I consider it a great honor to be invited to your conference and to have the chance to speak to you. We Germans always look to Japan with great interest and admiration for the culture, the discipline, the organization and the many capacities for intellectual and productive work. In the International Federation for Home Economics we have great respect for our Japanese colleagues and their participation in IFHE events as well as their role in the Asian Regional Association for Home Economics. During my time in IFHE I had the privilege to work with Professor Chiyono Matsushima in the Executive Committee and in her function as Vice President for the Asian Region for whom I have the highest esteem and who has inspired us greatly over the years.

1. Introduction: The International Year of the Family

The year 1994 has been declared the International Year of the Family by the United Nations. One may ask, at first instance, whether it may be necessary to have such an International Year of the Family (IYF). With a closer look at the changing situation of households and families one may then realize the importance of such a year. The International Year of the Family must be seen as a special instrument to focus on families and their conditions in a rapidly changing world. This is important in order to secure—in the short term as well as in the long term perspective—the essential contributions to society that only the private sphere of households and families and no other institution can provide. In the democratic perspective, also, it is the people and their living conditions that count.

Therefore, it is important to use the International Year of the Family to focus on families as essential micro units of society. This has an important bearing on the future because of the decisive role that families and households have regarding the decisions for and the raising of the next generation. Thereby they lay the foundations for the human resources or the human capital of society.

The official IYF theme is “The Family: Resources and Responsibilities in a Changing World.” This theme allows for two perspectives, one referring to the contributions of families to society and the economy and the other perspective in terms of responsibilities that the larger systems may have to secure the necessary resources for families so that they are in a position to operate. Both perspectives are important, not only the view of families as resources. They also need resources.

You may know that the International Federation for Home Economics has been one of the first international organizations to ask for such a year. Already in 1982 the Council of the International Federation for Home Economics voted to request an International Year of the Family. Consequently, the International Federation for Home Economics has taken a great interest and a leading role in the preparation for the IYF. On the international level IFHE has been active in many ways, for example in contributing to the seminars of the NGO Committee on the Family at the United Nations in Vienna, in particular:

- The Family—A Marginal Group as the Basis of Society ? (1987)

The International Federation for Home Economics organized its XVII World Congress with a
theme in view of the International Year of the Family. That has been the Congress in Hannover in Germany in 1992. Some of you may have been there and remember the theme: “Focussing on Households and Families: Change and Exchange.” Last not least, a major event needs to be mentioned where IFHE made many important contributions: That is the World NGO Forum in Malta for launching the IYF, which took place from 28 November to 2 December 1993, with the general theme “Promoting Families for the Well-Being of Individuals and Societies.”

The strong participation of IFHE and its members in the IYF on the international, national, regional and local levels is not only due to the professional commitment of home economists to households and families and aspects of well-being and quality of life. It is also a consequence of the awareness that home economists with their expertise regarding families need to be more proactive and to take on an advocacy role in the interest of families.

2. The Private Sphere of Households and Families—A Counterpart Still to Be Recognized

What is meant by the term “family” needs closer examination and scrutinization. Different people view the family very differently, even in the same culture and country.

In my paper, I shall rely largely on the context in Germany. With the great cultural diversity of families I have to state explicitly that I refer to the situation in my country, in Germany. This is the context I have some closer knowledge of. On the other hand, one may observe some developments of world wide extent as well as transfers of similar developments from one part of the world to another.

Traditionally in the industrialization process, one has come to look at the family as a private institution and has assigned the responsibility for family tasks to women. The label of privacy as well as the assignment to women worked in the direction to keep the family in the background with relatively little concern for its problems and with its contributions taken for granted. There are, however, many developments that ask for a new perspective on the family and on the private sphere.

When taking a systems approach it becomes evident that the family and the private sphere is part of the system and cannot be neglected without negative consequences. There are increasing interchanges and exchanges between the family and the “rest” of society—to speak assertively from the perspective of families and households.

The family and/or the private sphere is unique as an institution in society in so far as it is here, where the people as human beings live and have their home. In this context they satisfy life needs and find ways of practicing a life style. This also accounts for the fact that families and households have a large range of interfaces to many institutions in society and in the economy.

Also, it is the family and the private sphere where the many roles that people have to take in modern societies interact and have to be balanced. To illustrate, these may be the roles of earner, of consumer, of client, patient, voter, taxpayer, learner, traffic participant, etc. It would not be realistic to abstract from the interaction of these roles on the household level. The household cannot be looked upon in isolation.

Most important is the fact of changing gender roles, in particular, that women, increasingly, want labor force and public participation and in their majority do no longer draw their identity solely from the family. This puts pressures on the family for substituting the work capacity that is taken out of the family and that is not balanced (—yet ?-) by increasing family work by men. This also accounts for more public concern for households and families in particular with regard to the consequence of declining birth rates. Germany and Italy, by the way, are the countries in Europe with the lowest birth rates.

When acknowledging for the changes in the last decades one may come to view the private sphere of households and families and leisure time as of increasing importance. This refers once to its position in the value hierarchy where private life has moved up in its ranking of importance to people. And this refers also to the increasing radius of activities on the household and family level, the many interfaces and interchanges that households have with market and nonmarket institutions and the increasing variety of combinations of household services with market and collective goods and services. In this perspective the private sphere is seen as a counterpart to other sectors of society. The focus is set on the whole range of activities of individuals in households and families including basic needs satisfaction, the management, genera-
tion and maintenance of social relationship in the family, in the neighborhood and in social networks as well as what there is left in terms of leisure time activities at the disposal of individuals or family groups.

Clearly, that does not focus on a narrow definition of family and it is neither restricted to a narrow view of household activities in technical terms. Rather, this view tries to integrate the various dimensions and to view the private sphere as delineated outside objective conditions, that leave increasing degrees of freedom in choosing how to manage one's life. Many sociologists who work in the field of "life style" have acknowledged the fact that there are increasing options and choices for the management of the private sphere.

"The private household can be seen as the central link between the quasi public work and production sphere and the private reproduction sphere, between market distribution of goods and services and income and private consumption, between economy, society, the state and the public on the one side and family leisure time and private life on the other hand, between the realm of necessities and the individual realm of freedom" (citation from Roland Reichwein, 1993, p. 84, translated into English)

The household is then compared to a sort of switchboard in a metaphorical sense. Depending on the degrees of freedom households objectively have for their decisions and actions and on their subjective awareness of this and willingness to use these degrees of freedom they may set new courses to a considerable degree.

This leads to another point that should be mentioned here. In the public discussion and also in education there is—as far as I can see—a very unfortunate prevailing assumption that households and families are institutions that mainly have to adapt. The notion of adaptation on the side of households and families is very common. I propose to rather challenge the idea of the adaptive private sphere for many reasons. If there is any notion of some degree of autonomy, some degree of enlightened decision making and some responsibility in the actions taken then this also leads to innovative behavior and also to initiating change. With increasing options the possibilities rise for initiating change.

As far as the adaptive model is widely practiced in education, at least as regards our country, one must postulate a paradigm change in the direction of questioning traditional models with regard to their appropriateness under changing conditions. This also asks for more competencies and qualifications for enlightened and responsible decision making in the face of complex and rapidly changing living conditions.

The next chapter of this text is grounded on the assumption that households and families are by no means only directed by outside forces nor are they simple reactors. Rather, they are viewed as actors who, at least in certain phases, critically examine their living conditions and the alternatives open to them when making decisions for their further life course.

3. Changes in the Private Sphere and Its Interfaces

Home economists concentrate very much on the micro level of households and families while sociologists are interested in social phenomena and structuring forces. Changing gender roles and changing life styles may provide good examples for the different perspectives of both fields. While the sociologists look at the collective phenomena and the social change in this context, it is actually decisions on the level of the individuals—often in face of many barriers—that may have a cumulative effect that finally becomes manifest as social change.

There is a relationship between the micro level of households and families and society. But it may take on various forms. Social change is not only a phenomenon created outside of households but also within. Women when they change from the traditional role have to face many barriers: In their family, in the neighborhood, at the workplace etc. This can hardly be classified as adaptive behavior.

Starting out from this relationship between the decisions and actions at the micro level and resulting social phenomena, the focus is put here on the micro level and on the changes that evolve at the level of households and families or in the private sphere. From the large range of developments that take place, only three headings shall be selected for this paper. They shall be dealt with more or less separately, although they are very much interrelated. I am going to discuss changing life style and gender roles, new household and family forms and "New Household Work" resulting from complex living conditions.
3.1 Changing life styles and gender roles

Life styles change in many respects and are discussed with respect to value changes, modernization, individualization, environmental concerns, different time use and use of other resources etc.

The concept of life style is a very interesting one for home economics because of its relationship to the decisions on the micro level and its comprehensive nature. The concept of life style is used widely in different disciplines and applications, for example in the context of consumption, product design and advertising, in psychology with respect to coping with difficult life events, e.g. with unemployment (Beckmann and Hahn 1982). Sociologists have developed a special interest in the concept of life style. They find that the traditional concepts of class are no longer valid as before. Stratification does no longer follow so much along objective factors of income, profession etc, rather, increasingly subjective factors gain in importance, i.e. the subjective factors of decisions by the persons, by the subjects, gain more weight. Life style, therefore, is a very interesting concept because of the relation between the individual and the collectivity, and particularly because of the substantial influence of the individual, the subject on the micro level.

The question as to what the general direction is regarding the changes of life styles cannot be answered easily.

There is a value change moving from what has been seen as duty and acceptance values to values related to selffulfillment and selfrealization. Also, there are shifts in the ranking on the importance of work and employment towards a higher ranking of self-determined activities in the family or the leisure time (Klages and Kmieciak 1979).

A more recent study has the title—in German—“Die Erlebnisgesellschaft.” In trying to translate this one may come to something like the experience society or the general shift to the interest in experience (Schulze 1992). With some basic life conditions being more or less granted and with a rising number of options people get more concerned with aesthetics, style and the quality experiences. The author identifies a new stage of modernization in terms of the aestheticization of everyday life (Schulze 1992, p. 419) with a turn to the subject and to inner direction. The increase in experience orientation promotes respective markets and market supplies and tends to expand market contributions that provide or promise experiences (and style).

An important discontinuity between the generations has been found as regards the loss of importance of the values of the parent generation for the younger generation. The culture of the younger generation seeks for different orientations, also regarding family forms (Ringeling 1986, Tyrell 1985).

Changing gender roles are a phenomenon that affects society much more than is yet realized in many circles. The basic driving force are women as they want both: employed work and a family, just as the men have it—though the latter mainly without the burden of reconciling the work in both areas, mostly on a private basis. Legally, we have equal rights for men and women. But in practice the conditions are far from providing equity. Women are very much disadvantaged with the double role in terms of double burden. This results in disadvantages in many areas:

—disadvantages in their career and professional position
—less income and economic resources, lower pensions
—overloads of work, less leisure time than men
—psychic loads and overloads in terms of carrying the responsibility for the family, in particular for the children, beside their employed work

While the role of women changes with a certain pace and they are, tendentially, no longer willing to carry the total responsibility for family work, the complementary change of men’s roles is much slower. There are many problems as a result. One of the major results is the declining birthrate.

Strategies to reduce family work may help to some degree. However, many forces of modern life and of new life styles ask for “New Household Work” and tend to more than compensate any time savings from the first strategies.

Reconciling family and employed work, therefore, becomes a political issue of long range importance.

3.2 New household and family types

The nuclear family can no longer be looked upon as the typical family if one considers the quantities and proportions of household and/or family types. Many authors speak of a pluralization of family forms and household types.

The percentage of single households has increased very much during the last years and amounts to more than one third of the total number
of households in our country. Similarly, the frequency of single parent families has increased very much. Mostly these are women and children. But there are also single fathers with a child or children.

Further, there is also an increase of couples who live together without marriage or without legalizing their relationship in the traditional sense. The discussion is whether this is only a prologation of a testing phase that leads to marriage later, once there is a child, or whether this is a thoroughly new household or family type.

Another phenomenon is the increasing occurrence of marriages without children. Mostly these are dual career families. Actually, some studies refer to a polarization in Germany in so far as the missing possibilities of reconciling family and paid work account for an increasing number of couples without children while the women with children (—more or less have to—) leave the labor force at least temporarily, following the three phase model of employment phase, interruption for family phase, return to employment. The missing possibilities for care of young children outside of the family, at least for part of the day, are an important factor here.

Other new family types may be successive marriages, stepfamilies, binuclear families couples of the same sex living together or some communal living of several people sharing a flat or a house.

New household and family forms have many relationships to lifestyle and also to gender roles. Many impulses for new household types come from women who refuse to live a life totally of sacrifice and service to other family members including the husband. They are in search of new ways that allow them some more self-determination and some space for a life of their own (Beck-Gernsheim, 1983). They also want to break out of the isolation that the home may mean at the time of care for young children or elderly dependent persons. Young women often have an educational level equal to men and want to use their professional qualification. The new household types, even if they may provide less economic security, tend to open up chances for more choices by women themselves and less dependency on their husband.

A very important aspect of new household and family forms of societal concern regards the common tendency (with the exception of communal living) of a development towards a smaller size, less household work capacity and a certain vulnerability towards critical life events. This has consequences for the larger society.

The changes in the availability of unpaid services for dependents ask for new distributions and respective public measures.

3.3 “New household work” resulting from complex living conditions

Households and families when managing their daily needs and wants find themselves faced with an increasing complexity of living conditions. There has been relatively little attention yet to this other side of rising levels of living which regards the greater number of external relations that households have, implying interfaces with a large range of institutions. Securing the intended transactions at these interfaces implies increasing demands on households in terms of activities that represent a type of work. Because of the different character of this type of work as compared to traditional household work I have termed this “New Household Work” (Thiele-Wittig, 1987).

An illustrative example of “New Household Work” may refer to health and medical services. Typically, the progress in medicine leads to more specialization. Therefore, one has to deal with more doctors. In our country it is considered necessary to visit the dentist twice a year, already for preventative reasons. Women, starting from a certain age, should visit the gynaecologist regularly. Then there is the general practitioner and there are further specialists, in particular for children. The system is such that one has to make an appointment and to ensure the transport to the doctor. Usually there is more or less waiting time in the waiting room involved. If there is a prescription, it becomes necessary to reach the pharmacy during its opening hours. Also, the therapy suggested by the doctor has to be implemented into the daily routine. Regulations regarding the health system have undergone several changes because of rising cost. This also means that families must gain information on the system and its changes in order to know where to turn to and what services they may be entitled to.

So far this type of input of households has not generally been considered household work. But, on the other hand, one can hardly consider this as a pastime or a leisure activity of one’s own choice.

While the example given refers to the health system, there are many other institutions that households and families have to deal with. The following table from an earlier publication lists a range of
institutions whose services may be needed more or
less frequently or whom one has to comply with as
a citizen (Table 1). Not included in this table are
all the interfaces to the employment system or the
respective work place.

There is a typical asymmetry in the relationships
of the institutions to the households. Much of this
is related to the fact that large growing institutions
deal with a great number of relatively small house-
holds.

The institutions usually set the terms for the
transactions and also for the respective communi-
cation. These terms may refer to the location and to
access conditions, to opening hours, waiting time,
closing dates, conditions and forms for contracts,
certificates needed etc. The household member has
to comply to these conditions. Rationalization and
automatization processes often lead to the use of
forms and blanks and computerization with prob-
lems for the users of these standardized processes.
These may represent difficult barriers for some
households. Replacement of people through
machines, in ticket vending, some banking proces-
ses, etc. may cause problems to some persons and
requires learning processes.

Therefore, the differences between the experts
and the lay persons represent another important
aspect of this asymmetry. The employees in the
institution are the professionals for whom it is their
routine at their job while the household member
dealing with an institution usually is a lay person as
regards this institution. For the household member

Table 1. Institutions with which households interact and the goods
and services provided*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Some examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The distribution sector and related areas</td>
<td>supermarkets, neighbourhood stores, specialty stores, dry cleaners, consumer counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>energy supply institutions, water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair services</td>
<td>electrician, plumber, painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money, banking, investment</td>
<td>institutions for credit, savings, credit cards, shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance, security</td>
<td>social security, insurance companies, providers of security appliances, services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, counseling, public health system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring services</td>
<td>kindergarten, day care, school boys, churches, holiday camps, services for disabled persons and the elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>school system, evening schools and adult education, college system, book, supply, media contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and communication</td>
<td>mail, telephone, radio, TV, books and brochures, new technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>public transport, private transport regulations, repair systems, travel agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration and the law offices</td>
<td>government offices, election consumer protection, citizens’ advice bureau, lawyer, tax adviser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The kind, extent and importance of such institutions and the access to them may vary greatly from country to country, from urban to rural areas, by social and income groups and according to the gender of the individuals being served.

this contact with the institution may be a relatively rare event that may need long preparation, also with respect of fitting this into his or her schedule. The difference in competence may lead to psychological barriers and fears that need to be overcome. Misunderstandings and frustrations may arise.

New Household Work is very different from traditional household work. This may be an important reason for the fact that it is hardly recognized as work that needs to be done. Further, the institutions one has to deal with differ widely. Therefore, the visit to doctors may be looked upon as something very different from the telephone call to the repair service or the finishing of a contract with an insurance company. However, one may find a common denomination for all the demands on time and work by the external relations of households in terms of “New Household Work.”

The difference of “New Household Work” as compared to traditional household work may be seen in some of the following characteristics:

—It is less bound to the house or the living quarters.
—It is less characterized by personal relationships and more similar to professional work.
—There is less regularity and routine.
—It is less self-regulated and more dominated by the rules set by the institutions as described by the asymmetry.

“New Household Work” is meant to refer not only to the immediate work at the interfaces of households to institutions. It refers also to processes before and after which are closely related. In the forefield this may regard processes of information gathering and of orientation regarding questions of health, life style, environmental concern, etc. Moreover, the great diversity of tasks and activities implies increasing tasks of integrating these different areas and asks for the cushioning of bottlenecks, of problems and of disfunctions.

The rising complexity of living conditions and increasing “New Household Work” have important implications for education and extension: New competencies are needed in order to cope with the new demands. This is an important task for education. This also refers to more intellectual competencies for coping with the demands of everyday life.

But even if family members gain many more qualifications for dealing with the changing demands of everyday life, the interfaces are too many and the institutions too powerful and complex and the conditions not transparent enough for them to be fully competent partners. Therefore, there is increasing need for counseling services for households and families as a basis for many far-reaching decisions (for example for the field of insurances, financial services, etc.).

4. Consequences/Public Importance

This paper has started out with looking at the International Year of the Family as an important means of focussing on households and families or the private sphere and the respective interrelationships and exchanges with the wider part of society. These relationships and exchanges may be looked upon in two ways:

Once regarding the contributions and impulses that come from the level of households and families.

Secondly regarding the situation of households and families under changing conditions with respect to analyzing and balancing the demands and loads placed on them and providing them with competencies, resources and conditions that allow them to operate.

Three aspects regarding the first part have been selected for the preceding chapter. In this chapter I want to emphasize three aspects that need more public attention as a consequence of the changes at the level of households and families. These refer to changes in the public-private-mix regarding the care of dependents, the reconciliation of paid and family work and to education with respect to competencies for coping with everyday life in the face of more complex living conditions. The first two aspects are very closely interrelated.

4.1 Changes in the public-private-mix in caring for dependents

For the official opening of the IYF in Germany the Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, quoted out former Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who said at his time that the people have children anyway. However, this obviously has changed, as the Mayor stated.

The changing role of women as well as the development of new household types are important factors that decrease the capacity for unpaid family work and ask for new solutions. These new solutions may refer to both, a new division of family work between men and women as well as a new division between the tasks the parents carry and the
part the public is willing to take on. In the light of declining birthrates there is a challenge for society to produce more favorable conditions for raising children.

In home economics, normally there is no strict distinction between the work or the services for the different family or household members. However, in the light of declining capacity for unpaid work a conceptual distinction may be important between the work that is needed for dependents who are not able to look after themselves and need some care—like children or very old or sick persons—and, the work necessary for the daily needs of persons in the active phases of their life. Two major reasons may be named for this: One refers to the general interest of society in the next generation, so that there is a public concern that justifies public resources to be given to support parents who have children. Another reason refers to the different character of household work whether it means care for dependents or work for the daily needs of autonomous persons. Both types differ essentially as to whether they can be combined with paid work. The work for dependents shows little flexibility and is not easily conducible to the reconciliation of paid and unpaid work. On the other hand, the household work for people in their active life phases shows a relatively great flexibility and, principally, is apt to be combined with gainful employment.

In our country just recently, —after many years of political argument as to how to distribute the loads—a law has been passed regarding the introduction of a public insurance system for the need of care services in old age. Recent figures refer to every fifth person above the age of 80 who needs care, or 1.6 million old age persons in the Federal Republic of Germany who need care (Official information 1994).

The increasing portion of people who reach a very old age combined with the change in family forms and the declining capacity for caring services in the private sphere of households and families provided a strong demand for such an insurance system.

The other big discussion regards the public support for raising children. I am not a specialist in this field of public policy. However, there are two major aspects regarding the tax system in the relationship to children. One refers to the tax exemption of the amount of income that is needed in terms of expenditure for children. The other refers to a demand in changing the system from the emphasis on marriage to the emphasis on children. Also, there is the need for day care for children. Although we do have a respective law, there are problems with the implementation. The responsibility is with the communities. But they are already overloaded, financially, and see many problems.

4.2 More reconciliation of paid and family work for both women and men

The reconciliation of paid and unpaid work is a great issue for the future. In the International Year of the Family the German Minister for the Family and for Seniors particularly emphasized this issue. She put forward appeals to industry and the business world to be more sensitive to family problems and to integrate a concern for the family into the philosophy of the firm. Also demands are put forward for changes in attitudes of men and fathers regarding the household division of labor (Presse- und Informationsamt 1993/1994). However, it appears that these demands still get very little public attention.

There is little discussion yet regarding a reduction of general working hours in the interest of more time for the family or in order to improve the possibilities for reconciling paid and family work. Neither is there a discussion yet as to another distribution of work in the light of the large amount of unemployment. (Recent figures show 8.5% vs. 16.8% of unemployment in March 1994 in the old part and the new part of Germany, Sozialpolitische Umschau, Bonn 8.4.94, 155 p. 3, p. 7). The long term effects on children who grow up in relative poverty with parents who suffer from unemployment need more attention.

There is a growing discussion recently on more part time jobs. And there are also some voice in public who demand more part time jobs for men so that they are more available for the family. When comparing European figures of 1991, one finds that the percentage of part time jobs for men is only 2% on West Germany—like in Greece or Portugal—while the Netherlands have 16% and Denmark 11% (Sozialpolitische Umschau Nr. 159/1994).

4.3 Education not only for professional work but also for family and private life management

With a prevailing perspective on the world that is dominated some degree by economic concerns, and with an educational sector with a tradition of humanistic ideas in a more spiritual sense, it
appears difficult to argue for the importance of needs for qualifications for managing the private and family life. It is difficult to reach a breakthrough through preconceptions, very much held by male authorities, that see the problems of coping with everyday life more or less as negligible banalities. This is to be found the more, the less these decision makers are involved themselves in their own and their family's daily upkeep or the more they are relieved of this by their wife or by services they can afford to pay for.

At the IFHE congress in Hannover in 1992 our outstanding colleague, Professor Rosemarie von Schweitzer, brought forward some very pointed thesis in that direction on the final round-table-panel on family policy, referring to the missing knowledge of this relevant sector of life, on the part of men, their devaluation of this type of work and their generally distorted view in this regard. I am quoting her second thesis from the translation into English:

"The consequence of this masculine and feminine variance in the perception of household management and family activities with the aim of recuperation of the human potential has brought about a situation in which the men, anxious to emphasize their own importance, devalue these feminine activities and over-evaluate their own performance in industry and politics. In all cultures of the world, the activities primarily ascribed to men are more highly esteemed than those of women. This devaluation particularly applies to work in the house and for the family. Men rarely or never perform these tasks. This must change. Men must be more strongly confronted with their inconsiderateness and the destructive potential of their economic and power interests. They must be freed from their distorted view of day-to-day life in the family. (von Schweitzer 1993)

Unfortunately, by socialization processes, women generally join in this dominant thinking. Even in our field, there is—or has been—a considerable segment that uncritically took over this view.

Another aspect that causes many difficulties for home economists in our country is the federative structure of the educational system. Education is not so much an issue on the federal level, rather, it is in the competency of the state. And there are, by now, 16 states in the Federal Republic of Germany. We are by far fewer home economists in positions that can exert some influence in this structure except if we find means to raise some public concern.

There are many instances of partitioning. One is the federative structure just mentioned. Another may be seen the tendency towards in specialization and a sort of partitioned view of specific problems without acknowledging the interrelationships. In some instances the health problems are emphasized and there are calls for more health education. Another time it is consumer issues with a respective call for more consumer education. Then it is the environmental concern with a demand for respective education. Or it is the family as a social unit with an emphasis on parenting and building relationships. These are just some flashes on the tendency to circle out isolated problems and neglecting the interrelationships, instead of taking a more holistic view. Home economics does have this holistic approach. But the other side of being so comprehensive is that the profile does not come through so clearly.

In modern societies we find increasing problems that have clearly to do with missing education in terms of transmitting competencies for coping with everyday life under increasingly complex conditions and for managing one's existence and life course in the context of social relationships and with a concern for some important responsibilities (concerning other persons, the community, health, the environment, the idea of "One World" etc.). Problems such as health and obesity problems, overindebtedness, violence in the family and violence of young people, drug addiction etc. may be very much an outcome not only of objective factors but also of missing competencies in coping with everyday life and of missing respective education, such as home economics is principally able to provide it, on different levels.

Therefore, I want to turn to the relationship mentioned in the second chapter of this paper. The more exchanges and interrelationship there develop between the private sphere of households and families and the other parts of society and the economy, the more importance must be placed on not neglecting this subsystem. Rather, the increasing impact of this subsystem of society needs to be represented in the content and structure of education.

5. Summary and Outlook

The International Year of the Family provides a
platform for asking more public attention for this important sector of the economy and of society.

In the relationship between the individual on the level of households and families and broader social developments, the emphasis is put here on the decisions and actions on the household level. In this micro-macro relationship, the micro-units play an important part and need to be recognized as such. This means they have to be recognized as actors and not only somehow called as adaptors or used in a buffering or serving role. Therefore, the perspective of changes in the private sphere and their public importance has been taken. This is in contrast to a more prevalent view which concentrates on the social level and therefore on social developments and change.

Three aspects of changes in the private sphere and its interfaces have been selected, in particular changing life styles and gender roles, new household and family forms and “New Household Work.” This has been far from comprehensive and represents a very eclectic approach. However, the concern was to emphasize the degrees of freedom of decisions on the micro level and their impact on society.

Regarding the consequences and the public importance, a similar eclectic approach has been taken. Three aspects were selected: The change in the public-private-mix in caring for dependents, the issue of reconciliation of paid and family work and the issue of education of coping with everyday life in the face of increasingly complex and rapidly changing living conditions.

5.1. More recognition of the interrelationships between the private sphere are the “rest of society”

The line of thought in this paper starts out from and comes back to the importance of the private sphere for society. Therefore, at this point, the heading of the second chapter needs to be stated again: The private sphere of household and families—a counterpart still to be recognized.

Purposively, the term of counterpart has been chosen. Although households are small and their size has even decreased, they are the basis of society, they are the institutions in the context of which the citizens of any country live and act and make their decisions as to their life course. With rising interrelationships between the private sphere and other sectors, more recognition is needed. This applies also in a democratic sense with regard to attention to the degrees of freedom on the micro level for the people concerned.

5.2. Tasks for home economists and for home economics associations

The tasks for home economists in the face of rapidly changing and more complex living conditions and many changes in the private sphere are very manifold.

One concern regards the content of the field and its approaches. In the past it has been looked upon, to some degree, as a more technical field. But, the multidimensionality and the holistic, rather complex approach are the important aspects. This is what makes the field unique to some degree, in combination with the close relationship to the complexity of daily life needs. However, this comprehensiveness and complexity may be seen both as “a blessing” and “a curse.” While it is the specific attribute of the field it may also raise barriers and somehow it tends to work antagonally to a clear profile.

Another point regards the level of home economics education. While in the past a more crafts and practice oriented level has been considered important, the need is now for all levels of education. In particular, much more research, both conceptual and applied, as well as cross-cultural, is needed.

A great concern regards the place of home economics in the educational system. Also more counseling services are needed, as mentioned earlier.

In modernization processes, home economics has often been assigned a low rank or has been discontinued in the educational system. However, as has been argued in this paper, modernization processes have lead to more complex living conditions. And more respective education is now needed to cope with these living conditions and to gain the relevant competencies.

Home Economics Associations find increasing tasks to work both ways, with their members as well as concerning the public and the important decision makers. During the last years there has been a growing awareness of the need to be more proactive and to take on an advocacy role for the problems of families. This is part of the Plan of Action of the former IFHE President, Doris Badir, as well as part of the present Plan of Action in my presidency. There is also reference to the identity of the field and its profile as facing changing conditions as well as in the face of strong specialization.
tendencies. The International Year of the Family provides chances to raise more public awareness with respective consequences. And the oncoming next IFHE World Congress in Bangkok in 1996 and the preparation processes provide opportunities for further focus in the context of the 1996 Congress theme: Living Conditions—A Global Responsibility.

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