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### Abstract

*The global history of the profession of Home Economics spans a century, with six generations making significant contributions to the journey this far. In order to create and sustain a vibrant and preferred future for the profession, it is essential to focus on attracting and retaining present—as well as future—generations of Home Economics professionals. Understanding that we each belong to a generation, and that generations have unique yet predictable values, cycles, strengths, and weaknesses—generational dynamics—is a strategic way of embracing the future. I regard generational theory to be one of six key elements contributing to an opportunity phase, or a “convergent moment” (Pendergast, 2006—see Supplementary Material). This concept of convergent moment is that a number of important societal and historical factors are currently aligning, providing a never-before-experienced opportunity to re-vision our profession. It is my conviction that these convergent factors must be seen as a catalyst for major reform - making this a defining moment for our profession. In that context, this plenary paper provides insights into the generational dynamics that impact on the Home Economics profession and the need to better understand and utilise this information as a basis for future directions for the profession. In particular it investigates Y-Generation members as Home Economics professionals and proposes imperatives for the profession to be ready to embrace the future and the unique approaches of the individuals who are the key members for the future.*

### What is generational theory?

Generational theory seeks to understand and characterise cohorts of people according to their birth generation. It is a dynamic sociocultural theoretical framework that employs a broad brushstroke approach, rather than an individual focus. Generations are defined not by formal process, but rather by demographers, the press and media, popular culture, market researchers, and by members of the generation themselves (Pendergast, 2007).

For example, in a recent Australian newspaper, Y-Generation was used informally to describe cohorts of young people. Here are some article headings:

- Y are they out of control? (Courier Mail, 29.01.08)
- Opposition blames parents for out-of-control Y geners (Courier Mail, 29.01.08)
- Generation Y rebels a blast from the past (Courier Mail, 29.01.08)
- Court calls it assaulting a police officer—to a gen Y it's a badge of honour (28.01.08)

It is also used in formal contexts such as research publications:

- Generation Y and work in the tourism and hospitality industry: Problem? What problem? (Cairncross & Buultjens, 2007)

The concept of generational dynamics is not new. It is based on work done by historians William Strauss and Neil Howe in the 1980s and early 1990s on generational changes in Anglo-American history. Their work has been described as "brilliant," "applicable to everyone around the world," and "enlightening." It is widely used in marketing and communication fields, in product development, in higher education, and in the media as a way of targeting defined populations. Of relevance to this paper is that it has been used by professions and professional association researchers to predict membership and to develop strategic directions to target, engage, and retain selected generations (cf. Brooks, 2004; 2006).

A generation is typically defined as the average interval of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring, with, on average, a birth generation 20-22 years, and a lifespan four times that generational length. We are all born into a generation, but we might be: on the cusp with another generation; early; late; or in the middle of the generation. This is our generational location. The basic notion is that as members of a generation, we typically share a birth year range, opening us up to a set of experiences, and a set of social and economic conditions that in turn shape our generation in particular ways. This subsequently influences our collective thinking and leads to the acquisition of broad and common values and beliefs. In other words, if you're born in 1950 and grow up in the '60s and '70s, you'll be different at age 50 than you will if you're born in 1970 and grow up in the '80s and '90s. The acquisition of values and belief systems principally occurs during the formative or childhood years of each generation. As demonstrated in Table 1, a typical lifespan and the social role associated with the values and belief systems goes through four phases—acquisition, testing, asserting, and transferring.

Table 1: Four Phases in Life

Phase of life	Ages	Social Role
Childhood (formative years)	0-20	<i>Growth</i> being nurtured, acquiring values & belief systems
Young adulthood	21-41	<i>Vitality</i> testing values
Mid Adulthood	42-62	<i>Power</i> asserting values, managing institutions
Elderhood	63-83	<i>Leadership</i> transferring values, leading institutions

Source: Adapted from [http://home.earthlink.net/~generationwatch/gw\\_background.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~generationwatch/gw_background.html)

The origins of generations as a concept is American, but it is widely applicable to Anglophones, that is, those who speak English natively or by adoption and have a cultural background associated with the English language, regardless of ethnic or geographical differences. With the effects of globalisation and the permeation of information and communications technologies (ICTs), especially access to the World Wide Web (WWW), the creep of Anglophone influence and the monoculturalisation of society means the number of people who can be included in the generational cohorts are increasing dramatically. Many professional organisations with a global reach, such as IFHE, utilise English as the main language for information dissemination, and this reinforces and facilitates the reach and effect of generational patterns and impacts.

According to Howe and Strauss (2000), generations follow a repeating cycle, with four generational types typically following in the order of: prophet; nomad; hero; and artist. When the generational types are tracked across the lifecycle, there are characteristics that appear consistently throughout successive generations based on this factor. These are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Characteristics of generational types**

Lifecycle Type	IDEALIST prophet	REACTIVE depressed/ nomad	HEROIC	ARTISTIC adaptive
<b>Childhood</b> Nurture received	Relaxed	Underprotected	Tightening	Overprotected
<b>Young adulthood</b> Style Nurture given	Reflecting Tightening	Competing Overprotective	Building Relaxed	Remodelling Underprotective
<b>Mid Adulthood</b> Attitude	Judgmental	Exhausted	Energetic	Experimental
<b>Elder hood</b> How perceived Leadership style	Wise, visionary Austere, safe	Persuasive Pragmatic	Busy, confident Grand, inclusive	Sensitive, flexible Pluralistic
<b>Motto</b>	Truth	Persuasion	Power	Love
<b>Positive attributes</b>	Principled, resolute	Savvy, practical, perceptive	Rational, competent	Caring, open- minded
<b>Negative attributes</b>	Selfish, arrogant, ruthless	Pecuniary, amoral	Overbold, insensitive, unreflective	Indecisive, guilt- ridden

Source: Adapted from Strauss & Howe, 1991

Generations move as a collective through society, passing through the four phases of life, occupying different phases at different times and always maintaining the unique generational characteristics with them. There is no absolute consensus as to the calendar years

constituting each generation, but the generational boundaries adopted in this paper are commonly adopted by generational theorists. See Table 3.

**Table 3: A summary of living birth generations**

Birth years	Generational Name	Age range in 2008
1901-1924	GI	84-107
1925-1942	Silent	66-83
1943-1960	Baby Boomer	48-65
1961-1981	Generation X	27-47
1982-2002	Generation Y	6-26
2003 +	Generation Z	5 or less

Each generation acquires values and belief systems principally during the formative or childhood years of each generation. Table 4 provides a summary of the typical values and beliefs for selected generations, which also incorporates the features of the generational type.

**Table 4: Differences between selected generations**

Factors	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y
Beliefs & values	Work ethic Security	Variety Freedom	Lifestyle Fun
Motivations	Advancement Responsibility	Individuality	Self discovery Relational
Decision making	Authority Brand loyalty	Experts Information Brand switchers	Friends Little brand loyalty
Earning & spending	Conservative Pay up front	Credit savvy Confident investors	Uncertain spenders Short-term wants Credit dependent
Learning styles	Auditory Content-driven Monologue	Auditory/visual Dialogue	Visual Kinaesthetic Multi-sensory
Marketing & communication	Mass	Descriptive Direct	Participative Viral Through friends
Training environment	Classroom style Formal Quiet atmosphere	Round-table style Planned rRelaxed ambience	Unstructured Interactive
Management & leadership	Control Authority Analysers	Cooperation Competency Doers	Consensus Creativity Feelers

In summary, generational dynamics theory brings together four elements:

- repeating trends based on generational type (idealist, reactive, heroic, artistic)
- recognition that the formative years of childhood where exposure to a range of factors determine the fundamental values and belief system of the generation
- lifecycle stage (childhood, young adulthood, mid adulthood, elder hood) and hence characteristics evident for the generational type at that stage
- the relevant birth generation with its unique attributes at any given time (e.g., Baby Boomer, Generation X).

At the moment, for example, members of the Baby Boomer Generation, which is an idealist or prophet generation, are entering elder hood. See Table 5 for the cyclic location of the most heavily populated living generations in 2008.

Generation	Phase of Life	Social Role	Stage of cycle
Silent	Elder hood	Leadership: transferring values, leading institutions	Artistic
Baby Boomer	Elder hood	Leadership: transferring values, leading institutions	Idealist
Generation X	Midlife	Power: asserting values, managing institutions	Reactive
Generation Y	Young adulthood	Vitality: testing values	Hero
Generation Z	Childhood	Growth: being nurtured, acquiring values & belief systems	Artistic

The prophet or idealist generation is regarded as a “driven” generation, with clear agendas and purpose, such as the Baby Boomer Generation. The civil rights movement is an example of the type of energy and direction a prophet generation might have. This is followed by the nomad or reactive generation, which is typified as extremely cynical and often depressed, and a generation that is a response to the energy and enthusiasm of the previous prophet generation. Generation X is a nomad generation, and is regarded as a pessimistic and depressed generation. The next in the cycle is the hero generation, who are conventional and committed, usually with respect for authority and with civic pride. The hero generation usually produces some key influential international leaders. The generation following the hero generation is the artists’ generation, which is regarded as emotional and indecisive, and at the opposite end of the continuum from the hero generation in terms of leadership and initiative.

Generational theory, like other forms of supposition and speculative analytic tools, provides a particular way of reflecting on the past and if harnessed effectively, of future-proofing the Home Economics profession. However, it is important to add a caveat to this theoretical conjecture with respect to the Y-Generation. Whilst generational theory takes on board the

social and economic times during formative years of a generation and thus provides the basis for characteristics of that generation, a major societal paradigm shift has occurred in the last 25-30 years that has aligned with the formative and hence values acquisition years of our most recent full birth generation—the Y-Generation. The last 25-30 years has been an era of unprecedented transition from industrial to information-based culture and economy, from print-based to multi-mediated, digital approaches to communication effects of information and communications technologies (ICTs), globalisation and the emergence of the digital native. The simultaneous alignment of Generation Y and The Information Age has had an enormous impact, creating a larger than usual generation gap - or values difference, between previous generations and the Y-Generation, a gap accentuated by what is now recognised as the most significant shift in our society to date, with similar but smaller shifts occurring with the introduction of the printing press in the 15th century, and, before that, alphabetic literacy in 4th century.

## Y-Generation

Y-Generation is the first generation born into The Information Age, and for this reason members are known as digital natives (Prensky, 2005/6). Everyone alive today whose birth precedes them is known as a digital immigrant. Digital natives are characterised as: operating at twitch speed (not conventional speed); employing random access (not step-by-step); using parallel processing (not linear processing); employing graphics first (not text); being play-oriented (not work); and being connected (not standing alone). They get more screen time (TV, computer) than fresh air. Consider the following:

- 97% of Australian Y-Generation students, including 82% of Indigenous students, have access to computers at home;
- 87% of Australian students use a computer at home on a frequent basis;
- 74% of students use the internet frequently as a tool for finding information and almost 70% for communication;
- socioeconomic background does not have a great effect on use of computers or confidence (Thomson & De Bortoli, 2007).

A recent American study of more than 7000 Y-Generation members found:

- 97% own a computer
- 94% own a mobile phone (Reynol & Mastrodicasa, 2007)

and in terms of use of their computer, typical usage includes the following types of patterns:

- 69% of 17-25 year old females and 56% of males regularly visit Facebook.com, which is a social networking website launched in early 2004, with more than 66,000,000 active users (have used it in the last month) globally, and a daily new user average of 250,000 with an average of 44 photos per user, totalling 1.7 billion photos (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook#Statistics>).

These statistics corroborate the Y-Generation traits of being connected, play-oriented, and graphics-first explicitly.

Frequent change and technological progress are the comforting realities for the Millennial Generation, yet the same environment provides unsettling challenges for those generations before, including Generation X, the Baby Boomers, and, long before them, the Silent Generation. All of these generations happen to share society at this time, but it is the Millennials who are at ease in our contemporary world. Ironically, it is most likely to be X-Generation and Baby Boomers who are the mature role models, policy-makers, and leaders of the Y-Generation. With the sophistication of ICT it is possible to be almost anyplace, almost anytime. This shift into virtuality brings with it an end to enclosure, which was a key characteristic of generations prior to the current Y-Generation. They can access a range of mass communication technologies, engaging in on-line chats with others around the world, gaining essentially unlimited access to information on the worldwide web, and, in so doing, stepping beyond the constraints of time, distance, and space. They are a product of previous generations, yet they have been mediated in ways unlike any other generation. They represent a swing in values and attitudes that is unlike any generational shift of those groups alive today. While the key events shaping Y-Generation are yet to be confirmed, it is likely to include the following factors that significantly impacted on them during their formative years:

- Digital revolution: Internet, WWW, e-mail, chat lines, blogs, SMS texting (The Information Age)
- School violence
- Terrorism: For example, September 11, 2001 Terrorist attacks in America (The Age of Terrorism). The total number of victims is recorded as 2 998, the overwhelming majority of whom were civilians, including nationals from over 80 different countries ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_11,\\_2001\\_attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11,_2001_attacks)).

So what does this mean for the Home Economics profession?

## Home Economics generations

Home Economics has formally existed as a global enterprise since the establishment of IFHE in 1908, though its roots existed long before then in many parts of the world. Since this time, there have been six birth generations. Table 5 provides a summary of some of the major shifts in the evolution of Home Economics aligned with the generational periods. The final column identifies the generation to which the policy leaders, academics, and decision-makers having the greatest impact on the evolution of the field and taking on position of responsibility typically predominantly belong/ed. The final row in Table 6 includes predictions related to Generation Z.

Table 6: Home Economics evolution charted against generations

Birth years	Birth Generation Name	Home Economics Evolution <sup>1</sup>	<i>Generation/s influencing Home Economics evolution</i>	
			Major generation with influence at leadership level	Generation cycle
1901-1924	GI	Home Economics founded technical practice with a social mission—sanitation / public health; management & family with a scientific base; highly progressive and revolutionary; complied with first wave of feminism, legitimised and scientised women's work	Progressive	Prophet/Idealist
1925-1942	Silent	Shift to greater focus on management and thriftiness as a result of decline in world economy as a result of wars and depression; retained scientific legitimacy	Missionary	Nomad/Reactive
1943-1960	Baby Boomer	Loss of social mission as affluence emerged, particularly at the end of this era; focus on personal; consumer explosion in latter years	GI	Hero
1961-1981	Generation X	Consumerism expanding; feminism (radical) highly critical of Home Economics; decline in status; heightened attempts at legitimacy	Silent	Artist
1982-2002	Generation Y	Globalisation, postmodernity, lost academic wars (Failed/unconvincing) Attempts at equalitarianism and transformative practice	Baby Boomer	Prophet/Idealist
2002-2024	Generation Z	Reconfiguring profession—"Neo" <sup>2</sup> Home Economics; revisioning family forms; ethics and morality; ICT; sustainability...	Generation X	Nomad/Reactive

What this table demonstrates is that any birth generation comes into influence in terms of power and responsibility typically at two or three generation cycles hence. So, at this moment, it would be expected that Generation X might be increasingly seen in positions of responsibility in IFHE, with Baby Boomers remaining active members, often as managers, but taking on less responsible positions and acting as beacons for leadership advice. Silent

<sup>1</sup> While the Home Economics evolution presented in this table might be highly contestable by region, it is intended to provide a global trend in the focus of Home Economics

<sup>2</sup> "Neo" has been added to stake the claim by me that a new direction for Home Economics is required

Generation members should be positioned as elders, leading and transferring values of the profession.

In the Home Economics profession around the world today, there are some Silent, many Baby Boomer and X-Generation, and a few Y-Generation members. There will probably be some GI generation members as well. The wider paid workforce currently has four distinct generations, each with its own values, work and communications styles, leadership expectations, and much more. Most of those in the paid workforce will be from two generations—Baby Boomer and Generation X (Rodriguez, Green, & Ree, 2003). This is a relatively typical pattern across many professions, particularly those reliant on a model of volunteerism.

### IFHE generations

In 2004 at the IFHE World Congress in Kyoto the results of a comprehensive study conducted on the members of IFHE was presented. This study, with a 47% of total membership response rate, aimed to identify the benefits of membership and to evaluate the commitment of members to IFHE. From the results, several items proved relevant to understanding the generational attributes of IFHE:

- 25% of IFHE members are retired
- retired members are the most active members of IFHE
- nearly every second person (47%) has been a member of IFHE for 10 years or more (so they must be Generation X, Baby Boomer, or later generation)
- the longer people are members the more likely they are to be active, with almost 40% of those members of 10 years or more being active, compared to 25% 5-10 years; and less than 10% 1 year or less
- those who have been members for 10 years or more retreat from responsibility but still work on committees
- those who have been members 5-10 years take the most responsibility
- 79% of respondents are involved in teaching & education (Fauth, 2004).

Among other key advice given, the research concluded that:

- winning new and younger members is a big challenge and important to the future of IFHE
- to remain future-compliant IFHE has to move with the times and must maintain its vitality and attractiveness, e.g., via professional networking (Fauth, 2004).

What does this tell us about IFHE and generational effects? Unfortunately, there is no data available to determine the actual balance of membership according to birth year and hence to determine generational location. However, based on the data provided by the respondents to the IFHE survey, it can be deduced that in 2004, at a minimum the membership of IFHE was comprised of around 25% Silent Generation members (born 1925-1942). Table 7 presents a collation of general population percentages for each generation, association members, and the predicted IFHE membership spread according to generation.

Table 7: Generational patterns in the general population work and association membership

	% of current population	% of working-age adults	% belonging to associations	% Membership of IFHE	% IFHE best guess in 2008
GI	3	0	9	nd	3
Silent	14	8	20	25	25
Baby Boomer	27	42	32	nd	45
Generation X	15	24	26	nd	20
Generation Y	41	26	16	nd	7

Source: Brooks, 2006; Pendergast, 2006

It is clear that IFHE and I suspect most Home Economics professional organisations do not reflect the general societal trends of association membership. There is a much higher percentage membership comprising Silent and Baby Boomers than expected, with lower percentages for Generation X and Generation Y. How can this be accounted for? Some possible explanations include:

- decline in Home Economics profession over several generations
- refusal of individuals to align themselves with Home Economics

Another important feature of the IFHE membership is that 79% of respondents are involved in teaching and education. Hence, a further factor could be the overall decline in school and tertiary studies in the field leading to a decline in new memberships in X and Y-Generations.

With respect to general trends for professional organisations and how IFHE compares, an extensive study, *Generations and the Future of Association Participation* (Brooks, 2006), to determine characteristics of association membership including civic mindedness provides a good benchmark for comparison. This study found that in general, for associations:

- about a quarter (26%) of the cross section of the working population belongs to an association
- membership varies significantly by generation
- Baby Boomers are significantly more likely than younger generations (X & Y) to belong to associations
- it is predicted that Generation X will join associations at similar rates as Baby Boomers, that is, membership is more a function of age, however the overall numbers are smaller due to a population decline in Generation X
- this trend is likely to be followed by Generation Y
- age is a stronger predictor of association membership than generation. As Generation X and Y move into their peak professional years they are likely to

join associations at similar rates as Baby Boomers - but actual numbers will decline significantly.

These trends are predicted on the basis that associations are proactive in appealing to young workers and keeping older workers. Herein lies the challenge for IFHE and for Home Economics professional organisations, and for the profession in general.

### Strategies for generational planning for IFHE

There are four generations that will be affiliated with IFHE over the next two decades. There are three main imperatives required to work with these generational cohorts:

- Silent and Baby Boomer - focus on retention and active membership
- Generation X—focus on attracting, giving responsibility to, and retaining
- Generation Y—focus on attracting and retaining.

Before considering generational specifics, a recent publication *Where the winners meet: Why happier, more successful people gravitate towards associations*, by Brooks (2008), has identified some startling patterns about people who are members of professional associations, including:

- association members earn, on average \$10,000 more per year than non-members, even if they have the same education levels and job types
- association members are 19% points more likely to say they are “very satisfied” with their jobs than are non-members
- 45% of association members compared to 36% of non-members said they were “very happy” about their lives.

It is suggested in the study that associations should provide services to attract “winners,” such as:

- Career advantages: As an explicit career enhancing benefit, associations can act as conduits between senior executives and ambitious young members
- Continuing education: Associations should focus on predicting what their members need to learn and offer appropriate educational programs
- Community: Particularly in jobs that require frequent moves at the beginning of an employees career, tangible industry or professional community may be socially valuable to upwardly mobile members
- Opportunities to serve: Motivated association members may desire opportunities to serve both their associations and their related charities
- Accountability: Entrepreneurial members are attuned to accountability and measurable results in their lives and careers and will expect evidence that associations are accountable to members and the industries or professions they represent (Brooks, 2008).

Each of these insights is relevant for all generations. Following are additional strategies based on generational insights.

### **Silent and Baby Boomers—retaining and active**

The Baby Boomer and Silent Generation are currently dominating the modus operandi of the profession. This, I predict, extends beyond IFHE to include other professional organisations, university academics, and researchers, and those working in business and private enterprise. Attend any Home Economics executive meeting, event, or conference around the world and a quick scan around the room will support the proposition that the leadership roles—and also the general membership—are dominated by people aged in their late-forties or older. These leaders value regularity and predictability; they prefer to work alone, to draw on other experts, and to develop expert knowledge in their field. Their work ethic is one of high commitment and hard work, with a preparedness to invest long hours, often at night and on weekends. They are likely to be career Home Economists who have gradually risen to positions of authority over a career focussed primarily in the same field. They regard leadership positions as ‘earned’ through this process. Most Silent Generation and the first-born of the Baby Boomers are retired, and for a profession such as Home Economics that relies on volunteerism as the basis for much of its professional leadership, there exists a common pattern of sliding from the paid to the unpaid workforce, and retaining leadership roles. This lengthens the potential impact of this generation on the field.

Baby Boomers will be moving from positions of responsibility but if they follow typical trends will remain active members of committees, as many Silent Generation members currently are. They are imperative to retain as the core of IFHE for the next two decades. Strategies recommended to keep them active include:

- Enhance work and career satisfaction, e.g., IFHE might create special interest groups that specifically address issues such as retirement and estate planning
- Fund semiretirement employment options, e.g., assist with phased retirement by providing opportunities for part time involvement
- Keep retired workers involved in association communities, e.g., special emeritus status at educational and networking events
- Honour and overtly recognise the contributions of these generations
- Engage Silent and Baby Boomers as mentors for younger generational cohorts.

### **Generation X—attracting; giving responsibility to; retaining**

Generation X professionals are increasingly performing management/leadership roles in the Home Economics profession at this time. Generation X members need to be retained and nurtured by the profession - these are, after all, the emerging leaders. This is a challenge to the Home Economics profession as this group are less single-minded about their career aspirations than Baby Boomers, hence many will not persevere with slow-moving promotional opportunities or lack of recognition in a field that is devalued generally in society. Succession-planning to engage Generation X in leadership roles is essential. There is a risk that in Home Economics, as in other fields where leadership through volunteerism and long-

earned experience dominates, the Baby Boomer Generation will continue to remain in leadership and policy development roles long after Generation X are ready for these challenges. This may be a temptation because there are simply more individuals available from these generations and this is seen as an expedient solution to the problem of attracting and retaining Generation X leaders. This will stifle the profession and is to be avoided.

Strategies recommended to attract, develop responsibility of, and retain X-Generation members include:

#### **Attract**

- establish a training and learning culture
- provide flexibility and opportunities for fun and relaxation
- provide benefits that support paid and unpaid work commitments.

#### **Develop responsibility**

- engage mentoring and coaching practices
- provide specific constructive feedback on performance that is structured around clear outcomes
- have a clear vision of the profession/organisation as a basis for shared understanding. There should be clearly articulated plans, teams, and operational approaches
- Facilitate opportunities for Generation X to take on leadership roles
- Generation X must be positioned as the leaders of the profession.

#### **Retain**

- allow individuals to manage as much time as possible and do not change plans abruptly
- include opportunities for fun, relaxation, and flexibility. Generation X regard this as better security than financial security
- establish flexible working hours, job sharing, telecommuting capacities
- do not run meetings, conferences, and events on weekends or at night. Do have day time events that are short and can be completed flexibly if necessary
- have regular meetings and frequent feedback using available technologies as a preference to face-to-face frequent meetings with limited agendas
- feedback should focus on the broader picture, not minutiae and detail
- publicly recognise the contribution of Generation X members.

## Generation Y—attracting; retaining

There is a growing corpus of theory on the work practices, values, and motivators of the Y Generation. Boomer (2007) regards one of the priorities for attracting and retaining Y-Generational members to be embracing a “training and learning culture” within the profession. The top three motivators for MilGens are:

1. Meaningful work that makes a difference to the world
2. Working with committed coworkers who share their values
3. Meeting their personal goals (Allen, 2004).

In Table 8, key generational traits and values are used to provide a basis for suggested strategies for attracting and retaining Y-Generation members in the Home Economics profession. This is not an exhaustive list, but a sample of the kind of possibilities that must be canvassed to make the profession viable for the MilGen to consider.

## Generational theory, Home Economics, and beyond

At the outset of this paper I stated that it is my contention that Home Economics is at a convergent moment with respect to charting the future of the profession. Generational theory is one important, evidence-based tool that can be garnered in the challenge to future-proof the profession.

Table 8: MilGen values and motivators with Home Economics strategies

MilGen work values & motivators	Suggested strategies for the Home Economics profession to consider
Flexibility	expectations of flexible working hours, job sharing, telecommuting <i>opportunity for part-time commitments to individual projects</i> conduct meetings, conferences and events during work days <i>provide virtual meeting opportunities eg Skype and MSN</i>
Networking & Communicating	utilise the latest available communications technologies such as web based discussion forums; sms; iPods <i>introduce an e-journal and other forms of e-communication as the professional ‘face’ of Home Economics</i> respond to communications quickly
Mentoring	<i>establish mentoring models that focus on individual development</i> use the time span of 5 years for career planning
Ethics	<i>provide opportunities for individuals to make a difference - real capacity to action dreams</i> have high levels of morality and ethical standards
Education - lifelong learner and personal growth	<i>provide self-guided on-line workshops and the like</i> establish a training and learning culture

MilGen work values & motivators	Suggested strategies for the Home Economics profession to consider
Authentic experiences	<i>connect theory with practice and ensure a global perspective</i> provide incentives that align with the real world <i>prioritise personal and family health and well-being</i>
Collaborative teams	use collaborative teaming as a basis for work tasks and structure these into projects <i>provide resources based on collaborative teams</i> facilitate leadership at team level <i>conduct collaborative team training programs</i>
Instant results	shift from function-based work to project-based work. This might mean restructuring committees and the like away from function to specific tasks <i>provide recognition and increased responsibility for results well received</i>
Entrepreneurial	provide opportunities for creativity and challenge - roles must be seen as important and as being valued <i>encourage members to make their own opportunities for advancement</i> provide a reward-for-performance system. This can mean that those teams that are performing should be resourced, while those that are underperforming should receive no support <i>additional responsibilities are welcomed as they are seen as a chance to aggregate new skills</i>
Balance work and family	unlike Baby Boomer and Generation X, family comes first, so workplaces need to be family friendly, e.g., provision of childcare facilities and a tolerant attitude to children <i>conferences and meetings should include family and provide childcare</i> programs established that are geared towards health of Generation Y and their family
Multiple pathways - nonlinear thinkers	<i>will be seeking opportunities to diversify</i> looking for opportunities to move in nonlinear pathway
Technologically savvy	<i>access to information must be immediate and 24/7</i> internet is a main interface for communication

Source: Pendergast (under review)

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## Supplementary Material

The concept of “convergent moment” is that a number of important societal and historical factors are currently aligning around the profession, providing a never-before experienced opportunity to revision our profession. It is my conviction that these convergent factors must be seen as a catalyst for major reform - making this a defining moment for our profession. The factors, along with a brief summary, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Convergent Factors in the Home Economics profession\***

Convergent Factor	Brief Explanation
100 year history of the profession	The past century since the inception of Home Economics has been one of invention, development, and changes in roles for men and women generally in society. This current decade is unlike any of the 10 before, as it signifies a major shift in society, with the effects of globalisation, information and communications technologies, and the loss of enclosure, all making this decade unlike any previously experienced. It represents a societal paradigm shift.
Consumption and globalisation	The global pattern of a divide between the developed and developing countries where around 20% of the world’s population consumes 80% of the products and services, and the remaining 80% consumes the remaining 20%, has created problems for both groups, with the effects of abundance sometimes being described as “affluenza,” while the effects of underprovision lead to poverty, undernutrition, lack of educational opportunity and more. There is a lack of parity between the globalisers and the globalised.
Generational theory	The sociocultural construction of society based on generations provides a valuable insight into the current issues confronting the Home Economics profession. The future of the profession lies in the hands of the Y and Z Generations, the characteristics of which must be contended with and embraced by the profession if it is to pave its preferred future.
Societal context of the “New Times”	The idea of societal paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity is played out in workplaces, schooling, new literacies, new families, and communities. Given that Home Economics engages and operates among these contexts, it must embrace and lead the fundamental dimensions of “new times.” The Age of Terrorism and the Information Age are facets of the new times.
Family changes	Major changes are occurring in individual and family characteristics around the globe. The United Nations identifies four trends that impact families around the globe: changes in family structures; demographic ageing; the rise of migration; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Given that this is the unit around which Home Economics revolves, it is critical that an understanding of this site as an opportunity to stimulate reform is understood.

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Convergent Factor	Brief Explanation
The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)	In a recently released document titled " <i>Guidelines and recommendations for reorienting teacher education to address sustainability</i> ," the importance of the world's 59,000,000 teachers to educate for developing understandings about sustainable development is articulated and strategies for action outlined. It is argued that "the core themes of education for sustainability include lifelong learning, interdisciplinary education, partnerships, multicultural education and empowerment" (UNESCO 2005, p.15). The approach urges a multidisciplinary approach, noting that "no one discipline can or should claim ownership of Education for Sustainable Development" (2005, np). The societal goals of sustainability as presented by UNESCO are: environmental stewardship; social equity, justice, and tolerance; and quality of life for all people in this generation and the next - all of which, but particularly the latter, resonate with Home Economics in the context of both education and as a profession. It seems that there is growing alignment with the intentions of Home Economics, and this is being recognised at a global level.

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\*Detailed explanations of these factors can be found in Pendergast (2006).