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We live in a time when the condition of humanity is becoming increasingly compromised. Pervasive issues abound and intertwine: what seems like irreversible climate change; escalating terrorism; unsustainable consumerism; debilitating poverty; global health; political and economic crises; population growth and migration; a widening gap between the haves and have nots - the litany goes on (Pendergast, McGregor, & Turkki, 2012).

The family and consumer sciences (FCS) profession has to be prepared to confront, critically challenge and change this complex, confounding situation that is shaping the human condition. Historically, FCS has drawn upon an integrated, holistic, interdisciplinary approach as a way to counter the ineffectiveness of pervasive fragmentation and specialization (Brown, 1993). This paper explores the role of integral thinking in FCS, an approach that is complementary to, dependent upon, but different from, the integrated approach. It tenders the idea of integral-informed practice.

Both integrated and integral stem from the same Latin root *integrare*: to make whole or to make complete; to make part of a larger unit; to join with something else; to unite (Alschuler, ca. 2008; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Harper, 2014). However, they do not mean the same thing in practice. Integrated means two or more components are joined together into a single system, a new whole that did not exist before. Integral, on the other hand, means one or more of those combined components have been deemed *necessary to the completeness* of the whole. It is important that this component(s) be contained in the new whole (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012); its absence is noteworthy and has consequences. An integral approach is inclusive and does not privilege particular parts over others; rather, people judiciously, with careful deliberation, fuse relevant parts into new entities so as to address the complexity of the situation (Wilber, 2001, 2007).

An integral colleague suggested a lighthearted fruit metaphor to deal with the abstractness of these ideas. There are many kinds of fruit in the world, from local to exotic (which are actually local in their context). Placing whole pieces of the same fruit into a bowl together (e.g., shiny green apples) would represent specialization. This approach can create pleasing aesthetic arrangements but there is no guarantee this narrow view will reflect the complexity needed to address a given situation. Mixing up different fruits to make a fruit salad, by cutting the fruit pieces in various sizes and shapes, could represent an integrated approach. The intent would be to create something new by combining diverse parts, which is a better approach to complexity than specialization. However, making a whole new entity by blending and meshing fruits together leads to integral. Truer integrality would emerge if careful consideration was given to what fruits to include and exclude so as to get a new whole that provides the complexity required to address the unique situation (e.g., a holistic fruit smoothie). To stretch the metaphor, even richer/truer integrality could be achieved if fruits *and* vegetables were interwoven into a new whole, or whatever other elements were necessary to deal with the complexity of the situation (see Figure 1).



This paper positions FCS within the interface of both the integrated and integral camps, because the world and the profession need both (McGregor, 2010a; O’Sullivan, 1999). It begins with a historical overview of the presence of integrated in FCS practice followed with the merits of embracing integral, and a preliminary discussion of what that might look like.

The Legacy of Integrated

FCS has long viewed itself as integrated, holistic, and interdisciplinary, ever since its beginnings more than 100 years ago. Consider this chronological illustration. The Minutes of the 1902 Fourth Lake Placid meeting reported that the intent of home economics “is to connect and bind together into a consistent whole the pieces of knowledge at present unrelated” (as cited in Brown, 1993, p. 230). This “early definition conceptualized ... home economics as an integration of knowledge from various disciplines” (Brown, 1993, p. 229). Fifty years later, a 1959 report entitled *Home Economics: New Directions* explained that “home economics synthesizes knowledge” drawn from its own research as well as that of the sciences and the arts (American Home Economics Association, 1959, p. 2).

Soon after that, in a home economics professionalization text, Tate (1961) described home economics as a large, integrated field of study that brings together and organizes certain principles and facts from the sciences, the arts and philosophy into a functional whole. In a likeminded text, Parker (1987) characterized home economics as a “synthesis of knowledge” made possible because practitioners are trained to “understand the synergistic, integrated nature of home economics” (p. 20) (see also Fleck, 1980, p. 20 for the same sentiment).

At the 1993 Scottsdale conference, where the American profession adopted the name Family and Consumer Sciences, it was again affirmed that practice could be unified through its focus on an integrative approach (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS), 1993). Bubolz and Sontag (1993, 1998) explained the integrative nature of the profession and the discipline. The AAFCS Body of Knowledge (BOK) reinforced this philosophical point, noting that practitioners should employ an integrative, holistic approach (Nickols et al., 2009, see McGregor, 2010c). In 2012, McGregor delivered a Super Seminar on

the topic of vanguard, next practices at the AAFCS conference, one of which is integral thinking (along with complexity thinking, transdisciplinarity, and a focus on the human condition).

Framing FCS as synergistic, integrated, holistic, and interdisciplinary assumes that “the important concepts, principles, and perspectives used in [FCS] come from diverse disciplines and fields of study that focus on individuals and families *in different ways* [emphasis added]” (Arcus, Schvaneveldt, & Moss, 1993, p. 17). The challenge and opportunity for FCS are to tease out content, theory, perspectives and principles from aligned disciplines and then draw on the *synergy created when connections are made* between these insights and FCS’ mission and philosophy; that is, integrate separate parts into a new unified whole (McGregor, 2008). When engaged in *integrated thinking*, FCS would have to consider the traditions of understandings *already* established and internally agreed upon by those in the aligned disciplines (Dyball, Brown, & Keen, 2007). These understandings then have to be creatively merged with the FCS body of knowledge in order to deal with enduring practical, perennial problems.

The Promise of Integral

For over a century, the notion of *integrated practice* has served FCS well. Interestingly, the basic idea of *integral* originated at the same time as home economics, in the early 1900s (Chaudhuri, 1975). Home economics cannot be faulted, however, for not embracing integral at that time because the integral movement did not gain momentum in the United States until the early 1970s (Molz & Gidley, 2008), especially with the launch of the *California Institute of Integral Studies* (Chaudhuri, 1975). This paper argues that the time is right for FCS to embrace the promise of the integral movement (see also McGregor, 2011a,b, 2012); it is poised for integral-informed practice (McGregor, 2010a).

The premise of this paper was further inspired by McGregor’s (2010a) conclusion that “FCS *can choose* [emphasis added] to embrace integral ways of perceiving, thinking, researching and serving” (p. 55). This choice would be timely and courageous. Wilber (2006) observed that society has arrived at a “present day project of synthesis, an integral age at the leading edge, which is only a few years old, lead by a handful of pioneers” (p. 3). Home economics broke new ground 100 years ago with its integrated philosophy. FCS can again *choose* to be a ground breaking profession, on the leading edge as part of a cadre of integral pioneers.

To reiterate, an integral mindset would sensitize FCS to the idea that, as they integrated disparate parts into new wholes, they must remain cognizant that certain parts may be *necessary to the completeness* of the whole; their absence would be noteworthy and consequential. Indeed, Wilber (2003, p. xii) defined the word integral as “comprehensive, inclusive, nonmarginalizing, embracing.” By this he meant not leaving anything on the margins (leave nothing out); rather, people should pull together as many perspectives and viewpoints as feasible in order to get a more inclusive, complete view of the whole. One never knows when one aspect of something may be *the* integral piece (i.e., necessary for completeness). This approach is very different from just pulling things together as a matter of principle; that is, to integrate (which *is* an important principle). *Necessary for completeness* is perhaps the defining difference between integrated and integral.

The best way to achieve integrality is to “seek to incorporate all of the *essential* [emphasis added] perspectives, approaches, and ‘schools of thought’ into an inclusive, comprehensive, unified ... framework that transcends the limitations of any single point-of-view yet includes the important truths each perspective offers to the larger body of knowledge” (Integral Thinkers Staff, 2014). Each element in its own right contains a partial truth; the more

elements, the closer one gets to a more complete truth (i.e., truly integral whole, pun intended). “The awareness gained from drawing on all truths and perspectives allows an ‘integral thinker’ to bring significant depth, clarity and understanding to human endeavor” (Integral Thinkers Staff, 2014).

Succinctly, then, while integral means taking care to not dismiss anything, integrated simply means purposefully trying to merge several things together but not necessarily with any concern for inclusiveness (getting all parts of the whole). Integrated assumes it is better to have a new whole than to have a collection of disparate parts; however, a concern for *missing a part*, which might be the lynch pin for completeness, is not on the radar like it would be if concerned with integrality.

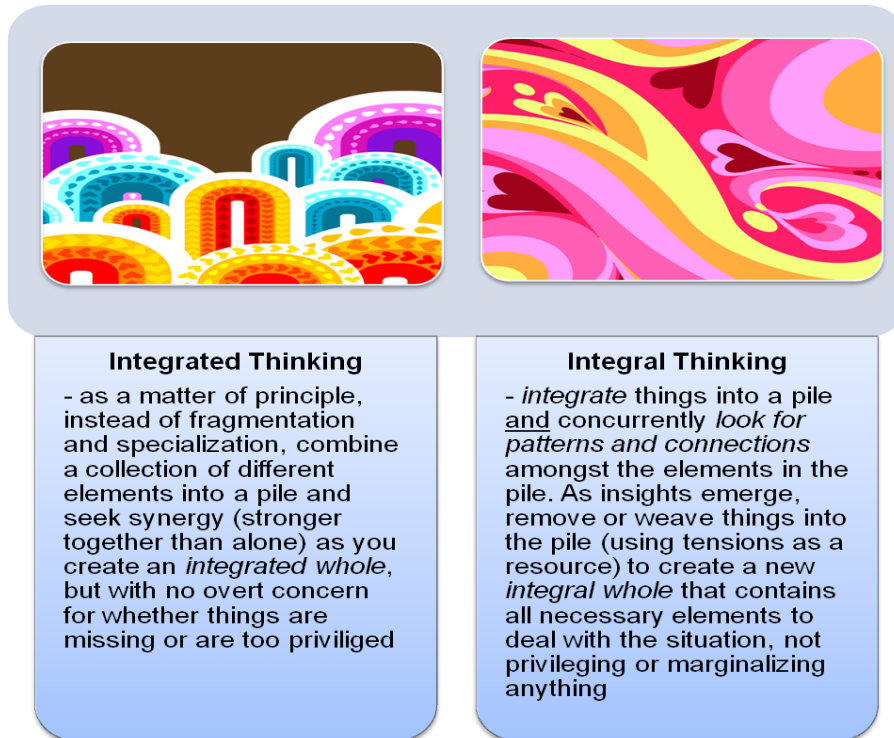
O’Sullivan (1999) also distinguished between integrated and integral: while integration strives for certainty, order, and sureness, integral respects uncertainty, disorder, and insecurity. He further claimed that “the term holistic places undue emphasis on harmony and integration” (p. 208), an approach that fails to account for the generative, dynamic and open-ended nature of integral processes. An integral approach assumes that harmony needs to be balanced with chaos; that is, people must respect that, in complex situations, order is emerging, just not predictably. As things emerge and self-organize, ironically held together with tensions, new insights will appear, insights into *which* parts are needed to complete the whole. Respecting chaos, tension and uncertainty, complexity and emergence, patterns and webs of relationships, and self-organization and generativity enables FCS to anticipate and value the open-ended process of finding the most appropriate and compelling combination of parts given the needs of the context (McGregor, 2010a, 2012) (see next).

Gidley (2007) further believed that an integral approach can lead to “the integration of the whole person” (p. 9) through the combination of conceptual, aesthetic and participatory aspects of practice and scholarship. This notion resonates with the systems of action approach advocated by Brown and Paolucci (1979, see also McGregor, 2014), wherein FCS strives to help individuals draw integral insights from integrating each of technical, interpretive, and critical aspects of solving a problem. Integral is the capacity for integrative thinking (mind), doing (body, action and communicative acts) and being (aesthetics and spirit) so as to respect “the art of nuancing the whole” (Integral Review Editors, 2007, p. 280). Through this integral capacity, FCS would appreciate that integral is all about creating a comprehensive, inclusive view of a complex situation, made possible because integral assumes that all views are relevant.

As well, FCS would respect that integral comprises emergent ideas (integral thoughts) *connected* with a collection of integral paths along which FCS travel as they strive to integrate disparate ideas into new, integral wholes (see Integral Review Editors, 2007). An integral whole is different from an integrated whole. An integrated whole is made up of a combination of different parts, with varying degrees of *necessity to the whole*; there is a chance that some important things are missing. An integral whole, on the other hand, comprises the parts deemed *necessary* to provide insightful, intuitive and informed insights into a powerful, complex phenomenon.

This distinction bodes well for FCS, which has a century-long legacy of integrated practice. They *just* have to extend their thinking to include the added complexity of striving for integrality. They would ask themselves “How many different perspectives are needed to adequately understand the situation from an integral perspective?” For clarification, integrated thinking would pull together a collection of parts, leading to a heap of different elements. FCS

would not look for any relationships or patterns between the elements in this new pile. On the other hand, using integral vision, FCS would discern patterns that connect the disparate elements in the pile, and use those patterns to weave the parts into a new whole. That is, they would not privilege any one part in the pile; instead, they would try to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible while striving for deep, luminous clarity of the situation (Wilber, 2007) (see Figure 2).



As mentioned, FCS have always integrated ideas from the sciences, arts, humanities and philosophies (see Tate, 1961). An integral approach “has the [added] potential to show how science, art, spirituality, and everything in-between provide valid insights that, *when taken as a whole*, provide the most complete view -a *more* true and *less* partial view” (Helfrich, 2007, p.1). To ensure the most complete view, FCS would explore the forces and connections at play around a complex issue and strive to judiciously combine them, consciously converging them into new wholeness. FCS would use whatever is available, even create new dots, and then connect them to add value to their problem solving. They would connect what matters, and, because of humanity’s very wide spectrum of diversity, *many things matter* (Schuman, 2014).

When solving complex problems requiring many perspectives, FCS would start piling things that matter into the center of the table, sort through them in coherent and creative ways, concurrently lining up, rearranging and meshing the forces and energies needed to solve the problem. During this integral process, FCS would combine the full range of insights and collective wisdom with the full urgency of the situation (Schuman, 2014). They would accept that one-size-fits-all solutions are toxic to the reality of human nature and to change itself. And, they would realize that dealing with the realities of humanity requires an appreciation that humanity shifts; that is, human intelligences adapt to life conditions and problems of existence (Beck, 2014). Accepting that humanity is always moving opens FCS to the *power of integral*; previous, impartial or incomplete solutions to the complexity of humanity will not suffice if humanity is always emerging. By association, FCS problem framing and solving must become integral in

character so as to accommodate the undiminished entirety of the human condition.

Summary and Conclusion

The premise of this paper was that an integral approach would better prepare FCS to address the pervasive and intertwined crises facing humanity, compromising the human condition. In summary, an integrated FCS practice would embody *joining with something else* and an integrative FCS practitioner would personify the process of making a whole by *unifying many parts*; both embodiment and personification are part of the creation of an integrated whole. However, creating an integral whole requires more; it also calls for an “approach... that takes into consideration all aspects of *the human condition* [emphasis added]” (Alschuler, ca. 2008, p.1). An integral stance provides a general orientation to practice from which multiple perspectives can be compared and synthesized into new integral wholes so as to answer the timeless *questions of humanity* (Jarrin, 2006).

In a monograph on home economics and the human condition, McGregor (2010b) advocated that FCS should view "the wholeness of the human family" (p. 24) as their purview, because all of humanity is integrally connected with the global human condition (see also McGregor, 2012). This paper has argued that an integral lens offers the FCS profession a viable alternative framework for interpreting what is happening to families and to society, in turn providing a focus on the human condition. To reiterate, home economics broke new ground 100 years ago with its integrated philosophy; FCS is half way there, poised for integral-informed practice. The profession has the unparalleled opportunity to *choose* to be on the leading edge as part of a cadre of integral pioneers.

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