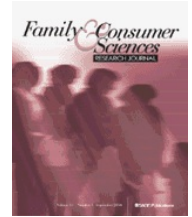


McGregor, S. L.T. (2009). Integral metatheory: Beyond specializations, theoretical pluralism and conventional metatheory. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 38(2), 142-157. Posted with Permission



Abstract

Recent family and consumer science (FCS) conceptualizations of specialization embrace the notions of interdisciplinary specialist, integration of perspectives, integral specialist and a generalist in transdisciplinarity. These innovations open the door for a conversation around the impact of research methodologies (different from methods) on the profession's body of knowledge. Conventional metatheory is explained, with four examples from the field of FCS. The paper then introduces the idea of integral metatheory, asking practitioners to strive for a deeper understanding of theoretical pluralism and a new form of synthesis: being able to integrate the results obtained from the integration of several theoretical perspectives. Instead of practicing from a platform of many individual theories, FCS professionals are asked to employ *integral metatheory* so they can consciously develop links *among* the theories and multiple perspectives, thereby leading to richer understandings of the complexity of the human condition.

This special issue of the *Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Research Journal* is about global and international research in the profession, especially about changes in the profession. This paper lobbies for a particular change, away from specializations and theoretical pluralism to an integral approach via integral metatheory. To illustrate the prevalence of specializations within the FCS discipline and attendant practice, consider the remit of this Journal, the official organ for the body of knowledge of FCS in the United States (as represented in the Call for Papers for this Special Issue). In its self-profile, the Journal is described as a professional vehicle for research from all *specializations* in the profession. It is billed as a journal that “exemplifies the richness and diversity that characterizes the profession today without compromising the integrity of specializations.” As well, when guiding authors to indicate the applicability of their research to daily practice, the Journal asks them to make connections to practice across specializations within the discipline.

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences' (AAFCS) Body of Knowledge statement addresses the issue of specializations, accepting them as a necessity, and even deserving of a special heading, *Specializations Addressed*. “A continuing trend in the field is the need for Family and Consumer Sciences professionals to function as specialists, requiring both considerable depth in one subject area specialization and the ability to integrate concepts from other areas of the family and consumer sciences knowledge base” (Baugher et al., 2000, p.4). They add, “Basic Human Needs, as an organizing principle, include traditional specializations and make possible the emergence of new specializations. The dynamic nature of the framework provides a mechanism for continual reflection, enhancement, and development of programs and specializations in the field” (p.4). This lingering penchant for specializations is reflected in the remit of the official research organ of AAFCS.

While respecting the stated remit of the Journal, such a pronounced focus on specializations, despite best intentions, has ramifications on the evolution of the knowledge base of the profession. While specializations have their place, hyper-specialization can reinforce the alienating and dehumanizing effect of using compartmentalized, fragmented and piecemeal

knowledge generated within separate, siloed areas of practice. It can legitimize the practice of placing arbitrary boundaries of demarcation around specific areas of study, keeping people in and people out. It can preclude the profession from making wider connections to other disciplines and, more importantly, beyond the academy. The deeply complex social problems that humans experience cannot be dealt with by people conducting research solely within specializations or by working among specializations within one discipline (Brown, 1993; Turkki, 2006).

To help make the case for a global change away from specializations to theoretical pluralism and, in the future, an integral approach, the paper shares insights from global FCS scholars who are reframing our understandings of specialization within the profession. These new conceptualizations of specialization embrace the notions of: interdisciplinary specialist, integration of perspectives, integral specialist and a generalist in transdisciplinarity. Such new approaches open the door for a conversation around the impact of research methodologies on the body of knowledge of the profession, and the necessity for a respect for pluralism. Four examples of metatheoretical exercises (ironically within four specializations of FCS) provide evidence of the profession's theoretical pluralism (using a collection of many theories and perspectives). The paper then introduces the idea of an integral approach that asks members of the FCS profession to strive for a deeper understanding of *integral pluralism*; that is, to be able to integrate the results obtained from the integration of several perspectives or methodologies. Instead of practicing from a platform of many individual theories (informed by methodologies), FCS practitioners could opt to employ *integral metatheory* so they can consciously develop links *among* the theories and multiple perspectives, thereby leading to richer understandings of the complexity of the human condition.

The ideas in this paper reflect much more than the suggestion of a new term - integral metatheory. The intent is to enter into a conversation about what FCS scholarship and resultant practice could look like within an entire new paradigm - an integral worldview. Also, within this new paradigm, the focus of FCS practice would shift from that of well-being and quality of life to a focus on the human condition, the original intent of home economics when it was conceived as a profession during the Lake Placid Conferences. The profession was founded principally to deal with the negative fall out of the contemporary condition of humans. Our founders met “out of concern for the home raised by conditions of society” (Brown, 1985, p.248). At the fourth conference (in 1902), Alice Chown recognized the “significance of the home in developing the possibilities of humanity” (as cited in Brown, p.261). In their seminal work on defining home economics, Brown and Paolucci (1979) embrace Hanna Arendt's (1958) notion of the human condition, intimating members of the profession should give this serious consideration as their *raison d'être*. In this, AAFCS's centennial year, it makes sense that our intellectual and philosophical conversations examine any dimensions of our practice that might constrain or advance the discipline, with our attention to theory and our valued ends being central to that dialogue. This paper offers the idea of integral metatheory towards an improved human condition.

Reframing Specialization Within FCS

Brown (1993) develops a very intriguing discussion of specialization and generalization (also known by FCS practitioners as integration) in the profession. Her claim that any existing specialization is the result of a human decision at some point in history implies that new decisions can be taken. She urgently affirms that many who argue for integration of knowledge are not opposed to specialization. She also distinguishes between integration as a unification of

existing knowledge in home economics specializations and integration through interdisciplinary research, far beyond the specific specializations of the profession (pp. 258-267).

Then, in her quest to get the profession to move beyond specializations and compartmentalized thinking, Brown (1993) argues for the profession to move beyond integration through interdisciplinarity to the adoption of transdisciplinarity. She confirms that this approach is not against specializations; rather, what is needed is practitioners who practice their speciality from a transdisciplinary perspective. She notes transdisciplinarity (understood by her to mean melding home economics with *other disciplines* for the good of humanity) will help home economists “go to the root of human problems ...rather than to treat the manifest symptoms. [This approach] makes us more critically reflective about social realities and their influence on the human condition rather than blindly accepting existing social conditions...” (p.268). A quarter of century ago, she asserts, “the *interdisciplinary specialist* must also be a *generalist* in her [sic] transdisciplinarity” (p.273, emphases added).

McGregor (2004, 2006, 2007) brings the idea of transdisciplinarity back to the profession. Transdisciplinarity recognizes the value of specializations, but does so with a deeper respect for the logic of the included middle, knowledge as complex and emergent, and multiple levels of reality. Conversely, specialization of FCS content areas can lead to specialization of thought and action, in turn leading to narrow approaches to problem posing and solving, possibly reducing the diversity of research in the discipline. Few of the problems faced by humanity can be adequately dealt with by an area of specialization, let alone by one discipline. What is needed is a spirit of synthesis that can lead to activities and contacts beyond specialized boundaries. A complete understanding of such problems requires a special form of synthesis: an integration of the results obtained from an *integration of perspectives* (Union of International Associations, 1995). McGregor agrees with other transdisciplinary thinkers - the transdisciplinary approach requires the competency to analyze complex problems in relation to the potential contributions of many specializations and members of civil society, the competency to conceptualize these problems in terms of the many dimensions they may involve (levels of reality), and the readiness to work cooperatively with members of civil society and specialists from disciplines that are relevant to the solution of complex problems of humanity.

Turkki (2006), who is also pondering the role of transdisciplinarity and specializations in home economics, offers the concept of *integral specialist*. By this, she means we would become specialists with the expertise to integrate, to link bridges, see connections, look for patterns, and to coordinate and communicate across disciplines and with civil society. Similarly, Brown (1993) posits that during transdisciplinary work to solve the problems of humanity, people do not strive to integrate subject matter; rather, they integrate purposes, different modes of knowing, different modes of rationality (ways of getting and using knowledge), basic concepts, and the presuppositions of various disciplines that form the foundations of the profession (p.244).

McFall (2006) maintains that AAFCS’s Body of Knowledge should be revised so it is *agent-centered* rather than discipline, specialization or subject/content area centered, as it is now. She wants the Body of Knowledge to be a platform for practice and social change rather than just a static collection of concepts and threads that privilege specializations. To be fair, there is a recent movement within AAFCS to create communities of practice, intimating a move away from specializations. But to date, the communities are still identified by content specific specializations or career paths (e.g., business, education) rather than by problems, processes, agency or philosophy (see <http://webportal.aafcs.org:8080/default.aspx>). Granted, members can

start their own community as they see fit, meaning someone could initiate a Metatheory Community of Practice. Nevertheless, in a 2008 AAFCS web-based survey (March), members were asked to self-identify by indicating their specialization. There was no box to tick for integration, holism, transdisciplinarity, theoretical conceptualizations, or other processes or philosophies. Members had to choose a subject matter, and there were a couple of competencies that they could choose, including communications. AAFCS is currently sending a mixed message to its members: specializations versus emergent communities of practice.

Traditions of Pluralism and Metatheory Within FCS

The considerable increase in specializations within the academy is a well-recognized phenomenon, with the FCS discipline being no exception. Specializations alone do not serve professions. This section introduces the idea of pluralism, a term that denotes a situation in which no particular political, ideological or disciplinary group or sub-discipline is dominant. It is often used to convey diversity within a situation. The co-existence of multiple groups and the respectful sharing of their attendant perspectives is the essence of pluralism. Belk (1995) and Hunt (1991), writing about consumer research, posit that tolerant pluralism, manifested in the acceptance of numerous disciplinary view points, is the way forward, rather than specializations. This pluralism ensures a respectful dialogue about ideologies and paradigms. Lowe, Carr and Thomas (2004) concur that a creative tension between alternative perspectives is developmental and has the power to move disciplines forward.

Back to the Journal for a moment. It proudly houses a researched-based body of knowledge generated by scholars in the FCS profession. The Journal accepts research conducted using alternative modes of “empirical and qualitative” inquiry and philosophical methodologies¹. Accepting research from both methodologies is a positive indication of the Journal’s pluralistic stance. Of significance is the Journal’s use of the term *methodology*, rather than method. Methodology is a term that refers to the assumptions about what counts as knowledge, truth, reality and the role of values underlying research. Methods are specific techniques for data collection, analysis and interpretation² informed by the methodology (Niglas, 2001). There are three main research methodologies: positivism, interpretivism (constructivism, naturalist) and critical postmodernism (the Journal explicitly mentions the first two but not the third). Plural methodologies are necessary for the profession to be integrative and forward looking; however, despite the solicitation of alternative modes of inquiry in its official research organs, FCS scholarship does not have a tradition of plural methodologies. Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) report that scholarship in the FCS discipline has consistently been grounded in the positivistic methodology. McGregor (2007) found the same trend.

In more detail, positivism (empiricism) holds that the truth is out there waiting to be discovered and the only way one can be positive that the truth has been found is using the scientific method; there is one truth. The world is made up of facts that can be used to explain reality. Constructivism (interpretivism) assumes that the truth is constructed within the minds of individuals and among people in a culture; truth is built from ongoing social processes rather than already existing, waiting to be found. There are many truths, many meanings and interpretations to one event, and these are understood through language, consciousness and shared meanings. Positivists try to create universal truths that apply to everyone and constructivists try to accurately describe the reality experienced by the people involved. Criticalists strive to uncover hidden interests and then expose the truth of what is really at play so everyone can engage in more informed, conscious actions to redress exploitation, oppression and

marginalization (Gephart, 1999; Niglas, 2001). Regardless of the methodology in question, grounding a body of knowledge in one paradigm limits the ability of practitioners drawing on this knowledge to best address the complex, emergent problems of humanity.

FCS Metatheory Experiences

To make sure this insular paradigmatic approach does not materialize, Klein and Jurich (1993) assert that members of professions must pause occasionally and reflect on the theoretical work they have done in their field; they must have a tradition of metatheory if they want to address the issue of methodological pluralism. Metatheory refers to members of a discipline systematically constructing and evaluating the theories, models, and conceptual frameworks of their field, *not* the empirical data (Weis, 1998). Klein and Jurich use the term metatheory to describe the theoretical aspects of a discipline-wide reflective process wherein members of a discipline analyze the activities of its scientists and scholars and evaluate the nature and efficacy of their existing theoretical frameworks, which are deeply informed by the dominant methodology(ies): positivistic, constructive and/or critical. Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm and Steinmetz (1993) insightfully define metatheory as the study of one's field of knowledge rather than the study of a particular topic within the field or the empirical data (results) accumulated in the field.

Every discipline, including FCS, should have metatheory, a systematic theoretical consideration of its foundations, methodologies and methods (Holman & Burr, 1980). They predict that new theoretical insights always emerge from metatheoretical and methodological gyrations within a profession. Weis (1998) suggests that scholars have an ongoing commitment to regularly examine the development of theory in their field. However, it is one thing to build and use a lot of theories in research (theoretical pluralism). For example, McGregor (2007) identified over 100 different theories used in 10 years of research in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. It is quite another to step back and reflect on the nature of said theories, and whether they are adequate for the problems being addressed by the field.

The following text shares a brief overview of metatheoretical experiences in four areas of specialization within FCS, with which the author has the most familiarity. The discussion provides evidence of a predisposition towards at least theoretical pluralism in FCS scholarship, defined as the use of a collection of many theories. Insufficient insights were available to judge the methodological orientations of the metatheoretical examples shared in the following text, but Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) found that, for over 25 years, scholarship in the field of FCS has consistently been grounded in the positivistic methodology. Similarly, Boss et al. (1993) and Redick (1996) report a solid grounding in positivism in family studies scholarship, with a somewhat modest trend towards constructivism. McGregor (2007) shares similar findings for consumer studies. Following the caveat suggested by AAFCS after the name change, references to initiatives before 1993 use the term home economics and those thereafter are referred to using FCS.

Consumer science. In 1980, Kroll and Hunt developed a conceptual model that attempted to analyze the emergent field of consumer studies. Although they did not use the term metatheory, their full intent was to position consumer studies as a new discipline, different from its roots (marketing, economics and home economics). This positioning involved a study of the field's knowledge and foci (Boss et al.'s (1993) definition of metatheory). Kroll and Hunt create a BAMMPP Model and used it to examine and judge the knowledge base of the field. BAMMPP represents, respectively, three dichotomies: basic/applied, micro/macro and private/public. They

even provide a rationale for using the term consumer science as the formal name for the field (excluding the labels studies, affairs, economics, education and interest). Since then, a collection of key theories has evolved to inform the knowledge base of the field: consumer behaviour and decision making, information processing, consumer socialization, contingency theory, attitude/behaviour/intention theory, innovation adoption, theory of planned behaviour, risk perception, consumer movement theory, consumer psychology, consumer policy theories, and consumer education. This is solid evidence of theoretical pluralism, but not ongoing metatheory.

Family studies. In 1980, Holman and Burr share a metatheory of family studies and attendant theories. Fifteen years later, Boss et al. (1993) published a *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods* (referred to by Weis (1998) as the field's metatheoretical classic). Many of the theories used by FCS scholars are in this collection and are identified by Holman and Burr: structural functional, human development, systems theory, conflict theory, exchange theory, human ecology, life course, social-cognitive behavioural, communication theory, feminist theories, phenomenology, and bio-social perspectives. Boss et al. recognize several trends relative to family and social science enterprises, two that are germane to this discussion: (a) more theoretical and methodological diversity as well as an enhanced blending of theory and methods and, (b) a movement away from positivism toward more constructivist and contextual methodological approaches. They explicitly comment on metatheory, defining it as a study of one's field of knowledge rather than a study of a particular topic within the field. Their book contains an entire chapter on metatheory and family studies, in which Klein and Jurich (1993) characterize the 1990s as a pluralistic period for family studies.

Family resource management. Berger's (1984) efforts at metatheory are framed as a state of the art account of home (family) resource management. For clarification, the term *state of the art* refers to the psychological, social and intellectual well-being of any particular segment of a profession (Baird, 1971). Berger's study reports on work undertaken in FRM between 1909-1984 (75 years). She notes that, as of 1984, no new theories were being developed, leading her to urge scholars to continue to refine and build theory. Regarding methodology, she reports that virtually all of the 22 FRM studies published in the *Home Economics Research Journal* were positivistic in nature.

In a seminal article, Key and Firebaugh (1989) recount the history of the evolution of theoretical foundations for family resource management (FRM). Grounded in their study of the field's knowledge base, they conclude that scholars in the area need encouragement to use and develop more and different theories. This is metatheory at work. In the tradition of metatheory, they systematically evaluate the theories constructed by and for the field. They trace FRM's theoretical foundations from economics to sociology and its discovery of systems theory in the 1960s. They conclude that the field must strive for theoretical integration as it continues to conceptualize the phenomenon, develop testable propositions from such theories and expose them to rigorous testing. They also advise FRM scholars to test theories in studies beyond the United States, in other cultures and countries, increasing the universality of FRM theoretical contributions. This is a nod to pluralism, as is their recommendation that cooperative research efforts from several theoretical bases are necessary for future development of the field. The two main theoretical contributions of FRM are systems theory as it relates to family and household and, starting in the late 70s, family ecosystems theory within the domain of human ecology theory (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). They call for a systematic compilation or inventory of research (a metatheory) and for multiple modes of knowledge generation in "an ecological enterprise of

theory, research and practice” (p.443). Again, this is evidence of theoretical pluralism with a clarion call for more metatheory.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education. In 1966, Chadderdon and Fanslow report that most of the scholarship in home economics education at that time lacked theoretical bases, and the theories that did exist needed to be reexamined in light of advances in related disciplines (i.e., education, psychology and sociology). They identify many inventories, batteries, scales and other measurement instruments but no theories, per se. Another report from 1971 was billed as a state of the art account of home economics education (Baird, 1971), but it is not a metatheory. Wallace and Hall (1984), referencing Nelson’s (1979) work, report that scholarship in the area of home economics education will benefit from stronger theoretical bases, and from qualitative methodologies to augment the overwhelming reliance on the positivistic methodology. They report that in the years spanning the early 1900s to 1984, home economics education became so overspecialized that scholars totally missed obvious connections between themselves and among them and other disciplines. They conclude that a comprehensive review and synthesis of research for each decade is needed because evaluative statements about research in one decade give direction for those of future decades.

Clawson and Morgan (1989) review the first six years of the *Journal of Vocational Home Economics Education* and strongly encourage the use of more interpretive and critical science modes of inquiry to off set the heavy reliance on empirical/analytical. Redick (1996) edited a collection of work that reviewed and synthesized scholarship in home economics and family and consumer sciences teacher education research from 1985-1995. This work provides an overview of, among other things, the research designs and methodologies used by FCS *teacher education* researchers. She reports that the 45 authors who contributed to the volume selected the best research available to describe the current status of knowledge about teacher education. She concludes this area of scholarship lacks depth in research that could clearly and precisely direct practice in the field of teacher education.

Hultgren (1996) (who acknowledges Clawson and Morgan’s (1989) recommendation) recounts philosophical and theoretical progress and innovation (metatheory), noting that while more research is being grounded in the interpretive paradigm (not the critical paradigm), it is being conducted by the same small pool of scholars. She calls on the editors of the profession’s research journal (this journal) to foster different modes of inquiry aside from the positivistic mode. Especially telling is her challenge, nearly 15 years ago, of the profession’s traditional conceptualization of inquiry encompassing empirical/analytical, interpretive and critical, wondering what our inquiry might look like within post-structuralist thinking? This is the only time the author has seen this question posed of the profession.

In 2001, Couch and Felstehausen report an increase in the use of theory to underpin family and consumer sciences education research (relative to previous decades). Nonetheless, upon examining four family and consumer science related journals where scholars publish FCS and home economics *education* research, they report that only eight percent (8%) of FCS education scholarship incorporated theoretical or conceptual frameworks or used theory-building statistical methods. Felstehausen and Couch (2001) report that, within one journal in particular, there was a 94% increase in theory utilization within a six year time span, ending in 1998. Both studies reiterate the need to strengthen the interaction between research and theory, meaning use research to test, expand or modify theories, or use results to propose new theories.

Couch and Felstehausen (2001) report a continual reliance on positivistic methodology

(96%), a decrease in the use of the interpretive research paradigm (3%), and nominal evidence of the critical inquiry/science methodology (<1%). This observation is interesting in that Wallace and Hall (1984) recognize home economics education scholars have to understand all three modes of inquiry if they wish to gain a comprehensive conception of home economics education-related knowledge. There is nominal evidence of theoretical pluralism within the FCS education specialization.

Integral Metatheory

It is encouraging that the discipline of FCS has experience with metatheory, yielding evidence of theoretical pluralism. Pluralism is a desired thing within a discipline (Edwards & Volckmann, 2008a). As exciting as this is, it is not enough, however, if the FCS discipline wants to embrace new notions of specialization set out earlier in the discussion, even to move beyond these to integrate the results obtained from an *integration of perspectives* (Union of International Associations, 1995). To do this, the FCS profession has to be open to an integral approach informing integral metatheory, which is different from the conventional notion of metatheory used so far in this discussion.

The *integral approach* is a change in methodology that the profession could embrace, expanding the profession's repertoire from three to four research methodologies. It takes the profession far beyond specializations and theoretical pluralism, and introduces new understandings of the familiar terms of integration and integral. In the integral approach, the term integral refers to a respect for chaos, disorder, tensions and emergent change, while integration is understood to be a desire for balance, harmony and certainty. As well, theoretical pluralism is viewed in a different light, more than using a collection of theories across the field of study. Edwards and Volckmann (2008a) explain that the conventional notion of pluralism recognizes the diversity present in a variety of perspectives; however, it does *not* move on to find any relationships between the perspectives. It recognizes the legitimacy of each perspective without making any attempt to draw connections between them. Pluralism generates a collection of different perspectives (a whole variety of theories and lens from which to view a topic), but does nothing with the parts in the collection. The parts continue to exist independently, even though they have been brought together. This is called postmodern theorizing, because there is no one universal truth; each theory or lens offers its version of the truth. Each perspective is valid and legitimate in and of its self, but there is no concern for its validity relative to others. Despite best intentions, although there is pluralism, things continue to remain fragmented and reduced to a set of independent and disconnected theories (albeit many theories), and people tend to let this happen unconsciously.

From a position of integral awareness, the goal of integral metatheory is to help people approach their own discipline to test out the waters of using theory to build theory. An integral methodology means that one aspires to cover as many perspectives as possible. It is an attempt to balance all of the authentic methods and validity claims of truth in use today (see earlier discussion of methodologies) to show how each covers a true but partial slice of the larger pie of human consciousness (Helfrich, 2007). From an integral approach, a different kind of truth emerges. Rather than truth being a noun (a thing to be found), it is a verb, a living engagement with life. Truth becomes a troth, a living pledge; people find truth by promising to engage with life (IR Editors, 2007). An integral approach has the potential to show how science, art, humanities and spirituality provide valid insights that, when taken as a whole, provide the most complete view - a more true and less partial view - of human experiences and consciousness.

Metatheories seek unification within a coherent, holistic and integral approach that can be applied to any field of human endeavor. They do this by synthesizing a vast array of true but partial theoretical gems into a practical, metatheoretical system (Helfrich).

A review of the FCS metatheory literature revealed nothing about making connections *among* individual theories to offset the blind spots in the original mapping and understanding of a phenomenon, event or occurrence. Integral metatheory would do this, both transcending and including the various approaches that people bring to the theory table (Edwards & Volckmann, 2007). This is an important point. Transcendence means *going beyond*. It refers to the idea that to know a boundary is to be aware of what it bounds and as such know what lies beyond the boundary. In other words, integral metatheory is a *knowing* of what theories exist and what could exist beyond them, at the same time. Because specializations are all about building boundaries, anything that removes them as barriers to integration is a good thing in this methodology.

Integral metatheorizing is a process that enables people to consciously develop links among theories and perspectives. In addition to respecting the diverse range of perspectives and theories, FCS professionals could examine possible links between them. To use a metaphor, rather than creating a pile of disparate perspectives, integralists would create a pool of lenses such that they can slide in, through and over each other making connections and illuminating theoretical relationships that did not exist in isolation. This mixing and merging of perspectives provides a richer approach to understanding the complexity of human experiences along multiple levels of reality. Complex fields and disciplines (like FCS) can use these lenses and their combinations as footholds for explanations and theories, and as ways of coping, meaning making and making sense of these realities. They can use the tangled pool of lenses to untangle the complexity. Integral metatheory provides a way for FCS scholars to draw on the separate works of others linked together in the pool of lenses. This pool contains generative lenses (they have the ability to originate something) that can, in combination, be used to generate, to construct, theory - use theories to build new theories (Edwards & Volckmann, 2008a).

Integral Mapping to Facilitate Integral Metatheory

As with any other discipline, asking FCS practitioners to move beyond theoretical pluralism so they begin to *use theories to build new theories* is a quantum leap from their current metatheoretical experiences (Volckmann, 2007). To ease this transition, they can benefit from an approach to help them in this integral, intellectual enterprise. A mapping approach was developed by two leading integralists, Edward and Volckmann (2007, 2008a,b), as part of their series titled *Integral Theory into Integral Action*. Assuming that people will be drawn to metaphors to share their integral explanations of phenomena, they propose a collection of visual tools (metaphors) to illustrate the theoretical patterns under consideration. FCS professionals will be familiar with many of these visual patterns and representations from their varied experiences with theoretical pluralism. These visual metaphors include: quadrants and matrices (to show relationships), levels (to show evolution), lines (also called streams to show progression through stages), states (transitory and temporary), types or styles (more fixed traits), perspectives (for meaning making), processes (for series or sequences of changes), intersecting T-lines (to represent dualities), nested circles (called holarchies to represent connections between parts), circles with embedded arrows (to represent cyclical processes), two-way arrows between aligned lists (to represent exchanges), helixes (coiling around an axis while constantly changing planes), and spirals (to represent complexity and dynamics) (see Figure one). Some theories only require one visualization tool while other, more complex theories, require several metaphorical tools to conceptualize the theory (Edward & Volckmann, 2008a).

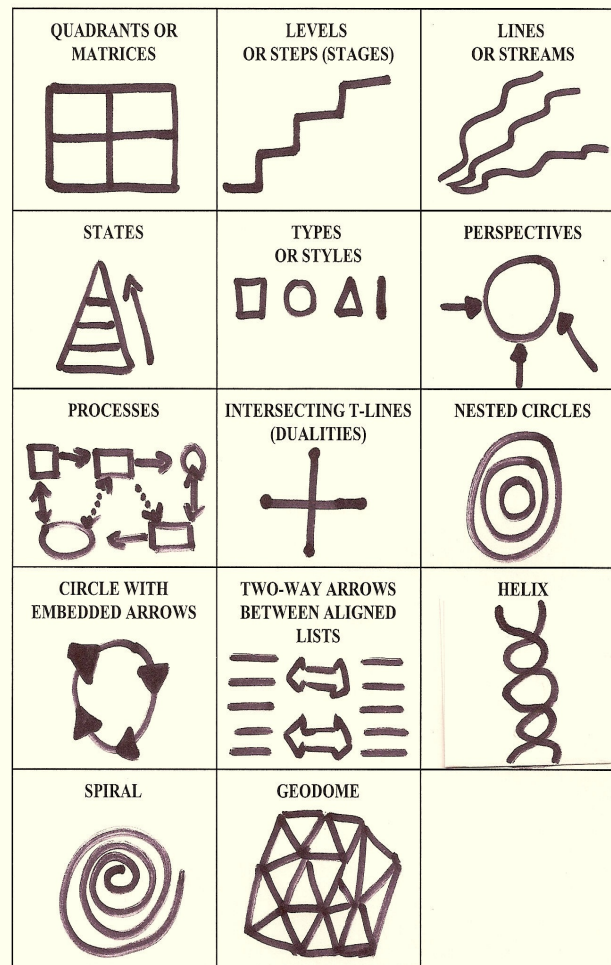


Figure 1 Special thanks to Dr. Nancy Chesworth (MSVU) for her help in conceptualizing the images for Figure one.

It is *perspectives* that are being integrated, perspectives about: relationships, evolutionary progress, development, styles, interconnections, interrelatedness, processes, progression, complexity and dynamics of change. Integral metatheory would have FCS scholars create combinations of these perspectives so they can minimize any blind spots in the original theoretical mapping and understanding of the phenomenon (Edwards & Volckmann, 2008b). Integral metatheory is about integrating the synthesis of results gained from an integration of perspectives. This strategy is a far cry from simply identifying which theories are being used in a field to advance its knowledge base.

A plausible example of perspective integration may serve to make the point, using three familiar FCS theories. Human ecosystem theory is always represented using nested cups or concentric circles, with double ended arrows representing a time continuum and reciprocal relationships. Maslow's progression through an hierarchy of needs is always represented using ascending levels in a triangle (with the highest level, self actualization, at the top). Vaine's (1994) model of the complexity inherent in the multiple spheres of influence on families (from the multiverse to the unknowable) is represented using either a geodome or a spiral. What might

a new theory look like that integrated the insights observed from the integration of all of these *perspectives* into a new theory: relationships, progression and complexity? How would it be visually mapped? What metaphor(s) would be suitable? What ever is developed would have to offset the blind spots in the original mappings. The resultant representation would reflect the integration of the results obtained from integrating these three perspectives - true integral metatheory. This approach to metatheorizing will “allow for flexibility, ongoing critique and renewal, and the growth of a community of inquiry whose focus is in publicly developing liberating and emancipating disciplines in all spheres of life for anyone who has the time, interest and desire to contribute” (Edwards & Volckmann, 2007, p.10).

As a cautious example, the work of home economists McGregor and Bateman-Ellison (2003) might be taken as a modest example of theoretical integration. They develop a *multi-perspective* research framework for designing family resource management research programs. They integrate insights from five existing theories: life cycle stages, life spiral across generations, unplanned life transitions, life course theory, and the spheres of influence model (mentioned earlier). They share the results in an unsophisticated five column table. The results of this as yet unnamed theoretical integration are now ripe for integral perspective metamapping using the metaphorical ideas offered by Edward and Volckmann (2007, 2008a,b), set out in Figure one. The type of intellectual scenario they developed is an approach that could enable FCS scholars and practitioners to engage with ambiguity and the unexpected, a new kind of energy for disciplinary evolution (Edward & Volckmann, 2007).

Emergent Determination

To quote key integral theorists, the ideas that this paper is “currently exploring and trying to sort out are very hard to take sufficient perspective on and communicate clearly to readers” (IR Editors, 2007, p.289). The process of writing this paper clarified the author’s appreciation that the scope of what falls under the umbrella of integral is as an ever-widening set of ideas. Not surprisingly, it is a challenge to hold all of these elements of integral in awareness at once, coming from the long standing conventional tradition of pluralism and metatheory. Knowledge of an integral approach and metatheory demands a different mode of practice. To that end, the wisdom of integral theorists comes into play again (IR Editors). If FCS professionals accept that their understanding of ‘what is integral metatheory’ is always provisional, is always in progress, they can continue to learn from each other rather than falling back on comfortable theoretical pluralism within specialization boundaries. It is important to respectfully recognize that, for some FCS practitioners, removing walls that compartmentalize disciplinary knowledge into specializations will seem to represent a watering-down of disciplinary boundaries. In these cases, it helps to be mindful that *integral* draws on the dictionary sense of ‘essential to completeness for a task at hand.’ Such completeness means comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. From this perceptive, it can be argued that compartmentalized knowledge held within the boundaries of FCS specializations precludes completeness of the discipline, and holds us back from working with a focus on the home and family for the good of humanity and the human condition (as proposed by East, 1979). The integral approach and metatheory direct FCS scholars toward an ever increasing view and collection of perspectives that respect the complexity of emergent human problems.

Something that is integral is an essential part of the whole landscape of our *being-doing-thinking*; it represents, respectively, the end place we arrive at along paths we travel as we generate emergent, novel ideas of how theories can be used to build theories (IR Editors, 2007). Integral approaches to any field attempt to include as many perspectives, styles and

methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the field. More empowering is the notion that integral approaches draw together an already existing number of separate theories and paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching rather than in competition with each other or assumed to be separate and not related (Wilber, 2003). FCS professionals are not strangers to integral thinking, with philosophers and some theorists in the field drawing deeply on recognized integral thinkers including: G.W.F. Hegel, Jurgen Habermas, Robert Kegan and Abraham Maslow.

This paper posits the time is ripe for the FCS profession to undertake this integral methodological change for itself. Reframing specializations to embrace emerging notions of integration, integralism and transdisciplinarity is a solid first step, as is continuing to undertake conventional metatheory within specializations. Both can occur in concert, during a time of transition. If the discipline opts to explore, as its next intellectual endeavor, integral pluralism and metatheory, this process will entail a new form of logic beyond the conventional and familiar logics of ethos (moral authority), pathos (emotions) and logos (rational logic), shaped by the three major methodologies. Integral pluralism and metatheory will require *vision logic*, the ability to conceptualize, compare and synthesize different perspectives and points of view, leading to transcendental knowledge (Wilber, 2000). Our Centennial president, Nickols-Richardson (2008) characterizes FCS practitioners as centenarians who focus on the whole, rather than individualization. Integral metatheory within the FCS profession and discipline will require newly created intellectual spaces (McGregor, 2004) that can support an integral vision of the discipline (beyond holistic), one that generates hope for a future knowledge base that is not fragmented, specialized and finite but whole, comprehensive and emergent.

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Endnotes

1. It is likely that by qualitative is meant the interpretive methodology (because empirical research can use qualitative methods).

2. The methodology determines the nature of knowledge that is pursued, the means by which the knowledge is produced and how it is assessed. Methods are specific techniques. In effect, the actual *methods* (called quantitative or qualitative methods) all stem from the methodology (of which there are three, see below): the research problems that are posed, the research design strategy, and the methods for generating a sample, collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data, as well as how to represent and share the results of the study (Niglas, 2001).