

# Social and Affective Dimensions in Home Economics\*

## 가정학의 중요성이 사회에 미치는 영향

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### <국문초록>

가정학은 현대 생활에서 빼어놓을 수 없는 한 부분이며, 사회 복지를 위해서 필수적인 요소이다. 사회, 경제, 기술, 문화적인 면에서의 여러가지 변화는 가정학의 초점과 내용, 가정학이 여러 계층의 사람들과 가지는 관계에 영향을 미쳐왔다. 가족 생활형태의 변화는 가정학의 일반적인 원리나 가정학 교과 과정의 내용등과 같은 여러 차원에 영향을 준다.

가정학의 image를 우리 사회의 중요하 학문으로서 개선시키는 방법들이 연구되어야 한다. 가정학은 변화하는 학문이며, 따라서 번이기중에 개선되기 쉽다.

가정학의 미래는 우리의 실천 정도와 현재 가정학에 종사하는 사람들의 생산성과 노력에 달려 있다. 지금까지의 가정학의 업적, 힘에 기반을 단단히 세움으로써 가정학은 사회의 급속히 변화가는 욕구에 보다 효과적으로 대처할 수 있는 것이다.

가정학이 지니는 특이성은, 사회·경제의 주요 단위로서의 가족의 reinforcement, 산업 사회로부터 정보 사회로의 급속한 이동, 새로운 기술들의 이용에 대한 도덕적·윤리적 문제, 경제적인 변화, 힘의 분산등과 같은 현 사회가 당면한 많은 도전에 대처해 나가는데 도움이 된다.

사회가 더욱 복잡해질수록 가정학은 새로운 차원을 추가하면서 적응해 나갈 것이다. 그러나 가정학의 특이성은 변하지 않고 그대로 남아 있을 것이다.

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## I. Introduction

Home economics is not only an inseparable part of modern life but also a vital ingredient for the welfare of society. Any changes in society-whether social, economical, technological, or cultural-inevitably affect home economics in its focus and contents, and in its appeal or relevance for different groups of people.

Changing patterns of family life invariably influence various home economics dimension-its general philosophy and even aspects of its curriculum contents. Past and present developments of home economics clearly reflect its future, such as trends in curricula and methods of instruction.

We must examine ways to improve the image of home economics as a serious profession in our society. Home economics is a dynamic science and therefore subject to improvement during periods of transition.

The future of home economics depends on the degree of our commitment, and on the creativity and enthusiasm of those in the profession today. We need to build on its rich heritage. As for present trends, home economists must realize that we have moved from an industrial to an information-oriented society.

## II. Challenges to home economics in a high-tech/high-touch society

We live in an era of profound changes.

The speed of the transformation is partially reflected in the enormous number of inventions that have been made since World War II. Today's discoveries in a wide variety of fields are disproportionately superior to the achievements of earlier ages. Satellite television, oral contraceptives, electronic computers, photocopying machines, the Salk vaccine, heart transplants-these are just a few of the more obvious examples of the technological revolution.

There is a gradual shift in society from an emphasis on the industry to the creation and distribution of information. The overwhelming majority of service workers now is engaged in creating, processing and distributing information. Strategic positioning of information also becomes very important. Home economists have to share and exchange information to let the profession thrive.

We are simultaneously moving to two directions-high tech and high touch-matching each change in technology with a compensatory human response. Whenever a new piece of technology is introduced there must be a corresponding human response, that is, high touch. Society's response to high-touch needs has been in the form of new programs, organizations, agencies, retirement planning, and counselling services. All of these, in turn, create new employment opportunities for home-economics professionals such as personnel management, group therapy, counselling, health and fitness programs, child care, and other activities that

upgrade the quality of life.

Countries are shifting from the idea of autonomous national economies to a world-economy concept. Home economists must therefore think in "global" terms to function adequately in an environment with complicated international interdependencies.

At the bottom line, people deal with the universal, basic needs of individuals which are (1) the need for proper nutrition, good health or wellbeing, (2) the need for shelter or appropriate housing, (3) the preservation of families as basic social units, and (4) the need to adapt to changes in the life cycle. All nations have created their own systems and organizations to meet these universal needs. Society is well aware that, in an interdependent world, aid is not charity but constructive investment.

Many prognoses, commentaries and criticisms about the future of societies come up as changes in technology, science, politics, and economics occur. Some of the analyses predict work patterns of the future, particularly with regard to professionals. It may be because of its dynamic nature that home economics is more concerned about change and its ensuing role changes than most other professions. However, this is not a quantifiable statement.

We need to be aware ourselves and we have to communicate to others that the business-and-industry roles that many home economists have assumed are directly contributing to economic and techno-

logical development. We also need to emphasize that those professionals serving in education, health, and human services make significant contributions to society, too. Health and resource management are indispensable fields for regulating the economic climate and the pace of technological advancements.

However, above all, home economics is concerned about people—the well-being of all the people that are affected by technological and economic changes. We will have to be concerned with the moral aspects of technology, that is, we will have to deal with matters such as ethics, human rights, family relations, child rearing, sexuality, leisure time, and religion. Changes in attitudes are neither systematic nor predictable, and what may be a value to one culture may not be one in another. Considering all that, home economics must assist the adaptation to change by setting the pace and by providing directions.

Home economics has been and still is instrumental in controlling population growth on this planet through intensive campaigning and counselling. Furthermore, issues such as food supply, energy conservation, and the distribution and use of limited resources have all been dealt with by home economics. Home economics has also accelerated research to improve nutrition, the use of leisure time, and cooking methods.

Home economists must do more than keep pace to succeed in this era of rapid technological change: We must stay ahead

by exploiting technology decisively and imaginatively.

### III. Problems in home economics and future perspectives

Most academic circles are by nature conservative. The reason for this is that their function is the preservation and proliferation of culture; the academia often functions as a socializing agent. It seems that changes in society are manifold, quick and extensive, while corresponding changes in home economics are slow and lagging behind. Society has shown exceptional growth but the home-economics education that is so badly needed lacks vigor. Home economics had gained recognition primarily as a practical or applied science but it is now in an identity crisis, in search for a sound theoretical basis.

The development of home economics is greatly hindered by the indifference and lack of knowledge about home economics' goals and its mission on part of other academic disciplines; even administrators often think that home economics consists simply of sewing-and-cooking skills. This prejudice stems largely from the overpowering influence of materialism in the industry and technology: The true nature of home economics is not recognized and neither are the enormous changes it has introduced in the life of the modern family. Home economics must strengthen its educational strategies and functions. An understanding of the importance of

the mission of home economics must be promoted and the profession must also be allowed to participate not only on an interpersonal level but on national and international levels as well.

Brown and Palussi (1979) point out that home economics is a unique discipline in its professional training. They indicate that home economics is both a practical science and a mission-oriented, idealistic field. They also suggest that the liberation of the sexes is an urgent matter if the field of home economics is to improve.

Industrialization brought about separation of sex roles and, as technology progressed, home economics became a field exclusively for women. However, there is a recent increase in the number of male students studying home economics-not only in the United States of America, but also in countries such as Canada, Germany, Japan, and Korea.

### IV. Family life

Societies around the world have ever-increasing needs for the services of home economics. The specific needs of societies obviously differ. However, there is a universal concern for the well-being of families, as fundamental today as it has been in the past.

The nuclear family which evolved with the economic growth spurt weakened the stability of the family, but may researchers report that home economists are notwithstandingly doing their part to save

the collapsing family. The family has always been a main subject of home economics, but subjects and definitions of "family" change with time: Family structures and functions have changed as have individual roles within the family. Some of the effects of modernization on family life are related to urbanization, the shift from the extended family to nuclear units, government family planning programs in response to large population growth, increasing isolation of the nuclear family, redefinition of husband and wife roles, and increased concerns regarding the quality of child education.

Cultural advancements have provided material comfort and convenience, but one cannot say that this is necessarily true happiness.

For instance, the nature of present-day issues in the family such as abortion, divorce, or single-parent households indicates that the problems go very deep. There are numerous examples that show how the conveniences of modern life have failed to bring about true, spiritual happiness.

Home economists can play their part in solving such problems in the family. They are already highly active in subfields such as engineering, social work in the community, ecology, consumerism, and counselling.

## V. Changing life styles cause curriculum revisions

There has been a number of suggestions

regarding possible radical changes in our way of life, brought about by the rapidly increasing automation reducing the need for work, and declining energy resources, reducing the capacity for production. Automation has already drastically reduced the number of manual workers needed to produce manufactured goods and this development is expected to continue due to the introduction of microprocessors. The trend is more and more towards doing it the easy way, using partially prepared frozen food and instant mixes of all kinds.

The decreased need for workers will have a number of effects: The average number of work hours will decline and people will therefore have more time on their hands for leisure activities. Increased leisure time can lead to an increased amount of creative work being carried out at home or elsewhere.

In large cities, there are steadily increasing numbers of single-parent families because of divorce and individuals' avoiding the responsibilities of a parent.

Present-day home economics is characterized by an inflexible uniformity of its contents, and students have rarely been given the opportunities to do field research or to carry out multi-disciplinary studies.

Tremendous changes in industrial economics and electronics have confronted home economics with the necessity to alter its curriculum. Furthermore, we need a solid body of academic literature dealing with actual problems and current

issues if we are to upgrade graduate-level education.

Curriculum revisions should proceed along the following lines: (1) The curriculum must have clear guidelines based on the generally accepted standards of home economics, (2) course contents must not only be relevant to the present community, they must also provide directions for the future, (3) higher education should offer a free and wide selection of professional choices with sufficient facilities and well-trained instructors so that students can develop their abilities to the fullest and that they may be prepared for their future leadership roles.

In response to technological developments, our home-economics programs-instruction, research, training, and practical applications-have changed, but our basic concern and focus have not. The interdisciplinary nature of home economics has been its very strength since the field started off as a separate profession.

Home economics, with a gradually increasing specialization in all its branches, has begun to have a profound effect on the contents of various school subjects and it has also become an educational requirement for many careers. We need competent specialists and flexible curricula to provide us with the right syllabi, matched to this changing society. If home economists are going to apply their knowledge and skills to help individuals and families to adapt to change, their approach must be different from those generated by related specializations in other

disciplines. The home-economics subject matter and its specialists' professional training presumes a view of the family, community, and employment that is unique and qualitatively different from all other disciplines.

Women's roles are changing. By 1990, women will not only be mothers and housewives, they will be even more engaged in politics, community work and other influential roles. Values in home economics will be affected: The definition of personal happiness and the values in the family will change and this will be reflected in the curriculum. Development of "educational engineering" will be intensified, that is, more units of mobile equipment will be implemented, tools for independent study computers, correspondence courses, and educational T.V. will enjoy wide popularity. Also, curricula should be opened to allow students of other disciplines such as law, medicine, social welfare, and elementary school education. These students will receive a home economics education as part of their professional preparation.

In this present information-oriented society, we have to work towards the enrichment of human life through an international point of view, provided that such internationally oriented programs have well-defined course objectives and a clear subject matter.

A more systematic curriculum on the international aspects of home economics is hence urgently needed.

The expansion of pre-school programs

and child care services mandates a need for leadership. Both national and community schools have changed the requirements for sciences, home economics, mathematics, the social sciences, and languages. It is necessary that home economics follows suit by modifying its subjects' contents because only then can the quality of education in home economics be significant to personal growth and the development of creative talents.

## VI. Careers

The nature of the career paths followed by people who become qualified home economists significantly affect the kinds and numbers of subject taught, since feedback from these careers modifies the subject contents in a cyclical manner.

I would like to mention present and future major employment careers, careers which are also indicative of the social and affective dimensions of home economics.

*Home economics education* now is as important a field as ever. Teaching home economics today involves traditional and non-traditional skills. Food and clothing are still taught but within a broadened curriculum including nutrition, personal finance, parenting, interpersonal relationships, consumer behavior, and sometimes occupational programs such as food service and child care services. Graduates find teaching positions in nurseries, regular schools, and special facilities for handicapped adults, and gifted or bilingual

children. After field/residential experience and a graduate-level education, many of these majors become educational specialists or agents for a business or public utility.

*Foods and nutrition, dietetics, and food service* programs offer a wide range of opportunities and challenges. Dieticians work as team members with doctors and nurses in hospitals, planning diets for patients and teaching patients how to improve their health through proper eating habits. Dieticians also serve as food service directors for school lunch programs, industrial cafeterias, and adult fitness and cardiac rehabilitation institutions. Others with graduate degrees enter careers in nutrition or food research or the teaching profession. Some work as inspectors, chemists, or quality control managers at food companies. Related employment positions in business and industry include positions in food product development laboratories, food equipment or trade associations, advertising agencies promoting food, food editors in newspapers and magazines, and home economists for retail market chains.

*Textiles and clothing* have been dramatically expanding in recent years to accommodate a wide range of career possibilities. Textile science majors' occupational choices include quality controller, laboratory technician, researcher in a testing laboratory, sales representative for a supplier, and consumer-education specialist for appliance manufacturers. A textile design major may become an independent

artist and weaver. Apparel design, which involves all the steps from designing to making finished clothing for men, women, and children for all occasions includes important specializations such as active sportswear, protective clothing for the industry, and functional clothes for the handicapped. The field of fashion merchandising, the competitive business where women and men plan, produce and promote clothing and goods as they are desired by customers, continues to expand and diversify. Most graduates begin employment as assistant department buyers, managers, or independent sales promoters. Being an interior designer is another occupational alternative: Clients may wish to have an entire home, a kitchen or office interior planned for. This career is based on the creation, selection, coordination, promotion, and selling of the thousands of items needed in planning and designing homes and businesses.

*Family resource management* also includes *housing-and-family economics and management*. Graduates often work in housing programs and become loan-processing specialists in a governmental community planning and development office or in the private industry. In business, positions range from energy auditor for utilities, who analyze the energy efficiency of homes, to housing managers, mobile and contract home designers, and real estate agents. Graduates in family economics and management take jobs in banks, customer counselling, credit departments, insurance agencies, financial counselling

etc. They also create consumer education materials and diagnose specific problems for public policy.

*Human development and family studies* consists of three programs: Human development, family studies, and early childhood education. Graduates in this field become-among others-child therapists, counsellors, caseworkers and/or managers in child abuse programs, drug programs, homes for unwed mothers, genetic and family planning clinics, social services' agencies, senior citizen centers, and community programs for the elderly. Other employment programs are offered by many institutions of higher education and high-school vocational programs, all according to the local demands. Some of them are as follows: Health care administration, care of facilities, retirement homes, public or private health agencies, hotel, restaurant and tourism management.

In response to the needs of society and the broadening areas of employment in the service industry, which values and seeks out the expertise of home economics graduates, the field must expand its range of services rendered to society by increasing its active involvement in public affairs, public policy, and politics. Participation and assertive action in public affairs and public policy areas will enhance visibility and promote understanding about the profession and this will significantly benefit society. Home economists have always contributed substantial knowledge and data with scholarly



commitment. We need additional efforts to cover even deeper dimensions of society. The unique subject matter of home economics predisposes it to contribute novel solutions to social issues today and to meet the challenges of societal changes such as the reinforcement of the family as socially and economically significant units, the rapid shift to an information society, the moral and ethical issues hinging on progress in biotechnology, the impact of economic changes, demographic shifts, and the importance of a global vision and global economy. The future requires sheer numbers of people, competent in political strategies and even more committed to the causes of home economics.

## VII. Research

Home economics is by nature integrative. Efforts should be made to facilitate integration not solely for the purpose of artificially connecting home economics and related areas of study, but because such an approach breeds professionals with holistic perspectives.

Problems concerned with human needs are too complex as to fall within the boundaries of a single content area of specialization. Interrelationships have to be understood in order to work successfully for a better quality of life for individuals and families. Additionally, societal problems often require the knowledge and skills of a team of skilled professionals. Such a team of professionals with

various backgrounds in a number of specializations can create unique solutions to problems. Some of the societal issues and related problems that individuals and families are coping with today are the energy shortage, poverty, malnutrition, child abuse, and economic instability etc. Home economics professionals with backgrounds in a variety of specializations effectively can assist individuals and families in resolving their problems. The Association of Administrators of Home Economics in America presented a document stating the five goals of home economics research. The goals are (1) to improve the conditions contributing to man's psycho-social development, including family relationships, and the social, emotional and cognitive development of children; (2) to improve the conditions affecting man's physiological health and development, including nutrition, food and health; (3) to improve the physical components of man's environment, including housing and its environs, textiles and clothing; (4) to improve consumer competence and decision making, values and life style; (5) to improve the quality and availability of community services enriching family life, including various community programs and their effects on the family.

The above goals indicate the present line of research, depicting its contents, its direction, and the general disposition of home economists and home economics instructors.

Research is the discovery of new facts,

new materials, new processes, new relationships or the re-interpretation of existing situations and the prediction of future developments.

## VIII. Conclusion

The future is an extension of the present. Successful developments of the past are certainly promise continuing progress in the future. By building on past achievements and strengths, the profession can meet the rapidly changing needs of society more effectively.

Current societal developments dictate a more conscientious, responsible continuing education through professional, critical evaluations of credentials. Home-economics programs must meet the growing needs by accomodating new technologies. In higher education, home economics must contribute its share to the general knowledge and professional education of students regardless of major. Multidisciplinary efforts should become the norm in home economics research.

The uniqueness of the home economics subject matter helps to meet many of the current challenges to society, including the reinforcement of the family as socio-economical key units, the rapid shift towards an information society, the moral and ethical issues of new technologies, economic changes, demographic shifts, and the decentralization of power.

Home economics is unique in how it views the life of families and individuals. As society becomes even more complex,

home economics will adapt by adding new dimensions. However, its basic uniqueness will always remain unadulterated.

ideal home life for today  
unhampered by the traditions of past.

utilization of all resources of modern science  
to improve the home life.

freedom of the home from the dominance of  
things  
and their due subordinating to ideals.

simplicity in material surroundigs  
which will most free the spirit  
for the more important and permanent  
interests  
of the home and of society.

Ellen H. Richards  
1904

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