

Final Draft as at 10 October 2014

Deagon, J. R., & Pendergast, D. (2014). Home economists' views and perceptions of spiritual health and wellbeing: a collective affirmation statement. *Journal of the HEIA*, 21(2), 2-12.

Home economists' views and perceptions of spiritual health and wellbeing: A collective affirmation statement

Jay R. Deagon, PhD and Donna Pendergast, PhD

This paper is a peer-reviewed paper.

Abstract

Home economists articulate relationships between home economics and spiritual health and wellbeing in various ways. This paper focuses on some similarities in spiritual discourses. Home economists from twenty-one countries responded to an anonymous online survey that invited cross-cultural views and perceptions about spirituality. Bricolage strategies, including qualitative descriptive statistics, elements of constructivist grounded theory, and content and discourse analysis, were used to establish themes in the data and enabled analysis of *home economists' language-in-use* relating to spirituality. Shared-meaning themes were located and used to construct a collective affirmation statement. The statement *confirmed some 'essential element' categories of* home economics including individuals, families and communities, the natural environment, and local and global citizenship to have relationships with spiritual discourse. Prominent spiritual discourse concepts emerged, such as uniqueness of the individual, respect for diversity, service to others, hope, meaning and purpose in life, family relationships and community spirit. For the participants in this study, home economics education contributed positively to spiritual wellbeing.

Keywords: spiritual wellbeing citizenship respect service hope diversity

Introduction

Spirituality is a dynamic state in human beings, which is individually expressed according to a complex array of factors, such as geographic location, worldviews and life experiences. Assumptions about spirituality often include perceptions of religious exclusivity (Marple, 2006), Indigenous or traditional ways of being and knowing (Bone, 2009; Tripcony, 2007), or 'new aged' ideology (Tacey, 2003). Many versions of spirituality have deep-rooted historical and cultural influences (Bernstein, 2000). Suffice to say, the variation of interpretations of the notion of spirituality is as limitless as the individuals who express them. As a result, understandings of spiritual terminology may have caused spirituality to become taken-for-granted, misinterpreted, overlooked or excluded from home economics philosophy, policy and practice.

Debate about the origins and stewardship of spiritual terminology is often contentious, whether it be in the field of home economics or elsewhere. This study was interested in locating some commonalities in spiritual discourse amongst an international and cross-cultural cohort of home economists. To initiate this investigation, a framework for conceptualising spirituality as a 'real' phenomenon was required, and then juxtaposing this framework with the essential elements of home economics.

Spirituality: Is it a real thing?

The most often cited challenges to studying spirituality typically include:

- rejection of the existence of God or transcendental domains because ‘science’ has never proven them to exist
- fundamentalist approaches to certain religious knowledge
- Euro-centricity of the researchers who often exclude multiplicity of religious and cultural knowledges existing in the world
- unclear terminology (Best, 2008; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Marples, 2006; Tacey, 2003).

In light of these challenges, some suggest that classifying and categorising spirituality is an impossible task and inappropriate (Chuengsatiansup, 2003; Hand, 2003). Not surprisingly then, constructing one concise definition for spirituality, or the health discipline construct of spiritual health and wellbeing (SHW), remains unresolved.

Working with the social construct of ‘spirituality’ from ecological and secular perspectives is not an easy task. Crossman (2003) observed that the term ‘secular spirituality’ ‘probably appears to be something of an oxymoron in that the secular cannot, strictly speaking, be spiritual in nature’ (p. 505). Philosophers and academics will continue to debate whether or not spirituality can be considered to be a ‘real thing’.

In this paper, the position taken is that spirituality is socially constructed knowledge, which means that individuals make their own meaning within their individualised relevant, relative and relational contexts (Deagon, 2013). The concept of social enactment of spirituality is a recommended way to bring a seemingly inward and intangible concept into an outward and observable reality (Radford, 2006). From this perspective, examinations of public expressions of spirituality may provide researchers with a way forward in order to locate commonalities of understanding. Moberg (2002) asserted that there is a ‘growing consensus that human spirituality is an ontologically existent or real phenomenon, in contrast to an earlier, but still not rare, positivistic assumption that it is merely a figment of folklore, myth, or the collective imagination’ (p. 48).

For the reasons outlined above, no specific definitions for spirituality or SHW are provided in this paper; rather, in order to contribute new knowledge to the home economics’ research field, survey data, language-in-use of survey participants and the reviewed literature were used to inform the development of a collective affirmation statement as a demonstration of shared meaning relevant for an international and cross-cultural cohort of home economists (see Hochheimer, 2012; Radford, 2006). This research may assist home economists to understand the ways in which spiritual knowledge systems are already, or may become part of our collective consciousness (Bernstein, 2000).

Recontextualisation describes the process whereby original concepts (for example, Greek wisdoms or sacred religious texts) are reorganised, manipulated and compressed to apply to new contexts (Bernstein, 2000). The recontextualisation process means an acknowledgement that concepts (like spirituality) are in a state of constant flux and alteration.

In 2005, McGregor and Chesworth (2005) partially addressed the issue of recontextualisation of spiritual knowledge. They were among the first contemporary home economists to bring forth ‘new’ versions of spirituality relevant for twenty-first century home economics. From their Canadian perspective, McGregor and Chesworth (2005) offered recontextualisations of spirituality that included ‘new aged’ spirituality: influences by popular culture and media; westernised society incorporating eastern alternative medicines into health practices; and traditional and indigenous wisdoms. Their article signified a shift toward a broader concept of spirituality that moved away from historically religious dominance.

Considering home economics is an international and globalised profession, the question of whether or not spirituality-related discourses were being recontextualised appropriately for twenty-first century

home economics, becomes an important question. It is this perceived shift in spiritual discourse, alluded to by McGregor and Chesworth (2005), that prompted the current study and questioned how a cross-cultural cohort of international home economists interpreted spirituality and SHW.

A framework for investigating spiritual health and wellbeing in the context of home economics

As this study was interested in locating commonalities in spiritual discourse among home economists, a framework was required for representing the relationships between home economics and spirituality. This was accomplished by more clearly defining the essential elements of home economics, identifying the domains of spirituality, and then showing the relationships between the two.

Four essential elements of home economics

Using the framework developed by Deagon and Pendergast (2012) as a starting point, this paper extends that work to define more clearly four essential elements of home economics to be:

- Individuals—each unique member of the human family. For home economics this means teachers, students, industry professionals and clients as well as individuals external to immediate circles of influence and unfamiliar persons.
- Families and communities—self-defined families, family units, locally and globally defined communities and groups. For home economics this includes families within immediate circles of influence to an individual, communities of practice, school communities, volunteer and humanitarian organisations, local and international businesses, governments and corporations.
- The environment and sustainable futures—this includes stewardship and care for living and non-living environments, including self-definitions of the home, built spaces, sacred places, natural landscapes, natural and man-made resources, ecosystems, organic life forms and inorganic material, creatures, space, air and water.
- Glocal consumers operating in a global community to connect with a larger reality—this means transcending beyond immediate needs of self and material reality to connect and interact with a larger reality in everyday life on Earth—past, present and future.

These four essential elements of home economics framed the analysis shared in this paper by providing concepts, words, and phrases to study home economics discourses.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) Position Statement: Home Economics in the 21st Century (IFHE, 2009) was the primary source of ideation about overarching international home economics philosophy, policy and practice. The IFHE suggested to the world that the position statement contains the essentials of contemporary home economics. Whilst acknowledging that ‘essentialising’ is not an ideal view, the research necessitated distilled concepts or ‘essentials’ to represent overarching international perspectives. To clarify, essential means ‘absolutely necessary, extremely important’ and stems from Latin *essentia* meaning ‘in the highest degree’ (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2013). Essence is a derivative of essential and means ‘intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, which determines its character’ (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2013). Referred to throughout this paper are the phrases ‘essential elements’ and ‘essential essence’, which are taken to mean the highest-order characteristics and the absolutely necessary and extremely important intrinsic qualities of home economics and/or SHW. These qualities determined certain characteristics of these topics and allowed a space where comparative relationships between home economics, spirituality and SHW could be located.

Four domains of spiritual health and wellbeing

Fisher’s (2011) four domains model (that is, personal, communal, environmental, transcendental domains) was utilised as the basis for understanding SHW (see Deagon & Pendergast, 2012). Fisher’s model explains SHW to be a sociocultural holistic model for understanding that spirituality permeates and integrates the multidimensional and dynamic interrelationships between all of the dimensions of health. Hettler’s (2010) original and extended dimensions of health model include spiritual, social, physical, emotional, mental, environmental, occupational, and planetary dimensions. From this

perspective, SHW is an overarching concept and includes ideas such as connectedness, relationships, reverence for natural and built environments, balance and harmony, and is both intrinsic and extrinsic. SHW is developed within the individual to varying degrees and, paradoxically, is in a constant flux of change because it is informed by worldviews, personal experiences, cultural situatedness and belief system (Fisher, 2011; Hawks, 2004; Hochheimer, 2010; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011).

Juxtaposing home economics elements and spirituality frameworks

The next phase of the research juxtaposed the essential elements of home economics with extant spirituality frameworks (see Figure 1). Figure 1 presents a visual representation of theoretical relationships between the four essential elements of home economics (individuals, families and communities, environments and sustainable futures, glocal consumers) and the four domains of spiritual health and wellbeing (personal, communal, environmental, transcendental) (see Deagon & Pendergast, 2012). This ‘essentials’ framework was the platform from which the investigation commenced.

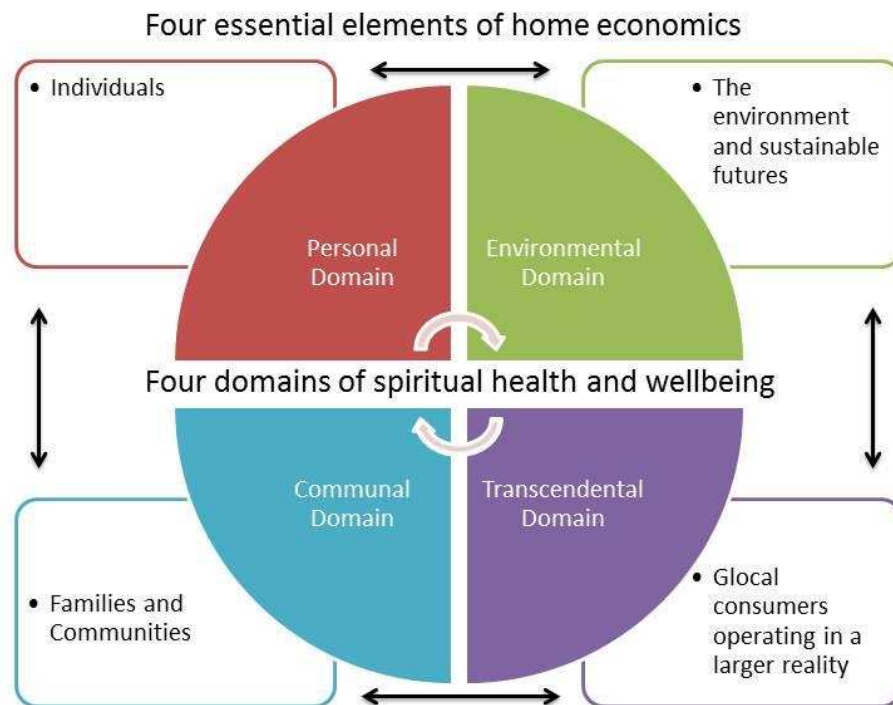


Figure 1. Model representing relationships between the four essential elements of home economics and the four domains of spiritual health and wellbeing

Method

An interdisciplinary approach

Home economics is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (IFHE, 2009), which means that ideally, in the course of their work, home economists are equipped with the skills to interpret and integrate information, knowledge and wisdoms from, between and across other disciplinary fields (McGregor, 2010). For example, as is the case of this current study, no evidence-based research within the home economics discipline had been conducted previously on the topics under investigation. The researchers, equipped with specialised home economists’ lenses, asked: What knowledge from other disciplines can be applied to this home economics research situation? Working

with interdisciplinary knowledge, and selecting the tools most appropriate to fit the research task at hand, is a complex research design called bricolage, an approach used in this study.

Bricolage

Bricolage (French for ‘tinkering’) is a Lévi-Straussian inspired way of constructing or creating research work from a diverse range of tools and objects that happen to be available to the researcher (Kincheloe, 2005). Bricolage is a multi-method research design that entails a non-linear process of collecting, analysing and displaying data through a weaving of thoughts, instincts, theory, methodology and analysis tools (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). For this reason, in this study, literature was frequently selected from fields outside home economics. Specifically, literature from nursing and education fields informed the construction of an online survey as the primary tool for data collection.

Survey construction

Ethical approval to proceed with the survey was granted through the Griffith University Ethics Committee under protocol number EPS/07/10/HREC. No survey instruments were located that investigated SHW within a home economics context previously. Therefore, an online survey or e-survey (electronic) was adapted from pre-existing instruments from nursing and education fields. McSherry and Jamieson’s (2011) Spirituality and Spiritual Care Rating Scale (SSCRS) explored concepts within a nursing context such as:

- hope
- existentialism, that is, meaning, purpose and fulfilment
- forgiveness
- beliefs and values
- spiritual care
- relationships
- belief in a God or deity
- morality and conduct
- creativity and self-expression.

In addition, Fisher’s (2008, 2011) Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM), originally constructed for use in educational institutions, organised twenty items under the four domains model that included:

- personal—meaning, purpose and values
- communal—morality, culture and religion
- environmental—care, nurture and stewardship of the physical, eco-political and social environment
- transcendental—ultimate concern, cosmic force, for theists—God, faith.

The essential elements framework described above (Figure 1) guided the recontextualisation and adaptation of these two instruments for home economics contexts. For example, the Equity/Assessment item asked participants to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (always) responses to the following:

- I include Indigenous Peoples’ concepts of spirituality in home economics practice and learning experiences.
- When planning home economics experiences, I encourage family and/or community members to contribute their knowledge and beliefs about spirituality.
- I include an inquiry process that explores a variety of points of view that include individual, family and/or community spiritual beliefs and knowledge.
- I include exploration of spirituality when teaching or learning about the dimensions of health (i.e. physical, social, emotional, environmental, mental).
- When exploring creativity, I encourage and include quiet time or silence in my home economics teaching or learning experiences.

- I include home economics experiences that allow individuals, family and/or community members opportunities to contribute to society as active local citizens.
- When exploring environmental sustainability, I include spiritual concepts in my home economics practice and experiences.
- When exploring knowledge within different contexts (e.g. historical, political/legal, economic, social/cultural, environmental, ethical) I include spiritual contexts.
- I include home economics experiences that allow individuals, family and/or community members opportunities to contribute to society as active global citizens.

During the analysis phase, concepts derived initially from McSherry and Jamieson's SSCRS and Fisher's SHALOM were compressed and adapted to become known as the 'essential element categories'. Descriptive statistics and participant free-text were woven together into naturally clumped themes. For example, as a result of an organic process, the Equity/Assessment items listed above were collapsed into the Communal/Relationships category. Furthermore, during analysis the Transcendental Other/Religion category transformed into a Worldview/Transcendental Domain category.

Assessing the validity and rigour of an e-survey

Assessing the validity of e-survey reports is problematic. Nonetheless, key elements of the e-survey followed Eysenbach's (2004) checklist for reporting results on Internet e-surveys. The e-survey had four parts:

- demographics (9 items)
- home economics practices (3 items)
- beliefs and attitudes about home economics, spirituality and spiritual health and wellbeing (10 items)
- personal beliefs and attitudes about spiritual, religious and personal beliefs (7 items).

Qualtrics Online Survey Software (<http://www.qualtrics.com/>) was selected for its navigation ease and also because it provided a comprehensive tracking and reporting facility.

In the development and pre-testing stage, the e-survey was pilot tested twice. The opening page of the questionnaire provided an informed content statement, consisting of assurances of voluntary participation and anonymity, investigator and institution contact details, definitions for key concepts and a statement of purpose for the study. The average time to complete the survey was recorded at twenty minutes. No incentives were offered to the participants. The e-survey consisted of radio buttons, drop-down lists, 5-point Likert scales and sliding scales. Some items were randomised to avoid biases in item responses. Participants were also invited to add 'free-text' comments in relation to some questions.

Free-text data were cleaned for anonymity purposes: names were changed and identifying data removed. Free-text responses supported theme development, where tag cloud theory was useful for identifying and displaying prominent language-in-use (Pendergast, 2010). In addition to coding for themes using pencil and paper and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, computer-assisted statistical analysis was performed using Qualtrics and SPSS. To prevent multiple entries from the same individual, Internet Protocol (IP) addresses were used to identify duplicate entries and data were cleaned accordingly.

Dissemination strategy and limitations

Dissemination of the e-survey was achieved through an initial invitation to participate emailed to members of several national and international home economics associations and advertised using social networking websites and in-print newsletters. The survey was open for three months and 11 days from November 2011 to February 2012. It was anticipated that the online survey would go 'viral'. Dewhurst and Pendergast (2011) had successfully employed a similar viral or snowballing technique. The number of home economics teachers and professionals worldwide with access to the

Internet was estimated to be 50,000, indicating a potential pool of target participants. However, response rates and completion rates did not attract participants as anticipated. Collection of insufficient numerical data meant that quantitative analysis was not appropriate, so a qualitative approach was adopted.

Analysis technique

Organised around the essential element framework, analysis work commenced with descriptive statistics to recognise trends in the data, including frequencies (f), means (M), standard deviations (SD), total population per item (N), subpopulations (n), and percentages (%) (Creswell, 2005). Once descriptive statistics identified initial themes, bricolage techniques (Kincheloe et al., 2011) were employed to construct a ‘best fit’ assessment of the key themes (Douven, 2011), an approach that included specific components of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), content analysis (Silverman, 2006) and discourse analysis (Gee, 2011). Strategies of bricolage then recontextualised a collective affirmation statement to represent the home economists’ views and perceptions of spirituality and SHW within the home economics context.

Findings

Qualtrics survey statistics revealed significant inconsistencies with completion and response rates. One hundred and three participants started the survey and eleven participants completed all aspects of the survey. Table 1 provides the key statistics that indicate target population, completion rates and the individual item response rates reported in this article.

Table 1: Key statistics including target population, completion rates and item response rates	Number (N or n)
Target population and dissemination strategies	
Conservative estimated target population of home economists with access to the Internet	50 000
Estimated number of members of home economics associations from Australia, Japan, Canada, America, Caribbean	12 800
Direct email with invitation to participate sent to IFHE members	1076
Estimated audience who received broadcast messages sent via online home economics social networks (Facebook, Twitter, WordPress and a purpose built website)	500
Response rates	
Total participants that opened the survey link	103
Number of participants that did not proceed past first item	13
Number of participants completing between 10% to 70% of the survey	25
Number of participants completing 80% of the survey	19
Number of participants completing 90% of the survey	35
Number of participants completing 100% of the survey	11
Number of participants who responded to an invitation for email interview	4
Individual item response rates	
Involved in the home economics profession	102
Gender	90
Age	90
Year of qualification	89
Country of origin	88
Importance of home economics concepts	88
Is spirituality a legitimate area of concern for home economics?	85
Support and guidance to address spirituality in home economics?	85
Beliefs and attitudes about home economics	78
Beliefs and attitudes about spirituality and spiritual health and wellbeing	72
See evidence of spiritual health and wellbeing in home economics	71

Influence of a Transcendental Other	70
Religious affiliation	71
SHALOM	66
Number of participants who responded to one or more free-text items	57

As a result of low participation rates (as indicated in Table 1), the analysis was unable to be conducted using inferential statistics such as ANOVA, Chi-Square Analysis or Pearson correlation coefficients. The data only provided particulars for a small cohort of home economists and may not be taken as representative of the whole target population. As a result of the small sample size and drop-off rates, there were significant mathematical discrepancies. For this reason, the bricolage approach described previously became increasingly important. For example, as the subpopulation numbers fluctuated and were inconsistent, it became necessary to treat item responses as individual data sets.

Demographic profile of the participants

Involvement with home economics

From a pre-defined list, participants (N = 102) indicated how they were involved in the home economics profession:

- teacher (f = 32)
- lecturer/academic/researcher (f = 23)
- retired, past student or interested person who is still involved in home economics (f = 13)
- teacher at college (f = 11)
- 'other' including education administrator, policy development worker, government, rural development worker (f = 8)
- university/college student studying to teach home economics (f = 5)
- university/college student not studying to teach (f = 4)
- industry professional (f = 3)
- high/secondary school student (f = 3).

Participants identified four main curriculum areas of study within which they taught home economics skills and knowledge:

- nutrition, food and diet which incorporate practical kitchen skills and theory (f = 26)
- consumer studies, consumerism and resource management (f = 21)
- family studies and relationships (f = 18)
- living environments, shelter and housing (f = 17).

Six additional 'other' areas of study were also identified by participants: global welfare, healthier living, ICT in daily life, global citizenship, kitchen design and ergonomics, and futures consciousness. The majority of participants graduated with a home economics qualification in one of two decades: 1980–1989 (n = 18), and 2000–2009 (n = 18).

Gender

Ninety-three percent of participants (N = 90) were female (n = 84) and 7%, male (n = 6).

Age

Age ranges varied. The youngest group were 19–24 years (n = 10), and the oldest participants were 71+ years (n = 2). The age groups most represented were between 51–60 years of age (26%) and 41–50 years of age (24%). Combined, age groups (i.e. 41–60) formed 50% of the responses.

Country

Eighty-eight participants represented cross-cultural responses from 21 countries. The four countries most represented were:

- Australia (f = 25)
- Canada (f = 11)
- United States (f = 11)
- Ireland (f = 10).

Other countries represented, organised by frequency, were United Kingdom (f = 4), Malta (f = 4), Finland (f = 3), Pakistan (f = 3), Puerto Rico (f = 3), Sweden (f = 2), Netherlands (f = 2), Barbados (f = 1), China (f = 1), Estonia (f = 1), Fiji (f = 1), Germany (f = 1), Kenya (f = 1), South Africa (f = 1), Spain (f = 1), Trinidad and Tobago (f = 1), United Arab Emirates (f = 1).

Home economics meeting *the needs of today's society*

Sixty-two percent of participants (N = 85, n = 53) responded 'yes' to the question 'do you think spirituality to be a legitimate area of concern for home economics?' and 38% (n = 32) responded 'no'. Participants were then asked 'do you feel you receive sufficient support and guidance to address spirituality as an aspect of home economics?' Eighty-two percent of participants (N = 85, n = 70) responded 'no' and 18% (n = 15) responded 'yes'. These responses revealed that although participants did perceive spirituality to be an aspect of home economics, a lack of official or professional support and guidance may impede addressing spirituality in practice. This observation was strengthened by participants' responses to questions relating to the perceived importance of some contemporary aspects of home economics.

Identified from the reviewed literature, seven 'importance' items were included in the survey to gain an insight into where SHW may fit in relation to other contemporary home economics educational directives. The purpose of this was to identify possible harmonies between the concepts. The following items were drawn from the IFHE position statement and extant home economics literature and identified as contemporary concepts for consideration in home economics philosophy, policy and practice. Presented here in alphabetical order, the seven items were:

1. acting on education for sustainable development initiatives through home economics practice
2. being an active and aware global citizen
3. making home economics reflect the needs of today's society
4. religion
5. spirituality
6. understanding spiritual health and wellbeing in home economics
7. using Internet technology to teach and learn about home economics.

The Qualtrics randomisation feature was employed for this question to ensure that answers were not presented in any pre-defined order of preference. A sliding scale ranging from 0 (very unimportant) to 100 (very important) was used to indicate which of these topics were personally important to each participant.

Results showed that 'making home economics reflect the needs of today's society' was of the highest importance to the participants (M = 92.27; mode = 98; N = 88). The SD of 12.24 revealed that there was significant agreement in opinion about making home economics relevant to the needs of today's society. This was in stark contrast to an SD of 34.15 regarding the importance of religion, which revealed a wide difference of opinion, including polar opposite scale ratings of 0 and 100. Religion was scale rated at M = 52.22 (mode 51) as lowest in importance. Spirituality rated the second lowest (M = 68.92; mode = 75).

Views and perceptions about spiritual health and wellbeing and their relationships with home economics

Returning to the pre-existing instruments adapted from McSherry and Jamieson's SSCRS (2011) and Fisher's SHALOM (2011), the essential element categories were explored next. Part three of the survey asked participants to respond to the statements about spirituality, spiritual beliefs, spiritual contexts, spiritual health and wellbeing and home economics practice where 5-point Likert scales indicated 0 (never) and 5 (always). Figure 2 is a visual representation of the mean participant responses to the essential element categories.

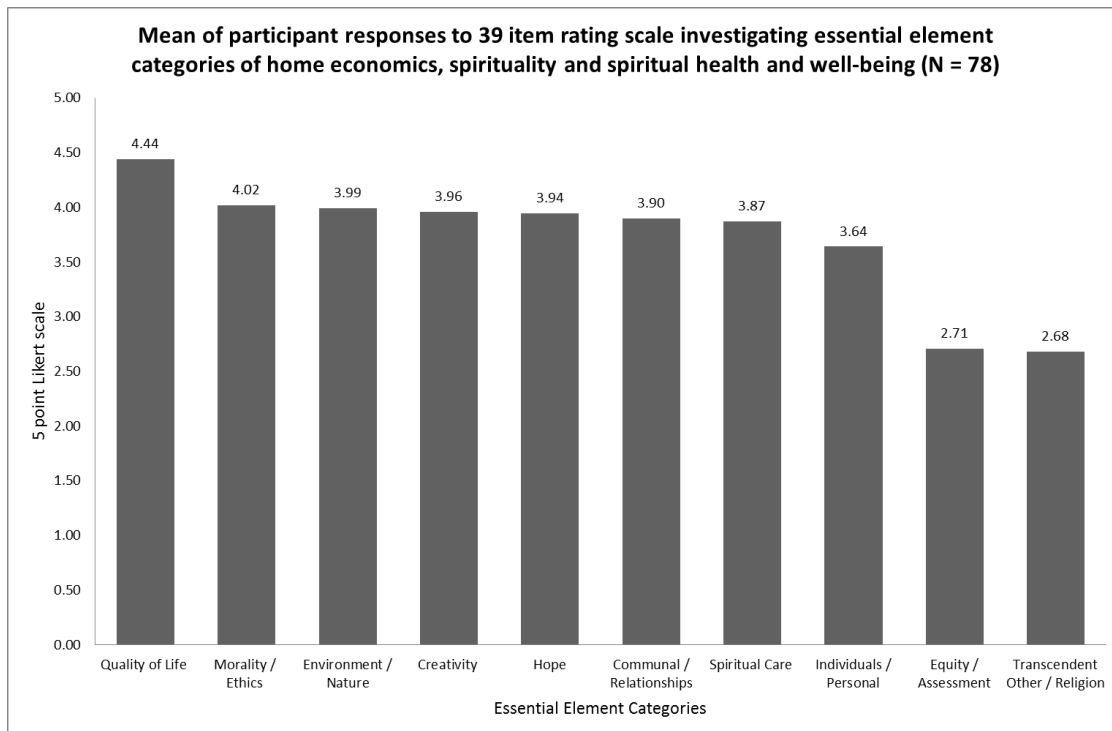


Figure 2. Mean participant responses to essential element categories

Figure 2 demonstrates that the participants ($N = 78$) believed that the Quality of Life ($M = 4.44$) category was the most significant aspect of spirituality and SHW within home economics contexts. In descending order of importance morality and ethics ($M = 4.02$), environment and nature ($M = 3.99$); creativity ($M = 3.96$); hope ($M = 3.94$); communal and relationships ($M = 3.90$); and spiritual care ($M = 3.87$) also rated very closely in the affirmative. The equity/assessment items ($M = 2.71$) indicated uncertainty about SHW being a part of home economics assessment. Uncertainty was tentatively confirmed by SD, which indicated a difference of opinion in this category ($SD = 1.20$). The transcendental/religion item ($M = 2.68$) rated above the mid-point of 2.5 but was the lowest rated category.

Spiritual, religious and personal beliefs

Seventy-one percent of participants ($N = 70$, $n = 50$) believed that something or someone beyond the human level, which could be called a Transcendental Other, held an external influence on their life. The remaining 29% ($n = 20$) did not believe in a Transcendental Other. Participants identified with a variety of different religions and non-religious groups including, in alphabetical order, Atheist, Christianity, Islam, mixture of beliefs, no religion, and other. Just over half of the participants ($N = 66$, $n = 36$) were Christian (56%). The next largest group reported 'no religion' (21%, $n = 15$). Participants used various terms to identify the name they used to identify a Transcendent Other, including, in alphabetical order, Allah, Divine, God, Matter & Energy, Other, Universe. As expected from the high percentage of Christians, 'God' (59%) was the most used term for the Transcendent Other ($N = 71$). Aligning with the 'no religion' group, 'other' was the second largest category (24%). Various language-in-use were reported to describe a Transcendent Other including: 'all that is', 'I don't know the name, I just know there is something bigger than you or me', 'human beings', 'no name', 'me and you', 'you'. These responses indicated qualities of being human or the human-ness of the transcendental domain. A few participants also asserted in their free-text responses, that the question related to the Transcendent Other that notions of God as a non-earthly being were believed to be a socially constructed cultural artefact. A few self-identifying Atheists named the Transcendent Other 'God', but others preferred the name 'matter and energy'. Those participants who reported 'a mixture' identified as 'Christian and Buddhist' also called the Transcendent Other 'matter and energy'.

Spiritual health and wellbeing is about authentic feelings and happiness. Spirituality influences all other dimensions of health, wellbeing and quality of life. Generally, spirituality is a positive experience. Spiritual life is about being a part of the world and having a sense of place. Spirituality means having meaning and purpose in life. Spirituality is what makes us human beings. We are human because we think, feel and act.

It is our moral and ethical responsibility to 'do the right thing'. Personal actions influence other people. Other people's actions influence us personally. All human actions influence the world. Everyone experiences spiritual life and spirituality differently. For some, God and faith have a very important place in everyday life. For some, nature, the universe or humanity are those forces that provide strength, renewal and hope.

Hope for the future is important. Being at peace within ourselves and with the world is important. Everyone's spiritual health and wellbeing is important. Events, life experiences and time all influence our spiritual beliefs and worldviews. We respect that everyone is unique.

Our families and homes are important. Teaching, nurturing and caring for our children, students and other people give us a sense of purpose. We understand who we are, when we are part of a family or community. Our spiritual beliefs are influenced by our families, community groups, schools, work environments, church groups, and exposure to different religions, places and cultures. Spiritual, religious and personal beliefs are often embedded within our cultures.

Home economics can facilitate local and global community relationships. Home economics has a positive influence on community spirit. Home economics teaches us to think about our personal actions and our influence on other people, natural and built environments and the world. Spiritual, religious and personal beliefs do influence our professional practice and pedagogy. Sharing, teaching and learning home economics curricula have an influence on our own and other peoples' spiritual health and wellbeing.

Figure 4: Shared meaning for spirituality in home economics—a collective affirmation statement

Figure 4 provides one version of shared meaning, using terms frequently used in the free-text responses, taken together with some of the key themes from the analysis to highlight home economists' language-in-use and fundamental concepts. The analysis wove together prominent concepts to encapsulate the essential essences of SHW as a collective and shared meaning of these home economists' perceptions of spirituality, spiritual life and spiritual health and wellbeing.

Discussion

In this paper, spirituality was appreciated as a 'real' phenomenon. This perspective presupposed differences between individual views and perceptions about spiritual, religious and personal beliefs. Spirituality incorporated things like creativity, aesthetics, awe and wonder, an appreciation of nature, compassion and connectedness (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; McGregor & Chesworth, 2005). These

notions are at the heart of understanding religious and non-religious specific (or secular) perspectives of spirituality. This study supports McGregor and Chesworth's (2005) assertion that spirituality is a diverse concept that is being recontextualised in various ways and for various complex reasons.

The important insights from this analysis were that regardless of religious affiliation, service to others and families and communities were revealed to be highly meaningful aspects of home economics and SHW frameworks. Survey results confirmed that the communal domain was the most significant for the participants and that respect for others, kindness towards others, and trust between individuals were important factors (Fisher, 2011).

The collective statement (see Figure 4) is new knowledge for the professional home economics community. This knowledge relates specifically to home economists' views and perceptions about SHW in home economics contexts. Derived from the qualitative bricolage strategies, this knowledge was observed through various emergent themes. The words, concepts and phrases contained within this collective affirmation statement were built from reviewed literature, survey data and the most frequent words of the participants in this study such as 'spiritual', 'life', 'health', 'home' and so forth. These word trophies were also highlighted in the tag cloud presented in Figure 3. The tag cloud and collective affirmation statement presented in this paper represent the beginning of a folksonomy for spirituality and spiritual health and wellbeing within a home economics context. Input and collaboration of a larger population of culturally diverse home economists is required to confirm this tentative understanding.

Implications

To provide professional support and guidance, locating shared meaning in beliefs and attitudes about spirituality and SHW and their relationship with home economics becomes vitally important. In order to strengthen the home economics body of research knowledge, participation in research is vital. With time and further debate the recontextualised collective affirmation statement presented in this paper may become a tool for understanding spirituality and SHW across home economists from cross-cultural backgrounds.

Some health and educational researchers believe that spirituality is essential, but often neglected aspect of overall health and wellbeing (Deagon, 2012; Fisher, 2011; Hawks et al. 2007; McSherry & Jamieson, 2011; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Smith, Tang, & Nutbeam, 2006). The body of research making positive connections between spirituality, health and wellbeing is growing incrementally, but researchers within various health disciplines, working at national and global levels, are urgently calling for more research so that commonalities and shared meaning can be located and validated (Chuengsatiansup, 2003; Cotton, Zebracki, Rothenthal, Tsevat, & Drotar, 2006; de Jager Meezenbroek et al. 2010; Hawks, 2004; O'Connell & Skevington, 2007; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011; Skevington, Lotfy, & O'Connell, 2004). This current research project has contributed to their calls by investigating spiritual discourses collected from various sources and recontextualising this knowledge for home economics contexts.

Conclusion

Spirituality is already part of our collective consciousness and the home economics body of knowledge, but is perhaps forgotten or ignored because of perceived biases or cultural misunderstandings. This study tentatively confirmed that home economists from cross-cultural backgrounds may have more in common than we think. For the majority of participants in this study and regardless of religious affiliation, age, or country of origin, as a socially enacted and publically expressed aspect of the personal and professional lives of home economists, spirituality is not only a real phenomenon, but important. Drawn from the key insights of this study, uniqueness of the individual, respect for diversity, service to others, hope, meaning and purpose in life, family relationships, and community spirit are requisite concepts for home economists. However, if home

economists are to meet the needs of today's society and address the four essential elements of home economics, that is, individuals; families and communities; the environment and sustainable futures; and global consumers operating in a global community to connect with a larger reality; then, spirituality and spiritual health and wellbeing must have a prominent place in our philosophies, policies and practices.

References

- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique* (Revised ed.). Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Best, R. (2008). In defence of the concept of 'spiritual education': a reply to Roger Marples. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 13(4), 321-329.
- Bone, J. (2009). Writing research: narrative, bricolage and everyday spirituality. *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education*, 12, 143-152.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Chuengsatiansup, K. (2003). Spirituality and health: an initial proposal to incorporate spiritual health in health impact assessment. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 23(1), 3-15.
- Cotton, S., Zebracki, K., Rothenthal, S., Tsevat, J., & Drotar, D. (2006). Religion/spirituality and adolescent health outcomes: a review [electronic version]. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(4), 472-480.
- Crawford, M., & Rossiter, G. (2006). *Reasons for living: education and young people's search for meaning, identity and spirituality: a handbook* [electronic version]. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Crossman, J. (2003). Secular spiritual development in education from international and global perspectives. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(4), 503-520.
- de Jager Meezenbroek, E., Garssen, B., van den Berg, M., van Dierendonck, D., Visser, A., & Schaufeli, W. (2010). Measuring spirituality as a universal human experience: a review of spirituality questionnaires. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 1-19.
- Deagon, J. (2012). Synergies between home economics and spiritual health and well-being. In J. L. Hochheimer, R. Fisher & M. Weiss (Eds.), *Spirituality: new reflections on theory, praxis and pedagogy*. Oxford, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Deagon, J. (2013). *Cross-cultural views and perceptions of spiritual health and well-being in home economics sites: public expressions and social enactments*. Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, Griffith University, Gold Coast.
- Deagon, J., & Pendergast, D. (2012). A framework for investigating spiritual health and wellbeing in home economics. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 5(1).
- Dewhurst, Y., & Pendergast, D. (2011). Teacher perceptions of the contribution of Home Economics to sustainable development education: a cross-cultural view. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 35(5), 569-577.
- Douven, I. (2011). "Abduction". In Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 ed.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Eysenbach, G. (2004). Improving the quality of web surveys: the checklist for reporting results of Internet e-surveys (CHERRIES). *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 6(3), e34.
- Fisher, J. (2008). *Reaching the heart: assessing and nurturing spiritual well-being via education*. Doctor of Education Thesis, University of Ballarat, Ballarat.
- Fisher, J. (2011). The four domains model: connecting spirituality, health and well-being. *Religions*, 2(1), 17-28.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method* (Third ed.). New York, USA: Routledge.
- Hand, M. (2003). The meaning of spiritual education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(3), 391-401.
- Hawks, S. (2004). Spiritual wellness, holistic health, and the practice of health education. *American Journal of Health Education*, 35(1), 11.

- Hawks, S., Smith, T., Thomas, H. G., Christley, H. S., Meinzer, N., & Pyne, A. (2007). The forgotten dimensions in health education research. *Health Education Research*, 23(2), 319-324.
- Hettler, B. (2010). Origins of the six dimensional model of wellness created in 1976 by Bill Hettler. Retrieved 15 December, 2010, from <http://www.hettler.com/OriginsoftheHettler6DimensionalModel.mht>
- Hochheimer, J. (2012). Communication, spirituality and the sharing of meaning. In M. Fowler, J. D. M. III & J. L. Hochheimer (Eds.), *Spirituality: theory, praxis and pedagogy*. In R. Fisher & D. Riha (Series Eds.), *Critical issues* (pp. 21-30). Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press. Retrieved from <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/>.
- Hochheimer, J. L. (2010). Imagination and the life force: toward a theoretical foundation for spirituality and communication. *Spirituality of a personality: methodology, theory and practice*, 4(39), 220-237.
- International Federation for Home Economics. (2009). Home economics in the 21st century: position statement. Retrieved from <http://www.ifhe.org/>
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2005). On to the next level: continuing the conceptualization of the bricolage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(3), 323-350.
- Kincheloe, J. L., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S. R. (2011). Critical pedagogy, and qualitative research: moving to the bricolage. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 163-178). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Marples, R. (2006). Against (the use of the term) 'spiritual education'. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 11(2), 293-306.
- McGregor, S. (2010). Historical notions of transdisciplinarity in home economics. *Kappa Omicron Nu Forum*, 16(2).
- McGregor, S., & Chesworth, N. (2005). Positioning human spirituality in home economics. *Journal of the HEIA*, 12(3), 27-44.
- McSherry, W., & Jamieson, S. (2011). An online survey of nurses' perceptions of spirituality and spiritual care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 20(11-12), 1757-1767.
- Merriam-Webster Incorporated. (Ed.) (2013). *Merriam-Webster online dictionary*. USA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.
- Moberg, D. O. (2002). Assessing and measuring spirituality: confronting dilemmas of universal and particular evaluative criteria. *Journal of Adult Development*, 9(1), 47-60.
- O'Connell, K. A., & Skevington, S. M. (2007). To measure or not to measure? Reviewing the assessment of spirituality and religion in health-related quality of life. *Chronic Illness*, 3(1), 77-87.
- Pargament, K. I., & Sweeney, P. J. (2011). Building spiritual fitness in the army: an innovative approach to a vital aspect of human development. *American Psychologist*, 66(1), 58-64.
- Pendergast, D. (2010). Connecting with millennials: using tag clouds to build a folksonomy from key home economics documents. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 38(3), 289-302.
- Pendergast, D. (2013). An appetite for home economics literacy: convergence, megatrends and big ideas. *Journal of Asian Regional Association for Home Economics*, 20(2), 57-65.
- Radford, M. (2006). Spirituality and education; inner and outer realities. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 11(3), 385-396.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text and interaction* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Skevington, S. M., Lotfy, M., & O'Connell, K. A. (2004). The World Health Organization's WHOQOL-BREF quality of life assessment: psychometric properties and results of the international field trial. A report from the WHOQOL group. *Quality of Life Research*, 13(2), 299-310.
- Smith, B., Tang, K. C., & Nutbeam, D. (2006). WHO health promotion glossary: new terms. *Health Promotion International Advance Access*. Retrieved from WHO website: <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HP%20Glossary%20in%20HPI.pdf>
- Tacey, D. (2003). *The spirituality revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality*. Australia: HarperCollinsPublishers.

Tripcony, P. (2007). Too obvious to see: explaining the basis of Aboriginal spirituality. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Religious Educators Conference, October 1996, Gold Coast, Australia.

Contact details:

Jay Deagon

Affiliation: School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University

Email: j.deagon@griffith.edu.au

Phone: +61 0402 119 711