1) defines Home Economics in its position statement on *Home Economics in the 21st Century* as a field and a profession "that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities". According to the Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA) the practice of Home Economics is to support individual and family wellbeing, through a range of expertise including childcare, design, health, housing, marketing and textiles. There is also a listing of professional skills and attributes including critical reflection, communication, collaboration, design, management and social justice that are apparently utilised by home economists based in industry and education contexts. These listings and descriptions identify personal attributes and contexts that act as boundaries for membership of the profession but neither fully addresses why it is a profession.

Describing the professional and the practice

Within the debate about what Home Economics is, and what is, can, and should be, called Brown (1980), McGregor (2010) and Thompson (1988) draw on a particular philosophical positioning. Brown (1980, 1993) argues for a Habermasian philosophical position to create inter-subjective understandings and a critical view of society that cannot support the (inequitable) status quo. McGregor (2010) discusses the relationship between Home Economics and the human condition in both current and future times that aligns with Aristotle's concept of the common good (Smith, 1999). Thompson (1988, 1992) draws on Aristotle's human actions to argue for the work of Home Economics as a profession that considered "relationships—of people, things and ideas" (1988, p. 3). Further Vincenti (1990) reasons "[v]alues and value judgements are an integral part of [our] professional practice" (p.192). Vaines (1990) discussed the importance of Home Economics as a profession philosophically informed by its mission as a process orientated discipline (Perzeszty, 1984) and described by Smith (2004) as a pragmatic, integrative approach.

There is also discussion about what is the actual work of home economists (East, 1980, McGregor, Barabovsky, Eghan, Engberg, Harman, Mitsifer, Pendergast, Seniuk, Shanahan & Smith, 2004; McGregor, Pendergast, Seniuk, Eghan & Engberg, 2008; Richards, 2000). Central to this discussion is the place and role of family in a democratic society. As one of its organisational aims IFHE argues the importance of "education for home and family life ... for all age levels and in all societies" (n.d.). A critical element of how home economists work is through educative processes that draw on inter and transdisciplinary approaches (Hodelin, 2008; McGregor, 2008; Turkki, 2008; Vincenti, 1990). These approaches are transformative (Brown, 1985) because of the intent to empower individuals and families for the purpose of action (Hodelin, 2008) where "[p]ractice always forms and transforms the one who practices, along with those who are also involved in and affected by the practice" (Kemmis et al., 2014,

p. 25). Whether home economists are working in schools or community settings they have an educative practice as a core objective. Therefore any consideration of the professional practice of Home Economics can be seen in what Green (2009) describes as a certain predisposition instilled in the membership that expects “an appropriate (professional) attitude regarding conduct and relationships” (p. 7).

Green (2009) argues that professional practice has been an under theorised concept, that profession and practice have been contested but in ways that have left each to be used in unproblematic ways. What is *professional* and what is *practice* are implied in most contexts with an assumption that what is meant is shared, that the recipient knows and understands the meaning. Schön (1995) points to an increasing mismatch between professional knowledge and the situations of practice arising from complexity, instability and value conflicts. Home Economics, perhaps uniquely, has a history of considering its philosophical positioning as much as its pragmatic responses to describe its work (Hodelin 2008; McGregor et al. 2004; Smith, 2004; Turkki, 2008). This does not necessarily mean that there is one position within or across the profession. However what is shared is the focus of professional practice of family-in all of its many forms and that the field is action orientated (McGregor et al., 2004, 2008; Vincent, Smith & Fabian, 2004) through educative processes asking, “how should one live well?” (Smith, 2004, p. 124).

In exploring what a professional is, Macklin (2009) disputes the more traditional view of a professional as being someone who works in a particular occupation described as a profession (i.e. law, medicine, accounting). Rather he argues that the professional chooses and undertakes their work with an explicit intent to focus on the wellbeing of others. Thus there are many different types of work that can be described as professional where the practitioner is in *being* with the work, functioning in a *mode* or where the practice is an adjective rather than a noun thereby including trades, allied health and education. The Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA) describes Home Economics as having a “focus on households and families; enhance everyday living by enabling individuals to make informed choices; act as advocates with a primary interest in households and families; and educate in the broadest sense” (n.p.). Teachers of Home Economics are therefore professionals not because they have particular expertise in teaching about family studies, food or textiles but because they connect with students, their families and the wider community in shared learning about these areas. The shared learning makes sense in the context of individual lives outside the school gates or community setting. It is able to do this because it draws on what is possible as well as building capacity for a future *well lived*.

Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) eschew practice as individualistic in that it focuses on the practitioner’s knowledge and action. Instead they describe practice as social because the practitioner rarely acts alone rather their practice is both orientated toward and by others as well as by moral agency. This is a position that has been articulated by Kieren, Vaines & Badir (1984) in their treatise of the Home Economics profession. Kemmis (2010a) describes the construction of practice as the result of interactions, with “histories, cultural and discursive resources, social connections and solidarities, and locations in material-economic arrangements and exchanges” (p. 140). Kemmis’ description resonates closely with current practices in Home Economics at several levels. Practice is a core component of what home

economists do (McGregor et al., 2004, 2006). Construction of practice exists between Home Economics and with students who undertake their classes or the clients they work with in the community, each a slightly different Community of Practice (CoP) (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham & Clarke, 2006) but with an identity that has been shaped by shared interests and activity through situated learning (Saltmarsh, 2009). It is within these CoPs that there are possibilities for developing skills and capacities for individuals, families and communities to live and create better lives (McGregor, 2010; Thompson 1992).

Consideration of what is *professional practice* for Home Economics is especially valuable in an era that has de-professionalised feminised fields such as teaching (Apple, 2008; Brennan, 2009) and Home Economics (Stage, 1997). McGregor, Pendergast, Seniuk, Eghan and Engberg (2008) have described how philosophy, ideologies and paradigms can impact on the work of home economists while giving “home economists the potential to change and to practice differently” (p. 47). This is significant when financial growth is put ahead of people, community and the environment. They go on to explore how technical practice, interpretative practice and critical/emancipatory practice. They see these as “systems of action approach [that] is a way to take ownership of actions and practice from a stance of integrity and accountability” (p. 51). Professional practice for home economists is not about reproducing social inequity through narrowly defined and prescribed technocratic work (McGregor et al., 2004). Instead there is considerable scope and possibility in acknowledgement of the power used by and on the profession to engage in practice that is both critical and empowering (Brown 1980, 1985, 1993; Freire, 1970, 1972; Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Kincheloe, 2003; Vincenti, 1990). This is dependent on the capacity of Home Economics to draw on current lived realities of the students and clients they are working with, to be able to understand future possibilities and generate action to get *there* (McGregor, 2010; Thompson, 1992).

Professional practice as Human Action

Professional practice invariably involves a balance between theoretical rigour and practical relevance (Carr, 2006) with particular tensions within the relationship between the two. Saugstad (2002) provides two perspectives on the relationship between theory and practice. He describes one as a normative relationship where practice is required to adapt to theory, and is critically described by Schön (1995) as when theory and technique are applied to practice through its instrumental problems. Thus learning about practice is no longer situated learning. The second perspective described by Saugstad (2002) is where theory is defined through practice, and described as *learning by doing*. It is this second perspective that is closest to the ideas contained within the IFHE Mission Statement (2008) that begins with an emphasis on what occurs in families and households and then moves to position this practice in context of social, economic and environmental context. While theory is often understood as everything that isn't practice, both have particular knowledges. Aristotle (trans. 2011) provided a differentiated way of understanding knowledge related to its function and aim, and that corresponded to intellectual abilities (Saugstad, 2002). In claiming that Home Economics is transformative because it empowers and generates action it allows a person to ask “What can or should I do now/next?” It subsequently allows for number of responses together with consideration of how things turned out, all of which requires more than technical knowledge and action (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Smith (2004) in writing about Eleanor Vaines' work, reasons that it is about challenging assumptions of everyday life, transcending the meanings of the everyday and thus a philosopher's act. Carr (2009) writes about the importance of philosophy in determining ideology and action. He looks to the work of Aristotle to invoke a meaning for practice and action with more substance than is implied in contemporary understandings. Aristotle's classification of human action continues to be widely used (Bartlett & Collins, 2011) to describe and analyse professional practice across a range of professions including medicine (Anders Ericsson, 2008; Gallagher, 2004); human resource management (Winstanley & Woodall, 2000); tourism (Tribe, 2002); education (Carr, 2006; 2009, Green, 2009; Kemmis, 2012) and Home Economics (Thompson, 1988, 1992). Aristotle provides us with three different human actions in his classification—*techné*, *episteme* and *phronesis*. Thus each of these human actions has its own aim, characteristics and therefore unique form (see Table 1.) What follows is a brief description of these three human actions together with some consideration of what they mean in the context of Home Economics.

Table 1 Aristotelian human action

	<i>Techné</i>	<i>Episteme</i>	<i>Phronesis</i>
Aim	To produce something	To seek truth	To do what is right
Form of action	<i>Poiesis</i> : instrumental action	<i>Theoria</i> : contemplative action	<i>Praxis</i> : morally committed action
Characteristics	variable, pragmatic, context-dependent, instrumental rationality, craft knowledge.	universal, scientific, invariable, context-independent, theoretical knowledge.	variable, pragmatic, context-dependent, oriented toward action, practical wisdom.

Based on Carr (2009), and Kinsella & Pitman (2012)

Techné is a form of human action that draws on knowledge about the production of *something* utilising strategies, skills and techniques. The practice of *techné* relies on the practitioner making judgement about how a goal is to be achieved, both pragmatically and consciously (Carr, 2009; Kinsella & Pitman, 2012). As an instrumental form of knowledge the profession of Home Economics has a strong disposition for *techné* through *poiesis* (or instrumental action) and is best represented in the concern for how “the perpetual family needs of shelter, nourishment, clothing, resource managements and consumption, and personal development and family relations (McGregor et al., 2008, p. 51) are managed.

While home economists have strong claims to make about *techné*, McGregor et al. (2004, 2008) outline concerns for the profession's focus on *techné* almost to the exclusion of other human actions and is echoed in Vaines' work (Smith, 2004). They argue that the result has been to limit the capacity of the profession to be able to engage intellectually; to be complacent about routine and resistant to change; to be complicit with hegemonic discourse and therefore unable to provide students, families and communities with what they really need. Further, according to Pendergast (2002), the result has been that home economists have not engaged sufficiently in theorising (*theoria*) and I would argue that there has been limited attention to the profession's claim for *phronesis* (practical wisdom). As a result, home

economists have been too easily marginalised and are continually forced to engage in the defence of the profession and field.

Episteme represents the second human action as the intellectual activity to seek truth. To do this requires contemplation or *theoria*, a pre-disposition for thinking about knowing why things *are*. Thus *theoria* as human action, in contemporary terms is too often defined as a search for *the* truth through invariable and objective criteria. In this aspect of human action the intent is to understand the general nature of how things work with the practicality of specific, operational details (Higgs, 2012; Reid & Green, 2009). This interpretation is heavily influenced by positivistic science and many writers such as Harding (2013) argue that it is both hegemonic and masculine in its orientation. She posits that “Objectivity has not been ‘operationalized’ in such a way that scientific method can detect sexist and androcentric assumptions that are ‘the dominant beliefs of an age’—that is, that which are collectively (versus only individually) held” (p. 62).

Within the context of Home Economics *theoria* draws on the sciences as described by Aristotle. There are scientific *truths* related to food such as raising agents and nutrition or the flammable properties of fabric. However in debating if Home Economics is a human/social science, McGregor (2010) draws the profession into the postmodern debate about the inevitability and legitimacy of many *truths* and impossibility of any single fundamental and universal truth that the profession both seeks and positions itself on. Having been too often categorised (and derided) as a girls or female dominated field (Pendergast, 2002) that focuses on family, in any and all shapes and forms, Home Economics should, more than any other profession, be able to accommodate and engage in *theoria*. Where one is able to seek truth that is standpoint dependant (Harding, 2013; Reid & Green, 2009).

The third Aristotelian human action is *phronesis*, referred to as wise practical reasoning (Eisner, 2002). It is here that the peculiarity of situations and entities are recognised. This draws on the professional’s understandings about subjectivity, ethics and the potential for transformation to make wise judgements in practice (Kinsella, 2012; Thompson, 1988, 1992). Smith (2004) claims that while Vaines doesn’t use the term *phronesis* in her work there is substantial “evidence that it is guided more by an underpinning of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) than practical reasoning” (p. 126). In their discussion of *phronesis* Kinsella and Pitman (2012) assert that professional ethics needs to emphasise the moral purpose of the work that is done rather than focus on ethics of practice, typically seen in the form of codes of conduct. “Adopting a professional language that is based in a moral framework involves a shift in foci of what is central” (p. 168) requires home economists to reposition how the technical and epistemological cores give rise to our professional practice.

Phronesis utilises a form of practice called *praxis* that focuses on doing what is *right*. This requires not only contemplation but also action, thus considerations of *praxis* as a human action makes use of both practice and theory reflexively. According to Kemmis (2010b, p. 10) *praxis* “is a form of conscious, self-aware action, as distinct from technical action (*poiesis* or making action) and as such it is about knowing what is being done simultaneously with the doing”. Home economists make decisions every day about how they work with other people’s

children or with clients who may be vulnerable. But do these decisions also have a phronetic quality (Kinsella, 2012; Thompson, 1992)?

Each of these human actions represents different pre-dispositions that determine the focus and description of human activity. In describing professional practice Carr (2009) claims that it cannot be adequately described as only *techné* and the reliance on *episteme* raises potential for distorting and diminished views of the social context in which the professional practice is operating. Instead Carr (2006; 2009) argues that only through *phronesis* can professional practice be adequately conceived as *practical philosophy*, as morally committed action. When discussing the reliance of the Home Economics profession on technical practice (i.e. *techné*) McGregor et al. (2004) have described it as an *addiction* that precludes any other possibilities for professional practice, especially those that allow for interpretative and emancipatory possibilities. Further McGregor et al. (2008) argue that the privileging of *techné* has drawn home economists into being complicit with reinforcing disadvantage and oppression. As Saltmarsh (2009) writes, professional practice requires the professional to think about how they make a difference in the lives of those they are working with. The challenge here is not to follow rules or obey convention blindly but to engage in critical reflexivity about our work with others.

Home Economics professional practice as Human Action

McGregor (2010) has identified eight unique contributions of Home Economics. She argues that Home Economics is a profession without rival and is distinct because of the academic and professional contributions that Home Economists make. As an example, reality in Australian schools is an ongoing narrowing of the curriculum and pedagogical approaches in the drive to privilege functional literacy and numeracy at the expense of other subject areas. Literacy and numeracy has to be about *something* as they are skills that are to be used within social contexts (Peterat, 1989). Home Economics is one area of study that provides opportunity for contextualised and situated learning that has application well beyond the school gates and years. Drawing on its unique contributions home economists have the capacity to readily build on what their students or clients can do and bridge between the school and the family/community settings.

The describing of the unique contributions of Home Economics by McGregor (2010) is done within context of the profession and the perpetual debate about what the profession should call itself to remain relevant in contemporary times. No other profession is challenged to review their titles as frequently (Davis, 2008; Hodelin, 2008; IFHE, 2008), in order to justify the field and to be held accountable for the work being claimed both by those within the field as well as those outside it. Instead what McGregor does is to deftly manage the perennial and wasteful debate about the naming of Home Economics and explores the work focus of home economists. It is through McGregor's description that it is possible to explore the professional practice of Home Economics as Aristotelian human action.

Green (2009) argues that knowledge and practice have a reciprocal relationship that is crucial in defining what is distinctive in a field of professional practice. Further Schön (1995) claims, "[t]he professional depends on tacit knowing in action" (p. 48) and "is dependent on tacit recognitions, judgements, and skilful performances" (p 49). These *knowing practices* are

authentic and have integrity demonstrating both *moral-ethical* and *moral-political* characteristics. To determine if Home Economics has such *knowing* practices, McGregor's (2010) eight contributions were reviewed together with the descriptions provided. Each of the contributions represents the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and practice, as described by Green (2009), and in this analysis, as ways of knowing (Saugstad, 2002; Smith, 2004). A hermeneutic cycle (Bredo, 2006) was used to interpret the whole text (i.e. the eight unique contributions). Then the descriptions of each contribution were interpreted. By pulling apart McGregor's descriptions of each form of action it was possible to interrogate them about possibilities for *knowing practices* and assisted in understanding each contribution as distinct text. This is an iterative or cyclical process to understand text through reproducing and re-experiencing of the author's creative process (Bryman, Bell & Teevan, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This process enables interrogation of Home Economics practice and profession according to Aristotelian human action. The resultant determinations are presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4 together with specific discussion.

Table 2 Home Economics as Aristotelian human action—*techné*

Form of Home Economics Action as <i>Techné</i>	<i>Poiesis</i> : instrumental action Knowing practices such as
Focus on Everyday Life	routines and practices found in the ordinary course of events.
Interdisciplinary and integrative/Holistic	draw information and insights from a number of disciplines to address problems faced by families.
Prevention, Education and Development	work with families to ensure the acquisition of skills and modes of thinking essential for functioning in society (education)
Systems of Action (technical, interpretative and critical)	cope with change by learning new skills and techniques
Practical Perennial Problems	focus on problems experienced every generation (perennial)
Critical Reflective Practice	manage and cultivate our knowledge base.
Functional Definition of Families as social institutions	become family literate to advance our unique approach to working with and for families.

Based on Carr (2009), Kinsella and Pitman (2012) and McGregor (2010).

When reviewing Table 2 it is possible to see how there is a strong focus on producing things through instrumental action. *Techné* acknowledges the skillsets of home economists working with individuals, families and communities to be able to *do*. This is, and continues to be a strength however it is also a problematic. Too often it is only what some home economists do or what others see us doing. Interestingly what emerges from McGregor's descriptions of the work shows *techné* being as much about what our work, as home economists is or should be when undertaken with others, as it is about how we ensure that our practice is evolving and growing with changing circumstances.

Attention to *episteme* and the identification of *theoria* was the most difficult to achieve in this process. The first challenge was to grapple with the positivistic notions of scientific and universal aspects of this form of human action. Within the context of the Home Economics profession that focuses on family in multiple social contexts that are global, the seeking of invariable and context-independent is not cogent with the field with its focus on seeking the common good (Smith, 2008) and therefore impossible to achieve. Following Harding (2013) the interpretation of *theoria* applied here is a need to be cognisant of the legitimacy of many

truths. The second challenge was to determine if there was a single *theoria* that applied to all or if there were different *theoria* at play according to the perceived contribution.

Table 3 Home Economics as Aristotelian human action—*episteme*

Form of Home Economics Action as Episteme	Theoria: contemplative action Knowing practices such as
Focus on Everyday Life.	Families are an essential component of every society through human history and represent more than a source of human capital.
Interdisciplinary and integrative/Holistic	
Prevention, Education and Development	Being critical of our work means being aware of power differences and how they impact on the lives of people, privileging few and disadvantaging many
Systems of Action (technical, interpretative and critical)	
Practical Perennial Problems	
Critical Reflective Practice	Values informing our work include security, equality, justice, rights, Freedom and peace.
Functional Definition of Families as social institutions	

Based on Carr (2009), Kinsella and Pitman (2012) and McGregor (2010).

In the analysis common threads were identifiable and therefore themes of contemplation emerged. In reality the statement about values, that inform our work within the contributions, fitted this category of human action but two other statements were added to reflect what else was deemed as being important but only implied *theoria*. Key words such as social justice, equity, justice, communities of practice, critical, power relationships reflect critical theory as being both broad and evolving and questions the assumption that (Western) nations are unproblematically democratic and free (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). There are theorists that have used critical theory to inform philosophical positing of Home Economics (Brown, 1980, 1985, 1993; Vincenti, Smith & Fabian, 2004) and that it is not solely Eurocentric (McGregor et al., 2008). The educative work of home economists aligns with Freire's (1970, 1972) work on critical pedagogy. By using a humanistic focus built on the assumptions that everyone has that capacity for engaging, conversing, exchanging ideas and negotiating with others (Freire, 1972), the pedagogy is positioned as one that is being enacted for all (Renwick, 2013, 2014).

As discussed earlier the privileging of *techné* is problematic in the profession and relying on *theoria* alone is not an option for viable and evolving professional practice either. Lather (1986, p. 261) highlights the potential for the overuse of theory when it “leads to a circle where theory is reinforced by experience conditioned by theory”. Home economists have not made sufficient use of *theoria* compared to the emphasis of *techné*. Subsequently engaging in any discussion and debate about the area of work claimed has been inadequate. This, according to Lather (1986), enables only a limited understanding in the field about how “[a]ny practice grounded in the presently dominant ideologies and attendant paradigms is not conducive to long-term sustainability of human kind” (p. 257). As a result, there are times when Home Economics professionals have been commandeered to facilitate work that is actually working against the interests of families (McGregor et al., 2004) thereby opposing the claimed ideal of the profession to work for families. This highlights the importance for finding a middle ground that accommodates the ethical utilisation of both *theoria* and *techné*. It is possible to find this in *praxis*.

Table 4 Home Economics as Aristotelian human action—*phronesis*

Form of Home Economics Action as Phronesis	<i>Praxis</i> : morally committed action
Focus on Everyday Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> valuing home life and families for more than their contribution to paid work role and consumerism. helping families help themselves become empowered as contributing world citizens.
Interdisciplinary and integrative/Holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> commitment to integrative, holistic, interdisciplinary practice. pay attention to the problems families encounter daily and inter-generationally. generate a knowledge base that is used for the current accepted social end of the profession: well-being and quality of daily life
Prevention, Education and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with families to instil a preventative approach to living day-to-day work with families to develop a focus on evolution and progress, especially as regards the improvement of the range and critique of choices available for everyday life (development)
Systems of Action (technical, interpretative and critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adapt to change by gaining deeper understandings and insights into values, attitudes and meanings, leading to stronger familial relationships engage in social action and change power relationships to improve the human condition for everyone. reasoned action-think about something before acting.
Practical Perennial Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approaches to solving perennial problems have to change because context changes. assumptions are undermined-i.e. what once worked will automatically work again.
Critical Reflective Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in morally defensive, ethical practice guided by critical, personal reflection. engage in dialogue in communities of practice. critique current social and political contexts leading to insights into pervasive power relationships that serve an elite few.
Functional Definition of Families as social institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with families as the basic democratic institution underpinning society—the cornerstone of civilisations, deserving of support
Profession as a holistic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate professional leadership when our philosophy, theory/knowledge and practice intersect. ensure integrity of our practice using this unique, ethically responsible approach.

Based on Carr (2009), Kinsella and Pitman (2012) and McGregor (2010).

Since McGregor (2010) is claiming that Home Economics, as a profession, is informed by values such as social justice and equity and peace, these values not only position the profession within boundaries of particular theory but these same values also identify the *moral-ethical* and *moral-political* stance of the profession. As a profession Home Economics has long since claimed a social justice agenda, as events such as Lake Placid occurred in a

time when women were typically and routinely excluded from normal (democratic) social life including voting, higher education, professional careers or any employment after marriage. In looking to what home economists do, McGregor describes a substantial body of action that is readily claimed as *praxis*, as evidenced in Table 4. Lather (1986, p. 262) observes that “[f]or praxis to be possible, not only must theory illuminate the lived experience of progressive social groups; it must also be illuminated by their struggles”. This is clearly evident in the professional practice described in Table 4.

IFHE (2008, p. 1) articulates the position that “Home Economists are concerned with the empowerment and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and of facilitating the development of attributes for lifelong learning for paid, unpaid and voluntary work; and living situations”. It is this position that requires action that is *praxis*. Clearly there is both a *moral-ethical* and *moral-political* stance being taken here (Thompson, 1988, 1992). There is nowhere for home economists to hide if they are seeking to avoid difficult conversations or to claim that they don’t get involved in politics. If we are to work with every family then we need to know that:

- Social justice and equity are pre-requisites for health (WHO, 1986) and education,
- Poverty in every form or manifestation is bad for health and therefore those living in low and middle socio-economic circumstances experience illness and disease disproportionately to the wealthy (Renwick, 2013, 2014), and
- There is a relationship between socioeconomic background and how well young people do at school. For example, in Australia teachers may have a class consisting of students aged up to 18 months apart in chronological age but will have to cater for a difference in performance that can be up to three years (Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman & Buckley, 2010; Wood, 2003).

Who, if not home economists, are in a better position to work with and for families, to not only develop skills that can improve daily life but to do so in a way that changes their world for the better? Surely this is critical if the profession is to rightly claim professional leadership and integrity (Brown, 1980, 1985; McGregor, 2008; Smith, 2004; Turkki, 2008; Vincenti et al., 2004). In reality the eight unique contributions of Home Economics provided by McGregor (2010) and the associated descriptions and justifications makes a strong case for Home Economics professional practice as *phronesis*, and therefore a need for closer consideration of what we actually do while also thinking about what we do, that is *praxis*.

Engaging in professional practice is a struggle (Peterat, 1989; Smith, 2004) “to become, and to be, the excellent, skilled, and moral practitioner of his or her trade or occupation” (Macklin, 2009, p. 88) and draws on all three of the Aristotelian human actions to be realised. To engage in professional practice does not require the professional to be consciously aware of their use of these three actions at any one time. However to deny each and all, is to ignore what is both possible and needed in claiming that the work is professional. For home economists to engage in professional practice we have to identify what is the *good* that is being sought (Brown, 1980, 1985, 1993; Peterat, 1989; Smith, 2004; Thompson, 1988, 1992; Vincenti, 1990) and to make decisions about which options and resources are available and

how they are used. For home economists this *good* is about engaging in professional practices that are critical to working with families, we aim to empower.

Conclusion

This paper has described the relationship between profession and practice using Aristotle's human actions. McGregor's eight unique contributions made by Home Economics were interrogated using a hermeneutic cycle to determine the extent to which they intentionally focus on the wellbeing of others—a key attribute of a profession. To do this a profession must be able to demonstrate shared work and principles that reflect a moral commitment. The very first issue of this journal focused on the launching of the IFHE position statement: Home Economics in the 21st Century, a policy document for Home Economics together with contributions from numerous home economists globally explores this very idea. The unique contributions developed by McGregor when analysed as Aristotelian human actions is another facet that supports the various claims that Home Economics is a profession.

While Home Economics has much to claim as professional practice we, as a profession, need to engage in practice in ways that acknowledge not only what is done but why and for what purpose (Peterat, 1989; Thompson, 1992). The conceptualisation of Home Economics through Aristotle's human actions provides insights into our work, as social practice, that is guided by moral agency. As a profession Home Economics has been and continues to be contested by those within but usually in response to those outside the field. As a result practitioners are adept in defending the value of Home Economics. On the other hand practitioners have also been complicit in making Home Economics an agency of hegemonic demands and thereby not acting in the interests of those individuals, families and communities we have professed to work for. By exploring and developing our professional practice through *techné*, *episteme* and *phronesis* home economists are in a strong position to engage in reflective practice (Smith, 2004; Thompson, 1988, 1992). If, as Higgs (2012) contends, practice is a pre-cursor of knowledge then Home Economics as a profession has plenty to draw from in order to understand and develop its own *praxis*.

Biography

Dr Kerry Renwick is a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia University. Her research areas include critical pedagogies; health education and promotion; and food and nutrition education. In an Australian context, she has served on the boards of the Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association (VHETTA) and the Health Education Association of Victoria (HEAV) including a term as President. Kerry was instrumental in the development and introduction of Home Economics as a secondary specialisation in the Bachelor of Education (P-12) at Victoria University, Melbourne Australia. kerry.renwick@ubc.ca

References

- Anders Ericsson, K. (2008). Deliberate practice and acquisition of expert performance: a general overview. *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 15(11), 988-994.

- Apple, M. W. (2008). Controlling the work of teachers. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The Curriculum Studies Reader* (pp. 199-213). Routledge.
- Bartlett, R.C., & Collins, S.D. (2011). Outline of Nicomachean Ethics. In *Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Bredo, E. (2006). Philosophies of educational research. In R.K. Yin, J.L. Green, G. Camilli, & P.B. Elmore (Eds.). *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 3-31). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Brennan, M. (2009). Steering teachers: Working to control the feminized profession of education. *Journal of Sociology*, 45, 339-359.
- Brown, M. M. (1980). *What Is Home Economics Education?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Brown, M. M. (1985). *Philosophical studies of Home Economics in the United States: Our practical-intellectual heritage* (Vols. 1 and 2). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Brown, M. M. (1993). *Philosophical studies in Home Economics: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. Michigan State University.
- Bryman, A., Bell, E., & Teevan, J.J. (2012). *Social research methods* (3rd Canadian ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Carr, W. (2006). Philosophy, Methodology and Action Research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40(4), 421-435.
- Carr, W. (2009). A Postmodern Perspective on Professional Practice. In B. Green (Ed.), *Understanding Researching Professional Practice* (pp 55-64). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Davis, M.L. (2008). On Identifying our Profession. *International Journal of Home Economics* 1(1), 10-17.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- East, M. (1980). *Home Economics—Past, present, and future*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Eisner, E. (2002). From episteme to phronesis to artistry in the study and improvement of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18, 375-385.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Cultural action for freedom*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin.
- Gallagher, A. (2004). Dignity and respect for dignity—two key health professional values: implications for nursing practice. *Nursing ethics*, 11(6), 587-599.

- Giroux, H. A., & Giroux, S. S. (2006). Challenging neoliberalism's new world order: The promise of critical pedagogy. *Cultural Studies↔Critical Methodologies*, 6(1), 21-32.
- Green, B. (2009). Understanding and Researching Professional Practice. In B. Green (Ed.), *Understanding Researching Professional Practice* (pp. 1-18). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Handley, K., Sturdy, A., Fincham, R., & Clark, T. (2006). Within and Beyond Communities of Practice: Making Sense of Learning Through Participation, Identity and Practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(3), 641-653.
- Harding, S. (2013). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is "Strong Objectivity"? In L. Alcoff, & E. Potter, (Eds.) *Feminist Epistemologies* (pp. 49-82), New York, NY: Routledge.
- Higgs, J. (2012). Realising practical wisdom from the pursuit of wise practice. In E.A. Kinsella & A. Pitman (Eds.) *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge* (pp. 73-86). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Hodelin, G.B. (2008) Recasting Home Economics for the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Home Economics* 1(1), 18-22.
- Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA). *Home Economics-Home Economics Profession*. Retrieved from: <http://www.heia.com.au/home-economics-profession>
- International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) (2008). *Home Economics in the 21st Century*, IFHE Position Statement 2008.
- International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) (n.d.). Mission Statement. Retrieved from www.ifhe.org/127/
- Kemmis, S. & Grootenboer, P. (2008). Situating praxis in practice: Practice architectures and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice. In S. Kemmis & T. J. Smith (Eds.) *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education* (pp. 37-62). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kemmis, S. (2010a). What Is Professional Practice? Recognising and Respecting Diversity in Understandings of Practice. In C. Kanes (Ed.), *Elaborating Professionalism, Innovation and Change in Professional Education* (Vol 5) (pp 139-165). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kemmis, S. (2010b). Research for praxis: knowing doing. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 18(1), 9-27.
- Kemmis, S. (2012). Researching educational praxis: spectator and participant perspectives. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38(6), 885-905.
- Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Edwards-Groves, C., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P., & Bristo, L. (2014). *Changing Practices, Changing Education*. Singapore: Springer.
- Kieren, D., Vaines, E., & Badir, D. (1984). *The home economist as a helping professional*. Winnipeg, MB:Frye Publishing.

- Kincheloe, J. (2003). Critical ontology: Visions of selfhood and curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 19(1), 47-64.
- Kinsella, E.A., & Pitman, A. (2012). Phronesis as professional knowledge: Implications for education and practice. In E.A. Kinsella & A. Pitman (Eds.) *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (pp. 163-172). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kinsella, E.A. (2012). Practitioner reflection and judgement as phronesis: A continuum of reflection and considerations for phronetic judgement. In E.A. Kinsella & A. Pitman (Eds.) *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (3pp. 5-52). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as Praxis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3) August, 257-277.
- Macklin, R. (2009). Moral judgement and Practical reasoning in Professional practice. In Bill Green (Ed.) *Understanding Researching Professional Practice* (pp. 83-100). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2008). Future proofing: Transdisciplinary ambassadors for the human condition. *International Journal of Home Economics* 1(1), 25-31.
- McGregor, S.L.T. (2010). Name Changes and Future-proofing the Profession: Human Sciences as a Name? [online]. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 3(1), 20-37..
- McGregor, S.L.T., Baranovsky, K., Felicia Eghan, F., Engberg, L., Harman, B., Mitstifer, D., Pendergast, D., Seniuk, E., Shanahan, H., & Smith, F. (2004). A Satire: Confessions of Recovering Home Economists. *KON Human Sciences Working Paper Series*. Retrieved from: <http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/recovering.html> .
- McGregor, S.L.T., 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.
- Pendergast, D. (2002). Marginal Subjects: Towards a Site of Possibility in the teaching of Home Economics. In Yin Cheong Cheng (Ed.), *Subject Teaching and Teacher Education in the New Century: Research and Innovation*. (pp. 375-408). The Hong Kong Institute of Education & Kluwer Academic Publisher.
- Perzeszty, A. (1984). Economics, Home Economics and the "New" Home Economics. In P. Thompson (ed.) *Home Economics Teacher Education: Knowledge, Technology and Family Change, Yearbook 4*. (pp. 195-214). Teacher Education Section, American Home Economics Association.
- Peterat, L. (1989). Service or transformative Knowledge? The Potential of Home Economics. *Journal of Vocational Home Economics Education* 7(1), 71-79.
- Reid, J. & Green, B. (2009). Researching from the Standpoint of the Practitioner. In B. Green (Ed.) *Understanding Researching Professional Practice* (pp. 165-184). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Renwick, K. (2013). Food Literacy as a form of critical pedagogy: Implication for curriculum development and pedagogical engagement for Australia's diverse student population. *Victorian Journal of Home Economics*, 52(2), 6-17.

- Renwick, K. (2014). Critical health literacy: shifting textual-social practices in the health classroom. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, 5(3), 201-216.
- Richards, M. V. (2000). The postmodern perspective on Home Economics history. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 92(1), 81.
- Saltmarsh, S. (2009) Researching context as a "practiced place". In B. Green (Ed.) *Understanding Researching Professional Practice* (pp. 153-164). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Saugstad, T. (2002). Educational theory and practice in an Aristotelian perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 46(4), 373-390.
- Schön, Donald A. (1995). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Smith, T. W. (1999). Aristotle on the Conditions for and Limits of the Common Good. *American Political Science Review*, 93(3), 625-636.
- Smith, M.G. (2004). Reimagining Home Economics as a Vital Force in Education. In M.G. Smith, L. Peterat, & M.L. de Zwart, (Eds.), *Home Economics Now: Transformative practice, ecology, and everyday life; a tribute to the scholarship of Eleanore Vaines* (pp. 99-110). Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.
- Stage, S. (1997). What's in a name? In S. Stage, & V.B. Vincenti (Eds.) *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the history of a profession* (pp. 1-13). Cornell University Press.
- Thompson, P. J. (1988). *Home Economics and feminism: The Hestian synthesis*. Home Economics Publishing Collective.
- Thompson, P. J. (1992). *Bringing Feminism Home: Home Economics and the Hestian Connection*. Home Economics Publishing Collective.
- Thomson, S., De Bortoli, L., Nicholas, M., Hillman, K., & Buckley, S. (2010). *Challenges for Australian education: results from PISA 2009: the PISA 2009 assessment of students' reading, mathematical and scientific literacy*. Retrieved from: <http://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/9>.
- Tribe, J. (2002). Education for ethical tourism action. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(4), 309-324.
- Turkki, K. (2008). Home Economics—a dynamic tool for creating a sustainable future. *International Journal of Home Economics* 1(1), 32-42.
- Vaines, E. (1990). Philosophical Orientations and Home Economics: an introduction. *Canadian Home Economics Journal*, 40(1), 4-11.
- Vincenti, V. B. (1990). Home Economics in Higher Education: Communities of Convenience or Purpose? *Home Economics Research Journal*, 19(2), 184-193.

Vincenti, V., Smith, F., & Fabian, C. (2004). Critical science: What it could offer all family and consumer sciences professionals. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 96(1), 63-70.

Winstanley, D., & Woodall, J. (2000). The ethical dimension of human resource management. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 10(2), 5-20.

Wood, D. (2003). Effect of Child and Family Poverty on Child Health in the United States. *Pediatrics*, 112, 707-711.

World Health Organisation (WHO) (1986). *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>