



*Home Economics*  
**FORUM**

**Volume 6, Number 2, Spring 1993**

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**Empowerment**

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# State of the Society

Norma Bobbitt, 1992 President

*This message is my reflection on the progress of Kappa Omicron Nu. I would like to thank you for the honor to serve as President of Kappa Omicron Nu and for your excellent support of the Society. I am pleased to pass the gavel to Mary E. Pritchard (Omicron Beta Gamma) as President for 1993.*

The Board of Directors began its work in 1992 with meetings January 2-4 at the Atlanta Hyatt Regency by reviewing the Agenda for the 90's. The agenda, identified through strategic planning with the first board in April 1990 under the leadership of Gladys Gary Vaughn, includes the foci of generation and dissemination of knowledge, chapter advising, financial growth, and membership recruitment and retention.

Most of the work of the Society was carried on this year through independent work of Board members, through telephone and fax contacts, and through contact at various professional meetings during the year. The highlights of the year are listed below.

## Membership

The primary focus for 1992 was recruitment, retention, and reclamation of members. The thrust to expand the professional membership of Kappa Omicron Nu has had an enthusiastic response. And we are pleased that membership has remained strong despite the difficult economy this past year. Kaye Boyer, Vice President for Finance, and I explored a new international membership category. This thrust is intended to expand our support of international scholars. Insights from interested members would be helpful in developing workable policies and procedures.

## Development Council

The Luncheon at the AHEA Annual Meeting initiated discussion of the Kappa Omicron Nu development thrust to be coordinated by the Development Council. Kathryn Burgum, former Dean at North Dakota State, challenged us by her presentation of a practical and theoretical framework for our development programs. The Vice President for Finance and other Board members refined the policies for the structure and operation of the Development Council. Edna Page Anderson, Educational Consultant of Columbia, South Carolina, has accepted the position of chair of the Kappa Omicron Nu Development Council. The Council will take leadership in providing the resources for Kappa Omicron Nu to generate and disseminate knowledge; promote its scholarly and research priorities; implement the Project 2000 initiative to recruit, retain and recognize minority undergraduate and graduate students and professionals in home economics; and fulfill other goals in the interest of the profession and the society.

## New Infrastructure

The infrastructure was upgraded through the move to new functional and lovely office space and through the successful transition to state-of-the-art

computer technology for membership management and accounting.

## Collaborative Alliances

Through the Coordinating Council of Home Economics Honor Societies, undergraduate research presentations were cosponsored again at the AHEA Annual Meeting. A new activity was the Graduate Study Showcase for students and academic advisers to explore the graduate study opportunities in various colleges and universities. This activity was coordinated by Virginia Moxley, Associate Dean at Kansas State University (Omicron Theta).

Kappa Omicron Nu continues the relationship with AHEA as a cosponsor of Project 2000 for minority recruitment and retention in home economics. Volume 6, Number 1 of *Home Economics FORUM* featured papers from the Project 2000 Summit conference; further Project 2000 plans will be announced at a later date. The Society endorsed the AHEA resolutions regarding racism and education of minority children and youth. Our booth in the Exposition featured our professional membership campaign and the 80th anniversary of Omicron Nu, the 70th of Kappa Omicron Phi.

Kappa Omicron Nu is initiating relationships with the American Dietetics Association, the National Council on Family Relations, the National Council of

Administrators of Home Economics, and the Association of Administrators of Home Economics. Other relationships will be sought to assure collaborative alliances to achieve mutual goals.

Kappa Omicron Nu is a member of the Association of College Honor Societies, which sets and maintains the standards and functions of honor societies. Our Society benefits from this partnership relationship through our Executive Director, Dorothy Mitstifer, who is also Secretary-Treasurer and manager of its national office.

### Programming Thrusts

Kappa Omicron Nu promotes professional development for members and chapters through national program themes and through scholarly priorities. The program themes are introduced on a biennial basis at each conclave. The theme, "Mentoring: The Human Touch," was continued in 1992. The highlight this year was the publication of the mentoring module, which provides theoretical information and interaction strategies for mentoring self-management. Campus chapters and professional groups will find this module helpful for personal and professional development. Many thanks to the authors: Dorothy Mitstifer, Burness Wenberg (Omicron Alpha), and Pauline Schatz (Southern Cal Alumni).

During the past two years, Vice President for Program Gwendolyn Paschall has been working on the 1993-95 theme of "Leadership for a Culturally Diverse Society," and the 1993 Conclave program will reflect this theme.

Scholarly priorities include undergraduate writing, ethics, and

mentoring. These priorities are long-term emphases that are implemented by *Home Economics FORUM* and other publications, by special projects, and by research.

A new thrust for Kappa Omicron Nu is the identification of a research agenda. The following research priorities will be instituted for awards for 1993-97: Cross-Specialization and Integrative Research with a Focus on Cultural Diversity and Minority Issues in Home Economics. Multi-year proposals will be accepted for projects with this focus.

### Honor Society Publication

Home Economics FORUM continues to be a premier scholarly publication for the profession. The theme for the next volume is "Collaborative Relationships."

### Recognitions and Awards

Outstanding members and chapters of Kappa Omicron Nu are recognized in several ways:

Adviser Award of Excellence honoring outstanding advisers is announced at Conclave.

Honor and Memorial Awards recognize contributions of members to research, scholarship, or leadership in the profession and bestows national recognition to the designated nominee.

Named Fellowships currently honor Eileen Maddex, former Executive Director of Omicron Nu; Dorothy Mitstifer, Executive Director of Kappa Omicron Nu; Marjorie Arch Burns, former Kappa Omicron Phi president; Hettie Margaret Anthony, founder of Kappa Omicron Phi. Members are encouraged to suggest other

members to be honored with a named fellowship.

Honorary Members are persons who work outside the field of home economics and have made distinctive contributions to the concerns of the field. The Honorary Membership Committee would be pleased to receive nominations.

Scholar Program grants are awarded to chapters once each biennium. For 1991-92, the sum of \$11,000 was awarded to 45 chapters.

Fellowships awarded in 1992 included: Lisa Hoover, University of Tennessee; Michelle M. Englund and Deborah L. Fravel, University of Minnesota; Susanne F. Olsen, University of Georgia; Mary J. Pickard, Kansas State University.

Research/Project Grants awarded in 1992 included: Marsha Casselman and Mary Littrell, Iowa State University; Jeanne Heitmeyer, Kay Grise, and Christine Readdick, Florida State University; Patricia K. Knaub and Margaret J. Weber, Oklahoma State University.

Undergraduate Research Paper Award was presented to Sheri Johnson, Omicron Theta Chapter, Kansas State University.

Undergraduate Student Papers for Presentation at Conclave - Undergraduates will have the opportunity to apply for this award for the 1993 Conclave.

Chapter Award of Excellence - Chapters will be honored at Conclave. The awards recognize outstanding programming and

chapter management. A total of \$1,000 is awarded each biennium.

Delegate Scholarships are awarded to chapters for Conclave attendance. This award benefits the chapter and the personal and professional development of the delegate.

### Leadership Opportunities

National officers on the Board of Directors serve by the calendar year, except for Student Representatives who are elected at Conclave and serve through the next Conclave. Officers whose terms expired in 1992 were Norma Bobbitt, President; Gwendolyn T. Paschall, Vice President for Program; Ruth E. Pestle, Secretary.

Other Board members this past year included President-Elect, Mary E. Pritchard; Vice President for Finance, Kaye K. Boyer; Student Representatives, Tracy Buckles, Carson-Newman College; Deborah Hix, Kansas State University; Karen Summers, West Virginia Wesleyan.

Special appreciation goes to these Board members for their contributions toward the progress of the Society.

Additionally, Dorothy Mitstifer, through her role as Executive Director, provided continuity for the Society and a bridge between the 1992 and 1993 Boards. A special thank you is extended for her assistance.

Committees provide a valuable national governance function and contribute to progress in achieving our mission. Committees for 1992 included the following members:

Awards - Jean Bauer, Sally Hansen-Gandy, Eleanor Schlenker, Margaret Weber, Margaret Briggs,

Maxine Rowley, Marianna Rasco, and Lea Ebro.

Constitution and Bylaws Carole Makela, Jean Dunn, Susan Poch, and Ellen Bentzel.

Finance - Nonboard Member, Frances E. Andrews

Nominating - Nancy Mundorf, Donna Both Downer, Geardean Johnson, Carolyn Manning, and Phyllis Spruiell.

Honorary Membership - Mary Pritchard, Ruth Deacon, Pauline Schatz, and Lillie Glover.

Editorial Committee - Edna Page Anderson, James D. Moran, Amelia Brown, Anne MacCleave, Ruth Anne Mears, Sandra Miller, and Rick Clements.

A new opportunity for leadership is available for volunteers to assist with developing an oral history of Omicron Nu and Kappa Omicron Phi. Also, assistance is needed for compiling a factual history of both organizations. Ruth Pestle developed the proposal for these efforts.

### Student Representatives

The three Student Representatives—Tracy Buckles, Deborah Hix, and Karen Summers—represent the chapters of Kappa Beta XI, Omicron Theta, and Kappa Beta Tau respectively. The student representatives are full members of the Board but are especially involved with recommending ideas to increase motivation and involvement of advisers, increasing the visibility of membership benefits, improving chapter programming, publishing

the chapter newsletter, and facilitating recruitment.

### Fiscal Status

The financial position of the Society is strong. We can be proud that almost twenty percent of our budget goes to fellowships, grants, scholarships, and awards. It should be noted that the Board of Directors takes its fiduciary responsibility very seriously. As you inspect the report below, you need to understand that our balance sheet totals go up and down with the conclave cycle expenses for delegate scholarships.

9/30/91	9/30/92
<b>General Fund</b>	
Liabilities and Fund Balances	
\$60,500	\$73,000

<b>Restricted Funds</b>	
Liabilities and Fund Balances	
\$328,200	\$346,725

### A Look to the Future

1993 is a Conclave Year, and the future will surely be uppermost in programming and governance. This biennial opportunity for bonding and for renewing the commitment to our mission will ensure that Kappa Omicron Nu remains a significant force in the profession and in the lives of its members. The Board knows that members are the most important asset and that not much happens without their participation in the development and realization of the Dream—of the future. You are hereby invited to share your vision.



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Authors:

Dorothy I. Mitstifer  
Burness Wenberg  
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## *1994-95 Grants and Fellowships*

### **Master's Fellowships**

Eileen C. Maddex Fellowship,  
\$2,000 - awarded from the Omicron  
Nu Fellowship Fund.

### **Doctoral Fellowships**

Hettie M. Anthony Fellowship,  
\$2,000 - awarded for doctoral  
research from the Kappa Omicron Phi  
Fellowship Fund.

Omicron Nu Research Fellowship,  
\$2,000 - awarded for doctoral  
research.

Sandra Bill Linck Fellowship,  
\$2,000 - awarded from the Kappa  
Omicron Phi Fellowship Fund for  
doctoral study in honor of her service  
as National President, 1965-69.

### **Adviser's Fellowship**

Dorothy I. Mitstifer Fellowship,  
\$2,000 - awarded from the Kappa  
Omicron Phi Fellowship Fund and  
targeted primarily to chapter advisers  
for graduate or postgraduate study

### **Research/Project Grants**

Alumni Chapter Grant, \$1,000  
New Initiatives Grant, \$6,000  
One or more grants will be awarded  
for proposals that meet the criteria of  
the Kappa Omicron Nu research  
agenda (see announcement).

### **Applications**

December 15 - Research/Project  
January 15 - Doctoral /Adviser's  
April 1 - Master's

Information and applications may  
be secured from the Kappa Omicron  
Nu National Office.

## *Research Agenda*

### **Research Priority:**

Cross-Specialization and  
Integrative Research

### **Focus for 1993-1997:**

Cultural Diversity and Minority  
Issues in Home Economics

Researchers might study how to integrate cultural diversity/minority home and family emphases into programs of higher education, how to prepare professionals to effectively work with various cultural and ethnic groups, or how to attract multi-cultural students and professors into the field. Proposals may respond to any of the above suggestions but need not be limited to them. Further information may be secured from the National Office, East Lansing, Michigan.

## Notes from the Guest Editor

Eleanore Vaines

Empowerment is a term which is much used and abused. The overall purposes of this issue of *Home Economics FORUM* are to address the confusion that evolves from the indiscriminate use of a term and to provide different views of the theme in order to better grasp the richness and complexities of empowerment. This is important because an empowerment orientation is an underlying stream running through home economics. Brown and Paolucci stated this orientation best in

*Home Economics Defined* (1979).

This treatise illustrates the way in which describing and explaining the field must be an ongoing scholarly endeavor. Unearthing the abundant meanings of the mission reveals a need to be explicit and consistent about the profession.

The articles in this issue provide a range of ways in which empowerment can be addressed and a variety of conceptual lenses through which exploration and expression can be pursued. Empowerment is touted as a

vibrant approach for expressing concern for the interest of all living systems and as an essential component of the moral vision of home economics. To rediscover living as if all life really mattered, to restore mystery and wonder to ecology as a unifying theme, and to reclaim the ordinary as extraordinary are other subthemes explored. This collection leaves us with a sense that there are many possibilities for continued scholarly and pragmatic investigation.

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## Editor's Comments

Dorothy I. Mitstifer

Kappa Omicron Nu is extremely proud to offer this publication as evidence of excellence in scholarship, research, and leadership. We believe the timing is fortunate; certainly EMPOWERMENT is basic to the search for professional unity and identity, sought by the collaborative task force by that title.

**IF I MAY MAKE AN IMPASSIONED PLEA**—The delegates to the Fall 1993 Professional Unity and Identity Conference should study these scholarly papers in preparation for the dialogue.

For your information, we have taken the liberty to publish two issues in one to concentrate the empowerment theme. If you were counting, you know that the last issue (Volume 6, Number 1) was published in early 1992. Due to circumstances beyond my control, the second issue of the theme "Building Minority Participation in Home Economics" is still on the "drawing board."

The Editorial Committee would be glad to hear of your suggestions for future themes. Two are in the wings: Collaborative Relationships and The Place of Home Economics in Higher Education.

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## Newly Elected Officers

President-Elect - Virginia L. Clark - South Dakota State University, Brookings

V P/Program - Frances E. Andrews - University of Montevallo, Alabama

Secretary - Anne M. Weiner - University of North Carolina, Greensboro

# Empowerment: Its History and Meaning

Virginia B. Vincenti

*This article focuses on the meaning of the concept empowerment, its origin, its historical development, usage, and implications for home economics. The histories of the meaning of power, its root word, and related concepts such as influence, authority, enabling, and freedom are explored in order to understand the meaning and significance of empowerment today. The conceptual analysis, examples, applications, and implications are focused not only on U.S. culture but, more specifically, on home economics in the 1890s and 1990s. Because home economics is interdisciplinary, drawing upon academic literature from many fields, this paper examines the meaning of power and empowerment in the contemporary literature of fields used in the professional practice of home economists.*

The Brown and Paolucci (1979) mission statement for home economics represents a commitment to the empowerment of families. It says the field's mission is "to enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action which lead (1) to maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them" (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 23, italics added). Numerous other fields consider *empowerment* to be part of their professional responsibility, but not all define it the same way.

This lack of consensus led Conger and Kanungo (1988) to conclude that the meaning of empowerment is not clear and, consequently, needs to be critically examined. In this article, I intend to focus on its meaning and historical perspective as a foundation for reading the following articles on

empowerment in this issue of *Home Economics FORUM*.

Because this article is about meaning and interpretation, it is important that I situate my work historically, geographically, and philosophically. Therefore, I must share with you that I am a Caucasian, middle class, feminist home economist. I have had a number of first hand experiences with people who have abused power and as a result, empowerment has important personal meaning to me. It has helped me think differently about myself and about all people who have experienced such abuse whether they have felt it because of their gender, race, ethnicity, language, age, or any number of other characteristics or circumstances which have been used to treat them prejudicially.

The contextual analysis, examples, applications, and implications herein are focused on the U.S. society and home economics, which is primarily a female field, not by design, but because society has defined its interests as primarily female responsibilities. It is for this reason that some of my remarks focus on empowering women and on the particular problems the field has experienced because of its gender makeup. I do not consider the mission of the field to be focused on improving the quality of life for women only, but for all family

members, including children, men, and extended family. Therefore, I hope this paper reflects a sensitivity to all people, including men, members of other U.S. subcultural groups, and citizens of countries other than my own. However, I do not claim to speak for them.

## Historical Perspective on Power and Empowerment

Although the current attention given to empowerment in the United States is notable in the academic literature by an increase in use of the concept in the 1970s, it is not a new idea that came out of the 1960s. The term itself has been around for centuries. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, hereafter *OED*, (Simpson & Weiner, 1989) traces the use of the verb *to empower* back as far as the 1600s. To understand what it means, why it has become an idea of significance in our culture today, and why I believe it will remain so, we need to explore the history of the meaning of *power*, the root word of empowerment.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) is considered mainly responsible for the development of the conceptualization of power as potency (Runes, 1983). For centuries after him, philosophers believed that ideas and the movements of people and animals were a result of their own power. He

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*Dr. Vincenti is Professor and Head of the Department of Home Economics at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. The author thanks Mecka Nagel, Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, for her help in searching the literature and checking the accuracy of philosophical interpretations. Any remaining errors rest with the author.*



described animals as "self moved" (Edwards, 1967, p. 58). The Greek myths are examples of how natural phenomena, such as the sun, were thought to be "active" beings, as were people and animals. As the notion of empiricism took shape, this idea became less evident in the work of later philosophers such as Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704). Later, when philosophers tried to understand this conceptualization of power within the framework of empiricism, they had tremendous difficulties because it did not correspond to any scientifically analyzable term (Edwards, 1967). David Hume (1711-1776), the Scottish philosopher and historian, came to believe that power is only in the minds of persons and is not real. With the development of positivism and experimentalism, the notion of power endowed to humans lost importance (Runes, 1983; Cohen, 1987). As nature came to be understood as invariable and predictable and humans as part of nature and, therefore, controlled by natural laws, the notion of humans as empowered beings was abandoned altogether (Edwards, 1967). This changed our conception of ourselves from active agents to passive objects.

Examination of U.S. culture in relation to power reveals some interesting insights. Several decades after Hume's major writing, the founders of this country wrote the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, intended to empower citizens to a level far beyond that which they had experienced in their countries of origin, where there had been little, if any, bestowed power from their rulers. In actuality, the implementation of these documents certainly did not provide equal empowerment for all, as history has shown. Their emphasis on individualism, coupled with the free

enterprise system and positivism, created a rationale for competition and a "survival of the fittest" mentality, which facilitated the misuse of power and an increased sense of powerlessness of some groups in our society. In spite of legislation and regulations to control abuse adopted around the middle of this century, Social Darwinism and its Industrial Revolution derivations have resulted in societal conditions that have contributed to a sense of individual powerlessness in the following ways:

1. The rise in the prevalence and prominence of experts has made average people (e.g., parents) doubt their own efficacy. Education has become preparation for highly specialized tasks rather than the development of broadly educated persons. As a result even experts, except those with overdeveloped egos, have become increasingly less confident about their ability to deal with matters outside their own areas of expertise.
2. The atomization of work (e.g., repetitive steps that are a small part of the process of completion of a whole task or project) has made people feel powerless and deskilled. Thus, many people have lost a sense of pride and meaning in their own achievement.
3. Although the use of machines (e.g., computers and robots) has eliminated some of the repetitive, tedious tasks workers used to do, it has contributed to a sense of powerlessness because jobs have been eliminated at the mid-skill level and others have been exported to other countries where wages are much lower. A growing number of positions available now are either at an entry level with very low pay or at a level requiring extensive education. Reich (1991) explains how the political and economic climate has been changing over the last decade to the advantage of the wealthy and the

disadvantage of the middle and poorer classes who experience a sense of powerlessness due to unemployment and underemployment. The resulting increased need for two incomes for families has left children on their own more and parents feeling less empowered to influence their children's development.

4. Because of this increased need for educational preparation for work and general functioning in society today, it is more difficult for people to succeed through sheer determination and hard work. For example, it is harder for immigrants today, compared to a generation or two ago, to learn enough to be self-supporting without special programs to help them.

5. Another contributing factor has been the centralized, authoritarian form of management used in many businesses and in government. Consolidation of small companies, schools, and other organizations in society contributed to the impersonal relationship between administration and those affected by centralized decision-making. The backlash in favor of deregulation, decentralization, and privatization has neither empowered most people nor increased a sense of community but has left them vulnerable to localized self-interest and greed.

6. Although the media, especially television, has increased our awareness of what is happening around the world, it has also contributed to a sense of anonymity and powerlessness to affect change. In addition, political candidates use the media more and more to replace direct contact with people because it is "more efficient." Furthermore, because of increased attention to violence, television especially has desensitized us to the horrors of abusive uses of power. Its rapid pace has made us less reflective about the ideas and values that we are exposed



to daily. We have become more passive learners, and interpersonal interaction, especially in families, has been reduced.

These factors contributed not only to a sense of powerlessness but according to Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Lipton (1985), they led to reduced middle-class participation in public life, a sense of isolation from each other because of our overemphasis on individualism, and a weakened sense of commitment to the public good. We entrench ourselves in what Bellah et al. (1985) call lifestyle enclaves, wherein we live and associate only with people very much like ourselves. Every person works to promote his or her own self-interest and justifies it with the belief that this is the way the system works. Even family members spend less time together as each person goes in his or her own direction. This isolation leads us to believe that we can't do much about the larger societal and global problems. Dissatisfaction with conditions such as these seems to have prompted the expanded attention to empowerment in the U.S. in the last two decades.

### Philosophical Definitions of Empowerment and Related Terms

Before discussing the meaning of empowerment within several different bodies of literature, it is fitting that we focus briefly on a comprehensive meaning of the concept and its basic component, power.

Rune's *Dictionary of Philosophy* (1983) defines power in various ways, but those relevant to this discussion include the following: "(1) the physical, mental and moral ability to act or to receive an action; (2) the general faculty of doing, making, performing, realizing, achieving, producing or succeeding; (3) ability, capacity, virtue,

virtuality, potency, potentiality, faculty, efficacy, . . . efficiency, operative causality, process of change or becoming; . . . (10) influence, prerogative, force" (p. 260).

According to Benn in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, it is difficult to define power because its meanings and related terms such as *influence*, *control*, and *domination* are uncertain, shifting, and overlapping. For example, two of these words may be interchangeable in one context, but in another, interchanging them would radically change the meaning of the sentence (Edwards, 1967, p. 424). Instead of trying to analyze power as a single concept, Benn suggests that it is part of a family of related concepts including, but not limited to, those listed above.

The related concept, *influence* (in connection with human action), is the exercise of personal power by human beings in such an indirect or intangible way that it is unseen or imperceptible except in its effects on a person, group, or course of events by affecting human character, beliefs, or actions. It is the power to sway or affect through prestige, wealth, ability, or position. The mass media in our society is an example of an entity that, because of its sometimes implicit or imperceptible nature, can either serve those in power and/or improve the condition of the targeted audiences. It is to be distinguished from *control* that is the power to give orders, restrain, or regulate (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 1982).

The *OED*'s 1989 definition of the verb *to empower* implies a more explicit relationship between the powerful and the less powerful. The first of its several definitions is "to invest legally or formally with power or authority, license" (p. 192). *Authority*, either bestowed or earned through competence, means having

the right to enforce obedience in others; moral or legal supremacy; the right to make an ultimate decision; conferred right to do something; the power to influence action, opinion, and/or belief (*OED*). Although this may empower the person being given the authority, as I pointed out earlier, the preponderance of authority figures and the status given to them in our society has contributed to a sense of disempowerment of the general population.

The *OED* also defines empowering as imparting or bestowing power for an end or purpose; enabling. Instead of enforcing obedience or deciding for others, *enabling* means endowing others with legal status, power, license, or sanctions. It means strengthening them, making them adequate or proficient; imparting the power necessary or adequate for them to achieve a given objective. It means making them competent or capable; supplying them with the requisite means or opportunities to reach an end or achieve an objective. This has quite a different emphasis from empowerment by authority.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1987), the effect of enabling others to act is to help them feel strong, capable, and committed so they can produce the results needed in the organization and feel a sense of ownership in it. When people feel empowered, they are likely to use their energy and talents with extraordinary results (p. 11). A leader's ability to enable others is related to the degree of power he/she holds in relation to the resources needed to accomplish a goal. But it also is related to whether that power is perceived as focused on the leader's well-being at the expense of others or on facilitating the work and well-being of those on whom the leader depends, as well as on others affected by that work.

The third definition the *OED* gives

for the verb *to empower* is to gain or assume power over another person or group, a thing, or oneself. Gaining power over others is merely another way to describe a shift in power in the struggle implied in the earlier discussion of power and related concepts. The implication is that power is finite (i.e., when one person is empowered, another person's power is reduced). This is the underlying belief that drives suppression and oppression.

However, another very different way of thinking of power involves the notion that the gaining or assuming of power over oneself or the abdicating of power to enable others to take control over their lives can really be *emancipating* and *freeing* for both. Emancipation is the setting free, delivering from intellectual, moral, or spiritual fetters; liberation from restraints imposed by superior physical force or legal obligation. Therefore, empowerment presupposes *freedom from arbitrary, despotic, or autocratic hindrance or restraint on action; independence. It means freedom to be self-determining without being affected by a defect or disadvantage; exemption from a specific burden, charge, or service* (OED, 1989).

In comparison, Partridge in Edwards' *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967) suggests that freedom involves recognizing that, despite what you are accustomed to, there are alternatives—being able to make informed choices among them. It refers primarily to a condition characterized by the absence of either direct or indirect coercion. Direct forms of coercion are commands or prohibitions backed by sanctions or superior power. Indirect forms involve molding and manipulation or control of the conditions that determine or affect the alternatives available to others.

Not only ignorance and suppression

but distortion, misrepresentation, and any kind of dishonest or unintentional propaganda (whether by the state, the culture, or by significant others in an individual's personal life) have the effect of controlling either actual or perceived options (Partridge in Edwards, 1967). Thus, empowerment encompasses psychological *freedom from any past coercion by another, from any disorder whether emotional or physical in origin, as well as from any kind of coercion by another in the present.*

According to Partridge (Edwards, 1967), no serious philosophical or social thinker has defended freedom as the balance of obstacles to satisfy any desire. What has been defended is the identification of freedom as the "absence of obstacles to the exercise and satisfaction of specific interests and forms of activity which are accepted as possessing especial moral and social significance" (p. 223). The *Bill of Rights* is an example of this because it refers to absence of coercion or interference and refers to people acting on their own initiative. In fact, by definition moral action involves making responsible decisions and acting accordingly without coercion, by exercise of free choice or will. Being coerced to do "the right thing" is not a moral act on the part of the doer and certainly is not an example of being empowered.

In a democracy, all adult citizens share in making decisions about the common arrangements of the society, including the use and distribution of resources which affect the choices available to all. For this reason, each person needs to be free to make informed and morally responsible choices. This implies the necessity of limiting one person's freedom in order to protect that of others.

Although empowerment of all citizens is crucial to a well-functioning democracy, in actuality, "democracies" can be coercive,

restrictive, and/or intolerant in some areas of life. The same could be said of subgroups in society such as families and businesses. People are truly empowered when they are actually choosing, exercising initiative, and acting deliberately and responsibly, not when they are choosing freely an alternative which they inherited and have never been even slightly inclined to question. Neither are people empowered when they narrowly, uncritically, and unadventurously follow the established customs and conventions of their society. People who are so molded and manipulated that they always want what their authority figures want them to want are not free or empowered (Partridge in Edwards, 1967). Likewise, freedom or empowerment is not expressed by people who generally rebel (against their experience of having been coerced and manipulated by specific people) to such an extent that they cannot think rationally and act responsibly.

More recently, Foucault, one of the most influential contemporary thinkers, has influenced a number of fields with his postmodern conceptualization of power. In the Foucauldian sense, power is conceptualized neither as being finite in quantity nor hierarchical. To Foucault (1978) such ideas recognize only "the terminal forms power takes" and not its dynamic nature. He contends, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (p. 93). Power must be understood as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which persons operate (e.g., work environment, families, government). The combination of forces makes up a unique and dynamic interaction which is experienced as power. Through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, power is the process

which transforms, strengthens, and reverses the force relations which either support one another and form a chain or system or isolate themselves from one another through disjunctions and contradictions (p. 92).

Institutional structures, laws, and social hegemonies attempt to crystallize this dynamic process. Power (as we commonly think of it) is simply the overall effect that emerges from the linking together of all these mobilities, in an attempt to arrest their movement. "Power is not an institution, . . . [nor] a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p.93). Based on this perspective, Foucault purports the following axioms:

1. Power is not something acquired, seized, shared, held, or allowed to slip away, but it is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.
2. Power relations, inherent in economic, teaching, sexual, and work relationships are the "immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums [and hierarchies] which occur in them" (p. 94).
3. Empowerment is not a shifting of power from the powerful to the powerless, but it comes from below. Foucault believes that the manifestations of relationships of force that take shape in work environments, families, and institutions are the basis for wide ranging schisms that run through societies.
4. Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective. On one hand, he argues that "there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives." On the other hand, power does not necessarily result from the choice or

decision of an individual subject because the tactics of one are interactive with those of others.

5. Power precipitates resistance in power relationships, which we cannot escape. That is, resistance goes on all of the time to different degrees, constantly effecting change even within formalized power structures. Foucault considers people at the bottom of the social strata not powerless but powerful (or at least potentially so) in their resistance to oppressive strategies to consolidate power in the hands of specific people. This seems to be a return to the notion of people as agents rather than passive beings responding to outside contextual conditions.

#### Other Disciplinary Perspectives on Power and Empowerment

Being an interdisciplinary profession, home economics draws upon academic literature from many fields. Therefore, it is important to our own understanding of power and empowerment to examine the meaning of the concepts in a number of different fields that have bodies of contemporary literature we may use in our work. Much social scientist literature is focused primarily on the need to empower minority groups such as women, Blacks, Hispanics, and the handicapped. Some of it is written by authors indigenous to these groups and some of it is not; some is written from the perspective of the dominant and some from the perspective of those seeking power.

Because home economics is made up largely of women and its content has traditionally been considered the concern of women, it is appropriate to examine literature focusing on women's empowerment. The large body of *feminist literature* is itself interdisciplinary. Anthropologists describe how women cross-culturally have certain forms of power in social

decision making, but the source of legitimacy in their exercise of power lies with men, who usually distance themselves from women's traditional concerns. Consequently, according to Elshtain, a feminist political scientist, males, due to their position in society, are "the sole possessors of unintentional power which has any public meaning with political consequences . . ." (Humm, 1990, p. 171). Such literature helps to make visible the conditions and reasons for lack of apparent power and the need for women's empowerment.

Other linguistically oriented feminist theorists locate the source of empowerment in consciousness and language. For example, Janeway has argued that one of the most important forms of power held by the disempowered is their refusal to accept the definition of themselves created by the powerful. "Women's power is the power to disbelieve" (Humm, 1990, p. 171). Rowbotham argues that language is itself one of the instruments of domination. Feminist praxis seeks empowerment through a new cooperative social order that goes beyond the principles of hierarchy and competitiveness (Humm, 1990), which result in relationships based on wielding power over others. This relates to the Foucauldian notion of power and resistance.

Because literacy and the ability to think critically and to reason morally enlarge the capacity for choice and decision, *education* is an important precondition of the existence of freedom and empowerment. Freire's work to empower Brazilian peasants is an example of this vision of empowerment. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) is a well known explication of empowerment. His recent book, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (1985), is a further developed discourse on power and



domination and the forms they take within historical, cultural, and social contexts for subordinate and oppressed groups. The book also deals with the problems domination poses for those who experience it as both a subjective and objective force. He believes that power is dialectical.

Domination is never so complete that power is experienced exclusively as a negative force . . . . [It] is at the basis of all forms of behavior in which people resist, struggle, and fight for their image of a better world . . . . Power as a form of domination is not simply something imposed by . . . [authority, it] is also expressed by the way in which power, technology, and ideology come together to produce forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural forms that function to actively silence people . . . . [It] is also . . . found in the way in which the oppressed internalize and thus participate in their own oppression . . . . [Freire makes] an important attempt to examine the psychically repressive aspects of domination and, hence, the possible internal obstacles to self-knowledge and thus to forms of social and self-emancipation (Giroux in Freire, 1985, pp. xix-xx).

Knowledge and increased understanding of power relations expand the capacity for acting freely, for being empowered. Education empowers people to effectively participate in the social, economic, and political orders. In the 1970s institutions of higher learning were regarded as places where empowerment for participation in the public domain was provided "by conserving [empowerment-related] values and cultural patterns, by criticizing society's norms and methods, by anticipating new modes of society and (in light of ideal ends) by encouraging leadership to move from conservation to innovation" (Muelder in Robertson, 1978, p. 1). More recently, higher education, in fact all public education, has come under criticism by many authors for interfering with innovation and empowerment. Even some early childhood educators have recognized

the need to expose preschoolers to an antibias curriculum to help them begin to develop the intellectual and emotional ability to confront oppression and work together to create a just society (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989). Unfortunately, the misuse of power can be experienced and learned early in people's lives.

The empowerment literature within political science is important to home economics because of the need for professionals within the field to become more politically savvy in order to fulfill our mission as stated by Brown and Paolucci (1979). *Political science* is the field which focuses squarely on the struggle for power, commonly referred to as politics. This struggle pervades not only government but families, churches, trade unions, corporations, and educational institutions, as well as the society as a whole. According to Hill (in Robertson, 1978), "because its roots lie deep in the unlimited capacity of people to disagree, . . . [the struggle for power] is . . . more evident in democracies [than in autocratic situations]. The purpose [of political science] cannot be to eliminate the struggle, but to learn how to carry it on with reason and responsibility" (p. 21-22). This helps to explain why empowerment is of such concern in our democratic society and in our profession. Applied to family politics, this suggests that home economics needs to help families respond to internal struggles openly and responsibly to empower all family members.

Related to political science, management is a profession home economics draws from for its business-related specializations and for the mode of operation of many administrators and leaders within the field. Within *management*, empowerment, as a scientific construct defined from empirical research, is used by some theorists to

explain organizational effectiveness. Yet, Conger and Kanungo (1988) lamented, despite increasing attention to empowerment, understanding of the construct and its underlying processes remains limited. Because management theory and practice have focused on managerial techniques, empowerment has not received the same attention from scholars in the field as has the construct of power or control (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

In fact, many management scholars have assumed that empowerment is equivalent to delegating or sharing power with subordinates. As a result of this orientation, empowerment has been viewed as a relational construct based on relative power over others. Leaders or managers who have power because of their position, personal characteristics, expertise, opportunities to access specific relevant knowledge, and control of resources and rewards, remain in power as they *share* their power with subordinates to meet the organization's or their own personal goals. For example, participatory management techniques, such as management by objectives and goal setting by subordinates, have been touted as empowering employees (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

*Organizational behavior* literature, as well as the larger, more encompassing management literature, has been greatly influenced by *psychology*, as has home economics. Psychology conceptualizes empowerment as a motivational construct. Here, to *empower* people is to enable by motivating them to enhance their own personal efficacy. The assumption is that humans have an intrinsic need for self-determination. Preferring this perspective, Conger and Kanungo (1988), define empowerment as "a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of

conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (p. 474). Speaking sociologically, Bellah et al. (1985) criticized the U.S. middle class's adoption of the psychoanalytic view of freedom and empowerment, which they argue overemphasizes individualism and diminishes commitment to the public good. More than we might like to admit, we as a field have also accepted psychology's definition of health as individualistic satisfaction with self and getting along with others as normal and healthy (i.e., adaption to the societal status quo). According to Thompson (1992) of the Child and Family Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, "most of the research *about* women in family studies . . . strives to fit women into existing or refined concepts and theories while expanding the subject matter of the discipline to include women's concerns" (p. 4, italics added).

The notion of empowerment in the workplace from the perspective of *labor literature* is certainly present, although the term itself is not widely used. The issues are the "deskilling of labor" and a lack of autonomy and control for workers. These are responses to the long-standing influence of the classic work by Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), which transferred control from workers to management. A number of authors have responded critically to Taylorism for its disempowering effect on workers (Nagel, 1991). Scientific management had a direct influence on home economics through the work of Lillian Gilbreth and Christine Frederick during the development of home management as a field of study.

## Reflections

It is interesting to note that the *OED* describes *freedom* from a Western democratic perspective that limits its meaning primarily to *freedom from* constraint and ignores its meaning as *freedom to*. The freedom from Lockean meaning, so important to the understanding of empowerment, is consistent with patriarchal views wherein the absence of restraint is considered adequate and justifies the unequal outcomes of the struggle for power as the survival of the fittest. The dregs of society sink to the bottom and those on top deserve to be there. This is acted out as support for the privatization of basic needs such as health care, reduction in support for families, especially women, children, and minorities, and the reduction of government regulation. This position favors the advantaged and powerful who benefit from individualism and competition and who justify their position with the "trickle-down" theory. This is based on a zero-sum notion of power as finite; if one group obtains power, another loses it. In contrast, the concept of *freedom to* is focused on the needs of the subordinate groups, the disadvantaged, and the majority. Based on a conception of power that is not finite, freedom is conceptualized not so much with a focus on individualism (and its reification in the free enterprise system and competition in many aspects of our lives) but on concern for the public good and on maximizing the freedom of everyone in workplaces, families, classrooms—in society.

In order for this society and its institutions (including the family) to flourish, it seems to me that there needs to be both freedom *from* external constraints and freedom *to* enhance the public good, which

includes the groups in society unable to compete. Bellah et al. (1985) argue that our current weighting of individualism and commitment to the public good needs to be readjusted.

Perhaps if we had a more balanced view of power and empowerment, we would not attend so much to problems such as drug abuse and teen pregnancy as if they were problems of individuals who need to be controlled by legal means, treated, and/or educated to ameliorate their individual problems. Instead, we might focus more on the societal conditions and attitudes which destroy hope and disempower. By focusing on this level, we would address the conditions that lead young people to perceive drug dealing as their only choice to make a decent living or that lead addicts to use drugs as an escape from hopeless situations. We would regard adequate health care and employment as a right of all citizens.

If we were to hold the conventional view of power consolidated in the hands of a few (rendering the majority only marginally powerful and others powerless), we would conclude that those with the power to make some fundamental changes are unlikely to change unless they themselves are convinced of its necessity. However, if we accept the views of Foucault, Freire, Thompson, as well as Brown and Paolucci in our own literature, we would place more emphasis in our professional practice on understanding power and power relations and on empowerment both as an inner state and as an external set of circumstances. Generalizing from Thompson (1992), we need to stop portraying the women, minority groups, and others (who are perceived as not having power) as victims and begin to portray them as active agents who can resist domination and find ways around the

constraints imposed on them. We should move beyond socializing for the status quo (e.g., by improving the efficacy of women within an unequal context) and beyond documenting injustice to placing more emphasis on reducing oppression—what it is, how it operates, and how it is experienced in everyday life. Families are both oppressive and creatively rebellious, supportive, and contexts for struggle. Thompson (1992) argues that what is needed is "research for women . . . consciously aimed at emancipating women and enhancing their lives" (p. 4). She suggests that family studies research (and I would add other forms of professional practice) for women should "(a) help women connect their personal experience in families to the larger social context, (b) capture how women struggle against and adapt to family relations that both nurture and oppress them, (c) provide a vision of nonoppressive family relations, (d) embrace the diversity among women and families by race, class, age, and sexual preference, and (e) challenge prevailing concepts and assumptions in the discipline, including how we think about gender" (p. 4).

In doing so, we need to question our own perceptions of freedom and empowerment. In addition, we need to recognize that empowerment of individuals and families as a social institution (as well as home economics as a profession) comes from a change in the perception of power and from a recognition that a feeling of disempowerment comes at least in part from a lack of recognition of the available choices, which are invisible to those feeling powerless. Empowerment starts internally and from there leads to removal of externally disempowering conditions. We need to take both parts of the Brown and Paolucci mission statement more seriously for ourselves as well as for our

constituents. An important contribution can be made if we work to enable individuals and families, and ourselves as professionals, to become self-forming, not solely in an individualistic way, and to become involved in the critique and reformulation of social policies that will empower all families.

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# A Language of Empowerment

Carol A. Morgaine

*The home economics profession has declared its mission as involving the empowerment of individuals and families as they work to improve the quality of their everyday lives. While the term empowerment is currently used within a variety of helping professions, little has been done to explicate the connections between its meaning and its applications. This article will explore the underlying assumptions of two definitions as well as the ways in which language systems, culture, and power are linked to home economists' professional efforts to empower individuals and families.*

Since its inception, home economics has debated its definition and mission. Although the terms selected to state the mission have varied from era to era and from country to country, the consistent focus has been on improving the quality of everyday life for individuals and families (Brown, 1985; IFHE, 1988). In the past few years attention has converged on the moral and ethical nature of our profession (Brown, 1980, 1984). At the same time, we have realized that relationships of dominance and subordinate influence professional actions (Apple, 1979; Grumet, 1988a), and that language is a conveyor of power and dominance (Hultgren, 1989; Morgaine, 1992). In the midst of this insight, we have begun to use the term *empowerment* in relation to our professional mission (AHEA Today, 1990).

This article will consider the ways our professional language may be conveying messages that are antithetical to empowerment. Central to this exploration will be an explication of how we have been absorbed into dominant relationships (Smith, 1990) through societally endorsed language practices and how we may be continuing the cycle. This

article will conclude with a call for a language of empowerment that is consistent with our professional mission.

## Empowerment

Webster (1983) defines empowerment as giving power or authority to others. In keeping with this common usage definition, teachers have thought to be empowering students as they disseminate knowledge (Van Hook, 1990), and social services professionals have incorporated diverse strategies such as client participation in decision making (Allen & Barr, 1984). Embedded in these applications of the term empowerment is the assumption that professionals have more power (influence, knowledge, expertise, and/or skills) than their students or clients. Therefore, they are considered most equipped to determine what goals are appropriate for students or clients. The unequal distribution of power, if consciously realized, is regarded as necessary and unavoidable. Likewise, the ways in which these differences in power influence the attitudes and actions of all those involved are rarely considered.

However, growing numbers of professionals, who are involved in projects to empower individuals and families, have begun to challenge this

definition and its underlying assumption. In an interview, seven women who coordinate empowerment efforts throughout the world maintained that (a) empowerment cannot be bestowed on others, (b) empowerment does not mean simply giving the disenfranchised more responsibility without additional support or resources, (c) empowerment must include both individual and collective actions, (d) empowerment is not assertiveness training, (e) empowerment is not just feeling good about oneself, and (f) empowerment cannot be limited to personal change (Allen & Barr, 1990). They argued, instead, that empowerment processes must be based on experiences designed to illuminate, challenge, and change social structures that support and maintain injustice and unequal power.

Recently, the Cornell Empowerment Project defined empowerment as "an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater control over those resources" (Allen, Barr, Cochran, Dean, & Greene, 1989, p. 2). Similarly, Rappaport (1987) agrees that empowerment is a process that results in people, organizations, and communities gaining control over their everyday affairs. In addition, he

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adds that empowerment will look different in each setting.

An assumption of these definitions is that everyday life has included oppressive and unjust influences and, as such, has placed unwarranted restrictions on certain people and on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Therefore, empowerment, alternatively defined, must include challenging the conceptualization of power as a hierarchical and scarce commodity (Baker-Miller, 1982).

Those hoping to facilitate processes of empowerment, then, must become students of the complex power dynamics inherent in helping relationships. This is important because, to the degree that people have been oppressed or have experienced unjust life restrictions, their development, their views of self and the world, and their actions may have been influenced.

Miller (1983) asserts that critical thinking processes are hindered when children grow up in situations which block authentic self-formation. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) have identified positive correlations between women's views of themselves as knowers and the social forces which influenced their families during their growing-up years. Freire (1968, 1986) contends that the more underlying power dynamics are ignored and attempts to empower are limited to disseminating information, the less those being helped actually develop the desired critical consciousness. Instead they continue to accept the passive role that has been imposed on them.

Vanderslice (1990) believes that when people have been oppressed or have experienced unjust life restrictions, two aspects of their worldviews must begin to change for empowerment processes to evolve. First, they must begin to view themselves as worthy, competent, and deserving. Second, they must begin

to regard themselves as having options within their everyday worlds. In order for these changes to begin, individuals must develop an understanding of how societal structures of dominance have supported and maintained unjust life restrictions. They must learn how they have come to view themselves as unworthy, incompetent, undeserving, and without options. As these insights emerge, those who have been silenced will be able to speak (Simon, 1987).

In developing a thorough understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, a study of the links between language and hierarchical social structures is foundational. Having learned our first language as our cognitions developed, we are usually unaware of the ways language has influenced our perceptions of the world, self, and others. Therefore, a consideration of how language develops during childhood will help to illuminate the ways in which we have been absorbed into an acceptance of hierarchical relations.

#### Language and Socialization for Dominance and Ruling

At birth, we began to be acculturated into the ecological systems of our everyday lives. Language plays a central role in these processes because contextual meanings are absorbed while grammatical and semantic rules are learned. Through language we learn to identify concepts which are woven together with fundamental cultural values. For example, in the dominant North American culture, language is used to link concepts of good and bad to the valuing of achievement, success, and cheerfulness. These values are usually congruent with commonly used metaphors (i.e., *good values are considered to be higher than things that are devalued*): "I'm so proud of her--she's climbing to the

top;" "He's really down today--why don't you go and try to cheer him up?" Woven into early socialization processes these metaphors are accepted as self-evident and, as such, are rarely challenged (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

#### Developmental and Cultural Influences

During a child's first few years of life, language emerges as the child develops cognitive and physiological capabilities. During this period the child learns (a) the sound patterns appropriate to the culture's dominant language, (b) words and their meanings, (c) the rules regarding the form and structure of words, and (d) an understanding of how to put words together to form sentences (Sroufe & Cooper, 1988). Although early linguistic theorists differed as to whether language, thought, or action emerged first, contemporary theorists agree on their interactive nature (Bruner, 1964; Edelman, 1984; Piaget, 1959; Vygotsky, 1934, 1962). Most agree that the process begins as life begins and is woven together with developmental and cultural influences.

Several authors have illuminated the links between language and culture (Martel, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Hall's classic work (1959, 1981) explained the intersections between language, culture, and power. Culture, according to Hall, can be examined on three different levels: formal, informal, and technical. Each level can be further analyzed by differentiating between what Hall calls learnings, awarenesses, and affects. His framework will be used to examine the interactions between language, culture, and power as we seek greater understanding of a language of empowerment.

## Formal Learnings and Awarenesses

Formal learnings and awarenesses are cultural values taught by both verbal and nonverbal commands and admonitions when adult authority figures purposely, but not necessarily with critical consciousness, mold children into hegemonic value systems (Dewey, 1959; Green, 1986; Prilleltensky, 1990). Usually, these formal teachings convey morally dualistic and rigid notions. For example, children learn *right* from *wrong* as they learn to acquiesce to adult authority by hearing reprimands such as, "Do as you are told!" "Sit still! Quit wiggling!" and "Now stop that!" Thus, power differences between certain groups of people (e.g., adults and children) are understood as the right or natural order (Grumet, 1988a).

Smith claims that because children usually begin life in the woman's domain as they are cleaned, suckled, and cuddled, they learn the language of *motherese*, "the babble of women to their children, the speech that is not speech" (1990, p. 3). Gradually, in order to prepare them for the language of those who rule, they are transferred to the realm of *fathertongue*—or the language of education, the media, and the law (Smith, 1990). It could be said that formal learnings and awarenesses begin as this transfer is made. Some suggest that these processes are more thorough for little boys than little girls, thus preparing males for ruling and females for perpetual childhood and dependency (Grumet, 1988a; Smith, 1987).

Formal learnings and awarenesses teach conformity and control. Generally, they are activated when value violations occur, thus evoking a powerful tide of negative emotions. The language used in the formal realm tends to objectify both knowledge and people by using

dominating strategies which devalue individual needs, feelings, and everyday realities (Smith, 1987).

## Informal Learnings and Awarenesses

Informal learnings and awarenesses commonly occur on unconscious levels because the strategies used are role modeling, imitation, and the gradual reinforcement of clusters of behaviors, attitudes, or mannerisms. Like formal learnings, informal ones and awarenesses incorporate hegemonic value systems. Because they are learned unconsciously, there is little awareness of the ingrained principles or patterns. For example, as children observe their role models they see that women commonly follow the lead of men, employees expect to be supervised by their employers, and adults defer to the authority of the law. Through these observations they may unconsciously assume that relationships are supposed to have a hierarchical nature. These experiences can also be laced with hidden assumptions (e.g., those in subordinate positions must rely on and conform to the knowledge of those in dominant positions). Early in life, hierarchical structures are considered normal and are not subject to questioning.

## Child Rearing Influences

A more complex illustration of the way informal learnings and awarenesses are influenced by language, power, and cultural values can be gleaned from Lawton's (1982) application of Davis' (1976) history of childrearing modes. Lawton pointed out that our current era of social services was preceded by an era in which it was decided that psychological control of children was more humane than physical control. Because of this, parents replaced

more blatant, physical means of controlling children with psychosocial means such as mixed messages (incongruities between informal and formal learnings) and psychic manipulation (purposeful shaming tactics). Although the resulting control over children took a different form, the outcomes were even more powerful. Davis (1976) maintained that children socialized in this way developed into moralistic-didactic adults who were unconsciously obsessed with controlling their own and others' lives. Grumet (1988b) noted that such individuals rely on societally endorsed niceties and conventions to manipulate and control others. By so doing, they create illusions of altruism or caring, thus masking their real goal of controlling others.

Noddings (1984) defines *caring* as helping another person grow into actualization. Unfortunately, authentic altruistic caring may not be possible for those whose childhood informal learnings and awarenesses have been dominated by psychological control and manipulation. During their growing-up years, these children learn to moralize all aspects of society and have an obsessive concern for rigid views of right and wrong. As adults, they seem compelled to try to control themselves and others in order to avoid wasting any and all resources. They place efficiency above all other values and hold a view that societal authorities should "parent" the common person (Lawton, 1982). Rather than caring that can be received by others to facilitate actualization, the resulting effect is a pseudo-altruism in which dominant cultural mores are prescribed and enforced. The ultimate outcome can be quite disempowering in the lives of individuals.



## Technical Learnings and Awarenesses

Technical learnings and awarenesses are forms of cultural knowledge that can be explicitly transmitted either orally or in writing and thus can be replicated in multiple settings. They are transmitted by those who occupy dominant positions within the culture and occur at the highest levels of consciousness. Teachers in educational institutions are among the first to introduce children to the technical levels of culture. Dominated by the language of prediction and control (Bochner, 1985), those who rule in these institutions (principles and teachers) often display an uncompromising attitude toward students. They select content and methods of dissemination and create criteria by which the students are assessed. As ways of thinking are legitimized by the teacher's speech and the printed and written word, corresponding worldviews, problems, questions, solutions, and standards are established.

Students, of all ages and at every level, absorb technical awarenesses and learnings during their educational experiences. As they do so their image is shaped in relation to who they should be, how they should look, and the content of their inner thoughts (Smith, 1987). Thus language is used to repress cultures and religions, mask political persuasions, mark insiders from outsiders, and legitimize professionals by confirming power on the norms they establish (Edelman, 1984). Cloaked with tradition and authority, these norms are rarely questioned.

The ambiguous and contradictory messages of technical forms of conveying culture may not be easily discerned by recipients whose formal and informal learnings and awarenesses have been laced with

unequal relationships. Miller asserts that when psychological manipulations (facilitated by hierarchical social structures) are used to teach children to conform, they frequently do not notice, "even at an advanced age, when someone is taking advantage of them as long as the person uses a 'friendly' tone of voice" (1983, p. 6). In addition, feelings and perceptions deemed deviant by dominant cultural values may be suppressed. As children learn to internalize these oppressive influences they begin to discount their own reality and conform to the messages about who they should be and what they should think and feel.

## Language and Professional Practices

The interactions between language, culture, and power follow children into adulthood and, eventually, into their selected professions. Formal and informal systems are supported by technical systems in that the organizational and functional structures of legitimate institutions replicate the patriarchal and hierarchical structures commonly found within families (Grumet, 1988a). Thus children are absorbed into hegemonious relations of ruling (Smith, 1990).

## Preprofessional Preparations

As a result of their childhood experiences with technical learnings and awareness, students preparing to enter professions are already schooled in following rules explicitly, complying with course outlines and assignments, learning concepts, and developing competencies (AHEA, 1989; Slocum, 1991). Likewise, preprofessional studies rarely encourage students to challenge established patterns of dominance and subordination. Thus their experiences

with teaching as telling continue as they carry on their roles of being told and taking notes.

Many seek entrance into the profession of home economics because of altruistic desires to help others improve the quality of their everyday lives. However, knowledge, people, and everyday life are soon objectified as those in the dominant positions of educational institutions reorder experience, direct attention, provoke responses, and express values (Grumet, 1988a, 1988b; Smith, 1990). Gradually, through carefully sequenced programs designed to teach foundational philosophies and accepted practices, preservice professionals are taught to view the individuals they will be teaching or working with as *students* or *clients*. Both written and oral forms of language teach students how to teach or to manage client cases, thus implying that they are to do something to their students or clients. Terms such as objective, achieve, acquire, manage, and effective dominate contemporary forms of educational and social service professions. Students learn a bag of tricks, teaching techniques, and how to manage resistant clients. Traditional gender differences are also maintained and supported by gendered values (e.g., the valuing of achievement, competition, control, and power) as well as by the devaluing of care, concern, nurturance, and connectedness (Attar, 1990; Eyre, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Martin, 1981; Rich, 1985). Assisted by textbooks, which are often devoid of emotion, students are taught to devalue and distrust their feelings. Instead, they are encouraged to conceal them to avoid confusion and deny unsanctioned insight (Attar, 1990).

As values of expedience and control are taught over caring and concern, illusions of efficiency and

achievement are gradually accepted as appropriate alternatives. Unnamed and hidden from view are the assumptions of prediction, control, and manipulation. To the degree that childhood lessons about conformity have been internalized, preservice students quickly adapt. Indeed, part of their introduction into the profession is their compliance to norms supported by the specialized and theoretical knowledge base of the profession (Sarfatti, 1977).

### Professional Practice

Newly graduated home economists receive their final initiation into the profession by conforming further to the norms established by their employing institutions. Whether in educational institutions or human services agencies, predominantly female home economists are encouraged by their administrators to devalue their socialization based on nurturance, caring, and connectedness (Gilligan, 1982; Grumet, 1988a; Noddings, 1984). Instead, they are expected to make use of principles of management and efficiency. All too often the language of a standardized curriculum, teaching or management by objectives, and attending to the interests of *stake holders* motivates new professionals to ignore or minimize the needs of individuals in order to achieve measurable outcomes.

When newly employed home economists do not measure up to these management expectations, their sense of failure may be great. If they find themselves considering the needs of individuals at the expense of efficiency, they may view themselves as needing to learn management skills as well as to become less sensitive. Rather than challenging accepted assumptions and traditions, their confidence may plummet as they blame themselves for not learning the

skills and techniques that they perceive as ensuring their success (Grumet, 1988a).

In turn, students and clients complete the cycle. Having a lifetime of experience within hierarchical structures, they are unquestioning of hidden assumptions. Falling short of the messages of perfectionism within standardized and objective assessment of their achievements, they accept our professional labels of underachiever, deviant, resistant, or from a multiple-problem family (Edelman, 1984). Hearing our language of disempowerment, they continue to contribute to the status quo (Bochner, 1985).

### Needed: A Language of Empowerment

Empowerment will not emerge if educational institutions and their representatives are unaware of the ways in which relationships are embedded with the language of dominance. Therefore, if empowerment is our genuine mission, a quest for insight must precede a change in action. Freire holds that *conscientizing*, or the "deepening of the attitude of awareness" (1968/1986, p. 101) is the first aspect of empowerment. We must all become aware of the ways in which we have been socialized into relationships based on dominance and ruling. Then we will be able to understand how our language perpetuates disempowerment.

### Claiming a Language of Empowerment

In order to possess a language of empowerment we must begin by exploring the ways in which our own socialization has prepared us for ruling relationships. This involves reflecting on growing-up experiences which oppressed us by demanding a

silencing of our personal perceptions. Noddings (1984) suggested that since most of us have been both personally and professionally socialized into the language of disempowerment, we may need to be nurtured into owning our voices through dialogue, practice, and affirmation.

Contemplating these often repressed memories (Greene, 1986) within an atmosphere of nurturance, we can begin to name our own realities. We can be honest about points of confusion, doubt, and strong emotions. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) refer to this reflecting and naming as moving from silence (or only receiving knowledge) to being able to construct knowledge by integrating our own voices with the voices of others. These processes of naming, repossessing, and declaring our realities are related to truth, morality, and consciousness--and thus to the mission of home economics.

Blum & McHugh (1984) suggest that thinking, which peels back the layers of consciousness is the avenue for truth and illumination. Critical self-reflection "brings to consciousness those determinants of the self-formation process" (Habermas, 1971, p. 22) that have contributed to ideological conceptions of the world and resulting everyday practices. Self-reflection seeks to examine that which is taken for granted, including one's own subjective language, and to question the rationalities, interests, assumptions, and beliefs of self and others. "Successful self-reflection results in insight which satisfies not only the conditions of discursive realization of a claimed truth (or correctness) but in addition satisfies the condition of the realization of a claim to authenticity" (Habermas, 1973, p. 23).

## Intersections: Language, Action, and Empowerment

As we become grounded in critical self-reflection, we begin to cultivate a language and "knowledge of action and thought, of praxis, of peace, and revolution" (Martel, 1987, p. 44). Having perceived how our life experiences have been unjustly silenced by societal structures of dominance, we realize how we have been inadvertently absorbed into a language of ruling (Britton & Maynard, 1984; Fay, 1977; Miller, 1983).

Emancipation, or the power to choose and act, emerges with this enlightenment (Greene, 1986; Martel, 1987). We begin with our own realities at the site of our own experience. We make choices, claim our voices, and break out of our silence to make ourselves heard (Smith, 1987). Gradually, in doing so, we begin to realize our mission of empowering families.

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# An Empowerment Orientation for Home Economics

Eleanore Vaines

*Home economics appears to function according to three separate orientations. This article presents these paradigms and proposes that the empowerment orientation is most appropriate because it is consistent with the field's mission. The profession is called to build consensus on its meaning and scope.*

Home economics, as expressed by its intellectual, pragmatic, and ethical activities, appears to function according to three separate orientations or paradigms<sup>1</sup>: technical, no choice, and empowerment (Vaines, 1990). From review of these orientations and their unique groundings, this article (a) discusses the selection of paradigms to guide development of the profession and to explain the nature of the field of home economics and (b) argues that an empowerment orientation is most compatible with the field's mission (Brown & Paolucci, 1979).

The underlying paradigms of home economics have been examined in various ways, particularly since the late 1950s. However, rational agreement on the field's orientation has never been formally sought by the profession (Lee & Dressel, 1963; McGrath and Johnson, 1968; Schlater, 1970; Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Brown, 1985, 1989). As a result, confusion remains among home economists and the public as to the meaning and scope of the field.

## Choosing An Orientation for Home Economics

In her recent overview of the nature of theory, Bubolz (1991) noted the importance of theories as "intellectual underpinnings that justify the

existence of a discipline as scholarly and unique" (p. 4). Thompson (1988) proposed a Hestian theory for the empowerment of home economics in the context of the private sphere. Bubolz and Sontag (1988) held that home economics is best explained as an integrative field. Vincenti (1990) strengthened these positions by proposing an integrative curriculum for home economics in higher education. These theorists, among others, have expanded our thinking about orientations of home economics.

A mission statement clearly articulating the meaning of home economics takes on greater importance as the field moves into the 21st century. From the political standpoint it should reflect the future problems of competition for and sustainable utilization of the world's resources—in the context of food production, clothing, transportation, housing, health, and family life. From the public relations standpoint the mission statement should clearly communicate what the field's professional services are and what they can contribute to a troubled world. Clarity of our message is essential if we are to receive ongoing community sanction and authority. From the professional standpoint, the mission statement should help to eliminate confusion obscuring the meaning of the field of home economics and contribute to the development of a cohesive and collegial community.

Unity within a field requires an agreed upon orientation that (a) states

a clear underlying rationale; (b) defines its activities; and (c) communicates in a consistent and coherent manner. This is what the field of home economics needs if it is to fulfill its unique mission as a community grounded in moral vision.

## A Technical Orientation for Home Economics

The technical orientation is referred to in different ways. Technical rationality (Schon, 1983), egocentric (Vaines, 1990), and technical-instrumental (Brown & Paolucci, 1979) are labels which identify this distinctive way of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962)<sup>2</sup>. This orientation, explored extensively by scholars in home economics (Brown, 1985; Hultgren & Coomer, 1989; Thompson, 1991), views the world as a machine composed of parts, of interacting organisms and things.

People who live this worldview perceive themselves and others as products of society and as cogs in a giant machine. Society sets the rules, and success is gained through conformity and through competition with others who are also striving to succeed. Failure is perceived as inability to live up to the rules.

The basic expressions of culture are found in its language and in its institutional and political structures (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). In a technically oriented society these structures are the vehicles of power required for imposing authority over others and for controlling the distribution of

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human and material resources such that they are both efficient and effective (Bellah et al., 1985; Bernstein, 1976; Capra, 1983; Eisler, 1987). In this context, the first and most important consideration in any decision is maximization of economic growth. Language and the institutional and political structures associated with the technical orientation are typically hierarchical in organization and linear cause-effect in analysis. Winners and losers in the system are polarized, and those unable to compete are isolated from the rest of society through unemployment. Education from this perspective must optimize the economic engine.

People consume things, and it is things which define them. What's more, change comes from authorities who know what is best for maintaining the status quo or improving upon it. In order for the economic engine to be efficient, goals, usually materialistic ones, are set and measured.

Thus women, children, family, and daily life under the technical orientation tend to be trivialized and dismissed because their worth is secondary (Eisler, 1987, xviii). What is worthwhile is information. Analytic-empirical science is advocated as the only way of knowing and, in turn, the only basis upon which problems of society should be addressed (Schon, 1983; Twain, 1983). Questions of importance are value free, and the primary ones are What? and How? (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Vaines, 1992). What are the definitions of clean food, air, and water? How can these be supplied?

Many professions are grounded in the technical-rational paradigm (Olsen, 1989; Morgaine, 1992) and many others pretend to be. Often the empirical abstractions of a profession completely fail to describe reality.

However, having evolved in the *age of science*, it is not surprising that the technical orientation is emphasized in the practice of home economics.

Professionals envision themselves as experts who dispense information to a receiver. From this view of professional practice, both the professional and those receiving their services become objects to be manipulated toward the achievement of preconceived goals.

The long-term consequence of living out a technical orientation is described by Schon (1983) as a crisis of confidence; this approach to practice tends to discourage professionals and create dissatisfied receivers. Problems of daily life cannot be solved by the professional as implied or promised, and piecemeal solutions to problems tend to create more and greater problems than those originally addressed (Schon, 1983).

Critics of the technical orientation point out other inadequacies (Capra, 1983; Peat, 1991). Control over phenomena can prove to be an illusion because an empirical study often is narrowed to variables which can be empirically formulated. Sometimes, the complex interactions of living systems are hidden or missed. The wholeness of the food chain is lost when small facets are studied and when many variables and variable relationships, known and unknown, are not included. For example, it is necessary to study food production around the world in relation to social and political systems as well as to global air flows, ocean currents, water supplies, pollution, and soil quality.

The kinds of social issues facing individuals and families presently exceed the capability of empirically-derived formulations or any other presently known methodology that a technical orientation alone might encompass. Experimental data

underlying an empirical formulation of a system provide only a snapshot of short-term behavior. Further, the ability of the empirical formulation to predict system behavior is negated if the variables are time variant, magnitude dependent, or nonlinear. These characteristics, true of all complex and dynamic systems, have confounded many technical disciplines in respect to their ability to predict such things as earthquakes, ozone depletion, weather, and the performance of manufacturing processes. Many aspects of process manufacturing, despite 50 years of intense automation, still require human sentience and analysis if the plant is to operate at all.

Continuing to embrace this way of thinking about ourselves in a world that is competitive and exclusive in nature is morally indefensible. It is also contradictory to the mission of home economics elaborated by Brown and Paolucci (1979). Analytic-empirical science when offered as one of many analytical methods, rather than the only method, provides important support data about individuals, families, and their relationship to other living systems.

If home economics enters the 21st century without committing to an examined and consistent orientation, the field is likely to end up where it does not want to be. This could prove to be the result if home economics takes the second possible orientation: the no-choice position.

### The No-Choice Orientation for Home Economics

According to Bellah et al. (1985) and Schaefer (1987), another option open to humans is to do nothing; taking no action is a form of choosing. Home economics has a mission statement which is grounded in cooperative values related to family as an environment and the family in

the near environment (Brown & Paolucci, 1979). To date, however, the field has been reluctant to probe the deep meaning of this mission statement.

To develop a theory and communicate the field's orientation requires concerted scholarly activity, and few professionals want to study theory and probe the depths of a mission statement. It requires translation and incorporation of the significant historical and contemporary literature to find the meaning of professional service as well as extensive dialogue among members of the home economics community.

Home economics has struggled with many issues related to its nature, but commitment to making theoretical choices has not followed. Evidence suggests that some professionals practice according to individualized interpretations of the home economics field. Brown (1984, 1985) addressed this dilemma of choosing not to choose an orientation for home economics. This choice can have serious consequences, notably through the contradictions between the actions of its practitioners and the declarations of its mission statement.

Socially responsible orientations that advance the position that all people are gifted and capable reflect the deep meaning of home economics (Brown, 1985). What follows is a description of such an orientation.

### An Empowerment Orientation for Home Economics

This third orientation that describes the function of home economics is empowerment. It, too, has had different labels: ecocentered (Vaines, 1990), reflective practice (Schon, 1983; Vaines, 1992), and empowerment (Williams, 1988). This orientation has been explored by scholars in home economics to a

limited degree (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Brown, 1984). Eisler (1987) traced the roots to prehistoric times when men and women lived in partnership (p. xv-xvi). Freire (1970, 1973) and Bellah et al. (1991) developed contemporary understandings about the empowerment paradigm.

This orientation describes the world as a network of interrelated living systems (Ableson, 1991). People, therefore, envision themselves as self-forming persons (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 23) within an active community. Such a belief system leads people to work together for the common good of all (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Bellah et al., 1991) because participation means that persons become part of something larger than themselves. Thus, society becomes a community of persons actively involved in shaping a moral vision of daily life (Palmer, 1990).

Within the empowerment orientation, power is shared; leadership is inclusive in nature by bringing people together to struggle with important community concerns. The language of empowerment reflects these beliefs. For example, effective is replaced as a criterion in decision making by a term such as sustainable. Children become *our* children because the future of planet Earth is being played out now with the new generation, and it is they who must cooperate if survival of living systems is to be assured.

Change, from this perspective, is a process of transforming ourselves in the community (Fay, 1977). Many ways of perceiving and knowing are essential in order to act in a reflective manner to honor the interests of all living systems. Schon (1983) and Morgaine (1992) provide examples of professions studying their own orientations and transforming their ways of being-in-the-world. Each profession needs to build on its

historical grounding and critique its present state in order to address what should be. In the empowerment orientation, professionals will be involved as active participants and collaborators in the community (Schon, 1983; Vaines, 1992).

The long-term consequence of living an empowerment orientation is that both professionals and those they serve become grounded in hope. Problems of daily life are viewed as aspects of whole systems, and they are addressed as ongoing processes. For example, the food chain becomes visible in this orientation as a complex and intricate web. People are users instead of consumers; food and the interrelated systems required to produce safe food sustain life; waste is used and shared; water is preserved and distributed carefully; land is studied as a resource and maintained for long-term sustenance; social and political decisions are consistent with maintaining and improving the earth for the next generation. This approach to problems demonstrates the complexity of the empowerment orientation; many variables, including their interdependence with the whole, are necessary to an understanding of the web—the pattern that connects. Ignorance of the delicate webs of life creates an illusion that people can control nature without consequences (Fay, 1977).

Living systems are fragile and enduring, mysterious and knowable, and apparently healthy even in the process of dying. Such paradoxes are the underpinnings of what Schon (1983) refers to as an orientation to everyday problems that integrates subject matter in addressing complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts. These characteristics are inherent in the social and political issues that are integral parts of everyday life.

The *age of science* is in a position to be replaced by new paradigms



(Capra, 1983). The issue before us now is whether we will choose a new paradigm or continue with a structure oriented to technology, competition, growth, and maximum (rather than sustainable) utilization of the world's resources. The call of the empowerment orientation is to choose a way which is grounded in a moral vision for tomorrow and which connects living systems with the metaphor of Earth-as-home (Bernstein, 1976).

### The Position: Home Economics Should Adopt an Empowerment Orientation

Clarifying and explicating the present orientations of home economics are important antecedents to the debate about the future of the profession. The choice of orientation should result from widespread deliberation and consensus-building processes regarding the nature of the profession and the moral vision of the home economics field (Coombs, 1988a, 1988b). The mission statement should describe the mandate of the field and define the boundaries of home economics both as an area of study and as a profession. Agreement on the field's mission, its areas of study, and its professional expressions will empower members to shape practice in imaginative ways. Brown said it well:

[T]hroughout its history, home economics has been a field of study not concerned with knowing only for the sake of knowing, but concerned with action which makes reflective use of knowledge in service to members of society . . . [and] also . . . [with] concern for the everyday lives of people in the home . . . . When a professional group makes use of knowledge to provide a service claimed to be of benefit to members of society, it places itself in a political-moral role . . . . Further, I am accepting the belief of home economists . . . [that they] are affected by the historical-social conditions in which the family lives. This means that unless the actions of home

economists do contribute to the common interests of those served rather than to any special and powerful interests that dominate society, we not only contradict ourselves; we also become unwitting partners in promoting an undemocratic society (1985a, p. 6-7).

Orienting theory maps can identify territories which have been previously overlooked or taken for granted. They can function as "explanations for a relatively broad range of events and can be applied to a variety of substantive concerns" (Bubolz, 1991, p. 2). Table 1 summarizes three competing maps of the intellectual, pragmatic, and ethical activities in home economics. These maps are intended to provide an improved grounding for the development of more specific statements about the nature of the field.

In summary, home economics needs consensus on an orienting theory which is coherent, consistent, and communicable for application to its critical concerns. It is the thesis of this paper that an empowering description of home economics will (a) guide the evolution of the field; (b) justify its services to society; and (c) strengthen the ability of home economists to articulate their being-in-the-world.

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**Table 1**  
**Professional Orientations: Three Positions**

	Definition/Description	Worldview	Politics	Institutions	Language	Everyday Life	End(s) Sought
Empowerment (power with)	Bottom up CHANGE: power is in people working actively together for the common good. Through these means, people are empowered to shape their tomorrow by cooperating together. All "authority" is challenged in view of what was, what is, and what should be in relation to what is believed, studied, experienced, and done in light of social responsibilities to all living systems.	World is home.	Public and private domains working together through direct and indirect actions in the community context. Government at all levels is a way of sharing power to achieve the common good.	Social structures created by people to serve people benefit the common good.	Language is examined and reflected upon as means of living an emancipatory life world.	Everyday life is a conscious lived experience in which persons actively participate. Values: sustainable environment for all living systems; compassion and caring are bases of ethics.	Common good or moral vision is shared and defined by participating actively together to reflect on the meaning of what it means to be human in relation to all living systems and to live in harmony together for the interest of all—a position which engenders hope.
Technical (power over)	Top down CHANGE: those in power position, directly or indirectly, impose policies and politics to benefit those in power. Therefore, those in power use their strengths to control and influence distribution of limited resources. Power is hierarchical and deeply embedded.	World is a place to be used.	Politics is engineered by imposing centralized decision making on communal life to achieve a correct order of the state and society.	Imposed social structures maintain the status quo.	Language tends to be mechanistic and manipulative, thus implying the worth of phenomena.	Those not in power are controlled through ways of thinking. Everyday life (domestic, female) is, therefore, trivialized as unimportant. Power domain dominates.	'Good' defined in materialistic terms and separated from inner, private, public, biosphere domains—a position which engenders hopelessness.
No Choice (powerless)	Power is accepted and unexamined; an invisible and obvious "given" which goes unchallenged because persons perceive themselves as too powerless to change the social order.	World is invisible and accepted.	Politics is accepted and unexamined.	Institutions are societal structures to which a person must adapt.	Language is accepted and unexamined.	Everyday life is a given; it is a routine which is unquestioned or valued.	The goal is to be "happy" and to live a satisfactory life—a position which engenders personal costs at the expense of living systems.

# An Aesthetic Approach to Empowerment

Marsha Rehm

*Empowerment occurs when full human potential is developed through reflective thinking and critical dialogue. An aesthetic approach can contribute imaginative insights and can empower new possibilities when applied to personal and family life. Described as the imaginative integration of diverse parts into new wholes, aesthetic experience includes qualities such as diversity, harmony, balance, resolution of tension, value expression, and drama. Specific examples from home economics literature illustrate how an aesthetic perspective can inform the reflective and critical abilities necessary for empowerment.*

According to Baldwin (1990), "A concern for empowerment should be interpreted as a concern for the development of existing potential" (p. 7). She argues that reflective thinking and critical dialogue enable families to discover their own potential and thus empower themselves. Because an aesthetic perspective is concerned with "what might be" in addition to the reality of "what is," it can inform the reflective insight and critical vision underlying empowerment.

This article first explores the meaning of empowerment in relation to the transformation of untapped potential through reflective thinking and critical dialogue. The second part indicates how an aesthetic approach can strengthen the ability to discover new forms of thought and value, gain critical insights, and contribute to personal and social transformation. Finally, examples from home economics are presented to suggest how an aesthetic stance can inform the empowerment of families.

## The Empowerment of Potential

Baldwin (1990) argues that "the empowerment of families lies at the core of the emancipative interest of home economics" (p. 10) and that

empowerment ultimately depends on full development of human potential. Individual empowerment includes a "sense of control over one's life in personality, cognition, and motivation" (Rappaport, 1986, p. 69). It involves the ability to understand, define, and act upon one's own needs (Baldwin, 1990). Of course, the process of individual development occurs in a larger context and is shaped by external forces.

Individuals and families must gain "freedom from external constraints imposed by the social, political, and economic spheres of society" (Baldwin, 1990, p. 3). Empowerment occurs when families become "sensitive to cultural diversity and the realities of political power and domination" (Hicks, 1990, p. 39). If home economists and families validate individual differences (Pugh & Donleavy, 1988) and cultivate diverse sources of potential within a collective group, "mutual empowerment" (Rappaport, 1986) results. Cooperatively, people then can "challenge the ultimacy and total legitimacy of the present order" (Sullivan, 1990, p. 70) and create alternative possibilities. Ultimately, empowerment is a "powerful force for change contained within ourselves, our significant others, and our communities" (Rappaport, 1986, p. 67).

## The Power of Aesthetic Form in Everyday Life

How can home economists tap the empowering forces for change? We need a way of thinking that promotes genuine insight, critical discourse, and collective vision. One such perspective is the aesthetic. Because the aesthetic approach fosters discovery of imaginative and possible forms in everyday life, it can contribute significantly to the empowerment of families.

## What is Aesthetic Experience?

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue, "Aesthetic experience . . . can occur in any aspect of our everyday lives—whenever we take note of, or create for ourselves, new coherences that are not part of our conventionalized mode of perception or thought" (p. 236). Kupfer (1983) implies that aesthetic experience is empowering because it leads us to creatively integrate diverse but mutually-enhancing constituents into a meaningful whole:

In aesthetic experience, we respond to what is presented to us by discriminating among its constituents so as to integrate them into a unified whole. The whole is formed out of the interaction among its parts. While these parts are distinct, . . . their relations with one another and their place in the whole is [sic] decisive for their meaning and their value . . . The parts are interdependent, forming a kind of community (p. 4).

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An aesthetic whole includes elements such as rhythm, balance, grace, unity, proportion, resolution of tension, theme and variation on a theme, emphasis, value expression, color, shape, sound, and drama. Jagodzinski (1988) describes how we aesthetically experience everyday life. For example, we experience a bold straight line when we progress with direction and confidence, a meandering line when we are aimless. We sometimes associate industry with drabness and lack of color, anonymity, calculated pursuits, and the camouflage of our "true colors." And we experience texture when we notice wrinkles on our faces and in our lives, or detect softness or hardness in language and situations.

Moreover, our capacity to aesthetically unify these elements into meaningful forms empowers the quality of everyday life (Broudy, 1972, 1987; Kupfer, 1983). Broudy (1987) suggests that we rely on aesthetic cues such as balance or drama to judge everyday forms from refrigerators to political candidates to weddings. Broudy reminds us how images such as the American flag portray values, shape thoughts on truth and justice, promote certain views about other people, structure knowledge, and guide actions.

#### How Can Aesthetic Form Empower Families?

If we agree with Kupfer (1983) that "such moral and social themes as personal development, responsibility, and community are worked out through the varieties of aesthetic experience" (p. 2), aesthetically-framed questions will facilitate the reflective thinking and critical dialogue necessary for empowerment. Are the parts balanced? Or, in contrast, are several elements disproportionately represented? What is emphasized, and what is the overall

meaning of a particular form? What are the themes, and how are they carried out?

Because empowerment depends on enlightened cooperation intended to reach shared goals, an aesthetic approach can be used to reflectively interpret our relations with others. If we recognize that "relationships can both communicate a social message and be characterized by beauty and dignity" (Bowers, 1990, p. 76), aesthetically informed social empowerment becomes possible. Because Kupfer (1983) argues that the "interdependence of distinctively developing individuals mirrors the form of the aesthetic object" (p. 74), aesthetic norms can be used to critically assess the quality of societal forms. The community as a whole exists to benefit its members and their relations and depends for its strength on the integrity and autonomy of its constituents. According to Kupfer, an aesthetically rich community "squanders none of the talent, industry, or capacity of its members" (p. 74).

Individuals can be empowered to interpret and critique the aesthetic qualities such as inclusiveness, reciprocity, utilized diversity, balance, and variations on valued themes within their families and society. We can ask questions about how diverse individuals are integrated into a meaningful whole. How might tensions be resolved? Do grace and rhythm evolve from reciprocity and dialogue? What socially significant details should be emphasized, balanced, or arranged around a valued theme? What dramas capture the social imagination, and what are the consequences?

The aesthetic approach also enables us to see and think in new ways. Because art forms have the "power to break the established reality" (p. 9), Marcuse argues that encounters with art can restructure consciousness and

empower people to gain new insights into "repressed potentialities" (p. 8). Aesthetics in daily living can prompt critical insights and restructure our visions. The important message for home economists is that the aesthetic stance can empower families to creatively form meaningful wholes from a variety of parts.

#### **Aesthetics, Empowerment, and Home Economics**

Aesthetic form underlies empowerment whenever human beings relate diverse parts into meaningful possibilities. The following samples illustrate how home economists can use the aesthetic approach to foster the reflection and critique necessary for the development of full potential in personal and family life.

#### Reflective Awareness and Thought

An aesthetic approach can "contribute to the individual's powers of contemplation, perception, and discrimination" (Van Dommelen, 1968, p. 775). As we think about our lives, we must remain open to new insights and richer possibilities in our everyday world. For example, Brown (1980) describes how useful arts can be. They can be more than routine, aesthetically significant in terms of meaning, history, and influence on human well-being:

Knowledge and aesthetic appreciation in the area of cookery can make the activity itself or the product itself have value other than the instrumental value of providing food to eat . . . [V]alues in such activities or products develop with depth of understanding, with sensitivity to their aesthetic dimensions, with having standards for doing them well, with comprehending the historical and cultural interpretations associated with them, with recognizing their potential contribution to human happiness or human suffering (p. 105).

Morgado (1981) reflects a similar point of view as she describes a project in which students select items of clothing that have special meaning to their families. Students use the particular clothing item as a basis for investigating family and social history, interpreting family values, and building stronger relationships. Home economists could work with families to aesthetically reflect upon home arts, ranging from a child's artwork to a dinner time conversation. What details are emphasized, and how are details arranged into meaningful forms? How do they differ with respect to expression of value, rhythm, contrast, mood? And what do the differences mean?

The aesthetic approach need not be limited to reflection on the meaning of traditional home arts, but can be extended to unlimited forms of daily experience. Van Dommelen (1975) challenges home economists to "broaden our concept of art in home economics to include poetry, dance, the performing arts, literature, television—in short, anything that touches and influences the aesthetic perception of an individual or a family" (p. 14). Atwood (1987) encourages students in textile design classes to notice aesthetic details such as shadows on walls, textures of trees, and shapes of leaves. As she states, "The world around us is so full of inspiration for designs—I want my students to really 'see' and appreciate" (p. 8).

Home economists could encourage individuals and families to contemplate the array of aesthetic forms in homes, family and social rituals, neighborhoods, and other aspects of everyday life. What contributes to harmony, drama, or feeling within daily rituals or special family days? Is there an appropriate rhythm or balance of parts? What themes and values are expressed, and

how are they carried out and repeated?

### Critical Questions and Dialogue

In addition to the development of reflective insight, empowerment also depends on critical analysis concerning the merits of social and political forms. An aesthetic stance can empower the critical consciousness necessary for liberation from oppressive societal conditions (Marcuse, 1978). Van Dommelen (1975) emphasizes, "Art and aesthetics are the feeling, the form, and the shape we give to our physical environments as we relate to our social, political, and economic environment" (p. 15). Thus, he argues, "Societal questions concerning aesthetics, or lack of them, in X-rated movies or violence-filled television should be questions of concern to home economists. Why? Because they are questions that relate to human development and perception" (p. 14).

Aesthetic forms important to home economics include children's art, fine art, family artifacts, popular art, social rituals, and forms of political and economic activity. Each form could be critically assessed from an aesthetic stance. What are the rhythms, tones, lines of direction, themes, and points of emphasis that occur in various media? What values and ideas do they express, and what are the consequences? Do communities express harmony, balance, and diversity? Are the dynamics of human relationships integrated into a satisfying whole?

Empowerment depends on individuals working together to find common ground and to achieve mutual goals. Cunningham (1981) proposes that home economists encourage dialogue about created objects because such interaction can "open the mind to an appreciation of

other perspectives; it may also develop sensitivity to the complexities of criticism" (p. 19). Brent (1989) calls for social consciousness on the part of interior designers: "Our environmental design problems of human habitats are inextricably linked with people. We must examine the environmental consequences and influences within the larger complex fabric of social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political forces" (p. 20).

Larger contextual issues that affect family life can be critiqued according to aesthetic qualities, relationships, and form. What constitutes resolution of tension between different cultural, ethnic, or economic groups? Are diverse individuals allowed to enhance each other and deepen the meaning of the social whole? What themes and variations occur in relation to the promotion of individuality and cohesion within a community?

### Conclusion

Because "art and aesthetics express our lives, our families, and our culture" (Van Dommelen, 1975, p. 15), the aesthetic approach can help home economists discover and develop human potential within everyday forms. Families can transform their lives by critical reflection and dialogue regarding such qualities as contrast, rhythm, mood, balance, drama, value, meaning, and harmony. If an aesthetic approach empowers us to "see the parts of a whole and how they work together" (Cox-Bishop, 1989, p. 20), family life is replete with transformative possibility.

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## Endnotes

1 Orientation and paradigm are used interchangeably. Although there are some differences, both are about basic tenets, beliefs, patterns, frameworks, maps, and ideologies shared by members of a culture. In a professional culture, an orientation (or paradigm) often goes unexamined and is invisible to those who practice the profession because it is taken for granted.

2 Being-in-the-world: This is a Heideggerian phrase which refers to the way human beings exist, act, or are involved in the world.



# Linkages and Empowerment: Collaborative Actions in Argentina

Linda Nelson and Elena Hidalgo de Avila

*Personal experiences with empowerment in international development are narrated. Home economics and social science professionals worked together and with rural homemakers in Argentina to build relationships that facilitated changes in all their lives. Following descriptions of the formal program, the professionals comment on the experiences and their relationships to empowerment.*

What follows is an international drama in which we invite you to participate. The drama demonstrates many facets of continuing international professional and lay personnel interaction, which is the basis of aid to Third World countries. The scenes take place in Western Argentina in a semi-arid region at the foothills of the Andes mountains. The narrative spans a period of about 30 years. It includes many players located in Argentina, some other Latin American countries, and the United States. The primary ones are a citizen of the United States who has had a long career in international development activities and two Argentine citizens who have careers committed to working with rural families through their positions in the Agricultural Extension Service. In Argentina, this is part of the Experiment Station Research and Extension organization called the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA). Other major players are the members, especially the women, in the extended rural families who participate in the

extension programs. In addition, there are participants who remain unidentified, unknown, or impersonal representatives of various agencies and organizations, but who are nevertheless very important in international development activities.

The plot or theme of this drama is one approach to development and its relationship to the empowerment of all those involved. The following discussion includes a series of personal experiences and insights as well as our retrospective reactions to them.

## Introducing the Lead Players

With the permission of the real players, we have personalized this narrative with actual names. During the 1950s, in graduate school, Linda was introduced to one of the new ideas in international development: the establishment of collaborative rather than hierarchical structures among people in participating countries. The citation has long been lost, but the professor's reasoned appeal for this change from the "donor/receiver" mentality made a strong impression on Linda who had already completed two years of international service and expected to continue.

Linda, whose undergraduate work was in home economics education, completed graduate school with

specializations in family resource management and anthropology. She accepted a position teaching in a master's program offered to Latin American rural development extension personnel. This program was sponsored by an international agricultural organization in Turrialba, Costa Rica, Central America.

In 1959, Haydee, an agriculture major from Argentina entered this master's program. When Haydee completed her program, she returned to Argentina to direct a school jointly sponsored by INTA and the Argentine Ministry for Agricultural Education. This school offered a two-year program for rural school teachers who wished to be eligible for extension positions with INTA. The school was located in Bolivar, a small rural town in the Province of Buenos Aires, named for Simon Bolivar who gained fame for his efforts to free Latin American countries from colonialism.

Haydee invited Linda to prepare the family-related social science aspects of the program. Two female sociologists were selected to develop classes on family life, rural sociology, and extension methodology. From 1961 to 1963, Linda made several trips to Argentina to consult with these two women who had prior field experience with INTA. Between consultations there was a great deal of correspondence

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about the content and process of the courses.

One of these two teachers emigrated from Argentina and the other, Clara, continued with INTA. After several years as a teacher in Bolivar, Clara became a national specialist in family life for INTA and then returned to her home province of Mendoza as extension supervisor for the Cuyo Region, which includes the provinces of Mendoza and San Juan.

In 1966, Elena entered the school in Bolivar. After graduation, she joined INTA as a county agent in her home province of San Juan. Simultaneously, she studied sociology at the National University of San Juan and graduated in 1976. In 1968 Linda began to work for another international development agency, however, she maintained contact with Clara and visited her both officially and for many holidays. Clara was very impressed with the talents and skills of Elena. During one of her supervision visits to San Juan in 1972, Clara invited Linda to accompany her, and she introduced Elena to Linda.

### The Context

The stage was now set for the extension activities to occur. Since 1959, Clara and Elena worked in the Rural Extension Service, within the structure of INTA, toward the general objective of enhancing the quality of rural life through non-formal educational programs for the farmer and the farm family. Nilda, Maria Luisa, and Elena, the female extensionists in San Juan, promoted the organization of rural homemakers and young women in informal groups called *Clubes de Hogar Rural* (Rural Home Clubs - CHR). The members generally shared common interests and a rural identity and focused on home centered themes and activities. During the 1970s the activities of

these groups of rural females continued, however, the emphasis was changed to community participation and coordination with other community organizations in order to seek solutions to common problems.

From these community-based groups, Clara, Elena, and other extensionists observed the emergence of members who had distinguishing characteristics. In her capacity as supervisor, Clara worked with Elena, Nilda, and Maria Luisa in San Juan to organize and train these women as intermediate level communicators who identified themselves as demonstrators.

### The Action

From the very beginning, these women were committed to "learning to teach" (Quiroga, 1985). During the 1970s, they had been assuming responsibilities, showing increased enthusiasm and disposition to teach what they learned. At the same time they were revealing social responsibility, expressing expectations of learning in depth, and receiving intensive training.

The first trainees were selected from 20 rural female groups by their peers, the CHR members. The practical activity for the first course involved collaboration within the group of CHR members to identify, assess, and analyze their local community, its problems, and needs. Then an educational program with short-range action plans offered the trainees opportunities for applied experience. Through their local involvement, horizontal diffusion of information and technologies multiplied the educational scope of Elena, Nilda, and Maria Luisa.

The training of Rural Home Demonstrators began in 1976 and continued until 1986 in a progressive and permanent manner in all the

Rural Extension Agencies in San Juan and Mendoza Provinces. The training program for the demonstrators had the following objectives:

1. Prepare demonstrators to teach what they learned and to apply the knowledge in new or changing conditions.
2. Develop awareness of group processes and teach skills for promoting, integrating, and maintaining working groups.
3. Stimulate demonstrators to acquire new attitudes toward and techniques for mobilizing people to identify community needs and take action.
4. Enhance their commitment to diffusion of knowledge to solve daily problems.
5. Increase ability of demonstrators to communicate with different audiences and in new situations.
6. Prepare demonstrators to promote transactions between groups and organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, to satisfy common interests.
7. Facilitate reflection about rural life and evaluate its development.
8. Heighten interest in continued training.

The program content for orientation of the demonstrators included three categories of topics; technical/educational, human, and methodological. Appropriate technologies and recommended practices were taught by specialists and adapted by the members after group discussions. The content subjects included health education, potable water provision, housing, community action, family gardens, household resource use, and soy (non-traditional protein source) in the human diet. The following human development and social life themes were examined: the family in development, the female role in the

family and community, the socialization process both within and outside the family, group interaction, small group dynamics, and the leadership role.

The learning process and behavioral changes, in addition to means of communication, were the methodological foci for development of knowledge and skills in order to develop effective verbal and visual exchanges. Themes included teaching-learning methods with adult learners, motivation of adult learners, the means of diffusion, and transferential and transformational approaches. Communication practices included the design of messages, techniques of personal interchange, and application in demonstrations.

From the beginning, active methods were used according to participants' suggestions, interests, and expectations; periods of training and practical application alternated. The formal educational sessions were followed by practice in their rural communities. A participatory approach was used in a variety of activities, such as one-day workshops, camps, courses, encounters, seminars, local and regional demonstrator exchanges, and the annual national rural homemakers' congress. Annual activities at the regional level permitted the demonstrators to meet, mutually interchange information, develop unified criteria, and gain reinforcement.

Possibly the most relevant and exciting activities were the summer camps, offered in communities in which Rural Home Clubs did not exist. The week-long camps provided opportunities for the demonstrators to use many abilities, which illustrated their growing empowerment. They organized their own families to function during their absence. In the host community, the demonstrators made individual visits to invite people

to their group activities. They had opportunities to apply what they had learned about how to study and diagnose the situation, how to motivate citizen participation, and how to adapt and teach new audiences. The combination of activities facilitated the initiation of new social relations as well as educational experiences. Although the name, demonstrator, was chosen because each one is expected to use the demonstration of practices as a tool for teaching, in fact, these women became volunteer community motivators.

### The Impact

The initial group in 1976 was composed of 36 demonstrators. Ten years later, in 1986, 13 groups with a total of 231 demonstrators were working in the region. These women were proud that other women and families in many isolated rural communities could learn by doing and practicing and that they were able to teach. They developed hope, self-confidence, and positive attitudes toward communicating with and helping others; they initiated a variety of activities in their own communities.

The greatest socially relevant contributions were in nutrition and in community action. These demonstrators taught practical ways to produce, prepare, and preserve food to improve the dietary intake, especially in low-income families. These demonstrations were characterized by simple, direct language; enthusiasm; very rudimentary tools and equipment; and basic applied nutritional concepts.

Between 1980 and 1983, a campaign to introduce soybeans as a protein complement in human nutrition was activated in San Juan Province. The role of the demonstrator was a key factor in the

success of this program. This campaign gave demonstrators social recognition as well as opportunities for evaluating, preparing educational materials, publishing their recipes, and demonstrating practices. In addition, they met the challenges of mass media by appearing on radio and television.

Some of them worked as volunteer nonformal educators at distribution centers of the National Food Program (PAN). Others worked as volunteers in the preparation of food for children in the Rural School Nutrition Program of the Social Welfare Ministry in both Mendoza and San Juan Provinces.

In 1984, over 3000 rural women, in 75 rural communities, participated in the educational activities planned and implemented by demonstrators. Since then, the demonstrator program in coordination with the National Direction of Adult Education (DINEA) initiated a new procedural element: monetary rewards. In San Juan Province, DINEA hired 4 demonstrators to develop educational activities for adult female learners and increased the number to 20 in 1985.

When demonstrators were asked during annual meetings about what they had gained from their experiences, they recognized that their self-confidence, self-esteem, and social recognition had changed. In addition, they related that they were more flexible in coping with different situations and problems, had increased their ability to assume responsibilities, and, above all, they felt personal satisfaction from helping others. They also manifested a growing awareness that they had assumed active participation, at the in rural development.

### The Players in the 1990s

Elena continued her extension activities while also gathering data for



advanced studies. She conducted qualitative, unstructured, in-depth interviews with several of the demonstrators, as well as with their spouses and one adolescent or adult child. The purpose of the interview was to learn about the perceptions of these rural family members regarding past, present, and future INTA activities (Hidalgo de Avila, 1991). The interview quotations, appearing below, are literal translations from Spanish.

### Demonstrators in the 1990s

Currently, the demonstrators maintain the same strength, enthusiasm, and self-confidence shown during the active phase of the program.

We have to look for the means not to stagnate, not to remain behind. We have to continue struggling (Susana, age 42).

They speak to the importance of the experiences for themselves and their communities.

I acquired knowledge to raise my level of living, about nutrition (and) health which is the most important. It is very beautiful to transmit what one knows . . . I have had the opportunity to give and that is most important: to give without interest, from the heart and the people feel it, the people are aware of it. (Fanny, 49).

And always I have been seeking the best for the community, not for me, because if the community changes, we all change (Susana, 42).

They speak to profound and pervasive changes in their family life.

In INTA I have learned a great deal. Before I was a homemaker, there to make the meals, clean, but I didn't ever think of going out, of having other friendship, of knowing other people, other ideas. [Now] my opinion is worth more because he [husband] is aware that I have not just been closed up in here. He hasn't had this opportunity. He tells them [the children] to get their mother's opinion; he says their

ideas and mine are better because we have developed more. (Regina, 61).

I would have liked it if she could have done much more, [could have had] more possibilities. [I'm] not like other husbands who put barriers for the wife. All the courses that INTA has offered through the CHR, all the things she had been learning, she had applied to the family; many times she had given a grain of sand [additional income] to the family through what she has learned. The project has been very important in this zone . . . (Juan, Susana's spouse, 46).

### The Other Players

Haydee, the original link between Linda and Clara through the master's program in Costa Rica and the school in Bolivar, died in the early 1980s. The school no longer functions; however, many of its graduates continue to work for INTA and to apply the knowledge to their families and community endeavors.

Clara completed a master's degree in rural extension in 1966 in Costa Rica with Linda as her major professor. They coauthored a book on family resource management, published in Spanish in 1967 and used since in Argentina and many other Latin American countries. Clara, under her married surname, wrote the report (Quiroga, 1985) that described the work of Nilda, Maria Luisa, and Elena as links to the rural families.

Of the three social extensionists in San Juan, Nilda has retired, Maria Luisa has transferred to another province, and Elena continues to work there. In 1980, Elena studied community development in Israel on an international scholarship offered to INTA. In 1988, she earned a master's degree in the United States under a contract between the International Development Bank (IDB/BID) and INTA, and in 1991 she completed the Ph.D.

Linda continued to supply written materials and consult when she

visited Argentina on vacations. She attended meetings and consulted as requested after her resignation in 1973 from an international development organization and her return to university teaching in the United States. Linda was invited by INTA to spend a sabbatic year, 1990-91, in Argentina where she worked with Clara and Elena on ideas to implement in the future.

Clara and Elena continue to work for INTA; however, their roles are changing as INTA modifies its structure. At this time, they are uncertain about how to continue to facilitate empowerment activities.

### Professional and Personal Linkages

What we have described was not planned and implemented under a philosophy of empowerment as it is currently understood. It grew as professional friendships developed, mutual respect and admiration were generated, language barriers were broken, and teaching-learning situations were experienced as two-way relationships.

Throughout the years, Linda kept hoping to find collaborative structures with equal power for the countries involved in the *developmental process*. But the technocrats, the bureaucrats, the economists, the specialists, the politicians—all made their claims for the *best* means to achieve development. Donor governments progressed through a series of philosophical approaches. Most of these were intended to give something such as machinery, information, money, food, and even organizational structures such as the extension service and democratic government. Eventually, the idea of integrated or holistic development surfaced to improve single communities.

As the regional and world banks entered the international development system, the distance between the donors and the receivers appeared to increase. Intermediate agencies appeared, both governmental and nongovernmental, to try to make claims on the funds available for development. How to write successful grant requests became an important part of the developers' knowledge and skills.

Although Linda worked in international agencies which subscribed with different degrees of enthusiasm to one or more of these philosophies, she became aware that she needed to develop her own way of working with colleagues in other areas of the world. The greatest challenge, as Linda saw it when she began to work with the teachers in Bolivar in 1961, was to initiate participatory methods rather than the usual rote learning style common in the country. At first, the local professionals were more interested in content than in methodology.

Eventually, Linda learned to let her collaborators take the lead. Often source materials were provided, but Linda did not insist on nor expect their immediate use. She learned that Haydee, Clara, Elena, and the other local professionals would use them, adapt them, or leave them alone according to their own priorities, cultural patterns, and estimation of their roles. By observation and conversation, Linda became more adept at timing her contributions, and, by similar processes, Clara and Elena and the others learned to be more specific about their needs. The same interaction process was used by Clara and Elena as they developed their activities for empowering the rural poor.

All the players had absorbed the current professional expectations of their university disciplines and their institutional employers. These had

strong orientations toward hierarchical structures, the philosophy that disciplines have *the answer* and that theoretical knowledge is the solution. Under these circumstances, it was not easy for all the actors to modify their philosophy and practices toward a new professionalism (Chambers, 1987) that accepts clients as thinking beings. They needed to change in many ways to empower each other as well as the rural people with whom they worked.

The philosophical basis came originally from resource management and human development and later evolved into a human ecological model. John Dewey's (1938) learn-by-doing philosophy permeated the educational orientation of all of the people involved in the activities described. Friere's (1972) educational perspectives strongly influenced rural education efforts in Latin America even while he was exiled from his native country by politicians who feared the kind of changes his concept of empowerment could stimulate.

### Reflections on Empowerment

The principles of empowerment, described in this paper and recognized after the experiences, have applicability in a variety of interpersonal and multicultural settings within and across national boundaries. We trust the readers will think about them and their applicability to their own work.

Empowerment takes time. People and situations do not change rapidly. This case has spanned 30 years, and all of the ramifications have not yet appeared.

Empowerment works in many directions: In this Argentine case each person has empowered others and in turn has been empowered. This experience has changed the lives of everyone involved.

Empowerment requires risks. When

you listen, you sometimes learn something you do not expect nor desire.

Empowerment can have an immense payoff in development of such human attributes as independence, awareness of self and others, recognition and use of interdependence, patience, respect, and creativity.

Empowerment is simultaneously fragile and strong; it is filled with tension.

Empowerment is facilitated by the acknowledgment, effective use, and integration of cultural diversity. The rural women in this case contribute cultural knowledge different from the urban and the foreign players because they are indigenous motivators. One of the translations of the word *motivate* is stimulate or influence the community. Clara, Elena, and Linda believe that Susana, Fanny, Regina, and the other actors are empowered enough to continue on their own by using their cultural strengths and their newly developed talents.

Empowerment gives voice: The demonstrators' expectations of INTA, the institution that supported and taught them, and their call for future support are signs of empowerment. Even as INTA is restructuring and eliminating the social science and family-oriented aspects of its work in favor of production agriculture, the rural women continue to demonstrate their empowerment and request continued support.

I think that the government doesn't know really well the role that INTA fulfills in the social area. . . . You haven't only reached the women, you've reached the family. I am very grateful for INTA: They formed me as a woman and my family, too. INTA . . . fulfills a task in the country which cannot be paid for . . . there are many women, many families, who have been ignored and left behind. They need optimism, consolation, help. Not economic help, but teaching, to open the road where we can walk to learn [and] see. INTA should grow, it should not stay behind and under no circumstances

should it disappear. If you are not there:  
How will we arrive? What will we do?  
(Ramona, 49)

The needs continue, but at a very different level than prior to the empowerment efforts. Only time will demonstrate the impact of the increased abilities to resolve situations, create new linkages, and empower other people to change and participate more fully in their own lives. We are convinced that the possibility is assured for continuing growth of those who have been part of the ongoing empowerment experiences related in this paper.

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## Call to Conclave

*The Second  
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will be held at the  
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*Theme:  
Leadership for a Culturally Diverse Society*

*Join KON members across the nation  
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study professional issues,  
renew commitment to the honor society,  
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The theme of the Conclave is implemented through the keynote address, workshops, and the Banquet Address.

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Reservations should be made by  
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## Commentary

William H. Marshall

In the dear dead days beyond recall, a great many studies were undertaken that were generally described as locus of control studies. These studies were basically designed to differentiate persons who had an internal locus of control from those whose locus was perceived to be external. Then, one attempted to explain why Person X was in one group or the other. Locus of control studies grew out of a larger interest, prevalent at the time of World War II, in understanding the authoritarian personality and in explaining various on-going social processes. Interest in this area of research declined rapidly in the late 60s; it can be said that virtually all of the research in this area preceded major developments in the women's movement but was concurrent with, and also part of, the twentieth century civil rights movement.

Although many facets of this historical background cannot be explored here, it is important to understand that the empowerment movement is part of a generalized ongoing set of social processes in which persons are increasingly able to view themselves as being in charge of their own lives and able to influence their environments. From such a perspective, it is possible to see the movement toward individual social empowerment as a culmination of, and yet an on-going aspect of, major interest in areas such as locus of

control. An illustration will be helpful. Experience with women of venerable ages, those now in their 70s and 80s, whose mothers were born and reared well before World War I, helps one understand better how some research into locus of control developed. On an anecdotal basis, but with substantial support from wide-ranging current writing, these women in general were reared by mothers and grandmothers who were products of the "great" days of American Victorianism. In general, these women were taught to be passive and submissive. It is not entirely surprising that they are also persons who often see themselves as externally controlled and with little, if any, power. Many perceived interaction as a process in which they were only acted upon; they had learned to be reactive rather than proactive.

This illustration makes it easier to understand that an individual's *development* of the perception of being empowered is an important aspect of socialization and one which is ignored during childhood and adolescence only at the later peril of the full development and empowerment of an individual. It becomes clear that lack of any sense of power—powerlessness—can lead to feelings and perceptions of alienation and rage with significant social and individual consequences.

Some years ago, Dorothy L. Sayers wrote that an emancipated woman cannot be controlled by any earthly force. I have to add, perhaps not by any force at all. The genie is out of

the bottle and is going to stay out. As each of us—woman, man, child—continues to have personal Epiphanies on our way to becoming fully empowered, we recognize that empowerment is an essential part of being and, therefore, not a thing to be taken away once we have begun the journey. It is also important to recall that empowerment is not a zero-sum game; being empowered oneself does not mean that others are less empowered.

The articles in this *FORUM* have provided a stimulus for reflecting on these issues as well as examples of ways in which professional home economists can influence the development of empowerment in diverse settings.

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Dr. Marshall is former Professor of Child and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

## Commentary

Carol A. Morgaine

The articles in this special issue of *Home Economics FORUM* help us to gain further insight into the illusive concept of *empowerment*. Kieffer (1984) also contributes to this understanding with his notion of "life span of empowerment." According to Kieffer, empowerment may emerge in peoples' lives on three different levels. The first level is *intrapersonal* empowerment or that which is experienced within the self as efficacy, potency, or "power within." The second is *interpersonal* empowerment, or that which is experienced as a collaboration with others through dialogue and results in an increased awareness of societal power structures. The third level is *community* empowerment or that which involves the use of strategies for both personal and sociopolitical change leading to justice.

Having read and reflected upon the articles within this issue, I am impressed with the ways these articles provide examples of Kieffer's (1984) levels of empowerment. My article illuminates the ways in which oppression works to cloud interpersonal empowerment, or the self-formation processes; Vaines claims that when individuals hold an empowerment orientation, they perceive themselves as self-forming and as able to participate in processes of their own transformation. According to Rehm, empowerment is

about developing existing potential: the ability to think reflectively, dialogue critically, and act with purpose and control. Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila provide an example of how collaborative and reflective processes contribute to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction—intrapersonal empowerment.

At the interpersonal level, Vincenti points out that the Brown & Paolucci (1979) mission statement calls for cooperative participation in critique and formulation of social goals. According to Vaines, when people identify with an empowerment orientation, they view themselves as members of a network of interrelated others. Without such an orientation, I claim that even our interpersonal language patterns may be disempowering rather than empowering. In relation to interpersonal empowerment, Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila provide examples of groups working collaboratively to become sensitive to cultural diversity and to find common ground and achievable mutual goals. With reflective dialogue, they involve themselves in interpreting their relationships with others as they organize themselves around the realities of political power and domination.

When considering the community level, Vincenti's analysis is embedded with an acceptance of the importance of external circumstances in addition to a person's inner state. She claims that the struggles that go on inside families have outcomes in society. Terms from the articles such as

*critical discourse, collective vision, working towards social and moral themes in community* provide the language of actions at the community level. Nelson & Hidalgo de Avila illustrate the multiplying effect when all levels of empowerment merge.

As individuals and members of the profession of home economics, we must begin to accept the necessity for each of these levels. One, alone, is not empowerment.

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## Commentary: The Ten "Ps" of Empowerment

Jo Lynn Cunningham

Empowerment is a term that has received wide usage recently by professionals from a variety of disciplines as well as by various citizen/advocacy groups. Those who accuse home economics of "jumping on the bandwagon" by talking about the "buzz word" empowerment are overlooking the fact that this concept has been a long-standing part of the heritage of home economics. The very origins of the profession, in fact, were in helping individuals and families take control of their lives by applying science to matters of everyday living.

Current interest in the concept of empowerment has resulted in exploration of its meaning and application from a variety of perspectives. The set of papers included in this special issue reflects that diversity. At the same time, there are some generalizations that can be drawn from them about the nature of empowerment. I have summarized these as "the ten Ps of empowerment."

1. Empowerment is *process oriented*. Although outcomes associated with empowerment may be identified, the concept is one that refers to a process (analogous to development, enrichment, or

education) rather than a status (such as health, wealth, or intelligence). This process orientation is described conceptually in different ways by Vincenti, Vaines, Rehm, and Morgaine. Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila give a personal/professional illustration of this process. Among the implications evident are that empowerment takes time, it occurs through interaction, and it is descriptive of a way of *doing* more than of *having*.

2. Empowerment is *philosophical*. It is a way of viewing the world, a guiding perspective or framework. Vincenti, Rehm, and Morgaine focus particularly on this aspect of empowerment. As with any philosophy, it is important to identify the assumptions underlying the empowerment framework and to preserve its integrity by maintaining consistency of focus and methods.

3. At the same time, empowerment is also *practical*. Kurt Lewin's assertion that there is nothing as practical as a good theory is borne out by application of the philosophical position of empowerment in professional practice. Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila illustrate this practical utility of empowerment in a cross-cultural setting, highlighting the breadth of the range of potential applications.

4. Empowerment is *perceptual*. As with the root word power, it occurs

in the minds and hearts of the participants. It is only as we perceive that we have power or that others have power that such power has any meaning or potential use. Vincenti and Rehm suggest this quality of empowerment in their definitions. The fact that empowerment is attitudinal is illustrated in the papers by Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila and Morgaine. A fundamental implication here is that empowerment cannot be *done to* someone else; it only can be *facilitated* through an interactional process.

5. Empowerment is *personal*. It applies to people and refers to a process that occurs only within and by humans. A physicist or engineer may describe the power of electricity or a machine, but the process of empowerment is uniquely human. This contextual dimension of understanding empowerment is used by the authors of all of the papers. Perhaps more subtle is the idea that an empowerment orientation reflects a rather deep and fundamental stance by an individual. A professional who enacts this orientation meaningfully must do so from deeply-held personal values rather than a superficial application of a set of procedures.

6. Empowerment is *pervasive*. It does not and cannot apply to a single dimension of functioning. As Morgaine notes, it is reflected in the language and other cultural systems in which we operate. Rehm links

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empowerment to the aesthetic perspective. Vaines refers to moral implications and to the systemic properties of an empowerment orientation, obviously indicating pervasiveness. If we are concerned with empowerment, we must be committed to a holistic approach.

7. Empowerment is *political*. It deals with relationships among people, especially the relationship between groups or individuals competing for power and leadership. In at least a symbolic sense, it deals with organizational structures and the procedures for defining and accomplishing goals. In presenting a historical perspective, Vincenti discusses the political dimension of empowerment from a theoretical perspective. In applying the concept of empowerment to a particular professional context, Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila illustrate the political dynamics involved in using this orientation. Both structure and function must be considered in enacting an empowerment framework.

8. Empowerment is *provocative*. It challenges the established order. The ensuing change often is unsettling emotionally and structurally as the system struggles to establish equilibrium once again. As Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila describe, the changes can be exciting and gratifying. The drama of the empowerment process, like most dramas, has elements of both challenge and relief, of tension creation and tension reduction, of frustration and satisfaction. As Vaines points out, empowerment inevitably involves change. So as we pursue an empowerment orientation, we must be prepared to experience irreversible change in our personal and professional lives.

9. Empowerment is *powerful*. It makes a difference in the lives not only of those who become empowered but other members of the social system as well. Recognition of this powerfulness is what motivates those who defend the status quo to oppose movements such as civil rights, women's liberation, and consumer rights. The theoretical impact of empowerment is described by Rehm and Morgaine; illustrations of the programmatic and personal impact of empowerment are cited by Nelson and Hidalgo de Avila. Empowerment is pervasive not only in a systemic sense but also in a cumulative sense, so that once the process begins it becomes self-sustaining. We need to recognize this force as we consider making the transition to an empowerment mode.

10. Empowerment is *positive*. It deals with potential—with what can be rather than with limitations of what is. According to Vaines, empowerment is a transformative process. Empowerment provides a significant means of improving the well-being of individuals and families. Perhaps best of all, the effects are ones that are likely to bring positive changes to those we serve, to ourselves, and to the larger society.

In summary, these papers illustrate the relevance of the concept of empowerment in home economics in contemporary thought and practice. Of at least equal importance is the fact that home economics was established on these principles. Ellen Richards and her colleagues envisioned a field that would enable individuals and families to gain control over their daily lives. A collaborative rather than an authoritarian model was projected, and this is the model that has been reiterated in more recent statements of

the mission of home economics. As we think about service to individuals and families as doing things *with* them rather than doing things *for* them, what we are describing is an empowerment orientation. The papers in this issue should challenge us to continue our quest for enriching our understanding of what that means and identifying new ways to accomplish our goals.

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