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Cassidy Wallace
cw921645@wcupa.edu

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Re-establishing the Value of Family and Consumer Science in the General Middle School Curriculum

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the

Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies

West Chester University

West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Master of Science

By

Cassidy Wallace

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Abstract

Family and consumer science is a subject that carries a complex cultural legacy. Beginning as a response to the social upheaval of the industrial revolution, family and consumer started as home economics, and was split between elevating the importance of the domestic arts and applying science to traditionally domestic tasks to both improve homelife and create new fields of academic research. While second goal was reached, and we now have food science, sanitation engineering, and materials research, among others, family and consumer science is still often relegated to domestic associations. However, family and consumer science is still relevant and powerful – and can be especially helpful in middle school.

Middle school should not simply be a preview of high school, but instead serve as a bridge between elementary and high school. Middle school serves a unique population of adolescent learners who struggle with changes in their social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development. The team structure of middle school was developed to account for these challenges and to balance students' duel needs of independence and support. Family and consumer science education, however, typically operates outside of the team structure so crucial to middle school education.

My goal here is to design a series of workshops that will improve the integration of family and consumer science into general middle school practice. Family and consumer science should not be dismissed as merely cooking and sewing. This dismissal is harmful, as it ignores the vast potential of subject. Integrating family and consumer science education more fully with the team structure of middle school will enhance the value and visibility of family and consumer science education, help students through their adolescence by instilling practical skills, and enhance the core classes within the team structure of middle school education.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Positionality

"Are we cooking today? When do we start cooking?!" is the chorus that greets me at the start of every period. I teach Family and Consumer Science to middle school students, and they are always eager to cook. Cooking is not actually required by Pennsylvania state standards or by the national guidelines for family and consumer science (*FRAMEWORK for FCS in CTE*, n.d.; Academic standards for family and consumer sciences, 2002). However, cooking is usually the method of choice for teaching food preparation, food safety, and related standards and is the highlight of the subject for most of my students. Along with my co-teacher, I also teach nutrition, child development, personal finance, family culture and tradition, sewing, and business. A colleague in the field said it best when she compared teaching middle school family and consumer science to "digging a bunch of shallow holes." Our units tend to last a week or two, and the typical length of a middle school family and consumer science course is one marking period, or about forty-five days. It is a hectic world, but also an incredibly fulfilling one. And yet, I never set out to teach at a middle school, to teach family and consumer science, or even to teach at all!

I came to my present position in a round-about way. Growing up, I had no intention of teaching at all; my mom, two aunts, and both grandmothers were teachers, and I wanted to be different. But as part of National Honor Society in high school, I was required to tutor after school. I found myself enjoying helping my fellow students and started to think seriously about teaching as a career. English Language Arts was my strongest subject, so I went to Pennsylvania State University and majored in Secondary Education and English. Outside of formal schooling,

however, all my activities and part-time jobs dovetailed with the core standards of family and consumer science.

I worked as camp counselor for pre-k children. I worked in food service at Penn State, learning about food preparation and safety along the way. As a vegetarian in a family of carnivores, I took an almost self-defensive interest in cooking and nutrition. I signed up for sewing electives in high school, sewed clothes for myself, and taught sewing at a summer camp. Even with all this experience, it never occurred to me to major in family and consumer science education. My personal blind-spot would turn out to be rather prophetic, or at least in-keeping with the blind-spot society has towards family and consumer science. What turned me towards family and consumer science was, quite simply, the job market. When I graduated college and started looking for a teaching job, English positions were scarce. In order to diversify and increase my hiring potential, I looked at my interests from a more critical standpoint. It seems obvious in retrospect, but I was uniquely qualified in all the standards of family and consumer science. I took the Praxis exam to qualify as a family and consumer science teacher and passed with ease.

After several years of substitute teaching and networking at family and consumer science teacher events, I started working as one of two family and consumer science teachers in a middle school. I teach sixth, seventh and eighth grade students on a rotating schedule, eventually working with just about every student in the building over the course of the year. And while we cover food science, nutrition, early child development, sewing, family, culture and traditions, interior design, and business, if you ask my students, they will tell you that I am the cooking teacher. I understand and empathize with them. Beyond the primal lure of food, cooking labs are an inherently hands-on experience and labs foster feelings of independence and competence.

Nothing has made me prouder as a teacher than overhearing one sixth-grade boy say to another "This actually tastes good! I made this, and it actually tastes good!" in between spoonfuls of his parfait, layered with granola baked the class before.

While the parfaits are generally popular with the students, not all the recipes I started with were well-liked. My predecessor left a curriculum with some less-loved recipes and lessons. I never had the opportunity to speak to her about her choices, but with student engagement in mind, I started making some small changes. I slowly transitioned teacher demonstrations, like biscuits, into hands-on labs for the students. I did away completely with a lesson about eggs, as so few students wanted to eat, let alone make, egg salad. I reframed child development lessons so they were less about parenting – after all, my students are about 12 years old! – and more about temporary care, like babysitting. But as I worked to adapt the curriculum to suit my students, I did not feel satisfied; there was some deeper issue that I couldn't put my finger on.

As Brookfield (1995) explains, becoming a critically reflective teacher is essential, but difficult. Not all reflection is critical. I started out asking myself, "Is this a good lesson? Will anyone eat the egg salad?" and was pleased with the small changes I made, but these small changes were not critical. These changes did little to affect overall change or address wider problems within family and consumer science. Brookfield outlines six why's of critical reflection, and number two, "It helps us develop a rationale for practice" (23) resonated most with me. He writes that "[critical reflection] embeds …our sense of who we are as teachers in an examined reality" (23). Critical reflection also means a teacher is "much better placed to communicate to colleagues and students…the rationale behind her practice" (23). As I started the process of reflecting on my curriculum, and family and consumer science in general, I realized the need for this communication and definition. My subject is often an island, untested and

sometimes dismissed. Being able to define the reality of family and consumer science, and communicate my rationale for curriculum choices and changes, is essential in reaching beyond the door of my classroom.

In considering how to best address the needs of family and consumer science and its purpose, my initial thoughts veered towards foods and multicultural education. One specific reality of family and consumer science classes is that they rely primarily on "western" ideas of food, family, and culture. Sometimes it is spelled out directly; the latest update to Pennsylvania's family and consumer science standards is still pending, but the current draft calls to add "mise en place" (a French cooking term meaning "everything in its place) as a specific term for all students to learn. Other times, it is more subtle. Many high schools offer both "Foods" and "International Foods" in the family and consumer science department. A dish like macaroni and cheese would be part of a Foods course, while arroz con leche would be placed squarely in an International Foods course. The chapter on utensils in the textbook my department uses includes wooden spoons and frying pans, but makes no mention of chopsticks, woks, or mortar and pestles. Why does this distinction exist? What effect does this distinction have on students of diverse ancestry? What effect does the distinction have on majority students who are coming of age in an era of rapidly shifting demographics?

I do believe these are valid questions. Foods curriculums need to be reexamined, not just in high school family and consumer science programs, but in culinary schools and in the restaurant industry (Maze et al., n.d.). But I work in a middle school and I am passionate about middle school education. Middle school family and consumer science is distinct from high school family and consumer science. In high schools, the class is typically an elective and meets every day for a semester or even the full year. Teachers work closely with their students and get

to know them well. High schools also have a different purpose than middle schools, being focused on career and college readiness.

As I researched more about genuine multicultural education and then compared the purpose and potential of family and consumer science at different academic levels, I realized that the problems I faced in my classroom could not be solved simply by applying a multicultural framework to foods. According to Au, true multicultural education is much deeper than adding facts about foods from different countries. Instead, multicultural education must powerfully confront the culture of power and control. It should invite students to engage in genuine issues, live in classrooms where students meaningfully engage with each other, and connect entire curriculums (Au, 2009 p. 3). In middle school family and consumer science, foods and cooking is one small unit, not a curriculum. That does not mean that multicultural learning cannot infuse the other units as well. But a larger problem of middle school multiculturalism is that of community. To use multicultural education to its full potential, teachers must foster true connections with their students, know them as people, and build safe communities to confront deep issues. Middle schools often use a "team system" of teaching, which does build community. But family and consumer science is generally outside of the teams. While family and consumer science can certainly incorporate many tenets of multicultural education, the limited survey nature of the course precludes a fully realized multicultural experience.

And so I ask myself the following: What is the purpose of middle school education? What is the history and purpose of family and consumer science? What is the current status of middle school family and consumer science, and what is its potential? In answering these questions, we will find a find a way to not only elevate family and consumer science, but middle school education as well.

I wrote earlier that I struggled to put my finger on the problem with my family and consumer science teaching. While I have identified the problem now – that family and consumer science's potential is not fully realized, especially in the unique context of middle school – I needed to spend some time considering how I knew there was a problem. What is the current state of my curriculum, my classroom, my program? What is my role within family and consumer science and within middle school education? Following the lead of David Takacs (2003) I realize that I must address my own positionality. How do my sense of self and my personal experiences shape what I know about the world? Takacs writes that "Education can have no more critical function than helping students function most productively and joyously in their communities" (38) and clarifies that this is achieved by "[respecting] different ways of knowing the world borne of different identities and experiences" (38). Bringing different experiences together to help build community is vital to teaching about family and community in family and consumer science. In fact, "stronger families or more viable communities cannot be developed without individuals 'maturing in self-formation" (Nickols et al. 2009, 273). I keep rethinking how I know what I know as I work in my classroom, writing lesson plans and reshaping curriculum. I do not have formal training in family and consumer science education, but rely on applying my own experiences to the secondary teacher training I have. I also must consider how I know what I know outside of my classroom, and address how we know what we know, as family and consumer science teachers and as society.

To address my thematic concern – improving the relevance of family and consumer science and better integrating it within middle school education – I intend to use qualitative research. One of the primary reasons to use qualitative research is that its multi-pronged approach can be helpful in hunting out assumptions. One of the first steps of qualitative research

is reflection. You must reflect in order to identify problems and to assess solutions. Reflection is especially crucial in teaching family and consumer science, as "researchers and practitioners not only will need to be demographically savvy but also will need to keep pace with changes over time…in addition to problem identification" (Nickols et al. 2009, 277). Critical reflection can help keep up with changes. Brookfield (1995) suggests using reflection to hunt out assumptions and urges us to question the paradigmatic assumptions that feel like objective realities, even when it feels impossible. The cultural perception of family and consumer science is often taken for granted. It's home ec, right? Kids learn to cook, right? One of the foods I make with my students is crumb cake. When I talk about my job and the crumb cake lesson comes up, it is often greeted with familiarity and reminiscence. Both my peers and representatives from older generations have made crumb cake in family and consumer science or Home Ec. "The choice of dishes canonized in any cuisine reflects hegemonic tastes and beliefs" (18) writes Vestor (2015). What does it say that coffee cake has become canonized in the curriculum of family and consumer science across generations? Brookfield (1995) encourages us to look at the role of power and hegemonic assumptions in education. It can be difficult to take a critical look at what surrounds us like the air we breathe. But as Brookfield points out, it is important to try. Educators can only develop sound rationale and take informed action if they are critical. As family and consumer science is squarely associated with crumb cake and cooking, it is not associated with disrupting the hegemony, breathing accessibility into STEM, and brining nuance to the middle school system. I argue that family and consumer science is actually uniquely suited to all three of these things.

Of course, once you begin questioning assumptions, the questions keep coming. But engaging in critical reflection of a dozen different, albeit related, questions is like casting a net

over the whole lake. You'll catch a lot, but good luck reeling it in! I can structure my research by looking at Denzin and Lincoln and their writing *The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research* (2013). There are many methods of qualitative research available to the academic and utilizing these methods can help stitch together different threads of research. Questions of perception – how do different populations perceive the role of family and consumer science? – might be addressed by point-of-view interviews. The actual rates of inclusion of family and consumer science departments in the wider school curriculum could be examined by positivist data collection. Significant research has been done over many years about how middle school supports adolescents. Traditional academic research could be used to provide groundwork for new explorations, looking at the intersection of family and consumer science and middle school. This research is needed, as currently, most states do not track family and consumer science programs at the middle school level (Wehan, 2013). Much of my research will focus on Pennsylvania, as it is my home state and requires family and consumer science at the middle school level. Acknowledging the constructivist paradigm of multiple realities can help breach the gap between what historically counts as family and consumer science and what could be.

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) lay out a process of qualitative research that can help steer a researcher through the many fractaling questions that arise once one starts to question the assumptions found in the family and consumer science curriculum. Lincoln furthers the refinement of research when outlining *Revolutions in Qualitative Research* (2005). She discusses the rapid changes in consciousness and acknowledges that these changes can lead to rapid shifts in qualitative research, as qualitative research is often a narrative exploration. A particular shift that Lincoln explores is the role of social justice in social science. It is necessary to have a specific cause in mind for research, and to be respectful of both our own perspective and of

potential perspectives of those who use your research. As Lincoln points out, "because scientists have often 'seen' what they wished to see, we need to exercise a prudent caution about the purposes to which any given piece of research might be put" (Lincoln, 2005). Using a variety of research methods, as outlined in this section, will help me see a more complete picture of the potential of family and consumer science, rather than any one facet. I need the varied techniques of qualitative research to ensure that my proposals are truly needed and are informed by reality, not just by assumptions.

In the words of Fine, et al (2003), I need to consider "For Whom" I am making changes. Will restructuring my curriculum actually benefit students? Will it meaningfully challenge the perceptions of family and consumer science? Will my workshops empower other family and consumer science teachers to improve not just their classes but their schools? I will use qualitative research because its many approaches allow for subjective and varied data collection.

So where is this all headed?

Qualitative research will shape the work of this proposal, and is used to lay the foundations of understanding for the proposal. Based on my research, personal experience, and the voices of others, I will lay out four key sections of relevant information – the purpose of education, the unique position of middle schools in education, the history of family and consumer science via home economics, and the current practice and potential of family and consumer science. I will then propose a series of workshops and resources for middle school family and consumer science teachers.

First, I will examine the role and purpose of middle schools. Middle schools are a relatively recent innovation in American schools. Their inception arises from both practical concerns – making efficient use of existing buildings – and psychological ones – fostering the

unique needs of adolescents (Lounsbury, 2009). Within the broader picture of middle school, I will highlight the role of family and consumer science.

Secondly, I will explore the history of family and consumer science as both a social movement and as a subject in schools. Family and consumer science traces its roots to home economics and the cultural perceptions of it have varied widely in accordance to larger societal concerns. From the industrial revolution to the Great Depression, from WWI to Betty Crocker and the Woman's Liberation movement, home economics, as family and consumer science was historically known, has taken many forms and has had many charges laid upon it (Elias, 2009). From its inception, the movement has had differing internal aims, and much of that turbulent history is on display in the current practice and perception of family and consumer science.

Examining the current practice and perception is my third foci. I will explore why family and consumer science is undervalued and increasingly cut from public school curriculums. There are several reasons for the reduction of family and consumer science, and if we are to strengthen family and consumer science, and thereby improve middle schools, we need to explore its perceived and actual weaknesses.

Finally, I will highlight the potential of family and consumer science, especially in the context of middle school education. I argue that family and consumer science is vital for middle school education for three primary reasons. The first is the potential of family and consumer science to further the integrated model of middle school by providing practical, hands-on applications from other subject areas. Family and consumer science is especially helpful in integration of the trendy STEM subjects. It is, after all, a science subject, and can open students to alternative applications of STEM skills. Second, family and consumer science is a counterpoint to the relentless encroachment of capitalism in our schools. I believe the goal of

schooling, especially at the middle school level, is to promote well-rounded social, emotional, and intellectual development, while preparing students to be active citizens in their communities. This goal is counter to the capitalistic goal of producing a larger workforce and creating a reliance on consumption, rather than production, of goods. Finally, family and consumer science is an important gateway to multicultural learning. In adolescence, students begin to wrest with questions of identity and acceptance, and the deeply personal subjects of food, family, and tradition are significant starting points for deeper exploration.

With these four sections researched and outlined, we will be prepared to consider what to do next. We will see how we can bring family and consumer science to its full potential in middle school education. Beyond any individual school, we can ensure family and consumer science's continued role in enriching the lives of students and in shaping the active participants of tomorrow's society.

Chapter 2

Thematic Concern, Conceptual Framework, and Definitions

THEMATIC CONCERN:

My purpose is to design a series of workshops that will improve the integration of family and consumer science into general middle school practice. Family and consumer science is often dismissed as merely cooking and sewing. This dismissal is harmful, as it ignores the vast potential of subject. Integrating family and consumer science education more fully with the team structure of middle school will enhance the value and visibility of family and consumer science education, help students through their adolescence, and enhance the core classes within the team structure of middle school education.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. What is the unique role of middle school?
3. What is family and consumer science education and what is its origin?
4. What is the current status of family and consumer science education – in terms of limitations and potential?

DEFINITIONS:

Constitutive:

Adolescence	A developmental period starting around age eleven years. Adolescence is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood and is characterized physically by the onset of puberty. Adolescents often struggle socially and emotionally as they try to figure out their place in the world and try to make sense of who they are as individuals (Peckham, 2011)
Home economics	An historic movement dating back to the early 1900's. Home economics had dual goals of improving the social condition by bringing domestic arts and science together, and elevating the female-dominated domestic arts to that of male professions. As a social movement, it faded out by the 1940's, but continued in public consciousness primarily through the public-school system where is was widely associated with homemaking skills like cooking and sewing. (Elias, 2008)

Operative:

For the purpose of the thesis,

the following definitions will apply.

Family and consumer science

A school subject that grew out of the home economics movement. Family and consumer science standards at the national level include 16 core standards: personal finance and consumer services, family and community services, counseling mental health services, early childhood development and services, teaching and training, apparel and textile merchandising and production, interior design/pre-construction, fashion design, food and nutrition sciences and technology, travel and tourism, and restaurants and lodging services (FRAMEWORK for FCS in CTE, n.d.). The Pennsylvania standards include four core standards: Financial and resource management, balancing family, work, and community responsibility, food science and nutrition, and child development (Academic standards for family and consumer science, 2002). While the state standards may seem far less encompassing than the national standards, the state standards include sub-headings which cover the same content as the national standards.

Hegemony	A form of dominance. Hegemony typically refers to the dominance of one country or social group over others. As used in this paper, hegemony typically refers to the dominant social movement of a given period, especially as it affects legislative decisions and cultural concerns.
Middle school	Part of the American public-school system between the elementary and high schools. The middle school typically caters to grades six, seven, and eight with the occasional structure of just grades seven and eight. The average age range of students in middle school is 11-14 years. Middle schools are most typically organized in team fashion, with sub-populations of students sharing the same group of math, science, ELA, and social studies teachers.
Pedagogy	The study and understanding of teaching. It refers to both the understanding of teaching and the methods used for teaching.
Special area subjects	Non-tested subjects that students only take for a portion of the school year. Unlike core subjects, these classes are generally not part of the standard middle-school team structure and at the high school level are usually electives. Common special area subjects include art, music, family and consumer science, and physical education.

Chapter 3

The Narrative

The Purpose of Education

The role of education is not easy to define. Education has served many purposes over centuries of humanity. It has been formal and informal, mandatory and optional. Sometimes education serves to preserve and sometimes to alter. Sometimes education is used to improve an individual and other times to befit society. Many of these roles are complementary, others contradictory. And many roles overlap. To give a thorough explanation of every potential is outside the scope of this paper. Therefore, we shall impose limits on our question and ask instead – What are some roles that education plays today in the United States of America? Why are these roles prioritized? As I said, many of these answers will overlap and contradict themselves, so I will also explain the role of education as I see it. Once we have set the reality and the dream, we will have the context for the continued existence of family and consumer science education.

To further narrow our scope, we will start with the most common form of education practiced in the United States today – public school. The public-school system has its roots in colonial Massachusetts and what is commonly referred to as the "Ould Deluder" act of 1647 which established a common school so that children of the community would learn to read, so they could read the bible, so they could resist Satan, that "ould deluder" (Shoked 2017, p. 964). While this justification for public schooling is clearly based in religious ideal, it places the role of education firmly in protection and preservation of individuals and society. And while the act established a common school system in the colony, it did not lead to immediate wide-spread

adoption of public schools. Instead, it served as a template for other small areas looking to start schools in their communities.

As the colonies grew and expanded, there was a lot of debate over the role of schools and who should be educated. No clear consensus was achieved, and while communities were certainly allowed to set up schools, there remained no formal or wide-spread attempt at education for all (Shoked, 2017). It was not until Horace Mann and the Common Schools Movement that education was standardized and available to all – at least in theory. By this point, the United States was in the throes of the industrial revolution. Demographics were shifting towards cities, and the society of the time quaked under the influence of urbanization, immigration, and automation. Horace Mann, as quoted in Shoked (2017), saw Common Schools as "a preventative and an antidote" as to the social changes (p. 976). To maximize efficiency and inspired by the prolific success of factories in turning out goods, Mann proposed that the common schools be centralized, with specialized over-seers and with grades to measure success of students. This was undoubtedly an efficient way to manage the large class sizes and shifting demographics, and set the role of education as one of assimilation and reproduction. Mann's common school system could be replicated easily and would force students of different backgrounds and cultures through the same steps, creating – in theory – uniform humans ready and able to contribute to industry (Steffes, 2012). Mann's common school system is largely in place today. According to Shoked (2007), when reforms swept through during the Progressive Era, schools "remained unscathed" (p. 985).

And so we arrive at the present day. We are inheritors of the colonial puritan's desires to educate in a manner that perpetuates their society and inoculates children against change. We are inheritors of Mann's efficient common schools, with the laudable goal of bringing education to

all, but with the questionable methods based on factory systems. Schools are used a stepping stone for greater personal achievement, and as an international yardstick for which country is poised to be the great hegemony. Mixed in with all this is the fact that schools educate children who will grow up to be Americans. This nation is founded on democratic principles. And while these principles are not perfect, they are improving, as more and more people are citizens and fully enfranchised. I would argue, then, that schools must prepare children to be active participants in our democratic society.

With that being said, I fear a spontaneous democracy in my classroom. Students' primary interests upon entering my room center on the food: Where is it? How soon do we get to cook? Are we eating today? I fear my students' urge to take over the pantry because on the few occasions where I have allowed my students to vote on what they cook, winning ideas included "brookies" (a brownie-cookie hybrid) and "pigs-in-a-blanket". I fear spontaneous democracy because the students' choices are empty of nutrition and because I have too many students and because not enough students have self-discipline and because I don't have a large budget for ingredients. I fear spontaneous democracy because within the current school system, I fear it will not work.

My school experience certainly did not prepare me to participate in democracy. In college for education, I first heard the name John Dewey and learned of his arguments for critical thinking and curriculums based on student need, rather than the need for administrative order. Dewey's work is sometimes dismissed because of the erroneous assumption that a student-centered approach is only achieved by sacrificing administrative order or control. That has certainly been a fear of mine. However, Dewey was not advocating for a system where individuals are only responsible to themselves. Instead, he argued that a student-centered

approach arose from collective learning, from a teacher and curriculum that were receptive to the needs of the whole. Students should not be encouraged to engage individually with the world, but collectively. Following the collective ideal of learning, democracy, and democratic education, should be pursued collectively. Dewey's vision was for common student-centered approach, yes, but the centering of each student was in the context of the collective. This approach can lead students to self-direction, independent of administrative control, because their individual learning is interconnected with group learning. It is only if we remove the collective, democratic whole that administrative control is necessary.

Personally, my education was hit and miss when it came to the democratic ideals of collective education. I certainly did not engage in much critical thinking during my k-12 education. Even my decision to start teaching was not particularly critical. It was simply an extension of what I seemed good at. I was a successful student, able to get by without studying. I knew how to pick out the right answer from four choices and how to phrase a short answer question just so. Looking back, the few classes in which I struggled also happened to be the few classes where students were required to think more deeply and support answers, rather than just state them. Except for those few classes, I was able to show up and get an A, so showing up was all I did.

On some level, I realized my "just show up" strategy would not always work. As I continued through college, I began getting paranoid about how easy everything seemed. I worried increasingly that when I left school and joined the "real world," I would fall short and be overwhelmed. What I did not realize from that creeping panic was that I was finally starting to think critically. I simply knew that something was wrong. My nebulous feelings came to a head during an election. I stood in the voting booth, staring at the list of candidates. And I realized

something important; I had no clue who any of them were or what they stood for or what they promised. Still, I cast a vote – for the names I liked best. I'd like to say that I learned something profound in that moment, but truthfully, I only felt an unsettling mix of pride and shame. I was proud to be an outward participant in democracy; I was ashamed of how my participation was merely performative.

One thing was clear, though. My education had not prepared me to participate in democracy in any meaningful way. John Dewey's ideals of critical thinking missed their mark; my public-school education did not create an educated member of the public. Perhaps creating an active citizen was never the goal of the education I received. As I said, education wears many hats and has many competing goals laid upon it. However, I believe that creating active citizens should be the goal of education. In a free and effective democratic society, education should create critical thinkers fully equipped to steer society ever on towards freedom, taking into account whatever changes come their way.

My schooling is not the only factor in arriving at the conclusion that education should create critical thinkers. Because of the values my parents instilled in me, I value personhood over wealth and see immense importance in being true to oneself. When people conform with masses or simply go with the flow, their identity is erased. Gordon (2017) reflects on authoritarian personality in the era of Trump. Authoritarian ideas lead to clear roles for followers. Followers do not think; they follow, more or less blindly. Gordon takes a close look at Adorno's contributions to theories of authoritarianism and explains that "the very category of a 'true individual' [is] beginning to vanish from social reality" (p. 41). Time and again, throughout history, where authoritarian government prevails, individuals vanish. Or perhaps, where individuals vanish – where citizens give up their personal identity – authoritarian governments

thrive. Regardless of which causes which, collective democracy is made by self-actualized individuals who decide to act for the benefit of society. Unthinking obedience is the opposite of critical thinking. A system that does not reflect upon itself cannot change, grow, or improve itself. Therefore, we must educate students to be reflective.

There is still a pressing question though. Do obedient people create a non-democratic authoritarian society, or does a society shape the people? Fromm (1957) argues that society shapes the individuals of a populace, and that people change society, and then it shapes individuals. People and society are intertwined and can feedback endless into themselves, or people can strike out to create change. Supposedly free societies create rigid thinkers who are obsessed with authority in several ways, but one key is propaganda and performance. Humans want to fit in with each other so they adjust themselves to always seem in-the-know, agreeing with propaganda, and leading those still on the edges of an authoritarian mindset, while following those who have stronger mindsets. While this can occur naturally, a government focused on replicating and preserving itself will encourage this process and discourage critical thinking, as critical thinking can then lead to critical disagreement. Schools have always been a key structure through which government can preserve itself. If teachers are not watchful, it is easy to fall back on familiar, on structure, on perpetuating what is, instead of pushing for what can be.

In theory, preserving the government of America, a democratic republic, should not involve creating unquestioning, authority-seeking citizens. A democracy can be most readily preserved by people continuing to vote, continuing to participate in democracy. However, the current state of America is not conducive to people voting, as indicated by low voter turnout, duplicitous redistricting, and discriminatory voter registration, among other policies (Hill, 2002).

America, then, is increasingly turning away from being increasingly turning away from its democratic trimmings and is instead becoming more and more dominated by the capitalism it was founded on. The problem therein is "that capitalism and democracy [are not] mutually supporting" (Albriton 2009, p. ix). For democracy to work, society needs active participants who share the view that critical thinking for the good of the collective is necessary. For capitalism to work, a society needs many people sharing the same views, needs and desires so that more can be sold. True capitalism needs many of the same traits that authoritarian societies have – obedience, homogeny, and thoughtlessness. Schools have been reshaped to foster the necessary sameness, to the point that "education is now a form of consumerism" (Spring 2003, p. 183). And consumerism is a form of mental oppression.

Pursuing the idea of mental oppression, I turn to Freire (2000). Are my students oppressed, and if they are, by whom or by what? As a teacher, how am I contributing to oppression? Freire points out that if the oppressor acknowledges his position, he may "[rationalize] his guilt through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, all while holding them fast in a position of dependence" (p. 49). I relate to this guilt, and to the reaction. Though I had never articulated it, I think I have always had an underlying sense of discord between the ideal philosophy of creating critical thinkers and the constraints of the consumerist educational system in which I work. As I mentioned, I fear that sudden democracy in my classroom would not work – because of funding, and a lack of education, and poor adolescent decision making. This does not mean that democracy has no place in my classroom; it simply means that my students are still learning. We have not reached the ideal purpose of education yet.

Acknowledging the discrepancy between the ideal of education and its current reality is not enough. As Freire writes, "To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should

be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce." (pp. 50). If we take Freire's notion that not all persons are free – and in the wake of the social upheaval of 2020, this notion cannot be denied – we must ask how students are oppressed. They might say they are oppressed because they're not allowed to wear hats or be on their phones. But there is much more insidious oppression. Freire (2000) points out that truly effective oppression is initially invisible, or inevitable, to the oppressed. School rules about hats are not the oppression. Instead, the problem stems from how societal inequality is reinforced in schools. Historically, schooling was often openly reflective of inequality and oppression. Illich, as cited by Spring (1999), explains that schools often "serve the function of translating economic differences into differences of schooling" (p. 66). For several hundred years, before America's existence as an independent nation and continuing on for centuries after, only certain classes of people were even allowed at school. That does not line up with the American ideal of free and equal education for all.

But our current state of "free education for all" doesn't mean freedom for all. Student are groomed to make it through school to join the capitalist race. Those who don't play by the rules are given detentions, suspensions, marginalized until it is inevitable that upon graduation – or upon dropping out – they are primed to enter the prison system. School is often an all-or-none proposition. Standardized tests limit creativity and inquiry (Dollinger et al. 2001). Regular grading and assessment presages performance reviews. Dutiful following of directions, ticking of boxes, performing without knowing, is essential for many (if not most) of the jobs currently available. In comparing this reality to the ideals of critical thinkers supporting a tolerant and inclusive democracy, I sometimes feel like the man quoted by Freire (2000): "'What can I do? I'm only a peasant.'" (p. 61). The conflict is especially poignant as a teacher of family and

consumer science. Dating back to the turn-of-the-century home economics, "individual well-being has been a central tenant of family and consumer sciences" (Nickols et al 2009, p. 273). If that is true, how did "consumer" get tacked on after "family"?

I feel torn. I am both oppressed by the capitalism and shallowness of current education, but by continuing to work, I fear that I am also an oppressor. Resolving this contradiction feels impossible. Freire's (2002) description of the banking model of education, fits perfectly with what happens where I teach. Critical thinking is discouraged in favor of students "receiving, filing, and storing deposits [of knowledge]" (p. 72). The banking method dovetails with perpetuating the dutiful workers capitalism needs. In capitalism, workers need to receive information and carry out commands, not analyze their work. Critical thinking does not align with capitalism. Unbridled capitalism needs unthinking workers willing to fill the lower ranks of labor and also needs unthinking consumers willing to buy whatever is suggested to them. As Adam Smith (1778) points out, humans need to be taught the skills of unthinking obedience. Humans do not naturally perform mundane tasks over and over.

Yet this skill, of unthinking performance, is necessary to support capitalism. Schools can be used to create obedient workers who divorce production and consumption. The spark of creativity that empowers humanity is diminished. Freire (2000) writes that the banking model so favorable to capitalism "inhibits [people's] creative power" (p. 77). Reflecting on his words, I reflect on how many times in a single forty-five-minute lesson I cut a student off, shutting off their stories, reducing their eagerness to share and connect in the future. How can I balance encouraging students and "getting through the lesson"? I cannot; There is a fundamental contradiction. What needs to happen in schools, including the family and consumer science classroom, "cannot be developed without individuals 'maturing in self-formation'" (Nickols et

al. 2009, p. 273). The focus on the collective nature of democracy where students are responsible to each other helps foster maturity. Building strong individuals with critical thinking skills goes beyond off-setting the capitalistic tendencies of our schools. It also aids the citizens of tomorrow in shaping our rapidly evolving world.

I listen to the students in my care, ranging in age from ten to almost fifteen years-old, and I am often overwhelmed by how foreign they sound to me. Meme culture, social media, awareness of social issues – the youth of today speak a profoundly different language than my contemporaries. Each generation has its own language and problems and concerns. While pundits often bemoan the younger generations, capitalism takes advantage of these differences. Companies hold "the view that important inter-generational differences exist among workers and that these differences provide challenges to managers in effectively managing their workforce" (Benson & Brown 2011). Note the attitude that differences provide challenges, not opportunities. A prevailing attitude is that the younger generation must conform to older patterns so the workforce can continue to operate smoothly. Youth is only good for selling new trends. Stepping outside the needs of capitalism and looking instead at creating a functional, free society, a different concern arises. In our rapidly evolving world, new generations should not be groomed to carry on exactly as their predecessors did.

Each generation must collectively think for themselves and decide how to best adapt to the increasingly changing world. (Spring 1999, chp. 2) In order for students to grow up and take control of their world, they must be taught to think critically. If they are denied this opportunity, they are denied change and growth. Giroux, as explained by Spring (1999), points out that "critical pedagogy gives people the ability to participate in a democratic state and the tools to equalize the distribution of power" (p. 25). Power has historically been in the hands of the

wealthy, and those old enough to have accrued wealth. As wealth is increasingly concentrated, so is power. Whoever wields the most power when critical thinking is stripped from the next generations' mental toolbox will stay in power.

This solidification of power can be combated by critical thought, as explained previously, but also by instilling in students the values of diversity and interconnectivity. Difference and culture, like democracy, are experienced collectively. Supporting the diversity I see in my students means supporting their collective growth and well-being. I value the diversity I see in my students. Not everyone is the same, and that is okay. In fact, fostering diversity is key to lessening the steamroller effect of rampant capitalism. In the essay *Fast Food Education*, Spring (2003) points out that cultural sameness is fostered by capitalism. It is easier to sell lots of goods if everyone is attracted to the same things, if everyone wants the same things. It is easier to sell to a united, uncritical mass than it is to design products and market them to people of diverse backgrounds. It is also easier to sell an idea to a uniform mass. If schools are used to cultivate sameness, society becomes easier to mislead. Every morning, my students are prompted over the school's intercom to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Unthinking sameness. Every spring, standardized tests are handed out with their columns and columns of fill-in-the-bubble one-right-answers. Unthinking sameness. Advertisements bombard students with carefully curated images of what teens should look like. Unthinking sameness. Subjects are compartmentalized and parsed until each unit feels like discrete, sanitary sameness.

Perhaps I am cynical. Perhaps, as E.D. Hirsch (1988) argues, cultural flattening is not a ploy to sell more stuff with more ease. It is instead a way to communicate and to ensure everyone has a chance for success. We should make sure everyone has a common background so that everyone can move up the ladder of success without barriers in communication or

understanding. Hirsch even compiled a helpful list of 5,000 things every American should know in order to be successful. However, if students are taught to be critical thinkers, rather than passive recipients of the "right stuff," they can observe what factors make people successful and decide for themselves how to achieve success. Hirsch's ideas also narrow the definition of success to success within the current capitalistic structure. Furthermore, Hirsch does not take into account white privilege or any of the other systemic issues that exist despite the choices of individuals. He ignores the collective in favor of the individual. With critical thinking skills, students can find success in more places, such as family, community, and personal growth. They can define for themselves the very meaning of success. With access to diverse ideas and the skills to think critically, students can rearrange the dominant forces of the world.

My perspective on education, that we must lessen the grip of capitalism to allow room for critical thinking in order to truly perpetuate democracy and create healthy citizens of tomorrow, informs my thematic concern about the value of family and consumer science education. The ideal of family and consumer science education, as summed up by Nickols et al. is a focus on the growth of the individual in support of the community (2009). That ideal is potentially in conflict with the "consumer" part of "family and consumer science." In 1993, Home Economics officially became Family and Consumer Science to reflect how consumer-oriented Americans had become and to encourage informed continuation of consumption. Rather than encouraging a return to sustainable practice, the family and consumer science field arose out of the 1980's, renamed and ready to bow to capitalistic consumerism (Spring 2003). In order to achieve the philosophic ideas to which I subscribe, I need to subvert "consumer" into "critical consumer" and help my students see the possibility of opting out. However, I cannot do this alone. Family and consumer science should be integrated better within the school system, particularly at the

middle school level. As we will see, the history of family and consumer science and the history of middle schools are both complex and teem with potential, but also have limitations.

In examining the potential of family and consumer science and middle school, we learn, respect, and examine varying perspectives. We can critically examine the many ways to live, work, and exist. Each generation must decide for itself which road it will take. As a teacher, it is my goal to equip students with the critical thinking and open-mindedness required to succeed. Circling back to the fear that started me on this journey, I am less afraid of how democracy will play out in my classroom, and more afraid that I will be unable to foster it. Can democracy be self-perpetuating in a capitalist economy or is it inevitable that critical wealth will overwhelm critical thought? I say democracy can triumph. Critical thinkers have pointed to democracy as a way forward for centuries, all the way back to ancient Athens. The practice of democracy is usually stymied by pessimism, by the fear that humanity will not vote in their own best interests but will instead vote to cede away their power. I sometimes share that pessimism, a pessimism that is built into the very foundations of the United States of America via the Senate.

But I also share the hope of Freire. Freire (2000) argues that "the act of love is a commitment to [the oppressed] cause" (p. 89). I love teaching and the potential of it. I trust that with guidance, my students can become critical thinkers in their own rights and chose democracy over capitalism. Amy Gutmann points out that for democracy to truly equate freedom, we must instill in students the need for nondiscrimination (Spring 1999). While prescribing what is taught comes with its own set of problems, they can be offset by coupling prescriptions with the critical thought needed to embrace, or reject, those prescriptions. Capitalism and its attendant requirements of a non-critical homogenous population loom around every corner. With effort and patience and love, however, I believe it is possible to teach the next generation to be open-

minded critical thinkers who have the power to change this country for the better and redirect it towards the lofty principles of a free and empowered democracy.

The Unique Role of the Middle School

It is vital to examine the grand purpose of education. In order to effectively realize the purpose, however, it is important to place it in context. I argue that the role of school should be to create critical thinkers, ready to participate in our democracy and improve our society. How does that role fit with where I teach, a middle school? Education is far older than the idea of a middle school. Let us take a look at how the middle school came to be and then situate it in the context of improving education.

By the late 1880's, in the aftermath of Mann's Common School Movement, most schools followed an 8-4 pattern, with 8 years of primary school followed by an optional four-year high school. This pattern held for many years with small shifts here and there, until the 1980's brought about the 5-3-4 year plan that is currently in use in most public school systems (Lounsbury, 2009 p. 31). In addition to this structural shift, the purposes of each level have shifted. For the purpose of my concern, reframing and improving middle school family and consumer science, we shall examine the advent of the middle school, it's initial purpose, and the purpose it serves today.

The roots of the middle school are found in the 1960's. Initially referred to as "Junior High", the concept of a separate school for the middle grades – typically 7^{th}-9^{th} grade, was initially met with confusion and occasionally derision. (George, 2009 p. 5). There was not a clear reason for middle schools to exist, and yet they were adopted with startling rapidity. This was not for any pedagogical reason, nor was it in deference to the extreme changes that characterize early adolescence. Rather, the adoption of middle schools allowed districts to skirt desegregation laws.

By having the middle and high school desegrated, many districts were able to keep their youngest students segregated in the elementary schools (George, 2009 p. 5). Through this, it is evident that the purpose of middle school was to preserve society, as dictated by the white men in power who wanted to preserve segregation. Skirting desegregation laws was not the only factor for creating middle schools. As the population swelled in the post-war years, many districts were faced with overcrowded elementary schools and underutilized high schools. A simple, practical solution was to move the upper elementary grades and lower high school grades together, freeing up elementary schools and making better use of vacant high schools (George and Alexander, 2003 as cited in George, 2009 p 5). This motivation – of space saving and efficiency – points to a pragmatic role of the middle school. It was not organized around any pedagogical or developmental principles. Rather, it was about efficiency.

The purpose of middle school did not vary significantly from the social aims of efficiency and social continuity until the 1980's. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* emphasized renewed rigor at the high school level in order to perpetuate capitalism and maintain global dominance. This renewal was primarily an invention designed to defund and roll back the multicultural gains from the 1960s social movement. From this emerged the four-year standard of high school, mirroring the four-year college program. 9th grade had often been included in junior highs, but was now consistently part of high school. (George, 2009 p. 6) The purpose of high school was set firmly as career preparation, either immediately upon graduation, or in preparing students for college.

While *A Nation at Risk* and associated fears of diminishing American hegemony were dominating the structure of high schools, developmental psychologists were turning their attention towards the needs of adolescents. (Wong, 2019) Junior high schools had functioned like

high-school-lite, and with high schools increasing their rigor, junior high schools faced a turning point. Should they echo the structure and rigor of high school, or was there a different option? Developmental psychologists, like Eccles and Lord & Midgley, "studied the lack of fit between students' needs and the organization and curriculum of many schools" (George, 2009 p 6.). While the recommendations of psychologists were not taken immediately into action, their research, combined with qualitative research and observations by teachers themselves slowly shifted the structure and purpose of middle school.

Middle school became not just about shaping students into future producers and consumers, but also about catering to the development of adolescence. When middle schools are viewed as simply an organizational tool, rather than an opportunity to shape students into active citizens, they fail. Middle school, as a concept, should not be simply a mini-high school. Rather, middle schools can function to guide adolescents through a period of intense development. Students this age crave independence but still benefit from structure (Wong, 2019). Students of different ages also tend to be at vastly different developmental levels. One student might be achieving dramatic intellectual improvement while struggling physically to maneuver their developing body. As Lounsbury (2009) argued, "middle schools that try to impose rigid expectations – say in the form of federally and state mandated standardized tests – will inevitably struggle" (p. 32). But if the purpose of the middle school is true to its best vision, students will come out better adjusted human beings, confident in their abilities and ready to participate in society.

In order to affect this transformation, middle schools have a number of unique strategies**.** Middle schools nurture adolescents by providing more cohesion than high schools, with teams, integrated curriculums, and in some cases even looping grades and teachers, so students stay

with their team of teachers all three years. Subjects are still divided by teacher and into discrete rooms, but the teachers of all the subjects have the same students. They have common planning periods and can implement consistent behavior plans to help struggling students as well as coordinate enrichment (George, 2009 p7). When middle schools are set up this way, there is opportunity to give students the freedom and autonomy they crave, while also giving them the support they need during a difficult developmental time.

While teams can blur subject lines and create a feeling of continuity for students, there is a lingering question of the subjects that don't fit neatly into teams. In most middle schools, the teams consist of math, English/language arts, science and social studies teachers. Students are with these teachers for the whole year and remarkable progress towards personal growth can come from the team structure. But what of subjects like music, art, physical education, and family and consumer science? This collection of subjects goes by different names, but is commonly called special area subjects. And these special area subjects are usually removed from the team structure. Students rotate through these classes, generally having them for only half or a quarter of the year. These subjects are valuable to students for many reasons, but are often not fully integrated. The lack of integration has two root causes, in part depending on the purpose of education.

When middle schools are tools of capitalism, they are utilized as a sort of proving ground, a preparation point for advanced high school studies. Special area subjects are not integrated because they are not tested. They do not provide quantitative data and do not directly translate into higher academic potential. It is common knowledge that education reforms that focus on math and ELA testing has led to the decline of special area subjects (McConnell, 2018). On the other hand, even when middle schools are viewed as a cornerstone of developmental

support and potential, special area subjects tend to get "lost in the sauce" as students rotate through them, rather than sticking with them for the full year. This is unfortunate, as special area subjects are important for the same reasons teams are – adolescents' full developmental needs and potential. According to McConnell (2018), when the purpose of education is to create active citizens, capable of independently participating in our democracy, then students' emotional and social well-being is "as important as data collected in those core academic areas" (para. 4). Special area subjects cater to development outside the tested realm. They give space for students to explore new interests, give value to their talents, and keep them engaged.

And special area subjects can achieve this better if they work better with teams. There are many ways to coordinate with teams, and different special area subjects may achieve this differently. However, I am interested in the potential of family and consumer science specifically. Of the special area subjects, family and consumer science had shallower roots, compared to those of art and music. The subject was born from a different movement – that of home economics – which has a turbulent and varied history. Understanding where family and consumer science comes from can highlight some issues with the subject today and lead to a better understanding of how to move forward.

The History of Family and Consumer Science Education

Family and consumer science as a discipline has its roots at the dawn of the 1900's in the home economics movement. "Home economics" as a term is rarely used in any official capacity in the United States today. Instead, in 1994, the American Home Economics Association changed their name to the American Association of Family and Consumer Science. However, many secondary schools did not change their department names and the cultural consciousness of home economics prevails. Due to this, and the fact that this section of the paper examines

home economics primarily before the name change, home economics will be used throughout this section, instead of the current term, family and consumer science. There have been many changes over the century since its inception, but there are clear lines connecting the conception of the movement to the issues we face in teaching family and consumer science today. The movement started out with some conflicting aims, the echoes of which are still felt today, and which are partially responsible for the current predicament of the subject. The conflicting aims also led to conflicting perceptions of the subject. Before delving into the history of family consumer science, let's take a quick preview of its current scope and status.

According to Lyn (2020) "My NJ school did not have [home economics] when I went through elementary and middle school. Cooking was offered at HS. That's it." Lyn attended public school in New Jersey from 1996 – 2013. Her recollection of the subject of home economics is not unique. Only one third of all U.S. secondary students enroll in a home economics course (AAFCS, 2020; IES:NCES, 2020). Those who do take home economics mostly remember cooking and sewing. This trend has been going on for years. According to LeVasseur (2020), another person reflects on their home economics education, this time from 1969-1972, "We had three separate areas of study each school year and respective rooms. Sewing, Cooking and the third was a catch-all of interior design and personal hygiene stuff". Sewing and cooking dominated the program, with other topics tacked on at the end. The version of home economics that appears in graduates' recollections does not fully realize the original aims of the home economics movement.

My goal is to increase integration of family and consumer science in middle school education. Integration can be accomplished in several ways, based on the unique potential of the subject. To understand the potential, we must understand the history of the movement. We will

examine the history of home economics as a wider social movement and compare that movement to its incorporation as a school subject. In seeing the historic struggles of self-identity and of social acceptance that home economics faced, we will come to understand the difficulties of family and consumer science education today.

Like any great social movement, the sentiments and feelings that shaped home economics were nascent for a number of years, but the movement officially began with the Lake Placid Conferences in 1899 (Lake Placid - North Elba Historical Society, 2012). While "conference" sounds grand, the first meeting did not even merit a mention in the local paper. The second meeting, in 1900, earned a brief write-up in the Elizabethtown Post from July 12, 1900 which read,

> A recent event of importance in Essex County is the second annual Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics. To this conference came women of national reputation as home makers and builders, women of intelligence and strong common sense, to aid in the improvement of home condition in this broad land of ours." (as cited in "Home economics history. (Lake Placid - North Elba Historical Society, 2012, para. 12)

These "women of intelligence and strong common sense" were led by two in particular, Catherine Beecher and Ellen Swallow Richards.

Catherine Beecher believed in the home economics movement as an opportunity for female equality, not by competing with men but by elevating women's domestic work and recognizing homemaking as a legitimate profession through the promotion of scientific and efficient running of the household ("Home economics history," 2012; Elias, 2008). Beecher believed strongly in education, founding several schools for young women and including a much broader curriculum than most schools for girls offered. While Beecher was progressive in this regard, she opposed women's suffrage and preached that a woman's place was in the home. She believed that the home was the source of feminine power and influence and saw home

economics as a way to strengthen that position (Michals, 2015). It is ironic that in campaigning for this, she left the home to run her school and attend conferences.

Ellen Swallow Richards had a related, but significantly different, vision. Richards was the first woman to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At MIT, Richards studied chemistry and become an expert in water quality and a pioneering sanitation engineer. ("Ellen H.", 2020). Her argument was that domestic subjects, including sanitation, nutrition, and food chemistry, were worthy of academic study and that women could gain equality by pioneering new fields stemming from a scientific and academic approach to domestic tasks (Elias, 2008). While Richards and Beecher worked together, forming a national organization in 1908 and starting the Journal of Home Economics in 1909, their different viewpoints set the tone for a movement that is often divided and fragmentary (Elias, 2008). In tracing the history of home economics and analyzing how it is taught today, one inevitably traces the different ideals of Beecher and Richards.

Looking back at the movement from 2020, over a century removed from the humble origins of the Lake Placid conferences, it is evident that the different aims of Richards and Beecher met different levels of success. Beecher's vision of elevating housework to a profession and therefore granting women empowered equality failed. Many issues contribute to this failure, including a deep societal sexism towards "women's tasks." It is not necessary in the scope of this writing to examine fully this failure, but it is worth noting that this branch of the movement is what registered in cultural consciousness and in many ways delegitimized the home economics movement (Elias, 2008).

Richard's goal of legitimizing domestic sciences and creating career fields from domestic tasks was much more successful. Nutrition, public sanitation, child psychology, materials science

and more all arose from early collegiate home economics programs. However, the success of these fields ultimately meant that they were able to stand alone and eventually separate from home economics, leaving a diminished recognition of the overall movement behind them (Elias, 2008). Few colleges today have a home economics – or family and consumer science – department, but most grant degrees in fields that developed from home economics.

Regardless of which faction of the early home economics movement you examine, what is visible in them is a great social reworking. The turn of the nineteenth century rose out of the industrial revolution. There was an intellectual shift towards mechanization and efficiency. Social change, viewed as problems by the hegemony of the day, were tackled from a scientific perspective. And there were many social changes, especially with an influx of immigrants and rural citizens to cities in order to man urban industrial factories. All of this change meant less-than-ideal living conditions and families split up as they had never been before. With this backdrop, home economics was a topic discussed at colleges and implemented professionally with varying degrees of success; it was not taught in fledging high schools. It would be decades before home economics entered grade school curriculums in any significant way. What really brought home economics from academic exploration and social progress movements and into public schools was World War I.

As a response to war-time concerns about food security, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 was passed. This act established a national Cooperative Extension Service that used land-grant colleges as centers of outreach to educate farm communities about modern agricultural practices (National Achieves, 2020). In effect, the Smith-Lever Act formalized and nationalized the work many home economists were doing on a smaller scale. Additionally, as stated by Elias (2008), "research to help the war effort moved nutrition, budgeting and rationing, textile science and

other branches of home economics into the spotlight" (p. 62). As the war progressed, the usefulness and legitimacy of home economics began for the first time to seriously enter high schools. In 1917, Elias (2008) explains, "the US Bureau of Education called for all women to receive home economics training in case war came to American territory" (p. 65). Home economists worked with the USDA to create campaigns about "war gardens," and canning as a patriotic measure. Many of these home economists worked as home demonstration agents and set up clubs to educate local youths as well as their parents (How did we can? n.d.). These efforts show a divide between what working home economists did – develop new scientific advances to help the war effort – and what teenagers learned – concrete skills to help at home for the war effort. While Richard's pioneering scientific spirit was in evidence in the workplace, the home economics of the classroom was more in line with Beecher's notions of elevating the importance of housework.

Following WWI, the practical side of home economics was emphasized by the Great Depression. The skills taught by home demonstration agents during the war – of producing and preserving one's own food, of selecting nutritious food for less money, of scientific self-sufficiency – were in more demand than ever. However, the integration of home economics into schools and society was not entirely smooth. Many programs completely neglected to account for culture and class, to the detriment of the subject. There were many cultural conflicts between home economists and the women they bombarded with their extension services and programs. As Elias writes, "a home economist arrived in a woman's community and told her that everything she and her revered ancestors had ever done was incorrect." (p. 79). Home economists might have been trying to help modernize and maximize the potential of domestic

work, but they did not always consider cultural differences within the United States, such as urban vs. rural and wealthy vs. impoverished.

Despite these tensions, home economics programs were on the rise. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration sponsored home economics courses with the goal of training women for vocations and creating jobs. While this move increased the prominence of home economics, it diminished founder Richard's vision of academic studies of domestic tasks. Instead, the vocational focus of the WPA's sponsorship tied home economics more firmly than ever to good application of practical skills (Elias, 2009). And it was in this form – practical skills for home use – that home economics reached high schoolers in a wide-spread capacity.

Family and Consumer Sciences Becomes Home Economics

Any chance of maintaining Richard's vision of scientific credibility within home economics at a grade school level was dashed by the impact of WWII. Practical skills like mending and sewing, gardening and canning were back in full force as a way to support the troops and keep the home front strong. By 1943, many home economists had stopped pushing for social change. Home economics was part of the curriculum, or at least a popular elective, in high schools across the nation and protections for consumers were in place at the national level. There were whole disciplines grown out of home economics, including the food science so vital for feeding an army abroad. According to Elias (2009), "the social concerns that were tackled by early home economists, including unsafe food and sanitation, had been greatly lessoned and there were national protections, like the FDA" (p 126). This progress satisfied many of those involved with the home economics movement.

While some of the movement's original goals were indeed met, home economics in high schools was evolving in response to a new national concern over cultural security. With record enlistments, many high-school soldiers got married before shipping overseas, leaving behind their high-school wives. Home economics courses were overhauled to train these young wives to keep house, as they would be expected to do upon the return of their husbands. Without a transition time between family life and married life, home economics courses took up the mantle of training these young brides and in doing so, returned to Beecher's ideals of homemaking (Elias, 2009). At the same time, women were entering the workforce in new and challenging ways, filling army enlistees' shoes, and there was a chance that the professional work that they did would reinvigorate the professional applications of home economics.

However, at the close of the war, women were encouraged to return to the home. The GI bill, in particular, allowed veterans to enroll in college with the government footing the bill. This reinforced the idea of men as breadwinners. The Marshal plan included home economics training for war-torn countries. Returning soldiers associated home economics with aid for impoverished nations and with the homemaking classes their wives and sweethearts took. While these men might study a field like nutrition, they would not enroll in home economics; wider cultural consciousness had dismissed home ec. as preparation for homemaking. This dismissal was furthered by the George-Barden act of 1946 which funded vocational training (Miami University, 2010). The wording of the bill was flexible; Home economics vocations could have included vocations in food science and public health. However, in practice, what home economics vocations amounted to was homemaker.

Homemaker as a vocation is not in itself a problem, but the 1809 goal of Beecher to elevate homemaker to a legitimate profession in order to gain equality had not happened.

Homemaking was taught, but with built-in instructions, rather than with bold self-empowering exploration and testing of methods. The 1950's were largely about "stabilizing" society, with an implicit acceptance of white, middle class values as the stable ideal. The goals of the original home economists, of developing professional skills that would be helpful at home were inverted. Now home economics taught domestic skills that could be useful for work, at least until marriage and the real career of homemaking. The complete lack of diversity and scientific ambition of the home economics of the 1950's is exemplified by the founding of the Future Homemakers of America, the primary home economics organization for young people, with a separate chapter for Black students. As the name implies, this organization was about the practical skills of homemaking, rather than pushing boundaries and finding new scientific approaches to domestic and societal problems (Elias, 2008).

Furthering the decline of rigorous home economics instruction was capitalism coopting the words of home economists and applying them to commercialism and advertising. Instead of women deciding for themselves how to best run their homes, "technology, media, and marketing in the 1950s changed the way women cooked and Americans [ate]." (How highly processed… 2017). Eventually real experts were replaced with amalgamations like Betty Crocker, who was invented in 1921 and hit television in 1949, billed as "a trusted source for recipes and homemaking know-how" (Betty Crocker Kitchens, 2017). Many home economics programs were sponsored by brands and organizations. On a personal note, as a modern-day home economics teacher, I regularly receive mail and email from the such sources as the American pork industry or The Popcorn Board and once even from Hershey chocolate. These messages all promised to help me teach my students all about how great pork, or popcorn, or chocolate is. And this sponsorship is nothing new.

While the 1960's and 1970's marked a cultural revolution in many ways, high school home economics programs remained largely untouched. LeVassueur (2020) recounts that in "7th grade I made bell-bottom pants with a flashy print" in her 1970's junior high home economics class. Practically, home economics was unchanged from its 1950's status. The only thing that changed was the style of clothes they were sewing.

Outside of the classrooms, the equal rights amendment was gaining momentum. The initial success of the movement – 30 states had ratified the amendment by 1973 – was checked by Phyllis Schlafly (USHistory.org, 2020). Schlafly epitomized the home economics that arose in the 1950's – she was trained as a lawyer but embraced the vocation of homemaker. She deferred to her husband and argued that the equal rights amendment would destabilize the fabric of American society. In her arguments, there was an echo of Beecher, who wanted to elevate housework in order to achieve equality – Beecher and Schlafly both operated outside of the parameters they argued for. Feminists countered that the fabric of American society needed changing. Home economists were caught in the middle and struggled with their internal understanding of their vocation compared to the national perception. Having largely given up social activism in the 1940's, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) was unprepared for the fierce debates surrounding the amendment. According to Elias (2008), "Because they generally considered themselves [to be concerned] with raising the social status of women, home economists were shocked to discover that second-wave feminists did not see them as allies" (p. 162). While there were still many women involved with home economics, it was no longer a strong social movement and the AHEA found itself lumped in with Schlafly, regardless of the feelings of its members.

The attacks that the AHEA suffered during the 1970's forced home economists to view themselves as activists again, in line with the pioneering Richards from the beginning of the century. Susan Weis, a professor of home economics education at Penn State thought the problem with public perception of home economics came from a duality, that "we teach one lifestyle while we ourselves practice another lifestyle" (Elias, 2008, p. 164). In Weis's case, she was referring to the lifestyle of an independent academic woman vs. the skill-based lifestyle of a white, heterosexual, middle class, nuclear-family homemaker that was taught in high schools, and increasingly in junior high schools, across the country. Weis's duality was an echo of the same dualities from the Lake Placid conferences and the visions of Beecher, who pioneered domestic skills as a source of female power and Richards who pioneered the chemistry of clean water and the creation of academic fields to solve human problems. That duality was never resolved and home economics, while buffeted by the politics of the equal rights amendment, failed to regain cultural relevance as a force for change.

What is the status of FCS today?

By the 1980's, many colleges had quietly started renaming their home economics programs. Food science and nutrition became stand-alone departments, along with fashion and merchandising, materials engineering, and others. What was left of home economics was often referred to as some version of "family science." With the capitalist advances of the 1980's, driven by Reganomics, home economists tried to stay relevant by pivoting more and more towards training students to be educated consumers, rather than scientific producers. This attempt culminated in the official renaming of the American Home Economics Association to the new American Association of Family and Consumer Science (AAFCS, 2020).

A look at the contemporary standards for home economics, now referred to as Family and Consumer Sciences, indicates a clear attempt to move away from Beecher's ideas of women empowered by domestic skills. In fact, the current mission statement does not even mention home specifically; instead it vows to "prepare students for family life, work life, and careers in Family and Consumer Sciences by providing opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed for success" (AAFACS, 2018). The vision statement includes empowering students to live and work in a diverse global society. With this mission and vision, the ideals of Richards prevail. Curiously, there is no mention of Richards or Beecher in discussion of the national standards of family and consumer science. The historical perspective on the website starts in 1992, as though family and consumer is a brand-new subject, owing nothing to home economics. ("Historical perspective, 2018). It seems that there is attempt to resolve the centuries old divide between Beecher's skills for the home and Richard's skills extending from the home in favor of Richards. Without any acknowledgement of the loaded past of the subject, it is perhaps unsurprising that the new goals are not being met. Current studies indicate that the global and sophisticated mission of the AAFCS often goes unfulfilled.

In addition to interviewing Lyn and LeVasseur, cited earlier in this paper, I interviewed six other graduates from the U.S. public school system, asking for general recollections and lessons from home economics or family and consumer science class. Every single one mentioned cooking and/or sewing. Personal finance and social skills were also mentioned. Only one interviewee mentioned careers, and that career was commercial cooking. (Ericson, 2020). From these small interviews, it is easy to conclude that the goal of "[empowering] individuals and families…to manage the challenges of living and working in a diverse global society" is not being met (AAFACS, 2018).

I recognize that the recollections of eight people do not make for a quantitative study or significant data. We will take a closer look at the current status of family and consumer science shortly. In examining the current status of family and consumer science, it is vital, however, that we keep in mind the past and how it has shaped perceptions of the subject. The AAFCS seems to distance itself from its historical roots, especially Beecher's ideals about homemaking. However, ignoring this history ignores how Beecher's ideas of homemaking were cemented in public consciousness by the needs of war, the social structures of the 1950's, and the dominance of capitalism as a source of expertise. This public perception keeps concrete skills like sewing and cooking in the forefront of classrooms.

But in looking to history, we can also see the other path, not of Beecher's elevated homemaking but of Richards' science. There is a broader perspective than homemaking skills in the foundations of home economics. While the AAFCS does not explicitly acknowledge the history, its mission and vision echoes Richards' perspective, and many FCS teachers call for it. It will be difficult to overcome the emphasis on immediately-useful homemaker skills that the World Wars and Cold War insecurity accentuated. Let us take the success found in the history of home economics education and continue it. The home economics movement did succeed at establishing new disciplines and making home worth studying. It also accomplished social goals for improved sanitation and food safety. Family and consumer science today can build on that history, at least, if it can overcome the rest of its history.

Contemporary Family and Consumer Science: Limitations and Potential

The complex and conflicting history of family and consumer science has left a complicated legacy. When people find out I teach family and consumer science, the conversation tends to go something like this:

"Family and consumer science? What is that?"

"Basically, updated home economics"

"Huh. They still teach that?"

It can be a bit demoralizing. And there is definitely credence to the assumption that my subject is gone. While family and consumer science is still a secondary school offering in all 50 states, many states do not even collect data on family and consumer science in middle schools (Werhan, 2013, pp. 44-45). Based on available data, from 2006 to 2016 the number of family and consumer science teachers fell by 26% and the number of students taking family and consumer science classes fell even further, by 38% (Werhan, 2013, p. 42). At the same time, articles with headlines like "Bring back home economics so kids can learn basic life skills to be successful in daily life", by Kin (2020) and "Bring Back Home Economics. No, Really" by Diamond (2019), and "Bring back home ec!" by Graham (2013) proliferate online. I've only cited three, but a quick Google search of "bring back home ec" yields some 484 million results, as of October 2020.

It is hopeful to connect these articles to the statistics, as a direct response to falling numbers. It is hopeful to think that this public outcry will bring back home ec – even though, as we family and consumer science teachers like to point out, it never left, not really. However, public outcry does not necessarily lead to changes in school policy. And really, the writings advocating for home economics are not exactly hard-hitting. Published on blogs like scarymommy.com or as opinion pieces adding color to the newspaper, they are not indicative of the mainstream educational priorities. Based on personal observations, these articles serve to reinforce the notion that home economics is dead, rather than contribute meaningful ways to revive the subject.

So why is the subject in need of revival? Why is home economics, even under the 21st century guise of family and consumer science, fading away? One reason is that family and consumer science carries the complicated historical and cultural legacy of the subject. Another reason is the rise of standardized testing which prioritizes math and English skills over soft skills, like art, music, and family and consumer science. Finally, and more subtly, is the insidious creep of capitalism and convenience. We will examine each of these influences in turn, and then start to address how family and consumer science remains vital in spite of, and even because of, these challenges.

As seen in the historical overview of home economics and its transition to family and consumer science, the subject has been plagued by sexist perceptions of "women's work" since its inception at the Lake Placid conference of 1908 (Elias, 2008). This is especially evident in how home economics was introduced to schools, during war time measures to stabilize the dominant white-middle class culture, and in the post-WWII years to remind girls to stick to the home and make space for the boys returning from the front. This watered-down version of home economics is how generations experienced the subject, and it has left a lasting perception on societal views. Despite title IX and the women's liberation movement and current feminist teachings, "Do you teach all the kids, even the boys?" is easily in the top three questions I field about teaching family and consumer science.

Stemming from a similar place is the perception of family and consumer science as merely cooking and sewing. A large part of this is because sewing and cooking offer the most tangible outcome. Students tend to be most excited about these units, and the practical skills gained here are what get shown off at home. And what reasonable middle-schooler wouldn't enthuse over getting to cook and eat during class! Every marking period, I give students an entry

and exit survey about the course and ask what they are most excited to learn and at the end, what they enjoyed the most. Cooking blows every other topic out of the water, with sewing coming in second. Some students do mention enjoying interior design, or business, or food safety, but cooking is the winner, time and time again. Many of my co-workers refer to me as the cooking teacher, despite many gentle corrections. The emphasis on cooking isn't necessarily a bad thing, but reducing the complexity of anything to a single facet erases much of the potential.

And what potential there is! Looking beyond they stereotype, family and consumer science is, in fact, a science. In an educational landscape dominated by STEM theory, family and consumer science can be a natural fit. While in the professional world, nutritional science, resource management, textile design, supply chain management, food science, and more stand alone, at the survey level they can all be addressed through family and consumer science. Family and consumer science to connect with the team structure of middle school, enhancing core subjects. Some of these connections are obvious. To work with a recipe, and especially to re-size a recipe, one must understand fractions. Sewing involves spatial relations, measurement, and calculations, not to mention learning to use a power tool! The study of family and child development connect to social science, child psychology, and human development. Cooking is a science unto itself, full of chemical reactions and formulas. Yeast, for example, is frequently used in science experiments as well as in many recipes.

What makes these connections difficult is the structure of middle school. Students are typically in teams, with shared teachers across the teams. With family and consumer science – as well as the other special area subjects like music and art, students are mixed from different teams and rotate throughout the school year. This complicates connections to other subject areas. Students from different teams might be learning material differently, based on their teachers. For

example, a science teacher on one team might have their students do an experiment with yeast that ties nicely with a baking unit, while the teacher on another team does not do that lab. Therefore, students mixed together from different teams in family and consumer science class have different starting points. Additionally, the rotation through the school year complicates matters. During the first marking period, 6th grade students may not have learned about multiplying and dividing fractions, while students at the end of the school year may be well-practiced in the same skills.

There is also the difficulty of the increasing importance of standardized tests. Of course, the issues with standardized testing as it is currently practiced could be an entire thesis unto themselves, and have been. Starting with concerns of international competition and the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* and continuing with No Child Left Behind, standardized testing has radically altered the landscape and the goals of public school. Standardized testing serves to control teachers, limiting their instruction y testing one tightly-controlled set of facts, and diminishing deep learning and critical thinking (Cody, 2011). This process was accelerated by No Child Left Behind as funding was tied to test scores. Standardized tests do not foster cultural learning or critical thinking, and yet funding is tied to them. When funding is tight, class sizes increase. Crowded classrooms mean less intimate and creative learning (Woods, 2015). It is difficult for teachers to introduce new ways of thinking when just getting students' attention is difficult and accounting for students' presence in the room takes several minutes. On a similar vein, family and consumer science departments tend to rotate through students quickly, meeting every other day or only for a marking period. This makes it even more difficult to move students towards genuine connection with their community and towards critical thinking. Family and consumer science, along with other special area subjects like art and music, often failed to meet

the scrutiny of standardized testing – they did not outwardly raise test scores, and so as funding dwindled, were cut.

The cuts to family and consumer science and other special area subjects are often especially detrimental and permanent. In most schools, family and consumer science departments have just one or two teachers (Wehan, 2013). If one math teacher is cut, the department as a whole can still function, albeit with the constraints of larger class sizes. But if a family and consumer science teacher is cut, so is the program. And when a family and consumer science teacher leaves, perhaps overcome with the reality of teaching cooking without money to buy ingredients, she – at the time of the most recent report, over 99% of family and consumer science teachers were women– is not easy to replace (Wehan, 2013). In Pennsylvania, there are only three colleges that offer a degree in family and consumer science education. From conversations with colleagues in a Facebook forum for family and consumer science teachers (*Family and Consumer Science Teachers. Facebook*, n.d.), many of us teachers found our way to teaching the subject in non-traditional ways, either transitioning over from other subject areas like I did or from careers related to family and consumer science, like interior design. We are not easy to replace. The undermining of family and consumer science education is a double-edged sword. As fewer schools offer it, fewer people train to teach it, until schools can't find a qualified teacher to hire and so the program is cut.

The perceived value of family and consumer science has also lessoned as the goals of education have shifted. It is often said that school should prepare kids for the "real world." When you dissect what the "real world" actually means, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that the real world is the one where you get a job. My home state of Pennsylvania just introduced a new "career readiness" standard required for graduation. As early as middle school, students

must start building a portfolio that indicates they are exploring career options (Career readiness, 2020). While family and consumer science courses can certainly relate to career readiness, especially in specialized high school courses, the central premise of the subject is taking care of self and community. I would argue that the "real world" includes shopping for food and preparing meals, connecting with friends, building healthy relationships, caring for family, not infecting everyone with e coli because you don't know how to clean produce, etc. But the state of schools disagrees. It is ironic, because the push for everyone to be working, to have a career outside the home, is at least partially responsible for the necessity of family and consumer science education.

At the historical roots of family and consumer science, during the industrial revolution, one of the primary concerns of home economists was assisting in poor immigrant communities where healthy food and sanitation was sorely lacking (Elias, 2008) While there are many reasons for this, the poor conditions can be partially attributed to a lack of time. All adults in these households generally had to work long, exhausting hours leaving little time for household matters, and even less for training up the next generation. Today, as more and more households require the salary of two adults in order to function, there is a similar problem. Children do not see the skills for running a household modeled. And with career readiness standards and the equation of "real world = career," family and consumer science, as well as other "non-career" subjects like art, music, even social studies, are often faced with dismissal.

It is also sometimes argued that with the proliferation of meal kits and delivery services and access to the internet with all the advice you could ever need, that family and consumer science skills are obsolete. Companies that prey on a sense of disconnect and on the longing for community would not welcome more competence and self-reliance coming out of schools. If

more people cooked at home, who would buy all the ready-to-eat foods? If students knew how to connect with their community and to care for each other, why would they buy into the empty promises of fulfillment through purchasing? American capitalism – which largely determines educational standards (Apple, 2012) – relies on production, distribution, and consumption, with consumption never wavering. Learning to be self-sufficient breaks this cycle. When students are empowered to produce for themselves, and can carry that confidence into all aspects of their learning, they gain the ability to tune out the siren call of cheap kitchen gadgets and slick advertising.

It may sound radical to suggest that capitalism is harming our schools. However, many shortcomings of the current status of education point toward the hegemony of capitalism. Kincheloe (2012), in his work, Critical Pedagogy in the 21st Century, explores the influence of capitalism on our schools. The economics of capitalism are simplified and flattened by their own omnipresence, until they seem like the only option. Based on personal conversations with my students, middle schoolers assume that everything is as it is because it works, because society asked for it, because it just is. Disrupting the all-consuming capitalism, or at least helping students see it and question it, is one of the great potentials of family and consumer science. By following the various interconnected facets of family and consumer science, students can learn about factors other than money that shape society. What appears on store shelves or Amazon's homepage does not happen by magic. There is a whole supply chain, replete with assumptions and dilemmas; the chain can be illuminated through family and consumer science, especially via foods standards. Questioning the economic determinism that saturates American consciousness is difficult (Kincheloe, 2012). Foods, however, can illuminate self-sufficiency, community, care, and other factors that shape everyday life, potentially independent of capitalism. Sewing and

repair illustrates the value of labor and teach students to create for themselves. Family structure, communication, child development, and more – all parts of family and consumer science and all intimately tied to the human, rather than the economic, condition.

Family and consumer science can certainly engage students, promoting confidence, and fostering independence. It can also transform students and start them on the path to becoming active citizens. I believe that one of the key goals of education in a democracy is to foster critical thinking and prepare students to look at their world and evaluate it. They should not come out of school docile and content with their surroundings, but bright-eyed and ready to address the needs of their society. One of the main conflicts in our society today stems from the competing needs of capitalism versus democracy. It is not in corporations' best interests to have engaged citizens – rather, they need people to work compliantly and to shop unendingly. There is the pervasive idea that your dollar is your vote, that the best way to shape society is by choosing how to spend your money, rather than how to spend your time and how you interact with your community. Family and consumer science can help students recognize that narrative and challenge it as they see fit.

In addition to enriching and connecting with core classes and preparing students for democracy instead of capitalism, family and consumer science has enormous potential for the social development of adolescence. Middle school is structed as a transition time, as students seek independence but still need structure and support. The young adolescent brain is going through a lot of turmoil, and middle school education tries to address the "multitude of changes occurring during the middle school years" (Young & Michael, 2014, pp. 55). Middle school students face anxiety in fitting in with peers and understanding themselves (Pickhart, 2011). One way to help understand self is to understand culture. Multicultural education is increasingly used

to help students understand each other and themselves. Middle school often brings an intense desire to fit in (Young & Michael, 2014) and understanding culture can help students understand themselves, in spite of social pressures.

And young adolescents face social pressures. They scrutinize each other and they securitize themselves. Social order is more important that it ever has been and for many it is the most intense it ever will be (Pickhart, 2011). This social uncertainty makes middle school a crucial time to introduce and foster the ideals of a collective democracy. If middle school follows the trend of high school and incentivizes and rewards individual achievement over collective understanding and growth, students lose an irreplaceable opportunity. Using a multicultural approach can demonstrate how to come together and work for a common goal. Middle school students are constantly seeking guidance. As teachers, we can guide them towards competitive individualist tendency or, using Dewey's ideas of collective learning benefiting individuals as part of society, build students up so they can then build for their collective selves a more democratic future.

As Au writes in Rethinking Multicultural Education (2009) truly transformative multicultural education cannot be brought about by one teacher or one subject. In transforming a school, family and consumer science education can play a key role. While the transitory nature of family and consumer science class limits how deeply and effectively multiculturalism learning can go, the hands-on skills and connections to family, food, and homelife make family and consumer science an excellent enrichment and starting point for a multicultural middle school curriculum.

Claus (2006) discusses how the standards and test pressure in core subjects, like math and literacy, often leave little room for multicultural exploration, while the applied nature of FCS

makes it a natural starting point. However, Claus (2006) also points out the multicultural lessons should not be incorporated in "predictable and limited ways, such as cooking food or sewing costumes" (p. 23). Rehm et al. (2002) also issues a call to action in regards to global perspective and writes that students should think deeply and critically about culture in the curriculum. Multicultural education that does not delve beyond physical examples of culture is often called additive and does not fully unlock the potential of multicultural education (Banks, 2007). However, it is not a bad place to start and is a tangible way to start students thinking more deeply. While a single marking period may not be enough time to delve into true multicultural learning, if family and consumer science classes are integrated with multicultural learning from the core classes, there is immense potential.

For example, a foods unit can literally let students taste the difference between cultures and become a starting point for asking why people eat the way they do. Once that question is asked, it could be picked up by the social studies department, as students learn about trade, colonialism, and social and economic forces that shape access and desire. Lessons about child development could include children's stories from around the world or the country and tie into a deeper exploration in Literacy class. Culture can be difficult to understand, particularly for students from the dominant culture of an area, where their lifestyle is seen not as a culture, but as the norm (Wren, 1999). The hands-on nature of family and consumer science education has the potential to illuminate these other possibilities, to be elaborated on in the team-unified core classes.

Family and Consumer Science is uniquely situated in a crossroads of consumerism and culture. We are tasked with teaching both purchasing decisions and traditions (Academic Standards, 2002). Instead of teaching students how to make the best purchases, we can explore

the idea that the best purchase might not involve a purchase at all. Advertisements make purchases and acquisition seem like the only path – to friendship, to sex, to family, to joy. I can show my students how to look critically at advertisements, to look beyond the glitz and ask, "What is really being promised here?" Once we have identified the actual desire – for comfort or for Campbell's – we can seek out other sources to fulfill our desire for social interaction. We can connect the lessons of critical thinking to other subjects, reaching out to science and social studies, highlighting the potential of math in the kitchen. Increasing the scope and importance of family and consumer science can help students see beyond the capitalist agenda and open them to genuine possibilities for change.

It will be difficult to engage middle school students – who have already spent five or more years in the oppressive monoculture of public schools – in critical thought, especially in the face of large class sizes and short meeting times. However, family and consumer science is such an immediately tangible subject that it provides a valuable tool. Not only is family and consumer science tangible, it is also multi-layered. For example, on the surface, food is just what is on the plate, but actually contains multitudes, including labor, production, preparation, eating, waste and disposal, history, personal connections, marketing… the list goes on and on. Middle school survey sources are limited in their scope. Cuts in funding, neglect as an un-tested subject, cultural dismissal are all factors working against family and consumer science. But the instruction students receive in family and consumer science class can provide inroads to discussion of larger social inequities and teach alternatives.

With our current unstable and unsustainable hegemony, it is my responsibility as an educator and as a member of the human race to push back against the unsustainable forces of capitalism. Schools need to prepare students not for the workplace but for the challenge of

shaping a more positive world. Using the potential of family and consumer science instruction as a starting point, I will move towards both revealing the inherent instability of our current system and equipping students to crucially evaluate their place in that system.

Chapter 4

Design

Purpose

The purpose of my curriculum is to give family and consumer science teachers the space and tools to evaluate their curriculums for the current state of education. Because I believe in the importance of creating critical thinkers, the design will not be prescriptive. Rather it will enable teachers to make positive changes based on the unique needs of their teaching situation. The curriculum will be structed as a series of two workshops which will address the decline of family and consumer science education and the powerful role it can play, especially in middle schools. Teachers who participate will leave with an increased understanding of their subject and practical ways to maximize the potential, including ways to connect with the team structure of a middle school community.

The societal goals of this program are, broadly, to create a family and consumer science program that is sustainable and is integrated into schools. As my philosophy from chapter three indicates, I believe that the purpose of education is to create active citizens and empower students to live and learn independently while participating in a collective democracy. Family and consumer science, as a subject that teaches specific skills like cooking and purchasing, is vital for this goal. Family and consumer science can also go beyond practical skills to highlight connections between core subjects and life outside of school, showing the way towards life-long learning and independence. Furthermore, family and consumer science is a natural starting point to introduce multicultural learning and strengthen a sense of community that is challenged by the turbulence of adolescence.

In strengthening and broadening the scope of family and consumer science education, I also hope to meet an administrative aim of keeping family and consumer science in middle schools. As a program that is often on the slate to be downsized or removed, learning the potential of family and consumer science and demonstrating how can be used to improve learning throughout an entire school can be a valuable step in ensuring the continued inclusion of family and consumer science in middle school curriculums.

In completing these workshops, teachers will be able to meet the educational aim of creating independent learners who can transfer their skills from core classes into daily application. My program is designed for middle school family and consumer science teachers. The family and consumer science teacher aspect of my audience is self-explanatory – the workshops are about strengthening family and consumer science curriculum and instruction. I chose to focus on middle school teachers because of the unique way family and consumer science is delivered in middle school, and the unique roles of middle schools themselves. At the middle school level, family and consumer science is typically taught as a survey course, sampling the many facets of the subject. This gives the advantage of flexibility in curriculum, but can also be fragmentary in nature, as there is not time to delve deeply into all the topic. Additionally, as students rotate quickly through their special area subjects, it is easy for the classes to be overlooked. Come conference time, students have often moved from one subject on to the next. With a teaching load that typically covers multiple grade levels, family and consumer science teachers often cannot attend grade-level meetings, nor are they integrated into the team structure of middle schools. These workshops will give middle school family and consumer science teachers ways to better integrate their subjects, increasing recognition and improving students' learning. As mentioned in chapter three, it is important that this happens. The young

adolescents who fill the halls of middle schools are a dynamic group who are growing and struggling on all developmental fronts. A wide exposure to experiences and ideas, including both core classes and special area subjects is essential.

I would also like to open these workshops to future teachers of family and consumer science, including teachers with other certifications who might be interested in moving to family and consumer science. One of the major impediments of family and consumer science education is a lack of qualified teachers (Wehan, 2013). Given that these workshops aim to give a background of family and consumer science instruction as well as look at new approaches to the subject, they will be very informative to those interested in teaching it. Core teachers who are interested in family and consumer science but may not be sure about teaching it could gain insight into the broader potential of the subject.

Content and methods

The curriculum will be a series of two workshops, one focusing on self-assessment and goal setting, and the second focusing on action plans and integration of family and consumer science into the wider school and district. Ideally, an online forum would be developed stemming from the workshops for teachers to share ideas, ask for help, and find general support.

As a result of attending these workshops, a teacher will have the knowledge and confidence to reflect on their curriculum and make changes to connect with other departments. Family and consumer science teachers typically face less scrutiny in their day-to-day instruction than teachers of tested subjects. This gives family and consumer science teachers the freedom to maneuver and make positive change. With the added ideas and confidence from the workshops, they could make connections with other departments and argue for the continuation of family and consumer science education. The workshops will focus not so much on existing family and

consumer science standards, but on ways to connect these standards to team teaching in other subject areas.

The curriculum of these workshops is designed in line with Dewey's ideals of flexibility, where a collective vision of learning and change supports individual growth (Dewey, 1938). The workshops are not about building one perfect family and consumer science curriculum, but rather about finding ways to connect curriculums and adapt them to fit the circumstances of individual teachers and their schools. The goal of educating students is to create thoughtful citizens ready to engage collectively with their world; therefore, the goal when working with teachers should be same.

As such, while the workshop will provide grounding in the importance of integration and suggest potential avenues for curriculum development, the ultimate choices are left to the individual participants. The curriculum is arranged so that it starts with self-assessment. Family and consumer science teachers come from a broad range of backgrounds and have their own ideas about why family and consumer science is an important subject. Often, family and consumer science teachers are on their own in a school or district, so time to assess themselves, and then share with the group is a first step in highlighting issues and building community, essential to the project. Additionally, self-assessment allows teachers to begin to articulate why family and consumer science is valuable, preparing them to make a larger argument for their subject.

I view much of the problem of the diminishment of family and consumer science through an historical lens. Understanding the history of the subject informs how it is viewed today. Historically, home economics teachers of the 1970s were blindsided by public perceptions of their subject (Elias, 2008), partially due to a lack of self-assessment. In addition to self-

assessment, the workshop will include an historical briefing of the subject as a starting point to understand where we are now, as well as an overview of the role of middle schools.

Ultimately, the aim of the workshops is to enable family and consumer science teachers to evaluate their curriculum, connect with core classes, and demonstrate the value of the subject in ways that have been overlooked. In order to do this, understanding the history and present state of the subject is important, but we cannot stop there. Using a cognitive approach, rather than a behavioral one, will allow teachers to use thinking skills and problem solving. Family and consumer science cannot function as a subject if it is merely transmitting skills, like dishwashing or sewing on a button. For the subject to reach its full potential, students should make connections, feel able to learn independently, and gain a better understanding of how school and lived skills intersect. If that is the goal when working with students, a workshop for teachers should honor the same principles.

Organization of the workshops

The two workshops will be linear, with the self-assessment and planning from the first workshop necessary for the actual curriculum development of the second. While the linear model for curriculum allows for building a rich body of knowledge, it is not without its flaws (Posner, 2003). If a participant cannot attend both workshops, they miss out considerably, and may chose not to attend to attend at all. A long-term goal of this workshop proposal is to also collect online resources which would help alleviate the issues of linear instruction. Participants who miss workshop 1 could visit the website before workshop 2 and lead themselves through some of the material. Without group collaboration, the learning will not be as meaningful as attending both workshops, but will enable participants to engage successfully with the workshop they can attend. Additionally, an online forum and the tools of the workshops themselves will hopefully

enable a sort of spiral of learning, as laid out by Jerome Bruner in Posner (2003). The workshops will be a starting point, but continued growth, reflection, and change will be enhanced by the online resources. Every time a teacher revisits the ideas of the workshops and practices the skills gained, they can deepen their understanding and work towards a more successful outcome for their students and for their subject.

In the next section, I will outline the structures, goals, and activities of the workshops. The workshops include a number of resources that can be found in the appendix. For both workshops, there is a lesson with activities, timing, and resources, followed by an in-depth discussion of each activity and the content and rationale for it.

Workshop 1

Lesson Plan

Objectives:	a. Understand how the history of family and consumer science influences current practice and how family and consumer science education intersects with middle school education. b. Analyze existing curriculum and set at least one goal related to team/core class connections. c. Research a list of allies for support in reaching the goal.
Resources (found in Appendix)	1. Self-reflection 2. Historical context presentation 3. Framework worksheet 4. Allies list organizer 5. Exit survey
Procedure	
Introduction (15 minutes)	• As participants arrive, they should take a self-reflection survey and fill it out. • As participants finish their reflection, ask them to introduce themselves to the group – share name, teaching position, and their choice of one of the five self-reflection questions.
Historic Context (30 minutes)	• Explain the workshop objectives and importance of historic and cultural context • Share the historic overview presentation, as found in the Appendix

	• Invite participants to ask questions and share personal connections during the presentation
Building a framework (30 minutes – 40 minutes)	• Explain the activity – analyze family and consumer science curriculum looking for areas that can be improved, especially by interacting with teams or core teachers. This is also a great opportunity to focus on units or lessons that never quite felt right. This activity could be an opportunity to improve them. • To guide participants in this work, use the framework worksheet • As participants get started, consider re-grouping them. For instance, if several participants have goals related to S.T.E.M., have them sit and work together.
Gathering Allies (10 minutes)	• Emphasize that this work should not and cannot be done by one person. Hand out the contact information forms for participants to fill out.
Wrap up and assessment (10 minutes)	• Remind participants of their objectives before the next workshop: o Make contact with relevant allies o Find a unit or lesson to revise during the next workshop. o Get a curriculum outline from contacts in another subject area, as suits their goal • Have participants fill out an exit survey

Content and rationale:

The goal of the first workshop is largely centered around self-assessment and curriculum reflection, as well as finding potential allies. Participants will be led through evaluating their personal theories of education, their pedagogy, the curriculum they teach, and the environment they work in. Participants will also have time to assess their resources and plan to make connections. This ground work is crucial because teachers must understand themselves and why they teach what they teach before they can make changes (Brookfield, 1995).

Self-assessment and reflection will also enable participants to focus their later work in a way that will be most suitable for their goals and situation. As every classroom is unique, so is every school and district. Teachers in attendance will have different starting points and different goals. Taking time to reflect will ensure that the work they engage in is meaningful for their teaching practice. As Dewey theorized, the most authentic learning comes out of flexibility.

Additionally, initial self-reflecting gives a tangible starting point that participants can return to in order to reflect on the success of their work, and to re-assess as appropriate. Participants can also compare their goals to that of their school and district. This is easier to do if time is taken to assess and record ideas. Having goals in writing will also make spiraling, or revisiting and revising work, more effective, since it is a record of thinking.

The opening activity will be self-reflection. Many family and consumer science teachers come from "informal" backgrounds, since there are so few certification programs in colleges. Personally, I transitioned from an English education background, and from conversations with fellow family and consumer science teachers around the state and country, this sort of transition is common. While this orienting reflection is important, it is an introduction, so is only five questions. The questions can certainly be modified to suit the participants – for example, if

participants are coming from outside of a traditional middle school, the second question could be changed to reflect where the participant teaches.

It is important to note that for this reflection, there are no right or wrong answers. After participants respond, they should share their reflections in small groups. As they share, they might want to change their responses, or add to them, based on what they hear from their peers. Even adding a note about how many participants share similar goals or frustrations should be encouraged. One of the goals of the workshop is to build community and enhance the democracy of learning. Forming community connections should be modeled in the workshop.

Based on what teachers share and their personal experience, the moderator of the workshop should move into a review of the context of family and consumer science – how it originated and how it is perceived today. Based on the participants, this section of the workshop may be longer or shorter, in accordance to group knowledge. If many participants have taught family and consumer science for years, the history of the subject might be familiar and merit a brief review with participation from the participants. As discussed in chapter three, the historical context is vital in understanding and reframing the future of the subject. While the history of family and consumer science has been laid out in prior sections, a few salient points should be emphasized in the workshop. These points are also summarized in the supplementary presentation, found in the appendix.

First, from the start, the movement has had conflicting, yet coexisting aims. This conflict still resonates today. Second, family and consumer science has taken many forms and had a myriad of applications since its inception as home economics in the early 1900's. We need to remember this wide breadth as a mine of potential going forward. Third, a cultural misunderstanding of family and consumer science – or home economics – is nothing new (Elias,

2008). The discipline has been misunderstood, sometimes willfully, many times before and family and consumer science professionals have had mixed success correcting it. One thing that has not worked, as seen in the 1970's, is staying close, operating within the confines of the discipline. As family and consumer science educators, we must reach out to the broader educational and social communities to demonstrate the vitality of the subject.

This section should also include a discussion of the role of middle school, as the target audience is middle school family and consumer science teachers, and those interested joining the ranks. It is important to emphasize the role of the team structure in meeting young adolescents' social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Family and consumer science generally operates outside of this team structure, so it is important to consider ways to connect and support students that bridge the gap.

During the third activity, the goal is to start looking for weaknesses and potentials in existing curriculum and practice. In introducing this activity, the moderator should explore with the group the importance of working with the team structure of middle school to enhance student engagement and to demonstrate the vitality of the subject. Remember, middle school is important for a student's whole development; it should not be purely to front-load students academically for high school (Lounsbury, 2009). Family and consumer science has the potential to connect students' lives with their core subjects in hands-on and practical ways. It can also serve to introduce multicultural concepts in tangible ways. Participants will formulate a goal for their program and then outline possible steps to help realize it. As they plan, they should consider building connections to other departments and teams as a corner stone of their plan. Connections deepen the relevance of the subject, contribute to the formative goals of middle school education, and increase awareness of the subject.

As participants form their goals, the moderator should remind them to consider what they believe the importance of family and consumer science is, but also to consider school-wide goals and initiatives. One of the great aspects of family and consumer science education is the relative flexibility of it. Because the subject is not tied to standardized testing, is not a core class, and covers a wide range of standards, teachers have a lot to work with. It is important that family and consumer science teachers do not fall into the social limitations often placed on the subject – such as being just cooking class.

Once a participant has framed out their goal, they should answer the questions laid out on the Framework worksheet (Appendix) to refine their goal and set up scaffolding for reaching it. All of the questions should be addressed in the context of each participant's individual goal.

The last activity before wrapping up emphasizes the need for connections. For this activity, participants should brainstorm and research a list of potential allies. Some of these might be provided by the workshop moderator, such as a list of county family and consumer science groups, intermediate unit contacts, and a review of state-level and AAFCS resources. In improving family and consumer science, it is important to not go it alone. Working with others facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject, but also shows first-hand the value of family and consumer science. Just as we should help our students work together and understand each other, we should do the same in our own practice. Furthermore, it is daunting to develop curriculum and make changes independently. The nature of family and consumer science teaching is often isolating, with many teachers being the only family and consumer science teacher in their building. This step is vital to gather resources in order to actualize goals.

Participants should find the names and contact information of potential allies in their district and use it to fill out their Allies List Organizer. This may be a partial list – moderators and participants are encouraged to add to it or alter it in order to suit their needs.

Participants should leave the workshop with a better understanding of the pitfalls and potentials of family and consumer science. They should be able to articulate how family and consumer science is uniquely suited to support middle school learning and how subject integration can enhance that. Additionally, participants should have a clear goal for improving their programs and a list of potential allies for meeting that goal. A first step following this workshop is for participants to reach out to at least one of their allies in the building or district and share their goals. Based on the conversations they have, participants should select one unit or lesson to start modifying and bring a curriculum outline of a connecting subject to the second workshop.

Workshop 2:

Workshop 2 would ideally be held a month or so after workshop 1 so that participants have time to reflect on their goals and make connections with others outside of their department. However, if time is a limiting factor, the two workshops could conceivably be held on the same day, with a break in between for participants to reach out to their allies. Workshop 2 is focused on developing actionable steps to reach the goal from the workshop 1.

During the second workshop, participants will expand on what they started in workshop 1 and make a specific change to a lesson or unit to better integrate with the wider school. What exactly each participant generates will vary depending on what their goal is. Additionally, participants will discuss how to use the changes to increase the visibility of the family and consumer science program and gain recognition for its invaluable contributions to middle school.

Lesson Plan:

Objectives:	a. Analyze existing curriculum and select a lesson or unit to revise b. Develop lessons plans that intersect with core curriculum c. Practice framing work in a positive manner for the current teaching climate
Resources (found in Appendix)	1. Lesson plan sample 2. Exit survey
Procedure	
Introduction (15 minutes)	• Check in with participants and their progress from the last workshop o Participants should share their goals and share what contacts or connections they have made • Explain the objectives of workshop 2

Unit workshop (1 ½ hours)	• This time is primarily for participants to work on their revised units or lesson plans. Remind them as they work that their updates should:
	  o Connect to a core class or team activities
	  o Be leveled – i.e. a slightly different lesson for each group of students as the school year progresses
	• Before participants work, share sample of updated lesson plans (appendix)
	• With about 15 – 20 minutes left, ask participants to share what they are working on, either in small groups or with the whole workshop

Outreach and visibility (15 minutes)	• Participants should be sure to share their work publicly so that others in the district are aware of the relevancy of family and consumer science. • During this section, review different way to publicize family and consumer science education, and give participants a chance to share their own ideas and experience

Wrap up and assessment (10 minutes)	• Remind participants of their objectives post-workshop and have them set goals to:
	  o Put the new lesson(s) into action
	  o Continue to coordinate with teams/core subjects – a yearly or semester check in to ensure lessons are still aligned is important, as education requirements are subject to change
	• Have participants fill out an exit survey

	• Remind participants that they will be contacted again in about 6 months

Content and rationale:

In keeping with the linear structure of the workshops, workshop 2's introduction is focused on coming back together and reviewing the material from workshop 1. Participants will be encouraged to share where they are at with the goals of the workshop. Guiding questions could include the following, but these questions are guidelines. In the spirt of collaboration and democratic learning, the questions can be modified to suit the audience.

- What was the goal you set?
- What connections have you made in your school or community?
- Reflecting on workshop 1, what have you realized about your teaching practice?
- What are you still struggling with from the last workshop?

During the Unit Workshop activity, the goal is for participants to revise a lesson or unit that will connect to another subject. Family and consumer science goes far beyond cooking and sewing, and these revised lessons should demonstrate this. While most family and consumer science teachers already know that family and consumer science is so much more, the connections are often unacknowledged by outside observers. Additionally, students in middle school progress quickly through the school year – students in the first marking period may not have studied fractions, for instance, while fourth marking period students may be well versed. Accordingly, the lessons participants revise should connect closely to a core class and be flexible so as to practice relevant skills at the appropriate time of the school year. The moderator can at this point show some examples of lessons that are flexible for connection. It can be difficult to

know when to introduce new concepts, which is why connection with allies in other departments was emphasized in workshop 1.

- General baking unit that is modified for each round of students based on their science classes. For example, baking with yeast when students study respiration, leavening agents to discuss how gas reacts under heat, the different parts of grain used in different flours in relation to plant cells and biology. The general unit remains in place, but the examples or small activities may change in conjunction with the science curriculum.
- A lesson on recipes can intersect with learning fractions. Early in the school year, the lesson focuses on recognizing fractions and their relative sizes (1/4 c vs. 1/3 c). As the year progresses, the lesson shifts to multiplying and dividing fractions, in keeping with student progress in math class.
    a. There is a sample revised lesson on this topic in the appendix.
- A cooking lab could feature different recipes throughout the year, lining up with what students are studying in social studies. For example, if students are learning about Central America, select a recipe from that region.
- From a team perspective, if different students in class will have had different experiences on their respective teams, activities could be designed in way that brings the class together, relying on their different bases of knowledge and experience to learn something new together.

Depending on what connections workshop participants have made with other teams or departments, they may be prepared to write new lesson plans during the workshop, or they might focus on generating potential ideas to share with colleagues after the workshop. Towards the end of this activity, participants should share what they are working on with each other.

While the connecting work is unto itself valuable from pedologic and student development standpoints, there is further potential. Family and consumer science is often undervalued, but if practitioners speak up and share their work, this tendency can be mitigated. Simply working with other departments is a great first step to visibility, but sharing work more broadly is also important. Participants should share strategies for self-promotion and practice drafting emails or other notices to their administration, highlighting the positive work being done in the family and consumer science classroom. What participants emphasize should be thoughtful and in keeping with district goals. For example, if a district is highly focused on math scores on standardized tests, participants can frame their work to emphasize tested skills being used in their untested classrooms.

Some suggestions include putting together a family and consumer science newsletter with pictures of classroom activities, creating a hallway display of students' skills, or asking to attend meetings with relevant core curricular teams – for instance, if you're collaborating with a science teacher, ask to attend at least one science team meeting and share how you're bringing science into the family and consumer science room.

As the workshop draws to a close, have participants set long-term goals that will help ensure their updated lessons actually go into place. Participants should write at least three goals – one about their teaching in the classroom, and one about outward connections, and one about self-promotion. The moderator might set up goal statements for the participants along the following lines:

1. In my classroom, I will…
2. I will reach out to…in order to…
3. I will share the potential of family and consumer science by…

Finally, participants will fill out an exit survey.

Implementation

While these workshops are set up to be easy to run, there are some potential limiting frame factors. First, gaining acceptance is still an uphill battle. On a wide societal scale, there is a huge cultural frame factor of dismissal of family and consumer science – either that it is unimportant/one-dimensional, or assuming that it is already gone. At the school level, family and consumer science is often seen simply as cooking or sewing. Other subject areas teachers may be reluctant to collaborate on something so "old-fashioned." Hopefully, other teachers will not maintain this attitude and will instead be excited to collaborate across the team structure, but it is important to be aware of the stigma against family and consumer science.

There is also the frame factor of time. The workshops themselves require time for participants to attend. As only a few teachers in any one district would attend the workshops, they must be scheduled in a way that teachers from a region can all attend. With the increasing access and familiarity with remote teaching, due to the pandemic, the time frame factor could be alleviated by holding the workshops virtually. With the use of the envisioned online resources, it is possible that family and consumer science teachers could host small versions of the workshops during organizational meetings.

Time is also a frame factor on an individual level. Teaching family and consumer science in a cross-subject manner will demand a degree of flexibility. As students rotate through the class, to deeply connect with other subjects, lessons would need to vary slightly on each go-through, making more work for a family and consumer science teacher. Ideally, that work will be offset by increased student understanding and engagement as they make connections, but there will be a definite time commitment at the outset. Besides the time of the family and consumer

science teacher, teachers from other departments must commit some time in order to successfully collaborate.

Outside of the classroom and school is the administrative and financial frame factor. Maintaining any academic department costs money. If a school board decides they do not have the money, or if state funding is cut, or if income from tax streams dries up, there is only so much one can do. Ideally, this workshop will enable family and consumer science teachers to create a compelling argument for the continuation of the subject in the face of budgetary frame factors. As far as the workshops themselves, there is also a financial frame factor, but it is relatively low – the cost of a place to meet and perhaps a subsidy for whoever leads the workshops. Clear assessment of the workshops will also be important in showing the befit of the work to administrations. Of course, that can only happen after the initial round of workshops have taken place, but this potential role of assessment is taken into account in the design of the assessment.

Chapter 5

Assessment and Evaluation

These workshops have the potential to help family and consumer science and middle-school education in general. However, in order to gauge their success, I need some form of assessment. The workshops are about progress and allow for a high degree of autonomy. Any assessment needs to be flexible to account for the different ways participants might apply the workshop information to their own teaching practice. Additionally, the workshops are not designed to yield immediate results. Rather they are a starting point. As such, assessment needs to happen not just following the workshop, but also after participants have had time to put their ideas from the workshop into action.

In order to account for the above factors, each workshop will be assessed by an exit survey immediately following each workshop. The exit surveys will assess how optimistic participants are about what they are learning and to gather immediate impressions. The first exit survey is especially important, as the feedback from it can be used to adjust workshop 2 according to participants' needs. There will be one additional survey sent six months after the workshops in order to assess progress made and gather feedback for improving the workshops. The surveys will include both numeric evaluations – such as "on a scale of one – four… – and short answers where participants can elaborate on what they gained from the workshops, or what they think can be improved. These surveys can be found in the appendix.

The data gathered will be used to both refine the workshops for future participants and potentially contribute to an online data base of ideas for other family and consumer science teachers. It is important to gather data after the first workshop so that the second workshop can

be modified, if needed. Professional development that does not take into account the reactions of the participants is missing a major opportunity. The point of formative assessment is to help instructors revise their teaching and improve the learning of participants (University, n.d.) which is very important in a linear series of workshops where more instruction is to come.

There will also be a survey immediately following the second workshop. This will help make improvements for future iterations of the workshop, but will also function in conjunction with the final assessment. The workshop 2 exit survey will attempt to capture a snapshot of participants goals and optimism. Effectively, it seeks to discover whether participants are planning to use what they have developed in the workshops. The intentions of the workshop 2 exit survey will then be compared to the data from a final survey, sent six months after the workshop. Teaching practice is iterative and gradual. Teachers cannot always immediately put into practice what they plan. Sending a follow-up survey gives participants time to actually try the strategies they developed. The 6-month feedback can be compared to the workshop exit surveys to help determine the true usefulness of the workshops. If, for instance, participants rate the workshops favorably in the exit surveys, but report little or no usage of their new idea in the following six months, there is a problem with the workshop that can hopefully be overcome.

Additionally, the 6-month feedback survey will ask participants to share anything they developed that was particularly successful. Any resources shared could ultimately be compiled on a web resource for other family and consumer science teachers. This web resources is a pipe dream at the moment, but could be used to feature participant responses, both of successes and struggles. A collection of data on how teachers are connecting family and consumer science with other subjects could also be used to demonstrate the validity of the subject to administrations who might otherwise be dismissive.

Evaluation

I do foresee that there will be room for improvement. Through the workshops we might uncover exciting new ideas that should be incorporated into the workshop models, or we might discover shortcomings. I truly believe my workshop proposal to be strong and useful, and in keeping with my philosophy and with research on adolescent development and teaching in a democracy. But I must acknowledge there are other ways to achieve goals, and other ways family and consumer science can be bolstered.

First, these are some possible applications of the workshops – goals in family and consumer science that could be explored by workshop participants that focus more on keeping family and consumer science in the schools. While it is wonderful to think of ways to expand and improve the subject, a harsh reality is that the subject must "earn its keep" as they say; falling in with district aims may be more prescient that truly enhancing the subject. Once family and consumer science is secure, then a teacher can revisit the ideals of the workshop and rework the curriculum for their philosophy of education.

In Pennsylvania specifically, but also present throughout the country, is an increased pressure on career focus, even at the middle school and elementary levels (*Career Ready PA*, n.d.). While I disagree with this pressure, it can also be used to the advantage of a family and consumer science teacher whose program is under siege. Historically, home economics gave rise to many scientific fields that are still in existence today. Additionally, many family roles, such as child care and food preparation are outsourced beyond the home as careers. Family and consumer science education can be reworked or reframed as an introduction to careers. As students learn practical skills for themselves, they can also be introduced to the career side. If a teacher chooses this goal, they should encourage students to think beyond "cooking = chef".

Connections with other subjects can make this apparent; in uniting with biology or chemistry for instance, the fields of food science and crop development come into focus. If a family and consumer science teacher can demonstrate how valuable their subject is in meeting the current pressures for career exploration, the subject is more likely to be met with approval from a school board.

Another focus is on S.T.E.M. – science, technology, engineering, and math. If a teacher is working in a district with a heavy S.T.E.M. focus, emphasizing the *science* part of family and consumer science might be key for enhancing recognition of the subject. Here is also where knowing the history of family and consumer science may be vital. Remember that Ellen Swallow Richards was the first woman to graduate from M.I.T. and did so with a degree in chemistry. Emphasizing that the very foundations of the discipline are rooted in science can go a long way to justifying its present branching. And once again, partnering with other subjects can affirm this. For example, coordinating with the math department to teach fractions, as one of the most reliable places where students will encounter fractions is in the kitchen. While a math class might use recipes as an example to engage students, in the family and consumer science classroom those same fractions can come to life as a pod of students multiplies a recipe so they can make enough food for everyone. Using existing district aims may not feel authentic, especially if the aim is more specific, like raising standardized test scores. Yet it may be necessary in order to preserve the subject.

Outside of district aims, there other ways to approach revising family and consumer science instruction. I focus on building a community of education to help students become true citizens, well-rounded people, and self-confident and use an historical lens for much of this. However, if other lenses are applied, the decline of family and consumer science could be

attributed to different causes and call for different solutions. One valuable lens is that of sustainability. Family and consumer science has consumerism built into it. In many ways, consumption of ready-made goods, including food, threatens to topple both family and consumer science and our environment. Climate change is a pressing issue. While most carbon emission come from a few large corporations, the daily lifestyle of Americans is also driving the degradation of our planet (US EPA, 2015). If this issue is pushed to the forefront in all aspects of life, including education, family and consumer science can play a crucial role in curbing consumption.

While sustainability could certainly be a goal developed from the workshops, the workshops themselves are probably not the best way to promote sustainability and challenge rampant consumerism. I acknowledge that some teachers may feel that tackling sustainability in family and consumer science, and education in general, may be just as pressing and I encourage them to develop their own solutions and to share them.

Another lens that is increasingly important in our polarized world is that of critical race theory. The history of family and consumer science is steeped in racial disparity and power struggles. From the earliest home economists that sought to "correct" the practices of immigrants to the teaching of the 1950's that strove to perpetuate white, middle-class hegemony, to today where nuclear family systems and western-European foods often dominate curriculums, family and consumer science has a long way to go to addressing the rich multicultural nature of students' lives. While I have concluded that a multicultural approach does not best suit the survey nature of middle school family and consumer science classes, I acknowledge that I am not an expert in multiculturalism or critical race theory. I do see immense value in using family and consumer science to open minds and start students down a more multicultural path, and I hope

that some participants of the workshops take it as a goal. But I am also open to other projects relating to family and consumer science that center multicultural learning and racial awareness, rather than include it as a potential outcome.

There is also an argument to be made that skill-centered family and consumer science, which focuses specifically on the tasks of cooking, of writing a shopping list, of child care, etc. is the way to move forward. Especially in communities where students may not see these practical skills modeled at home, it can be vital that school steps in and fills this need. We all need to know how to feed ourselves nutritious meals and care for others and ourselves. Connecting to other classes can be helpful, but being mindful of the needs of students as human beings is also important. I work in a district where most of my students already have some experience from home with the hands-on skills of cooking or laundry, as evidenced by pre-assessment I do with them each marking period. If that is not the case for another school, it might make more sense to emphasize useful skills as stand-along tasks. Sometimes knowing why needs to come after knowing how. It is still meaningful to be connected to the larger grade or team structure in making the decision to connect across subject lines, but a teacher may decide, based on their community, to focus on homemaking skills because that is what their students need.

Overall, I am confident that my workshop proposal allows for both the flexibility family and consumer science teachers need in their own classrooms and districts while providing a clear framework to assist in making concrete changes.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the above topics are valuable, within the scope of the proposed workshops, there is still potential for future research and development. Two areas in particular stand out – the first for developing an online platform to complement the workshops, and the second for increasing

research on the intersection between traditional family and consumer science skills and adolescent development.

First, it would be valuable to develop an online platform to complement the workshop. This has been alluded to previously, but I will take this space to elaborate. An online platform would include the resources from the workshops so any family and consumer science teacher could self-direct themselves through the workshop process or return to the website having completed the workshops in order to deepen their understanding. The online platform would also include examples of work from previous participants and be a place for teachers to share challenges and success stories, building a community of both thinking and shared resources. The platform could be helping in inspiring family and consumer science teachers on a national level. There are often differences between different state's standards, and different regions of the country have differing perceptions of family and consumer science. An online platform could help family and consumer science teachers around the country understand each other and foster a more unified front for the subject.

Second, further research could take an in-depth look at the role of special area subjects like family and consumer science to the middle schooler learner. The hands-on nature of many family and consumer science standards may be especially important for the development of adolescents' self-confidence and for their physical development. Additionally, many traditional family and consumer science activities require working in groups, such as sharing kitchen space when following a recipe. Future research could expand on ways traditional family and consumer science teaching already complements adolescent development.

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APPENDIX

Self-Reflection Survey

1. Why do you teach family and consumer science?

2. What do you think should be the goal(s) of family and consumer science?

3. What do you think is the goal(s) of middle school education?

4. How are you currently connected to your school's team and/or grade level system?

5. What difficulties do you face in your instruction? Think of day-to-day issues or bigger systemic problems.

Framework worksheet

1. What is a goal for improving your curriculum?

2. What in your existing curriculum supports your goal?

3. What weaknesses does your curriculum have that might undermine your goal?

4. What could you add to your curriculum to support your goal?

5. How might other subject areas, like science or social studies, intersect with your goal?

6. How do the priorities of your building or district intersect with your goal?
    a. For example, if district goals include higher math scores, how might that affect your curriculum?

Allies Worksheet

1. Contact information from three fellow participants
    -
    -
    -
2. Head of curriculum for your building/district

3. Curriculum coaches, if applicable

4. Department heads in your building for each subject

5. Two potential allies in your building, based on your goal
    - These might be fellow teachers or members of administration

Workshop 1 Exit survey

1. What is your goal (or goals)?

2. On a scale of 1-5, how familiar were you with the historical context?
    a. (1 being no prior knowledge, 5 being nothing new)

    1 2 3 4 5

3. On a scale of 1-5, how useful do you think these workshops will be for your practice?
    a. (1 being not useful at all, 5 being extremely useful)

    1 2 3 4 5

4. What do you hope will be accomplished during workshop 2?

5. Is there anything else you like to share with/ask of the organizer?

Workshop 2 Exit Survey

1. What was your goal (or goals) coming into this workshop?

2. On a scale of 1-5, how useful were the allies you contacted after workshop 1?
    a. (1 being not useful at all, 5 being extremely useful)

    1 2 3 4 5

3. On a scale of 1-5, how useful do you think these workshops were for your practice?
    a. (1 being not useful at all, 5 being extremely useful)

    1 2 3 4 5

4. Did you feel sufficiently supported to be able to develop new or modified lessons today?

5. What suggestions do you have for this workshop series?

6-Month Follow-up Survey

1. How have you implemented your ideas from the workshops?

2. Have you stayed in touch with any of your contacts from the workshops?

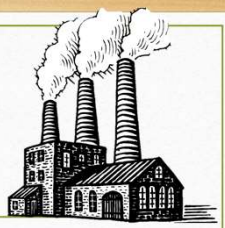
3. Has your connection with your school teams or core subjects increased? Why or why not?

4. Reflecting on the two workshops, and your success in implementing the ideas from them, what suggestions do you have for the workshop?
    a. Were there any activities that were particularly useful?
    b. What could be improved?

Family and Consumer Science

Making connections and moving forward

Understanding history



- FCS has its roots in the industrial revolution as society underwent massive shifts
  - Immigration
  - Rural → urban life
  - Changes in family structure
- Different responses to these shifts
  - Home economics was one response – to bring scientific solutions to home or domestic issues
- Many different voices even within home economics

Ellen Richards vs. Catherine Beecher

- First woman to graduate from M.I.T
- Widely hailed as founder of movement
- Believed in bringing science into the home
- Also believed domestic tasks worthy of scientific pursuit
- Pioneered fields of sanitation and ecology

- Prolific writer and educator
- Believed strongly in women's education
- Believed in bringing science into the home
- Viewed home economics was a way to elevate domestic work to the same importance as men's work
- Opposed women's suffrage

This divide is still present in the subject

- While Ellen Richards views are most commonly cited within FCS communities, Beecher's views (and social sexism) color outsider perceptions
- 1950's role of home economics as a class for girls and for preserving ideal, suburban (white, middle-class) values
  - This was a sort of return to Beecher's ideals
  - No longer about innovation, but instead replicating the correct ways
- Richard's success was establishing the precedence for new fields of study, like nutrition and food science, from domestic arts

Our role

- Continue to realize Richard's expansive vision and communicate it
- As family and consumer science educators, we must also dismantle dismissive stereotypes of our subject
  - Communicate clearly the vast potential of our subject
- We must make sure our promotions are not just lip service
  - We know how much math and science is involved in FCS, but are we implementing it as well as we can?

Family and Consumer Science & Middle School

- Middle school is not just High School Lite
- Adolescence is a turbulent time and middle school should strike a balance between nurturing students and fostering independence
- Unique team structure allows teachers to coordinate to support students socially and emotionally, as well as intellectually
- FCS classes – along with other special area subjects – are typically outside the team structure

Cooperation With Other Subjects

- Can build more specific skills
- Can help connect students across teams
- Can increase positive recognition of family and consumer science
- Can deepen student learning