



The Philosophy of Integration: Historical Heritage, Compromised Ideal

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Abstract

Using a historical research design, a chronology (organized by decades) recounts the extent to which the home economics/family and consumer sciences profession has sustained its commitment to the principle of integration over the past 125 years and how its understanding and use of integration have evolved over time. Using N = 51 documents written over a span of 119 years (1896 to 2021) from 15 countries, findings affirm the profession's unwavering commitment to an integrative philosophy. Findings further suggested that, although this principle is part of our heritage and is the essence of the profession's collective identity, integration is not the core of our actual practice. Our conundrum seems to be our penchant to lose sight of our rhetorical ideal (integrative function) in our real-world practice (disintegrative hyperspecialized form). The solution is to somehow ensure that form follows function - that an integrative ideology and philosophy augments hyperspecialization. Seven discussion points were developed around this overall finding concluding with a strategy for confronting the elephant in the room.

KEYWORDS: HISTORICAL RESEARCH, HOME ECONOMICS, FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES, INTEGRATION, SPECIALIZATION, HYPERSPECIALIZATION

Introduction

Herein, integration is viewed as part of the common wisdom of home economics. It is considered a part of our lineage and heritage passed down through generations (Bubloz, 1996).

Even before the Lake Placid founding conferences, home economics was about integration and holism. In her 1896 book reporting a series of lectures about household economics, Campbell commented that "you must rightly draw on the whole before you can rightly draw the part; - the greater includes the less" (p. 3). In effect, she was channelling integration. She also said, "Household Economics is the connecting link between the physical economics of the individual and the social economics of the state" (p. 3). Campbell's 127-year-old book included many notions related to integration: harmony, relations, processes, and connections (Bubloz & Sontag, 1988; McGregor, 2010).

Since its formal inception more than a century ago at Lake Placid, New York, home economics (now family and consumer sciences [FCS] in United States) has rhetorically framed itself as integrative. At the 1902 Lake Placid meeting, a well-recognized definition of home economics was tendered (East, 1982) predicated on the profession's integrative role: "A binding together is what is meant by home economics. [We] connect and bind together into a consistent whole

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the pieces of knowledge at present unrelated” (Committee on Courses of Study in Colleges and Universities, 1902, p. 71). This is the epitome of integration, which means to make whole (Harper, 2023).

Research Question

Brown (1985) interpreted this statement as a very early “commitment to an interdisciplinary ‘binding together’ of knowledge from diverse disciplines (not merely the sciences) for use in furthering the home and its interests” (p. 277). “Written history is a geography or map of where society has been. ... [Home economics] groups [also] have need to know themselves; to know who they are, and where they have been” (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 1). Driven by the author’s intellectual, philosophical, and pragmatic curiosity, this study queried, “*To what extent has the home economics profession sustained its commitment to the principle of integration over the past 125 years, and how have its understanding and use of integration evolved over time?*”

Integration Defined

Integrate is Latin *integrare*, ‘to make whole’ and is closely tied to analysis, synthesis, and synergy. Respectively, analysis is Greek *analusis*, ‘unloose.’ It involves separating out the parts of a whole, so they can be studied in detail. Synthesis is Greek *sunthesis*, ‘place together.’ It entails combining different components to make a new, complete whole (the opposite of analysis). Synergy is Greek *sunergos*, ‘working together.’ It refers to the interaction or cooperation between two or more agents when engaging to produce a combined effect that is greater than the sum of the effect produced by each separate part (Anderson, 2014, Harper, 2023). As a simple example, a whole would be *equal* to the sum of its parts (e.g., total [whole] cost of materials to build a house), but a synergistic whole is *greater* than the sum of its parts (e.g., the house made by combining the materials).

Using a jazz ensemble analogy (e.g., bass, percussion, guitar, and horns) (see Figure 1), analysis would involve listening to and studying the musical abilities of each performer - both their respective essential features and their relations with each other. Imagine the drummer was found wanting because she was not sufficiently talented, did not work well with other musicians, or both. Synthesis would entail finding a more or differently talented drummer to create another ensemble - a new, complete whole. Synergy would be the effect (the sound) created when the new jazz ensemble performs together. Their interaction and cooperation produce a musical performance that is greater than the sound of the separate individual musical performances. The whole they create is greater than the sum of its parts.

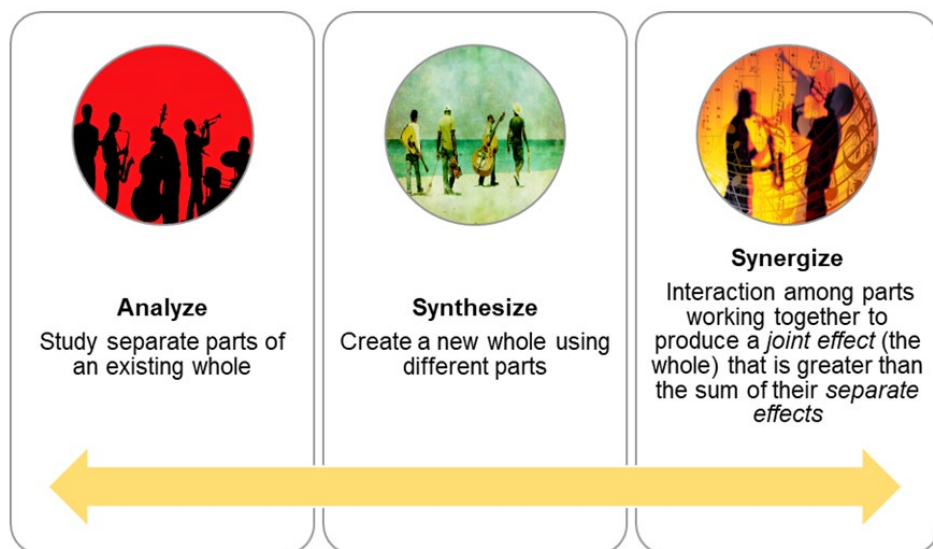


Figure 1. Jazz Ensemble Analogy to Illustrate Integration

When practicing from an integrative perspective, home economists and FCS would thus “view phenomena holistically as a complex system of interrelated parts, bounded through coordinated interaction and functional relationships” (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, p. 4). Integrative practice requires home economists being able to analyze and synthesize while appreciating the power of synergistic engagement among diverse elements whether knowledge, people, or something else. The new ensemble they create through integrative practice is now available for future analysis leading to ongoing synthesis that is dependent on synergy. A generative, affirming process is set in motion just as our founders envisioned and committed to so many years ago.

Bubolz and Sontag (1988) astutely defined integration as “a combination and co-ordination of separate and diverse elements or units into a more complex and harmonious whole” (p. 4). Referring to Jung’s (1986) work on integration and human ecology, they explained that integration involves home economists agreeing on central problems or issues “around which [they] must be able to build up an overview of the related disciplinary aspects of knowledge, handle summarized knowledge, develop constructive thinking and an ability to synthesize into a ‘new object for analysis’” (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, p. 4).

Method

Qualitative Historical Research

This study employed a qualitative research design in the form of historical research (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). “Historical research in any area of home economics may help us... learn much from the men and women who preceded us” (McBreen, 1984, p. 549). A chronological approach was also used in this historical research design. Historical research involves collecting, critically verifying, and synthesizing evidence from the past to answer a research question (McBreen, 1984; Thapa, 2017). Chronologies (Greek *khronos*, ‘time’) involve the study of these records to establish specific events or facts with associated dates (Harper, 2023; Turan, 2020). Chronologies are valuable research tools because they serve as a mental structure to scaffold thinking about a phenomenon. Attendant discussion points make visible historical ideas threaded through time (Turan, 2020).

In more detail, historical research entails several steps including (a) a literature review (consulting secondary sources: journals, books, and chapters); (b) note taking and rewriting; (c) finding facts and evidence pursuant to the research question; and (d) discerning and reporting a chronological pattern demonstrated through time (Barzun & Graff, 2004). The analysis that is required to prepare and write a chronological narrative depends on interpretation of the data and synthesis into a new whole - a new message pursuant to the research question. When reporting heavy documentation via quotations, clarity of writing is imperative. General statements should be supported with illustrative examples (Witkowski & Jones, 2006).

Another recommended reporting protocol for historical research is “periodization [which] is the process of dividing the chronological narrative into separately labelled and sequential time periods... typically decades or centuries” (Witkowski & Jones, 2006, p. 77). This approach was followed in this study. Labels for the 21st century decades (i.e., Aughts, The Tens, and The Twenties) were suggestions from Zimmer (2007) and Mohr (2019).

Sample Frame and Document Collection

The final sample frame was completed in 2021 and comprised $N = 51$ documents from 15 countries with many judged to be seminal in nature, meaning they strongly influenced later development. Others were more recent and served to enrich the chronology with contemporary

thinking and a more complete historical picture of the phenomenon under study. The data set constituted journal articles, conference papers, working group papers, white papers, books, book chapters, consultancy reports, position papers, and professional association documents (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). Half of the initiatives were American, but international examples also provided evidence pursuant to the research question about home economics and the principle of integration.

The documents ranged from 1902 to 2021 (a span of 119 years). The data set starts with the 1930s, which is a quarter century after the founding of the profession. This was deemed sufficient time for some semblance of a philosophical base to be established. Also, 82% of the documents were in a 50-year time frame (1970-2019). It is not uncommon for historical research data sets to be thinner for earlier dates due to a lack of source materials (McDowell, 2002). The Aughts, Tens, and Twenties contained less American and more international documents.

Documents used to create profiles for the first 90 years (1930-2018) were from the author's extensive personal home economics library curated over 50 years of practice. Some of these are one of a kind, but most are available in the general literature. The use of personal, often with limited access or no-longer-available, secondary source materials is accepted protocol for historical research - they are considered "the bread and butter of archival collections" (Witkowski & Jones, 2006, p. 76). Documents from 2019 onward were obtained through Google Scholar's search engine (including the Related Articles link) using combinations of the terms *integrate* (and derivatives), *home economics*, and *family and consumer sciences (FCS)*. This reflects a hybrid sampling protocol involving both convenience and purposive sampling (i.e., chosen on purpose because can best provide information to answer the research question) (McGregor, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis entailed bringing all the material together and then critically examining it to answer the research question. This was supported by a content analysis that involved coding for *integrate* and its derivatives and pulling out direct quotations containing *integrate* and sufficient text to provide context (Hassan, 2022).

Researcher Reflexivity

Interpreting the final chronology was tempered by overt concern for the researcher's reflexivity, subjectivity, and positionality (i.e., intuition, feelings, and impressions that can bias interpretation) (Berger, 2015). In that spirit, I consistently describe the profession as interdisciplinary, integrated, and holistic. After half a century of practice, I was philosophically curious about how the profession's sustained concern for and level of commitment to integration. I harbored no hidden agenda, nor did I proceed with unarticulated assumptions (per McDowell, 2002). In full disclosure, I firmly believe that integration is the cornerstone of our practice; it is what makes us unique among the more than 8000+ disciplines in the world.

The issue of reflexivity and bias was mitigated by (a) the meticulous use of verbatim quotes; (b) the logical arrangement of ideas by decades (McBreen, 1984; Thapa, 2017; Witkowski & Jones, 2006); and (c) an exhaustive search of the literature to ensure "an overall, holistic view [of the phenomenon] thus avoiding tunnel vision that can result in ... less-than-accurate conclusions" (McBreen, 1984, p. 542).

Findings

Per reporting protocols for the chronological method within a historical research design, findings were organized and presented by decade (Thapa, 2017; Turan, 2020; Witkowski & Jones, 2006). Unless otherwise identified, contributors were from the United States. Other's

country of origin is noted to illustrate that people from around the world were discussing integration within home economics. As a further caveat, this study *described* instances of the use of integration in home economics rhetoric. Granted, *explanation* (why something happened - why we valued integration) is understood to be more generalizable than descriptions of what was said. Nonetheless, historical research experts agree that “descriptive historical writing will have a large component of explanation” (Witkowski & Jones, 2006, p. 77).

Thirties

Prompted by a university Dean’s comment that “the trouble with you in home economics is that you have no philosophy,” Raitt (1935, p. 265) shared her philosophical position in a seminal article titled *The Nature and Function of Home Economics*. Twenty-five years after the founding of the profession, Raitt viewed integration as integral to our work. She proposed that, just like law, medicine, and engineering, home economics is based on “the philosophy that integrates” (p. 267).

Raitt (1935) explained that home economics integrates knowledge “in terms of purpose rather than as units of subject matter to be mastered” (p. 267). Although skills are important, why they are needed - for what *purpose* - is more important. She believed that organized knowledge emergent from integration is our foundation. She firmly held that home economists must “survey all fields of knowledge, all lines of activity, and glean therefrom whatever may serve the end we seek - improvement of homes and family life” (p. 267). That said, after observing the growing specialization trend, she lamented that a “great loss of power has occurred in home economics through the tendency to [specialize] (p. 270) [despite having] a philosophy complete and integrated” (p. 273). “Home economics serves as the interpreter of science” (Raitt, 1935, p. 272), and that interpretive role makes integration an imperative.

Forties

In 1948, Henderson tendered eight beliefs about home economics’ character. Paramount to her characterization was integration and a holistic perspective. She argued that home life is inherently comprehensive in scope thereby justifying the need for home economics. The profession must “concern itself with the *whole home and family experience*” (p. 110). “Because so many subjects had important contributions to make ... *home economics* was needed [given that] its uniqueness lies in their *integration* in relation to home and family life” (p. 111). Henderson maintained that “*more than being comprehensive* [home economics] needs also to be *integrative of the whole* rather than a series of specializations” (p. 110) (emphases in original).

Fifties

Fifty years after the founding of the profession and its professional association, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) struck a Committee on Philosophy and Objectives (1959), which prepared a report called *Home Economics: New Directions*. The committee asserted that “home economics synthesizes knowledge ... and applies this knowledge to improving the lives of families and individuals [along many] aspects of family living” (p. 680). It is safe to claim that the integrative nature of the profession still prevailed because synthesis intimates integration, which goes hand in hand with “creativity in extending, applying, or in disseminating knowledge to improve personal and family living” (p. 685).

Sixties

In 1967, AHEA published, what it affectionately called, *The Bird Book* (a bird is on the cover). Its official title is *Concepts and Generalizations*, and it represents the efforts of a national project started in 1961 “to identify the basic concepts and generalizations in the discipline of home economics” (Vincenti, 1997, p. 326). Concepts were defined as abstract representations

of the world (e.g., development, and socialization). Generalizations were defined as underlying truths with universal application and usually indicative of relationships (AHEA, 1967). The Bird Book was undergirded by AHEA's (1959) earlier *New Directions* document, which viewed home economics as employing synthesis and, by association, integration. The Bird Book initiative was deemed significant for the profession because it "created an environment of discovery as the profession [sought] answers to the basic concerns of home economics" (Amidon, 1967, p. 6).

Released a year later, the McGrath (1968a) report, *Changing Mission of Home Economics*, was deemed to have failed home economics entirely (Rossiter, 1997). Despite input from 1,672 home economists, McGrath, not a home economist, claimed that "the restraints of the past must be overcome" (as cited in Rossiter, 1997, p. 107). In particular, he recommended that home economics professors should have more contact with other disciplines intimating his impression that the profession was not interdisciplinary or integrative. He seemed to have missed the point that our integration imperative implies close contact with disciplinary *knowledge bases* (if not people) with our role being interpreters of that knowledge (see Raitt, 1935).

Ironically, while speaking at AHEA's annual meeting that same year, McGrath (1968b) articulated a change of heart, as it was. After acknowledging that "advanced and abstruse theory propounded in most disciplines has no observable relation to the ordinary problems of life, [he said home economics students should take courses from other disciplines in conjunction with] instruction provided by faculty of home economics and from a specific 'angle of vision'" (p. 507). Reference to an 'angle of vision' suggests a newly gained appreciation for the profession's commitment to translate and interpret abstruse disciplinary knowledge and integrate it with home economics knowledge to address the problems of life. Indeed, he now claimed that instead of breaking up or disbanding home economics curricula, they "ought to become more clearly identifiable wholes with an integrity of their own" (p. 507).

Seventies

In 1970, Schlater published *National Goals and Guidelines for Research in Home Economics*. Using an "ecological model as a base, [she reiterated] the continuing commitment of home economics to family and to the interaction between man and his [sic] near environment" (Vincenti, 1979, p. 328; see also Touliatos & Compton, 1988). It is well recognized that home economists cannot employ an ecological perspective without engaging in integrative practice (Bubolz, 1996; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Darling, 1995; Touliatos & Compton, 1988). This imperative means that Schlater was, *de facto*, advocating for integration in home economics research. *De facto* means existing or in effect without officially being recognized as such (Anderson, 2014).

In 1973, AHEA held, what it called, the 11th Lake Placid Conference to reach a consensus about the direction of the field (Vincenti, 1997). Breakout session records recounted attendees' comments with some directly related to integration. One person said, "through the particular integrative approach of home economics, families should be taught how to solve problems" (AHEA, 1973, p. 8). Another queried, "can a specialist legitimately claim to be a home economist or are only the so-called 'integrationists' home economists?" (AHEA, 1973, p. 7). A third attendee suggested that home economists should "develop [an] understanding of [the] relationship of the sub-disciplines to the whole; develop unity; define the specialist-generalist relationship (home economics is more than the sum of its parts)" (AHEA, 1973, p. 13). A fourth attendee recommended developing "competence in work with other disciplines and professional fields; start interdisciplinary teams" (AHEA, 1973, p. 14).

In her 11th Lake Placid conference paper, Paolucci (1973) said, “as a field of study, home economics is ecological and integrative [with the caveat that] we are only at the threshold of synthesizing knowledge” (p. 31). In circuitous reference to integration, East (1973) noted that “we have expected students to learn separately the concepts ... and to put them together somehow, sometime. ... The putting together has often been assumed to happen in the student’s mind” (pp. 24-25). She concluded that “they can’t think like home economists unless they are taught how home economists think” (p. 25).

As an aside, McGregor (2019b) (Canadian) later explained that thinking like a home economist involves “integrating any pertinent knowledge about the individual and family to a particular context, using a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to practice” (p. 40). This socialization involves training students’ minds “to tease out content, theory and principles from aligned disciplines and then to draw on the synergy created when connections are made between these insights and home economics’ mission and philosophy” (McGregor, 2011b, p. 107).

The 1973 Australian home economics draft curriculum document recognized that the profession “rests on a broad interdisciplinary basis [and that] Home Economics integrates these disciplines around a central theme - the well-being of the individual within his [sic] environment” (as cited in Pendergast, 2001, p. 27). Pendergast (2001) (Australian) applauded the architects of this home economics curricular initiative for modeling the Lake Placid founders who, in her opinion, had favoured a truly interdisciplinary and integrative approach.

Despite AHEA having nearly 29,000 members in 1964 (Rowles, 1964), the profession continued to be under attack, especially in the academy. University (male) administrators faulted it for being too female dominated and too vocational with too few doctorates and judged it as not legitimate (Rossiter, 1997). In this climate, AHEA commissioned and released a follow up to the “original NEW DIRECTIONS, written in 1959” (Bivens et al., 1975, p. 26) called *Home Economics: New Directions II*. Although the word integrate does not appear in this two-page document, it is implicit in the assertion that “the core of HOME ECONOMICS is the family ecosystem” (Bivens et al., 1975, p. 26). As noted, home economists cannot apply the ecosystem perspective without engaging in integrative practice.

Japanese home economists prepared and published *A Philosophy of Home Economics* (Sekiguchi, 1977/2004). In a unique approach, the true nature of individuals was deemed the foundation of home economics whose role is to “examine family life as a means of integrating individual independence and group cooperation” (Sekiguchi, 1977/2004, p. xxi). In effect, home economics is a focus on the family for the good of its individual members. “Human protection [is thus] the principal axis of home economics” (p. xx). The role of home economists is to clarify the individual’s relationship with their family to better ensure the former finds protection within the home. This relationship is compromised by excessive specialization with individuals uncritically depending on experts to tell them what to do. Japanese home economists argued that the profession must push back against this trend by using a holistic approach scaffolded with the application of reason (Sekiguchi, 1977/2004).

In 1979, AHEA released Brown and Paolucci’s commissioned report titled *Home Economics: A Definition*. In their normative (should/ought) philosophical definition, they addressed the issues of integration and specializations. “The knowledge appropriate to home economics is drawn from a number of disciplines, uniquely selected, organized, and transformed for practical use” (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 10) - that is, it is created through integrative thinking. After asserting that home economics must have a social purpose or a mission, they said any “specializations ... must contribute to the defined mission or purpose; [specializations] are determined by kinds of practical problems and, therefore, the kind of service provided and not by mere subject matter topics” (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 9).

Brown and Paolucci's (1979) proposition resonates with Raitt's (1935) earlier notion that home economics integrates knowledge "in terms of purpose rather than as units of subject matter" (p. 267). This purpose-focused perspective implies that specialization (i.e., expertise in a particular area for a specific *purpose*) is a necessary part of integrative, holistic practice instead of being an evil counterpart.

Eighties

In 1980, Daniels (from England) became the first home economist to conceptualize the profession as transdisciplinary. She intimated that transdisciplinarity better reflected the profession's integrative focus than interdisciplinarity. She proposed that using transdisciplinarity to organize home economics in higher education would involve disciplines from which home economists draw their interdisciplinary background and specializations with both forms of knowledge utilized in practice. Transdisciplinarity would thus enable home economists to, respectively, know (a) *why* - about fundamental things, (b) *what* is needed in the family's home and immediate environment and (c) *where* to go in one's practice to improve and develop the family's compromised situation. Daniels (1980) thus envisioned a role for both a common purpose and specializations in home economics practice.

In 1981, Vaines recounted her content analysis of the Lake Placid conferences. She concluded that knowledge of the historical dimensions of the field will "help practitioners to be able to integrate more fully and be more consistent in what they believe, study, and do. In turn, they will be able to project a clearer picture to those outside the profession of what the purpose of the field is and what services are provided by home economists" (p. 48). In effect, she was suggesting that employing integrative thinking bolsters the profession's image and success.

During the years 1984-1988, a small group of Canadian and American home economists met annually in Chicago, Illinois. "The meetings stemmed from concern about the increasing emphasis on specialization within the field and the diminishing appreciation for and understanding of its integrative nature" (Vincenti, 1997, p. 305). At the time, many (more than 30) university units were adopting names other than home economics to "emphasize its integrative nature" (Vincenti, 1997, p. 305). This strategy intimates that home economists still saw themselves as integrative, but they did not think the name conveyed that perspective. A name change was considered a strategy for integration. Change the name and everything else would fall into place.

In their 1984 framework for reconceptualizing home economics, MacCleave-Frazier and Murray (Canadian) prepared a five-screen model with integration as one screen. They proposed that to achieve the valued end of optimal quality of life for individuals and families, home economists must focus on practical, perennial problems using systems of action that draw on both the knowledge base of home economics and perspectives from other disciplines that are woven together through "the integrating perspective of home economics" (p. 71). They expressed concern that the profession had become so specialized that it had lost the ability to apply the principle of integration. They were convinced that "the willingness of the profession to reconceptualize its content, processes [especially integration], and goals will be central to its relevance in the future" (p. 73).

Also, in 1984, Kieren et al. (Canadians) published *The Home Economist as a Helping Professional*. They cited home economics researchers who had earlier characterized home economics as "a single field, ... a collection of disciplines and specialities, and ... a unified field [with these three being] independent of one another" (p. 11). They then added a fourth approach that Brown and Paolucci (1979) had identified called "*home economics as a practical science* [that] stressed the integration of theory and practice" (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 13). "This

conceptualization of home economics [views it as] a philosophical framework which synthesizes the many parts of the field into a whole” (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 14).

In 1985, Wilson and Vaines (Canadians) created an integrative theoretical framework for the examination of home economics practice intended to help practitioners choose the most appropriate theoretical path for a particular situation. This integrative framework comprised customary, instrumental, interactive, and reflective practice. Respectfully, these modes are atheoretical, empirical, interpretive, and critically reflective in nature. One of the authors, Vaines, explained an integrative philosophy thus, “the wholeness of integrated information ... requires an ongoing quest of putting the puzzle pieces together. Wholeness suggests that between and among seemingly disparate subjects there are potential relationships to be explored” (Smith et al., 2004, p. 11).

Lytle (1985) framed integration as a key “concept of home economics [asserting that] integration within home economics does not come easily in the minds of those who study it” (p. 74). People must be taught how to think integratively. In reference to socializing university students “to an integrative ideology,” Lytle suggested that their introduction to the concept of integration should be “a gradual process if it is to become central to a student’s way of viewing Home Economics” (1985, p. 74). Using a textile analogy, she explained that “the process of integration can be likened to weaving a cloth where warp and weft threads are interwoven and only as the weaving process develops does an overall pattern begin to emerge” (p. 74).

The profession had witnessed a shift from home economics to human ecology in the late 60s and early 70s (Brown, 1993; Bubolz, 1996), which continues to this day in some countries (McGregor, 2020). This peaked in the eighth when Bubolz and Sontag (1988) published a seminal piece titled *Integration in Home Economics and Human Ecology*. They argued that anyone who wants to practice as a home economist in the human ecology field must have the “ability to seek out and synthesize information, to see relationships among phenomena” (p. 11). This core competency pertains to one’s ability to engage in integrative practice, wherein one can employ the related concepts of “wholeness, harmonious, co-ordination, unification or unity, sum total of, and functional relationship” (p. 4). For them, integration meant “that we view phenomena holistically as a complex system of interdependent parts, bounded through co-ordinated interaction and functional relationships” (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, p. 4). Integration is the flexible glue holding home economics practice together. They were convinced that integration can occur at the theoretical, organizational, program, practice, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels in different degrees and forms (see also McGregor, 2011a).

In the same year, Touliatos and Compton (1988) also linked integration with human ecology. They conceptualized “an integrative model for human ecology research [to help practitioners improve] the well-being of families through education, research and community service” (p. 20). Their integrative approach involved synthesizing and applying theories from sciences, humanities, and the arts either alone or in multidisciplinary arrangements. Integrative research “should be on the whole if it is to be a dynamic research enterprise” (p. 20). For them, an integrative model of human ecology was a “unifying framework for its numerous specializations” (p. 25).

Nineties

In 1991, Baldwin (Australia) published *The Home Economics Movement: A “New” Integrative Paradigm*. Convinced that home economics can “embody a higher conception of purpose” (p. 48), she tendered a three-pronged approach to revitalizing home economics as a social movement. Like Ellen Swallow Richards and her founding colleagues, Baldwin felt that a home economics social movement was necessary to push back against the encroachment of the market (industrialization and consumerism) and state (excessive bureaucracy) into family life.

This pushback movement would entail (a) using critical social theory; (b) building and nurturing integrative home economics networks comprising faculty members (generalists and specialists), university students, public school teachers, and extension personnel; and (c) anticipating and overcoming internal and external resistance to the movement. Subsequent consciousness raising and self-empowerment would help create a *higher purpose* for the profession - “a just and humane society in which the family and the individual can flourish” (Baldwin, 1991, p. 48).

Brown (1993) tendered a seminal discussion of how she thought American home economists understood themselves. Her critical treatise addressed the holistic and integrative view of home economics. She acknowledged that “a holistic view of the relation among society, the family, and the individual is held among some home economists” (p. 125), but she was not convinced integration was profession wide because too many home economists privileged individualism within a capitalistic paradigm. Brown (1993) judged home economists as lacking understanding about the importance of integrating the (a) family’s role in providing members’ material needs with (b) its role as a key social institution and (c) “the significance of this integration to human development and human happiness” (p. 146).

When discussing human ecology and home economics, Brown (1993) judged the profession misguided in its assumption that “human ecology was ... a way to integrate the autonomous [fragmented] specializations that had developed in home economics” (p. 373). She also rejected claims that integration through human ecology would (a) add “an advantage to serving the family” (p. 374), (b) help “overcome the stereotype of [the name] ‘home economics’” (p. 375), (c) address the “concern for image-building” (p. 411) or (d) serve as an umbrella for “the existing unrelated assortment [of university home economics specializations]” (p. 374).

Her take away was that, regardless of best intentions at Lake Placid, integration did not happen in home economics despite AHEA’s growing “interest in noncompartmentalized and nonfragmentary approaches to knowledge, to ‘interdisciplinarity’” (Brown, 1993, p. 230). Brown judged interdisciplinary as not integrative enough preferring instead the “integrative function of transdisciplinary work” (1993, p. 244). Instead of integrating details of different disciplines and home economics subject matter to get new knowledge (per interdisciplinarity), transdisciplinarity would integrate different things: purpose, forms of knowledge, modes of rationality, and presuppositions of various disciplines. Brown presented transdisciplinarity as “a mutually acceptable integrating overall ... conceptual framework” (1993, p. 244) within which home economics practice could be conducted. She believed that this would be *real* integration.

At the 1993 Scottsdale’s preferred name and identity meeting, attendees agreed to change the name from home economics or human ecology to family and consumer sciences (FCS) in the United States. AHEA thus became the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). A new conceptual framework for the profession was approved, wherein, as a unifying focus, “Family and Consumer Sciences uses an integrative approach to the relationships among individuals, families, and communities and environments in which they function” (AAFCS, 1993, p. 1; see also Simerly et al., 2000). As key parts of professional practice, attendees committed to (a) integration as a core belief; (b) a “focus on the discovery, integration and application of knowledge”; and (c) “integrat[ing] knowledge across subject and functional areas [aka specializations]” (AAFCS, 1993, p. 2).

In 1994, Vaines suggested that ecology could be the unifying theme of home economics and human ecology (HMEC). She explained that the ecology concept is rich with paradoxes - one would not think things coexist, but they do. Because ecology respects complexity, diversity, and harmony, it is an apt concept for understanding “the ordinary, everyday lives of diverse families in many different communities and circumstances” (p. 62). But Vaines also saw ecology

as a unifying theme for the profession because it can bring together the specializations and “diverse parts of the field into a new kind of harmony. In such an integration, cooperation and imagination among and between the intellectual, pragmatic, and ethical activities of HMEC can bring about new understandings of the field” (p. 62). The resultant “whole is greater than the sum of its parts. [New integrated understandings] are integral to ... a meaningful future [for home economics]” (p. 62). The absence of these integrated understandings is consequential for the profession.

A year after the American name change was formalized, Darling (1995) wanted to help American university faculty members communicate their understanding of the profession to students. After lamenting the lingering negative effect of specialization on FCS practitioners’ ability to appreciate the integrative imperative, she tendered an integrative model of FCS. She asserted that “an integrative conceptualization of the profession has a long history, has been evolving [and now] is based on an ecological framework” (p. 373). To apply an ecological perspective in their work, practitioners must pay “attention to wholeness and integration as the unifying concepts” (p. 373). Darling (1995) further professed that “the strength of an integrative perspective of home economics/family and consumer sciences [comes from] the synergistic effect of combining several components [into a new whole]” (p. 375). She then tendered a new definition of the profession describing it as “an *integrative profession* concerned with *enhancing the quality of life* by focusing on the *interrelationships* among *individuals, families* and *communities* and the multifaceted *environments* in which they function” (pp. 377-378) (emphases in original).

In her discussion of human ecology, Bubolz (1996) recognized integration as an integral part of our lineage. She said, “we started off as an integrated field focused on the home and family, and we were for many years. Now, as I write this ... we are very, very specialized” (p. 57). She recognized “several challenges related to integration in human ecology” (p. 67) including integration of knowledge; programs; specializations with the profession as a whole; the structure of the profession with its functions; and between, among, and within people. She concluded that, to provide services to fulfil its mission, the profession must integrate its (a) value-based foundation with (b) education, research, and knowledge.

Aughts (2000-2010)

At the beginning of the new century, AAFCS characterized the profession as having a head, heart, and soul with integration one of five fundamental principles of the head of the profession. “Family and consumer sciences is grounded in an integrative, synergistic, holistic focus ...” (AAFCS, 2001, p. 2). This white paper was an adaptation of the Commemorative Lecture that Anderson and Nickols (2001) had delivered that year called *The Essence of Our Being*. Heading into the Aughts, integration was still perceived as a defining characteristic of home economics - part of its essence and true nature.

Starting in 2004, McGregor began to echo Daniel (1980) and Brown’s (1993) suggestion that home economics can achieve real integration through transdisciplinarity. To illustrate, McGregor (2011b) published an article about *The Transdisciplinary Methodology in Home Economics*. She explained that multi and interdisciplinarity “are natural first steps for solving complex social problems, but are not enough” (p. 107). Rather than just integrating knowledge from different disciplines, “transdisciplinarity holds a holistic vision of the world, and is concerned with the ... compilation and integration of different world views and value orientations” (p. 116). Like Baldwin’s (1991) vision of home economics having a higher purpose, McGregor (2011b) saw home economists using transdisciplinarity to achieve “a higher plain of inquiry [by working] at the interface of disciplines, civil society and other sectors, and doing so through ... value integration” (p. 117).

In 2006, von Schweitzer (Germany) (a) referred to excessive specialization as a pressing issue within the profession and (b) identified integration as the missing component in home economics. She said, “much lively discussion has evolved on all five continents ... about the conception of the science of Home Economics [which] has its fair share of problems in growing specialization and differentiating knowledge areas” (p. 15). She concluded that, “this calls for an integrated operative concept capable of holding together all the practice-oriented specialists” (p. 15). She was convinced that “what is needed is a viable, authoritative, holistic, theoretical concept which is valid for all variants of Home Economics, corresponding to a philosophy of Home Economics” (p. 15). For von Schweitzer, this integrative concept was her newly conceived *personal and social system theory of household activities*.

Turkki (2006) (Finland) argued that viewing home economics as holistic and integrated (rather than a collection of subject-oriented expert specialists) would require a new kind of specialist, an *integral specialist* with “expertises [sic] that integrates, links, bridges, coordinates and communicates” (p. 46). Being an integral specialist thus requires seeking connections; seeing patterns; talking within, across, and beyond disciplines; and building bridges. This approach means home economists would “have to pay attention to the dynamics and processes involved, and try to search for all hidden processes as well” (p. 46). Instead of accepting unintegrated knowledge, they would query ‘What is integrated knowledge?’ Furthermore, integral specialization entails a concern for not missing key aspects of a situation and its resolution. Any absence would be noteworthy and consequential because it is integral (*necessary*) to completing the new whole (McGregor, 2014).

In its centennial definition of home economics, the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) identified *integration* as one of three essential dimensions (threads) that all professionals identifying with the profession must exhibit. They must be adept at “the integration of knowledge, processes and practical skills from multiple disciplines synthesised through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent paradigms” (IFHE, 2008, p. 2). IFHE (2008) maintained that integration serves to ensure the achievement of well-being and the meeting of fundamental needs and practical concerns through using systems of action, specifically critical, transformative, and emancipatory action.

Scandinavian home economists approach home economics from a different perspective than North American practitioners. They concern themselves with everyday life instead of well-being and quality of life. As an example, Heinilä (2008) used phenomenology (i.e., the manifestation, perception, and meaning of daily experiences) to liken everyday home life to a spinning top. Care and a concern for the other are the point (narrow tip) of the top with the flywheel representing domestic skills used to enhance everyday life. Home economists would touch the top’s crown to encourage and facilitate a whole to be created. Home economists would approach everyday life as “one whole where the shape and colors of it merge” (p. 68). Using this metaphor, Heinilä explained that home economists should thus ask their “questions *in* the phenomenon as opposed to *from* [or *about*] the phenomenon” (p. 55). To develop her point about holism, Heinilä drew heavily on concepts related to integration: adaptation, coordination, analysis, harmony, and relations.

The current version of AAFCS’ body of knowledge (BOK) includes the concept of “integrative elements” (Nickols et al., 2009, p. 269) as well as core concepts and crosscutting themes. The two integrative elements, human ecology, and life course development, fortify the profession’s dynamic, holistic, and integrative nature - they “undergird the body of knowledge” (Nickols et al., 2009, p. 2009). Undergird means to strengthen and make secure thereby providing a sound basis (Anderson, 2014). The role of integration was thus perceived as pivotal to FCS practice because a BOK represents the complete set of recurring elements - the agreed-to principles, concepts, terms, and activities - that make up a professional domain (Hernandez, 2012). A BOK

reflects the “common intellectual ground shared by everyone in the profession, regardless of specialities, sub-disciplines, or career paths” (McGregor, 2014, p. 18). Nickols et al. (2009) de facto had presented integration as part of the common wisdom of home economics.

In an interesting twist, Pendergast (2009) advised that home economists should not privilege their existing specialized expertise. Instead, they should be open to always having to learn new things, so they can deal with pervasive change. They would thus become *expert novices* who are open to and comfortable with being inexperienced in a situation. They would become experts at relentlessly seeking solutions to evolving challenges and emergent issues. This is possible because they can let go of their expertise if it no longer meets familial or societal needs. Inspired by Pendergast’s (2009) idea, Mberwengwa and Mthombeni (2012) (Botswana) proposed that being an expert novice involves home economists (a) being critical of world events and how these events impact well-being; (b) being innovative and creative thinkers and problem solvers; and (c) becoming *specialists at integrating* divergent, complex ideas.

The Tens (2011-2019)

In 2012, Pendergast et al. edited a collection of 19 contributions about *Creating Home Economics Futures*. One of the editors, Turkki (2012) (Finland), described her work with a thread weaving its way through the 250-page collection with the concept of integration appearing 50 times and holistic 20 times. “My basic tool for communicating my thoughts about the many dimensions of Home Economics is the formulation of conceptual frameworks and models, a process informed by the aforementioned principles of holism and integration” (Turkki, 2012, p. 42). The key competencies of home economics are its flexibility and the “quality or competence to serve as integrators or facilitators in uniting diverse capacities and actions towards common goals” (Turkki, 2012, p. 42). Turkki (2006) had previously advocated for being integral specialists.

While recognizing the longstanding role of integrated, holistic practice in home economics, McGregor (2014) challenged the profession to engage in *integral practice*. Integrate means combining parts to create a whole. Integral means that if a part is missing in the integrated whole, its absence is noteworthy and impacts our ability to use the whole to address complex problems. Integral-informed practice is much more than integrated practice. McGregor said, “historically, FCS has drawn upon an integrated, holistic, interdisciplinary approach as a way to counter the ineffectiveness of pervasive fragmentation and specialization” (2014, p. 8). “Home economics broke new ground 100 years ago with its integrated philosophy [with the profession now] poised for integral-informed practice [, which is] a viable alternative for interpreting what is happening to families and society” (McGregor, 2014, pp. 12-13).

Florencio (2015) recounted the journey of home economists reviving the profession in the Philippines after its near demise caused by excessive splintering due to specialization. “As the idea of hyperspecialization flourished a sense of respect for and pride in the ... discipline itself diminished” (p. 10). She lamented, “I wonder how vast an expanse [home economics] can take and still know itself and keep its authenticity and integrity intact. At one point will our answer to what is home economics be in terms of its presence, implicitly or explicitly [or] in its various ... specializations?” (p. 10). Home economics in the Philippines is now viewed as “a specialized field of study that is reflective, interdisciplinary, integrative and interactive. It seeks to bring together the life of the mind and everyday living, and the elements of sustenance and relationships. It involves critical thinking and inquiry ... and interconnectedness” (p. 13).

The concern for the weakening effect of specializations on the principle of integration has been persistent. When Harden et al. (2018) conducted a study about American FCS professionals’ perceptions of the current and future direction of the discipline, several study participants commented on integration. To illustrate, one person said, “students fail to see the integrative

nature of FCS and ‘cling’ to their options/interests (e.g., Dietetics, Hospitality) over-identifying [sic] with FCS” (p. 24). And instead of saying home economics is the profession that integrates, one participant suggested that “I think FCS should be integrated into others curriculums [sic] ... if it wants to survive” (p. 27).

The recently revised standards for teaching FCS in American secondary schools recognized that the profession uses an integrative approach. “Like other disciplines, [FCS] is concerned with the integration of academic knowledge and achievement in a contextual approach” (National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences [NASAFACS], 2018, p. 3). With this principle in mind, each of the 16 areas of FCS study contains a Comprehensive Standard dealing with either integration or synthesis. Examples include (a) “Integrate knowledge, skills, and practices needed for a career in consumer services” (NASAFACS, 2018, p. 12); and (b) “Synthesize knowledge, skills, and practices needed for a career in family & consumer sciences” (NASAFACS, 2018, p. 21).

Finish home economists recently affirmed that home economics education includes integrative elements that enable learners to collaborate with other subjects in an interdisciplinary manner. “These characteristics have been used to describe home economics in every Finnish national curriculum since 1970” (Haapaniemi et al., 2019, p. 90). They shared examples of home economics educators’ contemporary use of the integrative approach to create integrative thinkers and to help learners collaboratively gain interdisciplinary skills.

McGregor (2019a) described FCS as “based on integration, which involves mixing things that are normally segregated. The result is a new whole comprising parts from several sources [normally] content, processes, and perspectives from many disciplines. Integration is about conceptual and perceptual connections” (p. 41). Respectively, students connect concepts together into a new whole by first making perceptual sense of things by “seeing patterns instead of learning subject-matter content separately” (p. 41). Students thus learn how to perceptually (patterns) then conceptually (content) make connections to “pull out what is relevant to the problem at hand [and then] weave things together to get a new, integrated whole” (p. 40).

The Twenties (2020-onward)

In a recent position paper, Naaz and Haseeb (2020) advocated for the revival of home science (home economics) in India from a holistic approach. A central part of their argument to convince the government to recognize the legitimacy of home science curricula was the profession’s integrative, interdisciplinary, and holistic nature. “In the nutshell, revival of Home Science school curriculum is the latest need of the hour in Indian school Curriculum that will shift the aims of education towards ... how to teach integrative skills” (p. 1). Relying heavily on Haapaniemi et al.’s (2019) affirmation of integrative practice in home economics, Naaz and Haseeb further appreciated that integration could differ by whom leads it and what is being integrated (e.g., knowledge, skills, experiences, methods, and/or materials).

Choi and Chae (2020) reported success when they augmented Korea’s home economics curriculum with three systems of action to ensure *convergence education* in home economics. Converge means eventually coming together (meeting) after travelling from different directions (Anderson, 2014). Korean home economics students were taught to integrate three systems of action (i.e., technical, interpretive, and critical) to address perennial and subpractical problems related to home economics curricular content. It was determined that, with integration, students learned far beyond what was intended in the original curriculum. Integration was affirmed as a valued component of home economics practice and a valuable skill set for learners to attain.

On a final note, in her research about Ireland's reformed secondary school home economics curriculum, McCloat (2021) reported that because home economics incorporates knowledge, skills, and theory "in an integrated ... manner ... it is ideally placed to deliver holistic and comprehensive ... education" (Abstract). Home economics teachers welcomed the revised curriculum, which heavily reflected the integration principle. These teachers judged it to be "timely, relevant and modern" (Abstract) thereby valuing integration.

Chronology Interpretation and Discussion Points

The research question queried, "To what extent has the home economics profession sustained its commitment to the principle of integration over the past 125 years, and how have its understanding and use of integration evolved over time?" The immediate answer is that the profession's commitment to the integrative principle and philosophy has been unwavering with no signs of letting up. Integration is part of our lineage (Bubolz, 1996) and remains the essence of the profession's collective identity evident through ongoing valuation of the imperative of integrative practice. But other threads wove their way through time as well (Turan, 2020) (see Table 1) including the ongoing, negative effect of hyperspecialization on our integration imperative and how best to overcome it.

Table 1. Seven Thoughts around Integration Threaded Through Time

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration as the crux of our philosophy • Disintegration: The bane of hyperspecialization • Integration as a unifying strategy • Form follows function • Integration inherent in ecosystem perspective • Array of integrative elements • Teach others integrative thinking |
|--|

Integration as the Crux of our Philosophy

There was clear evidence of the belief that integration was always intended to be the crux of our philosophy (i.e., a belief system that guides professional behaviour). Founders at the Lake Placid conference said home economics is all about binding things together that are not yet connected (Committee on Courses of Study in Colleges and Universities, 1902). Raitt (1935) said home economics is based on a philosophy that integrates. Henderson (1948) characterized the essence of home economics as integrative and holistic. Anderson and Nickols (2001) framed integration as part of the essence of our being as a profession. It is the crux of the AAFCS BOK (Nickols et al., 2009). These findings clearly resonate an existential, philosophical tone.

Disintegration: The Bane of Hyperspecialization

Just as prevalent in the chronology was a deep concern for hyperspecialization in a profession that was supposed to be all about integration. Although never expressed thus, concerns about excessive specialization are in effect concerns about *disintegration*. If integrate means to create cohesion (strength) by pulling parts together to make a new whole, then disintegrate means to lose strength or cohesion because the parts are breaking up, being pulled apart, or working in different directions or against each other (Sacks, 2020). A common thread running through our history was the lament about the damaging and lingering effects of excessive specialization and fragmentation. Many scholars herein believed that an integrative philosophy is our strength thus making a compromised integrative philosophy a fearful weakness.

To illustrate, Raitt (1935) claimed “a great loss of power” (p. 270) in home economics because integration had been subjugated by specialization. Some attendees at AHEA’s (1973) 11th Lake Placid conference called for the profession to develop unity by trying to understand and articulate the relationship between specializations (subdisciplines) and home economics as a whole. American and Canadian home economists met for years in the mid-to-late 80s to work out the issue of increasing specialization and the diminishing appreciation for integration (Vincenti, 1997).

MacCleave-Frazier and Murray (1984) claimed that the profession had become so specialized that it had lost the ability to be integrative. Bubolz (1996) lamented that although “we started off as an integrated field ... we are very, very specialized” (p. 57; see also Darling, 1995). “As specialisations grew, they became discrete and self-contained resulting in a reduction in the communication between [sic] the groups” (Harden et al., 2018, p. 17). This sentiment prevailed at the global level across five continents (Turkki, 2012; von Schweitzer, 2006). Harden et al. (2018) proposed that “the pendulum needs to swing back to interdisciplinary, integrative collaboration among specialisations to solve today’s societal problems” (p. 20).

Over 40 years ago, Brown and Paolucci (1979) had radically suggested that specializations in home economics should not be subdisciplines or subject matter topics (e.g., food, nutrition, and housing). Rather, specializations should be determined by the practical problems that families continually face (e.g., food insecurity, income insecurity, and inadequate shelter). Wilson and Vaines (1985) concurred, explaining that we need to gain specialization (expertise) in discerning what is needed for each situation and critically choosing the appropriate combination of knowledge, processes, and skills rather than relying on just subject-matter expertise (see also Turkki, 2006).

Integration as a Unifying Strategy

In an ironic about-face, some scholars herein gave credence to using integration to unify the disparate specializations back into an integrated whole as was originally intended. Touliatos and Compton (1988) recommended an integrative approach to human ecology research as way to unify home economics numerous specializations. AAFCS (1993, p. 2) identified “strong subject matter specializations with a commitment to integration” as a new basic belief for FCS practitioners. Similarly, Vaines (1994) acknowledged that a meaningful future for the profession depended on a renewed integrated understanding among specializations relative to home economics as whole.

Darling (1995) created an integrated conceptualization of the profession to offset the lingering effect of excessive specialization. In concert, she developed an integration-based definition of the profession to bring everything back together. von Schweitzer (2006) and Turkki (2012) fully acknowledged the pervasive presence of specialization in home economics on a global level. To fight against it, and to help pull things back together, Turkki (2012) recommended persistent, creative articulation of the principles of integration and holism.

As a caveat, using integration to push back against marginalization and fragmentation due to excessive specialization could be conceived as a Hail Mary, which is an action taken in desperation when time is running out, no other action is practical, and there is little chance of success (“Hail Mary,” 2021). To illustrate, Brown (1993) disagreed with the claim that human ecology was a way to integrate “the autonomous specializations that had developed in home economics” (p. 373). This approach would not serve as a unifying “umbrella for the existing unrelated assortment [of university specializations]” (p. 374). To be fair, she was faulting using human ecology as the Hail Mary and not integration per se. On that topic, Brown (1993) was convinced that integration had not happened at all in home economics as envisioned at Lake Placid, so using it to stave off the impact of specialization was misguided.

Form Follows Function

Another common thread in our history was reference to how achieving our integrative *purpose* has been thwarted by the *form* we have historically assumed, meaning other forms should be considered. Purpose is *purposus*, ‘an object to be kept in view; a reason for doing something’ (Harper, 2023). Employing the design axiom *form follows function* (Sullivan, 1896), our configuration should be informed by our intended purpose or function. That is, the purpose of home economics should be the starting point for its ultimate form. We first ask, “What is it we want to accomplish?” Then we ask, “What do we have to look like to make that happen - what form should we take?” One’s external form should express one’s inner life (e.g., a building’s exterior design (form) should reflect the different interior functions) (Sullivan, 1896).

This chronology revealed that our ultimate form of excessive specialization does not resonate with our intended integrative purpose or function of ensuring optimal well-being and quality of life using an interdisciplinary and holistic approach. To specialize is to direct one’s time and energy to one area to the exclusion of others (Harper, 2023). Currently, specialization in our profession means holding expertise in a home economics subdiscipline and subject matter to the point that it has weakened the entire profession. Several ideas emerged in the historical narrative around what our form *could* look like if it were not hyperspecialization.

First, Nazz and Haseeb (2020) said integration would differ depending on the purpose. Raitt (1935) recommended that home economics should integrate knowledge in terms of purpose rather than as units of subject matter. Brown and Paolucci (1979) also advised that specialization should reflect the perennial problems families face rather than any one area of home economics expertise. Should the latter prevail, however, there must be at least renewed communication among home economics specializations and subdisciplines (AHEA, 1973; Vaines, 1994).

Second, the profession could have a higher conception of its purpose other than well-being and quality of life (Baldwin, 1991). This higher purpose would also require some form of integration. Conceptualizing our purpose entails “forming ideas or concepts originating from observations, experiences and data.... Reconceptualization, therefore, involves critical examination of what has been in existence in the effort to improve or make changes” (Gitobu, 1993, pp. 46-47) (Kenya). Our reconceptualized purpose could be strengthening the home for the betterment of humanity, wherein we would engage in integrative work *through* families (see East, 1979 and McGregor and Piscopo, 2021). The intent would be a just and humane *society* within which all individuals and families can flourish rather than a narrow focus on what is at stake for each family unit (Baldwin, 1991). Sekiguchi (1977/2004) recommended that our higher purpose should be a focus on home and family as protective agents, so individual members can flourish as they deal with the onslaught of industrialization.

Third, our integrative purpose could be informed by transdisciplinarity. IFHE (2008) recommended using transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent paradigms to synthesize knowledge, processes, and practical skills from multiple disciplines as we engage in integrative practice (see also Daniels, 1980). Others went further than integrating disciplinary knowledge, suggesting that we can better serve our purpose by integrating knowledge *as well as* world views, values, and perspectives held by other disciplines in addition to governments, industries, and civil society (i.e., individuals, families, and communities) (Brown, 1993; McGregor, 2011b). This approach greatly expands what can be integrated and why.

Fourth, the notion of *integral* was identified as a way to augment the integration approach (McGregor, 2010, 2014; Turkki, 2006). If something is integral, it is necessary, meaning its absence is consequential regardless of whether home economists realize it is absent. Turkki (2006) recommended that home economists appreciate this distinction and become *integral*

specialists who “try to search for all hidden processes” (p. 46). Pendergast (2009) similarly advised that home economists should become expert novices who continually learn beyond their disciplinary expertise while becoming a *specialist of integration*. They would relentlessly search for a more complete picture of what is going on and how best to address things while not missing anything of import (see also Mberwengwa and Mthombeni, 2012).

Integration Inherent in Ecosystem Perspective

With the advent of the ecosystem perspective in the late 60s to early 70s, integration became both explicit and implicit. Bubolz and Sontag (1988) explicitly said that if home economists wanted to practice in human ecology, they *must* be able to engage in integrative practice. Others were less direct but still implied integration. To illustrate, seminal documents like *New Directions I* (AHEA, 1959) and *New Directions II* (Bivens et al., 1975) did not use the word integrate, *but* they did refer to synthesis and family ecosystem thereby intimating integration. Schlater (1970) de facto alluded to integration when she created an ecological home economics research model.

It may be that those advocating the ecosystem approach depended on practitioners inferring integration, which is implied through ecosystems theory (Bubolz, 1996; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Darling, 1995; Touliatos & Compton, 1988). On second thought, and deeply ironic, perhaps the move to human ecology and family ecosystems inadvertently weakened home economics integrative imperative as Brown (1993) suggested - out of sight, out of mind. This tentative insight warrants further investigation.

Array of Integrative Elements

On several occasions, comments about integration in home economics contained suggested elements for integration beyond disciplinary knowledge. This implies that integration is not limited to home economics specializations talking to each other to make them less fragmented. Bubolz and Sontag (1988) believed that integration could and should also occur at the theoretical, organizational, programmatic, practice, interpersonal, and interpersonal levels. Bubolz (1996) later echoed their thoughts using different terminology. Respectively, home economists could and should integrate (a) knowledge; (b) the structure (form) of the profession with its functions (purpose); (c) programs; (d) specializations with the profession’s practice as a whole; and (e) integration within, between, and among people.

IFHE (2008) said home economics integrates knowledge, processes, and practical skills. Brown (1993) and McGregor (2011b) proposed transdisciplinarity because it integrates knowledge as well as world views, values, and perspectives held by a wide array of stakeholders. Naaz and Haseeb (2020) said knowledge, skills, methods, materials, and experiences could be integrated with integration dependent on who was doing it and why. Bubolz and Sontag (1988) further acknowledged that integration varies by degree and form. This chronological thread suggests that integration is a broad construct and a far-reaching principle. There is a myriad of ways to practice integration in home economics, which should be explored in future research.

Teach Others Integrative Thinking

On a final note, The Tens and the Twenties decades reflected a shift away from rhetoric about FCS and home economists using integration to one where they must educate others how to use it, especially secondary students who are the next generation facing incredibly complex, intractable problems. To illustrate, NASAFACS’ (2018) standards were predicated on the Comprehensive Standard of integration. Haapaniemi et al. (2019) affirmed Finland’s 50-year, ongoing practice of teaching students an integrative and interdisciplinary perspective. McGregor (2019a) framed students’ integrative thinking as conceptual (content) and perceptual (patterns). Naaz and Haseeb (2020) argued for retaining home sciences curricula to Indian teach

students integrative skills from a holistic perspective. Choi and Chae (2020) demonstrated the merit of using home economics to teach Korean students to think integratively. McCloat (2021) said home economics' integrative nature ideally positions it to teach Irish students the principles of a comprehensive and holistic approach to living. Connecting integration with interdisciplinarity and holism has remained a common practice through time.

Study Limitations

Study limitations are aspects of the research design that influence interpretation of findings (McGregor, 2018). Historical research has several limitations (Hassan, 2022) that are reflected in this study. First, due to the loss, destruction, or inaccessibility of some secondary sources, researchers must acknowledge the reality of an incomplete or biased data set and satisfy themselves that this limitation does not compromise meaningful interpretation, trustworthiness, and generalizations (Hassan, 2022; Lai, 2013). A final data set of $N = 51$ spanning 119 years with authors from 15 countries mitigated this limitation. As a caveat, as expected with historical research, the earlier decades contained fewer entries (12%) than more recent times (McDowell, 2002), but this lacuna was somewhat mitigated by their seminal nature.

Second, acknowledging that historical research runs the risk of subjectivity of interpretation and lack of objectivity (Hassan, 2022), the research design accommodated the researcher's reflexivity and positionality about the profession's commitment to integration. This further entailed the meticulous use of verbatim quotes (McBreen, 1984; Thapa, 2017; Witkowski & Jones, 2006) to create "an overall, holistic view thus avoiding tunnel vision that can result in ... less-than-accurate conclusions" (McBreen, 1984, p. 542).

Third, limited generalizability can be a limitation of quantitative historical research (Hassan, 2022), but in qualitative historical research, trustworthiness is the issue (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). Trustworthiness refers to both the data and conclusions being transparent and open to critical thinking by readers. They must be able to *trust* that a researcher's statements about the findings and their implications are true. The trustworthy criterion was addressed with (a) thick descriptions (i.e., very detailed and judicious quotations), (b) researcher reflexivity and positionality and (c) the researcher's prolonged engagement in the field (50+ years) (McGregor, 2018).

Fourth, future researchers should employ a more systematic sampling protocol to procure historical documentation across the decades from sources other than Google Scholar and personal archives. Possible sources include the full Lake Placid Conference holdings archived at Cornell University (<https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/hearth6060826>), the back issues of the AHEA *Journal of Home Economics* (also at Cornell University), home economics professional organizations' conference proceedings, and home economics and FCS theses and dissertations from around the world.

Conclusion and Moving Forward

The historical analysis herein supports the assertion that the home economics and FCS profession has remained steadfast in its commitment to integration principle since the field's inception 125 years ago. Its reasons for doing so have remained constant ranging through philosophical, methodological (research), pragmatic, and educational. Scholars cited herein consistently expressed their rhetorical appreciation for the enduring value of integration in the profession. Inherent in this historical discourse, however, was the idea that on-the-ground practitioners and university students do not fully appreciate the power of integration preferring instead their unique, subject-matter specialization. This preference (by choice or ideological

blindness) has weakened the profession on a global level leading to perceived degrees of disintegration and a struggle with how to mitigate its fallout.

“Knowledge of the history of home economics is not a luxury. It is a necessity, and our survival as a profession depends on our ability to preserve and interpret that history” (Kieren et al., 1984, p. 1). Florencio (2015) concurred. “Our own perspective of the discipline/profession should be marked by learning from our past with discernment, assessing our present with candor and courage, and charting our futures(s) with the foresight and fortitude of our illustrious forebears” (p. 13).

In an uncomfortable truth, this chronological historical narrative revealed a difficult situation with no clear answer - a conundrum. Although there was overwhelming agreement that home economics and FCS must privilege integration to achieve its purpose, adhering to this binding principle over time proved difficult for a myriad of reasons with the main culprit being hyperspecialization at the expense of an integrative whole. Our actual conundrum seems to be our real world (disintegrative specialized form) versus our rhetorical ideal (integrative function and purpose) and our penchant for losing sight of or struggling to meet that ideal in our real-world practice. The solution involves ensuring that the integration principle again becomes a core aspect of our actual practice as well as our philosophical and political rhetoric - *our form must follow our function*.

To state the obvious, both society and the public will receive a disservice if the profession is not integrative in its approach. Perpetuating or allowing disintegration is not morally defensible. But how do we ensure integration is at the core of our practice when hyper specialization is not going away, the existence of integrated university programs is declining, and many new hires socializing the next generation are not trained home economists steeped in the integration imperative? The conundrum exposed in this historical research enterprise may become the *elephant in the room*. This idiom refers to a situation wherein a controversial issue becomes obvious, but people refrain from dealing with it because it is embarrassing, makes them uncomfortable, or it is dangerous territory to explore. Respectfully, it is time for the profession to engage with this difficult conversation if it wants to move forward.

Zigarmi and Diamond’s (2023) suggestions to that end have relevance here. They recommended a five-step template for addressing difficult conversations about undiscussable issues (the elephant in the room), so the issue can be framed as discussable. These steps include first asking oneself “*What is at the heart of the matter? What is not working? What unconscious patterns, perceptions, emotions, or passive agreements are in play?*” The second step involves imagining oneself as a fly on the wall or an extraterrestrial (ET) observing the situation for the first time. With this objective curiosity, people can speculate “*What else might be going on?*” and “*What is really going on?*” This distance paves the way for a less biased and improved understanding of the situation.

Third, people must accept that, “more often than not, something is stuck or undiscussable because it is thought to be threatening, undervalued, or simply wrong. Naming and holding it without judgement opens up the floor to learning and discussion” (Zigarmi & Diamond, 2023, para. 14). Using such start-words as “*I noticed, I observed, it seems, or I’ve heard,*” people can better describe what is holding back progress. Each of these observations reveals valid possibilities. Fourth, each person must minimize self-protective framing of the difficult issue. Avoiding this makes them receptive to opportunities to learn and improve. Productive start-words would include “*I’d like to learn*” or “*Help me understand*” (Zigarmi & Diamond, 2023).

Finally, the conversation must open to others facing the same elephant in the room with start-words including “*What do you think? How do you see it? What does this mean to you and to all*

of us? and *What can be done?*” This final step is about group reflection and input from each other, so the elephant in the room remains visible and discussable (Zigarmi & Diamond, 2023). As trivial as this may sound, the resultant difficult professional conversation may well be the necessary first step toward strategizing that ensures integration remains front and center, so the profession can continue as a powerful force for well-being, quality of life, and an enhanced human condition.

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