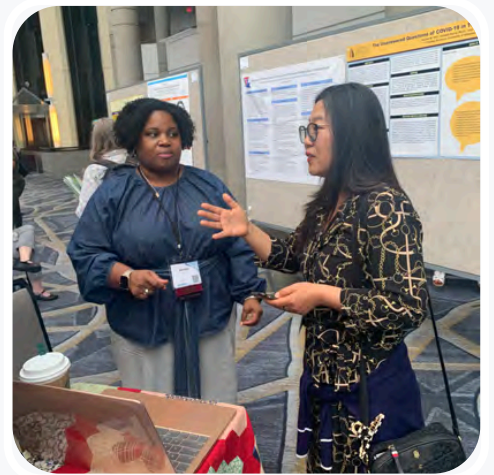


Research Posters



2025 AAFCS Annual Conference – Kansas City, MO
Assembly of Higher Education & Community of Colleges, Universities and Research
Oral Research Presentations

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Adapting Residential Spaces for Remote Study: A Reflection on Student Experiences Four Years Post-Pandemic

Anna Ruth Gatlin, Ph.D., Auburn University*

Sally Ann Swearingen, Ph.D., Stephen F. Austin State University

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reshaped how students lived, studied, and adapted their environments to support remote learning. As we reflect four years after the height of the pandemic, this study explores how students modified their living spaces during the pandemic to support academic engagement during an unprecedented shift to online education. The aim of this research was (1) to understand where students were studying and how they adapted their surroundings, (2) the implications of these changes on academic outcomes such as satisfaction, engagement, and perceived success in a remote learning context during the pandemic, and (3) explore how this data can impact educators and designers in the post-pandemic world. The conversation about supportive learning environments in higher education has expanded beyond formal classrooms to include a wider range of formal and informal spaces that influence student learning outcomes. Research has increasingly recognized that learning can happen in diverse environments, including digital, natural, and mobile settings, with a growing emphasis on student-centered spaces that are adaptable to individual learning needs. This shift became important during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced a rapid transition to remote learning, and remains important as many institutions still offer hybrid options. Even in fully face-to-face institutions, students study in a variety of spaces, including spaces where they have agency to make changes, such as their own room. This study highlighted the importance of non-traditional learning environments, exploring how and where students engage with their education.

Method

This study employed an online survey distributed to 542 college students across 93 majors at two universities, using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods. Data collection focused on identifying the spaces where students studied, how they adjusted these spaces, and the relationship between space adaptation and academic success. The survey included both open-ended and closed-ended questions, with a primary emphasis on the latter for quantitative analysis. The methodology was designed to allow for remote participation during a time of restricted physical interaction, making it possible to gather insights from a diverse range of students.

Data Analysis

Data for the study were collected through two separate instances of Qualtrics surveys, one for each partner institution, and then combined into a single dataset for analysis. A frequency analysis was conducted on close-ended questions, with results reported as counts and percentages. Trend analysis identified consensus through higher aggregate numbers and the proportional spread of responses across survey options. The reliability of the data was supported by similar findings across both universities, such as the ranking of the bedroom as the most common study space. Limitations of the method included potential biases in self-reporting, reliance on respondents' ability to complete the survey in English, and the scope, which only addressed student perceptions of their built environment without direct observation. The sample primarily consisted of female undergraduates, with 22% male respondents and representation from 93 majors, reflecting diverse perspectives across different disciplines.

Adapting Residential Spaces for Remote Study: A Reflection on Student Experiences Four Years Post-Pandemic

Conclusions

Results indicated that the bedroom was the most frequently used space for studying, followed by common areas such as living rooms and dining rooms. Beyond the home, the campus library emerged as a significant study location when accessible. This preference for residential spaces underscores a shift in the learning environment, driven by the need for safety and convenience during the pandemic. The data revealed that students commonly adapted their study spaces to enhance comfort, reduce noise, and adjust lighting conditions. These changes were strongly associated with improved satisfaction, productivity, and engagement with online coursework. For example, many students studying in their bedrooms reported modifying their seating arrangements and optimizing lighting to create a more conducive study environment. Analysis of body positions showed a preference for studying in chairs, beds, or on the floor, particularly among students residing in dormitories. This flexibility in adapting body posture suggests that students were willing to modify their physical environment to fit their needs, despite limitations in space.

Implications and Relevance for Future Research and Practice

The findings highlight the importance of the physical environment in supporting academic performance, especially in the context of remote or hybrid learning. As higher education institutions continue to incorporate online learning components, understanding how students leverage their residential spaces for academic purposes is crucial. Insights from this study suggest that students who actively shape their learning environments report higher levels of academic satisfaction and success. For practitioners, the implications are clear: educators, designers, and policymakers must consider how to better support students in creating effective study spaces at home. This may include providing resources, guidelines, or even subsidies for ergonomic furniture, lighting solutions, and noise-canceling tools. Colleges and universities could also explore offering workshops or digital resources to help students optimize their personal study environments.

Future Directions

As we move further into the post-pandemic era, additional research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of residential study spaces on academic performance. Future studies should investigate whether the trends identified during the pandemic persist in a more stable educational landscape. Additionally, qualitative research involving interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into the reasons behind students' choices and adaptations. This line of inquiry could extend beyond academic settings to examine how remote work and hybrid professional environments influence the design of residential spaces. In conclusion, this study underscores the adaptability of students in optimizing their living spaces to meet academic needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. By continuing to investigate how these adaptations influence learning outcomes, we can better support students in cultivating environments that promote well-being, engagement, and success, both within and beyond the context of higher education. The lessons learned during this period of rapid change offer valuable guidance for designing learning environments that are flexible, student-centered, and resilient in the face of future disruptions.

Cross-Course Collaborative Digital Pattern Recreation Challenge

Leigh Southward* and Sarah Hixson (University of Arkansas)

Digitizing historical costumes using modern 3D scanning techniques provides a modern and lasting approach to preserve fragile historic and cultural garments (Montusiewicz et al. 2021). Providing students with opportunities to use innovative technologies that allow this process increases their engagement and interest in historical costume as well as their digital skill competencies (Din 2024). This project provided an approach to integrating digital technology with historical fashion studies and with apparel production software. Students in a historic and contemporary apparel course and students in a digital apparel production course collaborated to digitize, recreate, and interpret historical garments.

Researchers, each an instructor for one of the two collaborating courses, implemented the project in the Fall 2024 semester. Students in the digital apparel production course 3D scanned the historical garments with the Vitronic Vitus scanner to catalogue the garments and to have a reference for pattern drafting. Patterns were drafted and rendered in Browzwear VStitcher. The recreation was uploaded to a shared presentation platform hosted by Browzwear: StyleZone. Students in the historic and contemporary apparel course double-blind reviewed the recreation visually and the information provided by the digital apparel production students. This created a bridge between first year and sophomore courses where fibers, fabrics, and construction are briefly discussed and the senior historic and contemporary apparel course that solidifies contextual and temporal understanding related to textiles and apparel production. For example, a dress dated from the 1920s was described as using polyester fabric by the digital apparel production student; this error was relevant to the historic costume course and provided students an opportunity to interpret and engage with historical garments.

Students in the historic and contemporary apparel course reviewed digital patterns of garments in the historic costume collection that were created by students in the digital apparel production course. The students in the historic apparel course assumed the role of museum curator. They were tasked with identifying key design features (e.g., silhouette, fabric choice, construction techniques) of the historic garment, and providing detailed feedback to the digital apparel production students regarding how these features could be accurately recreated in a digital environment. Students were asked to suggest adjustments to draping and fit and propose two additional colorways that align with a historically accurate representation. Digital production students used this feedback to iterate their designs to improve accuracy and quality.

Forty-eight students in the historic and contemporary course double-blind reviewed 20 digital recreations of garments from the historic costume collection, and 98% identified the correct period of the historic garment and proposed appropriate colorways. Forty-one students (85%) provided feedback on fabric choice and construction details to improve the historical accuracy of the digital pattern.

This project underscored the potential of digital technology in fashion studies, offering new methodologies for preserving and interpreting historical garments and bridging gaps in the apparel merchandising and apparel product development curriculum. Digital archivists, production instructors, and historical dress instructors alike can employ this approach to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of fashion history, pattern drafting, and its contemporary applications.

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Family Perspectives on Professionals' Role in Elder Family Financial Exploitation

Katelyn A. Golladay (University of Wyoming), Jennifer Crittenden (University of Maine),
Julie Bobitt (University of Illinois Chicago), Stephanie Simms (University of Wyoming),
Virginia Vincenti* (University of Wyoming)

Purpose

This study focuses on a family perspective of power of attorney as a vehicle for family-perpetrated elder financial exploitation (EFFE) risk and how professionals facilitate or address EFFE risk. Specifically, its objectives were to examine participants' experiences related to professionals contributed to or reduced EFFE risk.

Rationale

Although estimates vary about the extent of EFFE, most studies agree that family members are the largest group of perpetrators and that many forms of abuse, commonly physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and neglect, co-occur to gain control over older relatives to facilitate financial exploitation. Particularly when perpetrated by family members, EFFE poses a unique challenge due to complex family dynamics. Through the first-hand accounts of family members whose older relative(s) experienced EFFE, it is clear that the public needs to understand how professionals working with middle-aged and older adults could facilitate or reduce the risk of the increasing prevalence of elder abuse and EFFE.

Methodology

This research is based on a larger national study of 59 non-abusing family members English-speaking, U.S. residents, 18 years old or older who had at least one relative age 60 or older who had appointed another relative to be their power of attorney. This presentation will focus on a 24-family subsample, wherein a POA agent financially exploited one or two older relatives (principals). These cases also included one or more professionals who contributed to the principals' exploitation. In these cases, professionals were complicit in facilitating the EFFE. In one case the principal's attorney was her financial POA agent and acted as a co-perpetrator with the medical POA agent. In other cases, attorneys, not POA agents, were complicit in the POAs' perpetration.

Because of privacy laws prohibiting referrals, we used convenience sampling. Recruitment of participants included flyers in senior centers and other well-traveled community locations, Extension; and email listservs to the National Center for Elder Abuse, other governmental agencies, non-profit and professional organizations; community presentations, and public television. A website was also used for recruitment and to obtain a signed consent form from participants.

To increase efficiency in obtaining demographic information, a survey was used, followed by an in-depth interview to increase understanding of survey responses, and to provide participants an opportunity to share their experiences. The semi-structured interview protocol, based on an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, evolved to explore participants' perceptions of influences on the risk of EFFE. Each refinement was approved by the University of Wyoming Institutional Review Board. Interviews conducted in person or by phone lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. They were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, de-identified using pseudonyms for names of persons and specific locations except for states so the research team could check state laws to better understand cases' details. The cases involved the principals, perpetrators, and interviewees living in twenty different states. Participants, most were not POA agents, were asked about the selection of the POA agent(s), past and

current interactions with the principal and other family members, professionals, and how these social and professionals relationships influenced EFFE. Participants were also asked about societal influences, such as ageism and the economy at the time EFFE was occurring and at earlier times that could have influenced the principals and/or the perpetrators.

This study used constructivist grounded theory (CGT), a qualitative research methodology that strives to understand a social process that does not yet have an adequate theoretical foundation. The excerpt data coding and analyses were conducted in three steps: initial/open, focused, and theoretical coding. During the initial coding, at least two researchers independently read each transcript multiple times, then met to discuss proposed initial codes and reach consensus. Initial open coding was inductive (i.e., data driven) and focused largely on coding details about personal attributes, descriptions of what happened, values, emotions, actions taken, and impacts. Both intra-participant and inter-participants initial codes were compared, and sometimes combined because of similarity. Finally, focused codes were compared to explore the relationship among them. Interviewer memos, genograms, and multiple participants per family (when obtainable), were used to triangulate information during analyses.

Findings

Themes for this presentation were selected from codes organized into the following broad categories: Risk Factors from End-of-Life Planning, Risk Factors from Professionals' Actions and Attitudes, and Protective Factors from End-of-Life Planning, and Protective Factors from Professionals' Actions and Attitudes. Excerpts within these themes were examined from the mesosystem/family perspective with regard to interactions with exosystem professionals. We examined excerpts from across these broader themes to identify instances where professionals and those external to the family were discussed in relation to professionals' actions related to EFFE. This cross-cutting analysis resulted in the following subthemes: conflict of interest, competence, and transparency predominantly originating in the exosystem with professionals, that influenced principals (Bronfenbrenner's microsystem) and the family, specifically perpetrators (mesosystem).

Conclusions

It is important to note that the families interviewed discussed touchpoints with legal professionals within Bronfenbrenner's exosystem. Just as notable as what participants' discussed in these stories was what was missing from their accounts. The complexities within EFFE cases require an interdisciplinary team-based approach, largely absent from family narratives.

Implications for Research and/or Practice

Family stories and their implications underscore that EFFE is a phenomenon that crosses multiple systems from macro, where policies impact POA arrangements and reporting, exosystem professionals interact with families, and within the mesosystem where deep family conflict and conditions can incubate risk. While the research literature currently focuses on how elder financial exploitation can be mitigated by individual professions, more research is needed to examine how individuals and organizations external to the family interact and contribute to or prevent risk for families. Meanwhile, to reduce the likelihood of EFFE and other forms of elder abuse, the public and professionals could benefit from education about what is known to date.

**Assembly of Higher Education and Community of Colleges, Universities and Research
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**Assembly of Higher Education and Community of Colleges, Universities and Research
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Saying YES to FCS: The FCS Student Leadership Curriculum – Insights from Cohort 1	*M. Williams-Wheeler; P. Faulkner, G. Alston; and E. Acquah (North Carolina A & T State University); E. Cross (Lexington Senior High School); L.Bruff and S. Carter (Davidson-Davie Community College); J.Telesford (T.A. Marryshow Community College)
Redefining Mentorship for the 21st Century: A Focus on Retail and Hospitality Students	*Lisa Kennon, Lynn Brandon, Christy Crutsinger, & Kim Williams (University of North Texas)
The importance of FCS post-secondary education for teacher preparation: A review of the literature (2006-2023)	*Rachel Jumper (Stephen F. Austin State University; Billie Collier (Florida State University); Jane Opiri and Karleah Harris (University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff)
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Psychological Needs and Motivations for Purchase Intention of Sustainable Clothing

Amy G. Manley*; Yoo-Kyoung Seock, University of Georgia

Purpose: Studies suggest that consumers may not feel a strong personal or intrinsic attachment to their clothing, yet they still look to align with or feel connected to fashion brands that prioritize sustainability (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Despite an increase in conversation around and demand for sustainable products from companies, sustainable clothing purchases remain uncommon among most consumers (Park et al., 2017). Certain consumer segments have been identified and labeled as explicitly sustainable purchasers in previous research (Kang et al., 2013). For ecological and economic progress, sustainable products should not be confined to a single population segment, as consumers who buy sustainable clothing vary in their levels of commitment (Park et al., 2017). Importantly, consumers' non-sustainable clothing purchases do not necessarily reflect a lack of environmental value or ethical consciousness (Shen, Richards, & Liu, 2013). Research shows that consumers have perceived barriers, hesitations, and resistance preventing them from making sustainable purchases (Shen, Richards, & Liu, 2013; Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Previous research also suggests that consumer intentions toward products can be examined through the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Widyarini & Gunawan, 2017). The purpose of this research was to explore consumers' intentions for purchasing sustainable clothing through the lens of Self-Determination Theory and its subtheories.

Rationale: Consumers' awareness of their consumption choices influences demand for apparel products resulting in cultural shifts that have long-lasting impact on consumers' sustainable behavior. Consumers' purchase decisions are complex combinations of various factors with different degrees of influence (Park et al., 2017). According to SDT, individuals become more self-determined, and thus increasingly motivated, as their basic psychological needs (BPN) for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan & Deci (2017) suggest that motivation is a continuum, where individuals shift between feeling more controlled or autonomous, depending on their perception of a situation. In this study, we investigated (1) the relationship between the three basic psychological needs (BPN) and sustainable clothing purchase intentions, (2) the association between the four levels of extrinsic motivation regulation (EMRL) and sustainable clothing purchase intentions, and (3) the correlation between BPN and extrinsic motivations in shaping these intentions.

Methodology: A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, which consisted of 49 Likert scale questions measuring purchase intentions for sustainable clothing, extrinsic motivation regulation levels, and basic psychological needs. The survey was created through *Qualtrics*. After approval from the Institutional Review Board, the data was collected online through *Amazon Mechanical Turk* to sample a population over a wide geographic area. Sample participants consisted of adult consumers aged 18 and over, all residents of the United States.

Findings: Of the 383 respondents, 51.2% were male and 48.8% were female. Most participants were married (72.1%), with bachelor's degrees (67.1%), full-time careers (89.3%) and income between \$51,000 to \$75,000 (42%). While all age cohorts and U.S. regions were represented, most were Millennial, born between 1981 and 1996 (73.4%), and from the south (40.6%). Testing of reliability confirmed the internal consistency of each multi-item scale, and each

scored above the Cronbach's alpha threshold of 0.7: purchase intention for sustainable clothing (0.94), extrinsic motivation regulation levels (0.92), and basic psychological needs (0.93).

Relationships between BPN constructs and SCPI. Pearson's correlation analysis showed that all three constructs of BPN have significant positive relationships with sustainable clothing purchase intention at the $p < .01$, 2-tailed threshold. Relatedness has the strongest relationship (.577), followed by autonomy (.532) and competency (.522). This proves that the satisfaction of individual BPN constructs can influence consumers' purchase intention for sustainable clothing.

Relationships between EMRL and SCPI. All four extrinsic motivation regulation levels have significant positive relationships with purchase intention at the $p < .01$, 2-tailed threshold. The level of strength follows the same progression pattern to being more self-determined. Consumers with integrated regulation, the most autonomous and thus closest level to intrinsic motivation, have the strongest relationship to purchase intention (.745). Subsequent levels have reduced strength. Identified regulation (.674) has significant strength, but then there is a notable drop to the more controlled levels of introjected regulation (.376) followed by external regulation (.352). This correlation proves that while all extrinsic motivation regulation levels influence purchase intention for sustainable clothing, there is a noticeable difference in the impacts from the more autonomous motivation levels as opposed to the weaker and more controlled motivation levels. From this finding, the researcher is currently investigating the possibility of a directional motivation continuum and the subsequent relationships to purchase intention for sustainable clothing.

Relationships between BPN and EMRL. The three basic psychological needs have significant positive relationships with the more autonomous extrinsic motivation regulation levels, integrated and identified. Results show, however, that each BPN has no statistical significance with the more controlled extrinsic motivation levels, introjected or external. An interesting finding is that each of the three BPN have slightly stronger correlations with identified regulation as opposed to the more autonomous or self-determined level of integrated regulation. The BPN correlations for identified motivation by strength are relatedness (.562), autonomy (.493), and competency (.455). Additionally, the strength of correlations for integrated motivation are relatedness (.552), autonomy (.469), and competency (.436). The findings show the pattern of BPN relatedness having the strongest relationships followed by autonomy, and then competency. This implies that satisfaction of the BPN relatedness should be the most important consideration for retailers when wanting to increase consumers motivation for sustainable clothing, however, the other BPN autonomy and competency are still strong positive indicators which should not be overlooked.

Conclusions and Implications: The results from this analysis show that the constructs from SDT and subtheories are significant and relevant in evaluating consumer intentions toward sustainable clothing. Results show that consumers can be motivated at all extrinsic levels, but that BPN satisfaction is not significant at all levels. This suggests that there are other variables outside of the SDT subtheory that are significant antecedents for controlled levels of motivation. Further research is currently being conducted on the directional impact of these theoretical constructs with subsequent model development, as well as defining consumer segments based on continuous and categorical data.

3D Printing as a Pedagogical Tool in Design Education: Evaluating Student Skill Development

Georges Fares; Anna Ruth Gatlin*, Auburn University

Purpose: This study examines the impact of 3D modeling and printing on the development of spatial visualization and design communication skills among beginning-level design students. By assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) over multiple academic cohorts, this research seeks to determine whether integrating 3D printing technology into studio courses enhances students' ability to conceptualize, iterate, and articulate three-dimensional designs effectively.

Rationale: Design education emphasizes experiential learning and hands-on projects to cultivate spatial awareness and visual thinking skills. However, many first-year students encounter challenges in creating mental visualizations of complex spatial forms, often leading to difficulty in clearly communicating design intentions. Research suggests that 3D printing technology can support these cognitive processes by providing tangible representations of designs, fostering a deeper comprehension of spatial relationships, and improving design precision and detail (Arslan & Tazkir, 2017; Al Ruheili & Al Hajri, 2021). This study builds on these findings to explore how access to digital modeling tools influences student learning and engagement in design studios.

Methodology: A longitudinal study was conducted comparing three consecutive studio cohorts—Spring 2020, Spring 2021, and Spring 2022. Each cohort completed a project involving components that required spatial detailing, with variations in instructional methods due to the pandemic. In 2020, students worked fully remotely without access to campus facilities, relying solely on digital communication. The 2021 cohort had limited campus access under hybrid conditions, enabling a few students to experiment with 3D printing for their models. By Spring 2022, the entire cohort had in-person access to the studio, with 3D printing integrated as a core component of design development and iteration. Rubric scores for key project elements, such as spatial organization, detailing, and communication of design intent, were collected and analyzed to evaluate progress and identify trends.

Findings: The analysis of rubric scores showed an improvement in design outcomes over time, with the Spring 2022 cohort achieving the highest average score of 87% compared to 83% and 82% for the 2020 and 2021 cohorts, respectively. Furthermore, qualitative feedback indicated that 3D-printed models helped students visualize and refine their designs, leading to greater accuracy in spatial dimensions and clarity in presentations. Reflections from the 2022 cohort highlighted the benefits of 3D modeling in testing design ideas, adjusting proportions, and enhancing their confidence in communicating concepts. Notably, the 3D models allowed students to better anticipate user needs, adjust for functional requirements, and make informed decisions with a tangible understanding of scale and volume.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that integrating 3D printing into design studios provides students with valuable tools to enhance their spatial reasoning and design iteration processes. The technology not only aids in the physical representation of complex forms but also fosters a deeper engagement with the design process, allowing students to move from abstract concepts to concrete solutions with greater ease. This enhanced ability to translate design ideas into clear, detailed models results in more cohesive and precise project outcomes. Findings from this study may inform curriculum design and advocate for the adoption of digital fabrication resources across design programs.

Implications: Incorporating 3D modeling technology into design education holds promise for advancing pedagogical approaches, particularly in foundational courses where spatial visualization skills are critical. By bridging digital and manual design tools, educators can create more dynamic and interactive learning experiences that resonate with students' practical and theoretical needs. This approach not only improves design accuracy and communication but also increases student enthusiasm and involvement, providing a pathway to more effective and satisfying design education.

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Evaluating the Impact of Accreditation on Family and Consumer Sciences Programs: Insights, Challenges, and Opportunities

Anna Ruth Gatlin*, Ph.D., Auburn University; Virginia Rolling, Ph.D., University of Alabama

This study explores how accreditation by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) influences the perceptions and outcomes of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) programs. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research focuses on three populations: currently accredited programs, formerly accredited programs, and programs that have never sought AAFCS accreditation. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study provides comprehensive insights into the impact of accreditation on FCS programs, with implications for researchers, educational practice, and accreditation bodies.

Purpose and Rationale: The purpose of this research is to understand the diverse perspectives of FCS programs regarding AAFCS accreditation. Accreditation has historically been associated with enhancing program quality, credibility, and alignment with national standards, however, participation in accreditation processes varies significantly across institutions. This study seeks to investigate the factors driving these variations, including perceived benefits, challenges, and barriers, with the goal of identifying strategies to increase engagement and support for FCS programs considering accreditation.

Research Design and Methodology: To address the study's objectives, a mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative feedback from open-ended responses. The target population included department heads and program administrators across the U.S. representing three categories: currently accredited, formerly accredited, and never accredited FCS programs. A purposive sampling technique ensured diversity in geographic representation and institutional size. Data collection was carried out through emailed surveys tailored to the specific accreditation status of respondents. Three versions of the survey were developed to gather information on demographics, institutional characteristics, and detailed perceptions related to the AAFCS accreditation process. Close-ended questions using Likert-type scales captured quantitative data, while open-ended questions allowed participants to express nuanced views on their experiences and decision-making processes.

Sampling and Response Rates: The study achieved substantial response rates from each category. Out of 32 currently accredited institutions, 19 responses were received (59% response rate). Among 43 formerly accredited programs, 18 responded (42%), while 15 out of 45 programs that have never sought accreditation participated (33%). These response rates provided a dataset for analysis, allowing for reliable comparisons across the different groups.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests to identify significant patterns and correlations. Qualitative responses were examined using the constant comparative method to identify emergent themes related to accreditation experiences. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis framework was employed to synthesize findings, enabling a deeper understanding of how accreditation status influences programmatic outcomes and institutional perspectives.

Key Findings:

- Programs with AAFCS accreditation are predominantly concentrated in areas like textiles, apparel, and retailing, as well as human/child development. Respondents cited benefits such as enhanced program credibility, alignment with national standards, and external validation. However, significant barriers include the high financial and administrative burden associated with the accreditation process. The need for increased faculty support and institutional resources was highlighted as a critical factor for sustaining accreditation.
- Previously accredited programs, particularly in food science and nutrition, often transitioned to other accrediting bodies like ACEND (Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics). Although these programs acknowledged the benefits of accreditation, they emphasized the challenges of maintaining AAFCS accreditation, such as resource constraints and perceived limited returns on investment. The decision to discontinue AAFCS accreditation was frequently linked to shifting institutional priorities and budget limitations.
- Programs that have never sought AAFCS accreditation, notably those focused on human/child development, often align with other specialized accrediting bodies like NCFR (National Council on Family Relations) and NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). While these programs recognize the general value of accreditation, barriers such as faculty engagement, perceived relevance, and concerns about eligibility for 2-year institutions were prominent factors deterring pursuit of AAFCS accreditation.

Implications for Practice: The findings carry significant implications for research and practice, including FCS programs and accrediting bodies like AAFCS. For researchers, the study highlights the need for further exploration into how accreditation influences program sustainability and quality. Future research could examine innovative approaches to streamline accreditation processes, explore joint accreditation models with other professional bodies, and investigate long-term outcomes for programs that either pursue or forgo accreditation, thereby enhancing strategic decision-making in FCS programs. For practitioners, understanding the specific challenges associated with AAFCS accreditation—such as resource constraints, administrative burdens, and faculty engagement—can guide more effective institutional planning and support strategies. For FCS Programs, insights from currently and formerly accredited programs can guide strategic planning. Institutions considering accreditation can leverage identified benefits—such as increased program visibility and standardization—to secure internal support and resources. For AAFCS, the study highlights the importance of addressing the specific challenges faced by different types of FCS programs. Streamlining accreditation processes, reducing administrative burdens, and providing targeted support mechanisms could enhance program engagement. Additionally, collaborative accreditation pathways with other bodies may offer a more flexible approach to meet the diverse needs of FCS programs.

Conclusion: By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research sheds light on the varied experiences of pursuing AAFCS accreditation. The nuanced insights from currently, formerly, and never accredited institutions emphasize the need for AAFCS to perhaps rethink its accreditation model to better align with the evolving priorities of FCS education. Ultimately, rethinking the model could lead to increased participation and a stronger alignment of programs with national standards, thereby enhancing the overall quality and impact of FCS education.

Are Students Equipped? Exploring Competency Gaps Due to Changing Retail and Fashion Industry

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This study investigates the competencies required for fashion design and merchandising (FDM) graduates to succeed in a retail and fashion industry reshaped by rapid digitalization, globalization, shifting consumer behavior, and heightened awareness of sustainability and social responsibility (Jin & Shin, 2020; McKinsey & Co., 2023). While the COVID-19 pandemic intensified reliance on e-commerce, data analytics, and ethically informed production (Kim, 2021), industry shifts were already underway, demanding new skill sets from incoming professionals (Dwivedi, 2020; Keiser & Garner, 2018). In this context, many believe that undergraduate FDM programs have struggled to keep pace, leading to competency gaps that undermine the readiness of new graduates (Adams, 2021).

This research centers on identifying key hard and soft skills—ranging from digital marketing and data analysis to empathy, creative design thinking, and sustainable business practices—necessary for graduates to thrive in increasingly omnichannel, value-driven retail environments (Aversa et al., 2020; Notten, 2020). Employing a Human-Centered Design (HCD) framework (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Landry, 2020), this study gathered input from 119 participants across three stakeholder groups—students, industry professionals, and academic faculty—using validated scales (Chowdhury & Anon, 2021; Merryman & Lu, 2021) to measure perceptions of required competencies, current industry changes, and recent graduate preparedness.

Analysis revealed discrepancies between how students assessed their preparedness and how faculty and professionals viewed these same competencies. While students felt confident in communication, organizational skills, and trend forecasting, industry professionals rated these proficiencies lower, highlighting a gap between academic preparation and real-world expectations. Similarly, faculty and professionals identified empathy, creative problem-solving, and technical competencies (e.g., Adobe design tools, data science) as areas needing improvement. Despite students' belief in their merchandising and design foundations, the industry emphasized a need for stronger branding, promotional display capabilities, and seamless sustainability integration.

Although students and faculty recognized emerging technologies like AI and digital fashion, professionals were more cautious, suggesting that meaningful industry integration remains a work in progress. This gap underscores the importance of continually updating curricula and providing more experiential learning opportunities, such as simulations and internships, that bridge theoretical knowledge and practical application (Hudson, 2022; Joseph et al., 2021; Shirley & Kohler, 2023).

The findings further highlight the necessity of integrating sustainability, ethical labor practices, and social responsibility into educational programs (Murzyn-Kupisz & Holuj, 2021). As consumer values increasingly prioritize fairness and environmental stewardship, students must graduate not only with technical and creative expertise but also with the ability to implement and communicate sustainable strategies effectively (Shaffer et al., 2019).

Implications of this research include a call for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers to refine educational models to better meet evolving industry demands. Incorporating iterative HCD methodologies ensures that technological, social, environmental, and economic shifts are reflected in learning outcomes, assignments, and industry partnerships, supporting the transition toward a “knowledge society” where digital literacy and meaningful information use are paramount (Zhao et al., 2021).

While this study provides valuable insights, limitations such as a small sample size and uneven representation of U.S.-based programs suggest the need for broader, more diverse research. Additionally, future longitudinal and qualitative studies could offer deeper insights into evolving competency landscapes, guiding more responsive and future-oriented FDM curricula. In sum, this research underscores the need to recalibrate FDM education, bridging the gap between academic preparation and professional success in a dynamic, tech-driven, and ethically conscious retail and fashion industry.

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Resilience and Competitiveness of the Cotton Industry Cluster

Juyoung Lee*, Farhana Momotaz and Caroline Kobia (Mississippi State University)

This study investigates the relationship between resilience and competitiveness within U.S. cotton industry clusters, focusing on supply chains that include fiber production, yarn and textile manufacturing, apparel and textile product manufacturing, and retailing. Over the decades, the U.S. cotton industry has faced significant challenges, including technological advancements, offshoring, and global competition, resulting in declines in manufacturing and employment (Karpova, Kunz & Garner, 2021). Despite these challenges, recent developments, such as reshoring manufacturing facilities and a shift toward niche markets, indicate promising signs of resilience (Lee et al., 2020; Borneman, 2022). Scholars have highlighted that resilience refers to an organization's capacity to withstand disruptions by developing new strategies and mobilizing resources, while competitiveness relates to a firm's ability to innovate and achieve performance goals, such as cost-efficiency and differentiation (Porter, 1985; Kantur & Iseri-Say, 2015).

The study adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data through convenience and random sampling from stakeholders across the cotton supply chain. Participants were recruited via trade organization memberships and Amazon Mechanical Turk, resulting in 34 valid responses representing fiber producers, textile manufacturers, and home furnishings retailers, with diverse demographic backgrounds and years of industry experience. To explore resilience, the study modified Kantur and Iseri-Say's (2015) Organizational Resilience Scale into open-ended questions, addressing robustness (e.g., "What is your company's strategic vision and outcome expectancy?"), agility (e.g., "How rapidly does your company take action or develop a plan B?"), and integrity (e.g., "How successful is your company in acting as a whole with all of its employees?"). Constant comparative analysis, including open and axial coding, was used to identify recurring themes and relationships within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The results revealed the critical role of both internal and external resources in fostering resilience. Internally, participants emphasized strategic planning, teamwork, and forward-thinking business management strategies as essential for navigating industry challenges. Missy (Furnishings and Clothing) noted the importance of "making an effort" and being prepared to adapt swiftly to change, while Dave (Textile Manufacturing) emphasized the necessity of having "a team" to ensure smooth operations. Effective leadership, characterized by respect for individual roles and delegation, was identified as a significant factor in resilience, with Erica (Fiber Producer) highlighting that "respect for the roles each person plays is important." Financial efficiency, including long-term investment and leveraging past capital, also emerged as a critical component of sustainability, as Zach (Furnishings and Clothing) noted the importance of "building on past success to weather future disruptions."

Participants also highlighted the significance of external resources, particularly robust supply chain networks and relational dynamics with suppliers, vendors, and customers. These networks were described as essential for maintaining flexibility and adapting to disruptions. Communication was frequently cited as a vital component of resilience, with Elizabeth (Furnishings and Clothing) emphasizing that "communication within the team must be pristine" to ensure alignment and efficiency. Regular updates, clear leadership, and effective monitoring mechanisms were seen as necessary for managing both routine operations and unexpected challenges.

The study concludes that resilience and competitiveness are closely intertwined, with resilient businesses demonstrating robust leadership, strategic agility, and cohesive internal operations. Geographic clustering enhances resilience through knowledge spillovers, cost-sharing, and innovation, enabling businesses to adapt to global market pressures (Porter, 2014). The findings suggest that policymakers should prioritize the development of industry clusters to foster regional economic resilience, while businesses should focus on leadership development, employee engagement, and strategic partnerships. Future research should further explore resilience mechanisms within supply chain dynamics and the role of digitalization in enhancing competitiveness.

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Community Quilting and its Impact on Mental, Social, Emotional and Social Wellness among Women in Rural US

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Rural communities worldwide face significant challenges in accessing mental health services, leading to heightened health disparities and social isolation among mature women. Traditional crafts, particularly quilting, have historically served as vehicles for community building and emotional expression in these communities. The objective of this research was to investigate the impact of quilting in a community group setting on promoting mental well-being among mature women in rural settings. Through a six-month ethnographic study, the researcher examined quilting's impact on mental health, social connections, and cognitive function involving eight participants aged 60-79 in rural US. The qualitative data was collected using focus group interviews and participant observations during regular quilting sessions. The data was transcribed and analyzed to reveal the themes. The thematic analysis of the data revealed four primary benefits of community quilting, such as (1) stress reduction and improved emotional well-being (2) enhanced cognitive engagement through complex pattern work and problem-solving (3) strengthened social connections and community building and (4) increased sense of accomplishment and self-worth through creative expression. In addition, these findings suggest that community-based quilting programs could serve as cost-effective interventions for promoting mental health in rural areas, particularly among mature women. This study supports four UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG-3 Good Health and Well-being observed by the improved mental health of the participants. SDG-5 Gender Equality was achieved by empowering women through creative innovations and expression and SDG-11 Sustainable Communities achieved through community-building initiatives. Additionally, this research contributes to understanding how creative activities can lead to individual wellbeing and wellness as well as community vitality aligning with the FCS Body of knowledge. This study has implications for mental health practitioners, families and caregivers with mature women.

Perceptions of Pregnant Women on Physiological and Psychological Changes and their Influence on Maternity Wear Selection

Zipporah Barasa, Laurie Apple, Leigh Southward (University of Arkansas)

Introduction and Literature Review: Pregnancy is an experience full of growth, change, enrichment, and challenge (Devi, 2019). Women deal with fears and uncertainties about the changes that will take place in their bodies during pregnancy (Borrelli, 2018). Wegle and McAndrews (2022) stated that changes in a woman's physical body elicit different feelings and thoughts that impact their choices of maternity clothing. Many women are psychologically disturbed because of the change in their physical body image (Sohn and Bye, 2015). According to Krisjanous et al (2022), it is essential to acknowledge and accept the physiological changes caused by pregnancy. Research indicates that a woman's body shape, weight, and size change significantly during pregnancy, requiring clothes that can accommodate these changes (Noopur, 2012; Sohn & Bye, 2015; Wegle & McAndrew, 2022). Pregnant women's bodies undergo a shift in their body image and appearance because of these changes. Studies also show how these changes influence the fit and size of maternity apparel (Barasa, 2020; Balasubramanian & Robinette, 2020; Jaiswal, 2022). With the increasing demands of pregnant women to maintain their pre-pregnant body and look fashionable, many perceptions may arise regarding body changes during pregnancy. Consequently, these perceptions may impact the selection of maternity apparel either negatively or positively (Krisjanous et al, 2022). Studies addressing pregnant women's views on physiological and psychological changes and their impact on maternity clothing selection are limited. To bridge the gap in literature, this study aimed at identifying the physiological and psychological changes of Kenyan pregnant women aged 16 to 35 years and how they impact maternity apparel selection. This study addressed the following research questions using the proposed research model shown in figure 1: What are the perceptions of young expectant women between 16-35 years on the physical body changes during pregnancy? What are the perceptions of young expectant women on psychological changes during pregnancy? What is the influence of the perceptions of young expectant women on physiological and psychological changes on maternity wear selection?

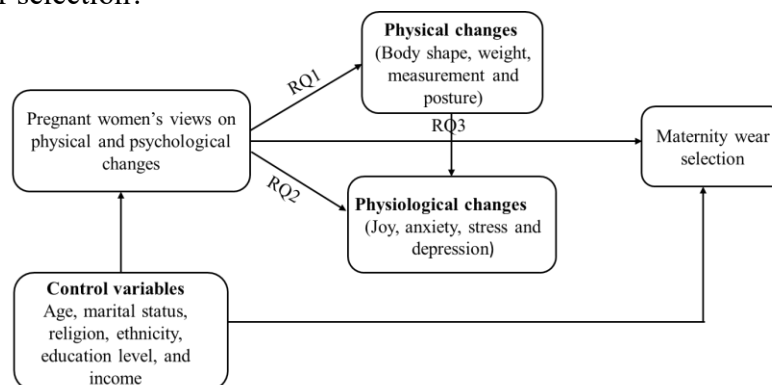


Figure 1: A Proposed Research Model for this Study

Methodology: A descriptive research design was used to collect, analyze, and present data. Several demographic variables were employed as control variables, including gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, educational level, and income level. Convenience sampling was used to select 96 expectant women aged between 16 and 35 years as they attended antenatal clinics at KNH for a

period of four weeks. Interviews and questionnaires with open and closed-ended items were used to collect data. There were 90 usable responses gathered to analyze data. Frequencies and percentages (Orodho, 2005) were used to summarize variables relating to demographic characteristics, perceptions of pregnant women on physical and psychological changes and maternity clothing selection. Quantitative aspects were analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

Findings and Discussions: Based on the results from the interviews and questionnaires, the three research questions were addressed. Sixty-three percent of respondents in trimester one noticed a slight change in their body silhouette. Conversely, all respondents in trimesters two and three experienced dramatic physical changes in their body silhouette, measurements, weight, and posture. Based on the physiological changes, findings revealed that 39% of the pregnant women viewed the changes positively while 61% viewed the changes negatively (RQ1). The respondents explained that they regarded the pregnancy period as an exciting and joyful experience and worked to cope with the changes. It was also revealed that pregnant women experience anxiety, joy, stress, fear, and depression during pregnancy (RQ2). The respondents viewed the changes adversely since they were anxious and unhappy with the changes in their physical bodies. Most of the young expectant women described the changes as undesirable, stating that they felt heavy, awkward, and unattractive. Additionally, the findings regarding the influence of pregnant women's perceptions on physiological and psychological changes on maternity apparel selection (RQ3) showed that respondents who perceived the changes negatively chose unsuitable (62%) maternity clothes that were ill-fitting to conceal their pregnancy or maintain their pre-pregnancy shape. Furthermore, those who viewed the changes positively chose suitable (38%) maternity clothing that could accommodate their changing bodies with the aim of looking stylish.

It was therefore concluded that women who are expecting experience different physiological and psychological changes that they perceive either positively or negatively. Therefore, women who viewed the changes positively made suitable choices of maternity wear while those who viewed the changes negatively made unsuitable choices of maternity clothing. Disparity in the way young expectant women perceive these changes creates a need for retailers and manufacturers of maternity clothing to understand these changes and enable production and selection of maternity apparel that is appropriate in terms of sizing, fit, comfort, and style.

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Developing caring citizens: Building students cultural understanding and empathy through study-abroad experiences.

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Purpose: This study analyzes the experiences of seven American-born students from a university in west Texas who completed a study-abroad program in Spain in the summer of 2024. The four-week program included two courses (six credit hours): one focused on cross-cultural healthcare policies and the second on cross-cultural contexts for promoting health and well-being. In addition to lectures, students were exposed to different experiential learning activities in the local community, developed briefs contrasting health policies and programs in the U.S. vs. Spain, and completed in-depth reflections on the overall study-abroad experience.

Rationale: According to the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2024), over 280,000 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit during the 2022-23 academic year. Research shows that study abroad experiences extend learning far beyond academic outcomes, such as growth in personal autonomy, cultural awareness, world-mindedness, and emerging civic concern (Haas, 2018; Berg et al., 2012). As patient populations and care contexts become more diverse, students in health professions need to acquire skills for effectively engaging with individuals from various cultures. In addition to promoting intercultural competence, the goal of some study-abroad experiences is to promote cultural humility, which leads students to become more attuned to and accepting of people of different cultures (Kako & Klingbeil, 2019). Discussion-based learning, experiential activities, and reflection opportunities during a study-abroad program can provide students with opportunities to learn and share about the process of cultural humility (Kako & Klingbeil, 2019).

Methodology: The participants were seven undergraduate students (six females and one male) majoring in pre-health professions. For this study, we analyzed students' end-of-course reflections (n=7). Students were asked to reflect on the changes they had experienced in their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and conditions as a result of the study-abroad experience. Students were also asked to discuss how this experience affected their personal and professional growth and goals. Permission to analyze the participants' data was received from the researchers' IRB. Data were first content-analyzed for patterns and regularities. The researchers made written notes and comments when patterns and regularities (thematic categories) occurred. Categorization is a crucial step in qualitative research as it helps organize and make sense of the data by grouping related codes into broader themes or categories (Richards & Morse, 2007). Four guidelines suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981) guided the process of creating thematic categories: 1) frequency, 2) credibility, 3) uniqueness, and 4) inquiry.

Findings: Regarding learning outcomes, students discussed gains in intercultural competence and critical thinking skills, which were mostly facilitated by the experiential learning experiences and reflective nature of the courses. Most students referred to the hospital observations (i.e., shadowing doctors in different clinical care areas at a local teaching hospital) as the most significant experience among the experiential learning activities. This experience allowed students to challenge their previous assumptions regarding healthcare systems and expanded

their worldviews regarding access to health and the provider-patient relationship. As expressed by Participant 5, *“My attitude towards health has altered in two ways. Firstly, I am now much more resolute in my belief that cost barriers to healthcare should not exist. Realistically, I know how difficult it would be to implement policy in the U.S. to reduce these barriers, especially seeing how even the Spanish system has its faults, but I am more intrinsically motivated to advocate for change in the future now instead of being a passive participant in the system”*. Beyond the somewhat expected learning outcomes (e.g., increased cultural competence), two main themes emerged from students' reflections: “risk-taking and personal growth” and “rethinking their future selves.” Getting out of their comfort zone by exploring a new cultural context and challenging themselves to do things outside of that zone led students to learn about aspects of themselves that previously were unknown to them. As stated by Participant 3, *“I don’t know if it is directly applicable to the course, but I have made the decision to be more spontaneous going forward...people tend to stick with what activities they become proficient in. This means that being a creature of habit keeps people from seeking out novel experiences. But novel experiences are the only way for individuals to grow and develop over time.”*

Regarding the theme of “rethinking their future selves,” students' narratives fell into three categories: changes at a personal level, changes to their professional selves, and self-care. For example, at a professional level, these future selves include a more empathetic approach to their future patients/clients and advocating for them: *“I think this course will be foundational to how I approach caring for patients in my future. My empathy has increased for those who need to seek care but worry about how to afford it.”* (Participant 5). *“My overall attitude towards health has changed to be more inclusive, as I plan to assist in making health more inclusive for all someday”* (Participant 4).

Conclusions: Participating in a study-abroad program can be a transformative learning experience for students. It invites them to reflect on prior assumptions and form new meanings that guide their actions, behaviors, and considerations for their future personal and professional selves. In addition to gains in intercultural competence, students can benefit from increased cultural humility. Finally, we argue that a study-abroad experience can contribute to educating “caring citizens” by developing students’ skills for interacting with diverse people and building their cultural understanding and empathy.

Implications for research and practice: The results of this study contribute to the literature on the benefits of intercultural exchanges by providing insights regarding the broader impact of study-abroad programs on students. This study also speaks to the importance of designing study-abroad experiences that not only align with students’ academic interests and professional goals but also incorporate engagement with the community hosting the study-abroad program. Thus, our findings can inform educators interested in developing innovative contextual curricula for future study-abroad programs.

Discernment in a Disruptive Digital World: Generative AI as an Educational Ally

Lynn Brandon, University of North Texas

Purpose. Much like the printing press, the Industrial Revolution, electricity, and the Internet, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is poised to disrupt many areas of our society, especially education. Each of the previous disruptors, when harnessed effectively, contributed significantly to the world in which we live. The purpose of this presentation is to explore how GenAI can be effectively employed in educational settings by drawing on one researcher's experiences over the past two years. Additionally, a pedagogical model developed by the researcher for incorporating GenAI into the learning process will be introduced.

Rationale. While GenAI offers immense potential for enhancing learning, it also presents significant challenges. Many educators restrict or prohibit the use of GenAI in courses, often with good reason depending on specific student learning outcomes. As the lead professor in Furnishings & Décor (F&D) merchandising—an extension of a core FCS discipline—the researcher is committed to preparing students for industries increasingly shaped by GenAI applications. The rapid evolution and pervasive nature of AI necessitates a balanced approach that leverages technology while preserving the core values of education and learning.

Methodology. Most often, the integration of new technologies into education presents unique pedagogical challenges. A series of video recordings focused on GenAI in education, from elementary through higher education, was analyzed to seek to comprehend the evolving academic landscape. This review provided a starting point and foundation for exploring the “Pandora’s Box” of expansive possibilities of GenAI in education and revealed several challenges including: (1) identifying and selecting appropriate GenAI applications from the vast array available, (2) determining if and how students could benefit from GenAI in assessments, and (3) incorporating “traditional” instructional methods to ensure that students continue to develop and apply their own human intelligence in learning activities in the wake of GenAI.

Findings. During the exploration of GenAI's potential in educational assessments, a chance conversation with a colleague provided a *pivotal* insight. The *barrier* to effective GenAI use depends on the individual's acquisition of institutional knowledge and their capacity to evaluate AI-generated outcomes critically, rather than accepting them without question. This is the *key* element and is crucial in preparing graduates for the new work frontier in the evolving professional landscape. Bloom's Taxonomy is the primary pedagogical framework for the Furnishings & Décor program. However, through the process of conceptualizing approaches for integrating GenAI into courses a new model emerged, from necessity, to better align with GenAI-enhanced pedagogy. The researcher developed the “Inspect What You Expect” (IWYE) Model. It emphasizes the importance of 1) Knowledge Acquisition: Developing a strong foundation in the subject matter, 2) Prompt Engineering: Crafting effective prompts to guide AI-generated content, and 3) Critical Evaluation: Assessing the quality, relevance, and potential biases of AI-generated outputs.

Conclusions. University-age individuals are uniquely situated at the tipping point of this tectonic technological shift. While they have ready access to GenAI, they often lack the institutional knowledge and discernment needed to critically evaluate its outputs.

Implications. As educators and industry professionals who *do* possess institutional knowledge, it is our responsibility foster the next generation empowering them with lifelong learning capabilities and discernment development and encouraging the continual growth of their human intelligence, regardless of the technological advancements.

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The Evolving Landscape of AI: Impacts on People-Centered Sciences in FCS

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Purpose. Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) taking over the world? It may seem so. However, AI is not new - it has been evolving for decades, often in ways not consciously realized. Leonardo da Vinci created a famous “automaton” in the 1490s and in 1921, a Czech playwright first used the term “robot,” meaning “worker”. Pivotal contributions made mid-20th century include Turing’s Test determining a machine’s “intelligence” and Weizenbaum’s ELIZA, simulating human to machine conversation. John McCarthy, an American computer scientist, coined the term “artificial intelligence” in 1955. In 2006, Google Translate launched, marking a significant milestone in everyday AI applications. These few examples highlight gradual development, but the rapid advancement of *Generative AI* (GenAI) has captured widespread attention within recent months. Its ability to “generate” content raises questions and poses challenges, particularly related to education, individual creativity, problem-solving, data security and more. However, time and technology march on and FCS professionals should determine best practices for AI in their respective areas, sooner rather than later.

Rationale. The researcher’s interest in AI, particularly its implications for higher education, began in early 2023 with minimal prior knowledge of its potential and perils. This ongoing exploration aims to understand more of AI’s transformative potential, including Generative AI applications. The primary goal was to examine AI’s broad impact on people-centered sciences, including apparel and interior design, retail and hospitality, health and nutrition, education, and personal and family finance. While this presentation cannot provide definitive answers, it seeks to foster meaningful discussions about the opportunities and challenges posed by Generative AI within FCS disciplines, both professionally and personally.

Methodology. Given the dynamic nature of AI, this research focused on its current relevance during the years of 2023–2024. This exploratory and introductory study analyzed 10 video recordings from selected AI conferences (e.g., MIT, Berkeley, and ASU) and 10 peer-reviewed academic journal articles. These sources were systematically reviewed to identify key themes. Content analysis tools, NVivo and ChatGPT-4o, extracted insights and themes revealing diverse perspectives on the benefits and challenges of AI and Generative AI in education and beyond.

Findings. Not surprisingly, the analysis identified broad themes both advocating for and against AI adoption and implementation. Positive themes included enhanced personalization in education, efficiency and automation in routine tasks and analytics, expanded accessibility for language translation and support, innovative teaching and learning via immersive simulations, facilitating lifelong learning, skill development for future workforces and more. Categories of concern included challenges to academic integrity, exacerbating digital divides, potential to dehumanize education, reliability and trust issues, undermining traditional pedagogies, threats to educator roles, privacy and data security risks and more.

Conclusions. Where do we go from here? While AI offers tremendous potential, its adoption brings consequential challenges that demand careful attention, evaluation, and application.

Implications. A balanced approach is necessary to determine the ethical, practical, and sustainable uses of AI. The future of AI in FCS disciplines will depend on our ability to navigate these complexities thoughtfully and collaboratively.

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Experiences of Community Educators Facilitating a Fatherhood Program

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Purpose: This work aims to explore the experiences of community educators who facilitate a fatherhood education program through cooperative extension. This includes an exploration into the educators' motivations for taking on their role, strategies for recruitment and retention, approaches to managing class dynamics, and the program's impact on participants.

Rationale: Historically, fathers were overlooked in parenting education programs and related research (Panter-Brick et al., 2014). However, broader recognition of the importance of father involvement has led to an increase in funding for father-focused programming (Perry, 2011). An expanding body of literature suggests that these interventions can promote positive outcomes, including enhanced psychological wellbeing, improved communication skills, and stronger father-child relationships (Henry et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2020). Facilitators are vital to the success of these programs. While some research has considered facilitator characteristics, particularly the role of gender (Frank et al., 2015; James et al., 2020; Siccouri et al., 2018), there is a paucity of research which considers the experiences of the educators themselves (Cederbaum et al., 2024). Leveraging the expertise of community educators provides an additional and unique perspective on fatherhood programming processes and outcomes, including insights into their own experiences.

Methodology: Strong Dads is a free program which utilizes the nationally recognized and evidenced-based curriculum, *24:7 Dad*, and is offered in nine counties, in both English and Spanish, through Oklahoma State University Extension. Educators are tasked with recruiting participants (i.e., fathers), leading weekly two-hour workshops for 12 weeks, and acting as coaches/case managers to help participants access resources, achieve their goals, and enhance their fathering skills. Qualitative interviews, each lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes, were conducted with nine Strong Dads facilitators (four English-only, five bilingual). To recruit interviewees, information about the study was presented to Strong Dads facilitators by members of the research team, and any who were interested were invited to participate. Three trained researchers conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom. Interview topics included their motivations for working in this role, recruiting and retention, facilitating classes, educators' challenges and successes, and the impact of the program on participants.

Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) as a guiding framework, members of the research team conducted an initial investigation by reflecting on key themes which arose in the interview data. Next, researchers collaborated to discuss these key themes and sub-themes as a foundation for an expanded coding scheme.

Findings: Several key themes emerged. Facilitators reported applying for the job because of a relevant personal interest or passion. Specifically, almost all facilitators mentioned a desire to improve children's wellbeing, and believed that engaging fathers would be an efficacious means to obtain that objective. One Latina educator described her interest stemming from her wish to promote a cultural shift in her community toward more father-child interaction. Educators also emphasized the importance of building relationships with community partners for successful

participant recruitment. These partnerships were described as especially important because of men's hesitancy to join the program without a referral from a trusted source. Indeed, encouragement from others (romantic partners, employers, friends, etc.) was a commonly explained impetus for fathers deciding to enroll. Meanwhile, frequently identified barriers to enrollment were the time commitments, which were perceived as lengthy, and conflicting work schedules. Facilitators repeatedly highlighted that a successful cohort was characterized by fathers building camaraderie and connection through "opening up" to one another. Educators described the vital role they played in this process by promoting dialogue and being vulnerable themselves through sharing personal stories. Despite the available incentives for participants (free meals, gas cards, gift cards for completing surveys), facilitators reported that they believe nearly all the fathers are intrinsically motivated to better themselves, particularly for the sake of their children. Facilitators shared that they believe the program has a positive impact on every participant to some extent, recounting that they hear from both fathers and their significant others how they have improved their communication, have increased empathy, and are more involved with their children. Facilitators reported that the job was rewarding, and they enjoyed witnessing fathers make changes in their lives to reach their goals. However, a final theme that emerged was the pragmatic struggles associated with the position such as paperwork, budgets, and trying to meet quotas required by the program's funding contract — elements of the job that sometimes feel disconnected from their loftier goals of strengthening fathers and families.

Conclusions: Facilitators of fatherhood programs are often an underutilized resource for program development. Thematic analysis of interviews conducted with Strong Dads facilitators revealed important insights related to participant recruitment and retention, class dynamics, the impact of the program, and insights into educators' experiences, including their practical, everyday struggles.

Implications for research and/or practice: Additional research should continue to explore both facilitator insights and the characteristics of facilitators that contribute to positive processes and outcomes. Such work could guide successful program implementation by informing the development of effective job descriptions, hiring candidates likely to excel, identifying areas for administrative improvement, and illuminating ways to better support and train educators.

Navigating Roles: Fathers' Experiences with Attending a Cooperative Extension Fatherhood Program

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of fathers participating in a community fatherhood education program and how they view their roles as fathers.

Rationale: Decades of research have highlighted the impact that fathers can have in their children's lives. Father involvement promotes a host of positive outcomes such as psychological wellbeing, healthy peer relationships, and academic achievement (Ford et al., 2023; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Wilcox, 2014), while also protecting against deleterious outcomes such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, poverty, and delinquent behaviors (Chetty et al., 2020; Kofler-Westergren et al., 2010; McLanahan et al., 2013). In addition to benefits for their children, involved fathers tend to have greater economic stability, better mental and physical health, and a greater sense of purpose (Kotila & Dush, 2013). Despite the evidence indicating the importance of father involvement, many fathers lack confidence or do not see themselves as valuable (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2006), and approximately one-quarter of children in the United States live without a father in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Mounting evidence suggests that fatherhood-focused intervention/education programs can help to ameliorate these issues. Such programs have been shown to contribute to increases in father involvement, cooperation with co-parents, and enhanced father-child relationships (Henry et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2020). Although an expanding literature points to positive outcomes related to fatherhood programming, comparatively few studies have qualitatively explored the individual perceptions of program participants (Henry et al., 2020). Qualitative interviews allow for a more in-depth analysis of how participants experience their role as a father and interface with community programming.

Methodology: Qualitative interviews, each lasting approximately 30-60 minutes, were conducted with graduates of a fatherhood education program, Strong Dads. Strong Dads is a free program which utilizes the nationally recognized and evidenced-based curriculum, *24:7 Dad*, and is offered in nine counties through Oklahoma State University Extension. Participants attend weekly two-hour workshops for 12 weeks which include discussion on topics such as parenting styles, employment, communication, and conflict management. In addition to facilitating workshops, community educators act as case managers by helping participants access resources, achieve their goals, and enhance their fathering skills. To recruit interviewees, information about the study opportunity was shared with current and former Strong Dads participants by community educators and the research team through personal contact and electronic means. Four trained researchers conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom. Interview topics included their experiences and beliefs concerning fatherhood, how they were introduced to the Strong Dads program, why they decided to join, their experiences interfacing with the program and other participants, the impact of the program on their lives, and their evaluation of the program. To analyze interview data, researchers employed thematic analysis procedures adapted from Braun and Clarke (2012) to generate, refine, and elaborate on themes that arose from participant responses. In an initial analysis, two researchers independently reviewed a subset of transcripts and generated their own schemes for coding themes. Next, these researchers collaborated to discuss the themes they observed arising from the data to identify key themes, sub-themes, and create a unified narrative.

Findings: Several key themes were identified in the initial analysis process. First, participants described navigating uncertain and evolving fatherhood roles in contemporary society. Many expressed a desire to parent differently than previous generations, particularly those who referenced strained relationships with their own fathers. While reiterating the importance of traditional roles such as financial provider, they emphasized the need to be more emotionally and physically present for their children than their fathers had been. This balancing act was touted by fathers as an important challenge to the societal status quo. This theme was also manifest in fathers noting that they benefitted from content about discipline, particularly discussions on how to maintain firm rules with children without being too harsh. Another key theme was group dynamics and camaraderie. Fathers enjoyed the process of sharing and connecting with other fathers. Other fathers often served as a reference point, including to validate and reassure them that they were "on the right path," and they weren't alone in what they were thinking, doing, and experiencing. Many participants enjoyed engaging with fathers from diverse backgrounds, taking on mentoring roles or being mentored by more experienced fathers in the group. For several participants, these friendships continued after their cohort completed the program. Overall, fathers had positive evaluations of the program and highlighted the importance of making similar programs available in communities.

Conclusions: The importance of father involvement has been made clear in the research literature. However, many fathers lack confidence in navigating their roles in an evolving society. Fatherhood programs can provide fathers with a supportive community, reassurance, and enhanced confidence in managing these roles.

Implications for research and/or practice: As many fathers experience uncertainty in navigating their roles, these findings underscore the value of making fatherhood programs available in diverse communities. While many programs focus on specific populations such as non-resident and/or low-income fathers, these results also shed light on the potential benefits of including experienced, well-established fathers who can serve as mentors. Themes demonstrating the significance of group dynamics highlight the need for program facilitators to foster interactions, create a comfortable space for vulnerability, and leverage opportunities to strengthen connections between fathers (e.g., alumni groups).

From Concept to Classroom: Creating an Animation-Based Flat Pattern Teaching Tool

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Purpose and Rationale: Student engagement in technical apparel design courses has shifted significantly in the 21st century due to technological and societal changes. Traditional methods, such as textbooks, studio instruction, and lectures, once effective for past generations, often fail to meet the needs of today's Gen Z learners, who are tech-savvy, visual, and prefer immediate results (Ashdown, 2013; Prensky, 2010; Weidmer, 2015). While educators have incorporated materials like demonstrations, graphics, and videos to enhance instruction, issues such as poor visibility, sound, and lighting frequently disrupt learning (Boorady & Hawley, 2008; Brandewei & Kim, 2019). Wianna et al. (2018) suggested these challenges could be addressed through engaging multimedia tools that integrate text, audio, video, and images. Animation-based teaching tools, widely used in fields like nursing, engineering, and architecture, have proven beneficial by offering user-paced learning, enhanced task visualization, and increased engagement (Hall, 1996; Wiana, 2017). Similarly, it is anticipated that patternmaking steps can be accurately mimicked through simulated dart movements and 3D visualization of patterns on dress forms, effectively addressing the limitations of traditional methods. This project aims to develop animation-based flat pattern making teaching tools that will be used to support instructional delivery while accommodating the evolving needs of Gen Z students.

Methodology: Flat pattern animation modules were developed in following stages:

Exploration of user-defined requirements for development of flat patternmaking animation modules: Student and faculty interviews were conducted at four HBCU's to thematically analyze current teaching and learning practices used in flat pattern design. .

Identify flat patternmaking techniques for developing animation teaching modules: A total of five animation modules demonstrating three principles of patternmaking: (1) dart manipulation, (2) added fullness, and (3) contouring, were developed. Both the pivotal transfer and the slash-spread methods were demonstrated under each principle. Specific pattern manipulations were sourced from Joseph-Armstrong (2010).

Development of animation module prototypes for selected patternmaking techniques: Animations were created using Autodesk's 3ds Max software. PowerPoint decks were prepared to demonstrate patternmaking steps for each module. Audio scripts were written to describe the steps for each principle. Scripts were professionally recorded in an on-campus recording studio. In total, five slide decks, audio scripts, and corresponding voice recordings were developed for each principle. All materials were provided to the graphic designer, who compiled them to produce the final animations.

Pilot testing of developed animation modules: Pilot testing was conducted to evaluate the animation modules across parameters including visual appeal, quality of voice recording, animation organization, pacing, and the extent to which the animations were beneficial, technically accurate, an asset to the learning process, and an aid in the enjoyment of learning flat

pattern design. A survey questionnaire, including both structured and open-ended questions, was used to gather feedback from animation experts, fashion industry professionals, educators, and students. A total of 10 responses were collected and analyzed.

Module modification and development: This was an iterative process where the pilot user testing results guided initial module development, fashion and animation experts feedback were used to refine and finalize modules.

Findings: Students and professionals who participated in the pilot testing provided largely positive feedback on the parameters evaluated. One professional shared the following comment about visual appeal, which was on theme with other pilot reviewers: *“Clean lines and basic shapes, as featured in the animation graphics are key elements that enhance the visual appeal. By keeping the animation graphics simple, you have allowed the focus to remain entirely on the pattern making process, minimizing distractions.”* Reviewers also praised audio quality, indicating that *“...voice was very clear and easy to understand...”* Organization of the content received further feedback such as *“Overall, I would rate the organization of the video content 10/10. From start to finish the instructions were clearly presented both verbally and visually...”* and *“Great! It was logical and easy to follow.”* Reviewers expressed excitement and interest in subscribing to a full series of animation modules. Constructive feedback centered on adding high contrast colors and labels during animations to aid in viewing clarity, improving zoom-in/out options, and facilitating rewind and fast-forward options. In addition, reviewers requested more imagery in the module introductions, to reduce the time for title slide viewing and to demonstrate flat pattern design in the industry context. Comments reflective of this feedback include: *“I would add more imagery during the first two minutes of the video,”* and *“...only to update the pen color to something noticeably different...”* All comments were reviewed by the research team and summarized to the animator. Recommendations included more imagery, more color contrast in lines, labels, and chapter breaks for easy navigation through the animation. The following animation modules were successfully developed via the project’s methodology: (1) Mid-Neck/Waist Darts, Slash-Spread, (2) Mid-Armhole Dart, Pivot, (3&4) Converting Darts to Shoulder Gathers, Slash-Spread and Pivot, and (5) Princess Seaming, Slash-Spread. Animation videos were uploaded to YouTube to aid in sharing and distribution. The development process demonstrated success in rendering and animating full dart manipulation, fullness, and contouring steps, in full color, using both slash & spread and pivot methods.

Conclusions and Implications for Research and/or Practice: The developed animations have significant implications for improving the teaching and learning of flat pattern design. Animations are currently being tested at partner HBCU institutions to collect more expansive student and faculty feedback, which will be shared during this conference presentation if accepted. Based on the feedback within course implementations, the research team will move forward to edit existing modules and to pursue the development of new modules, possibly in partnership with textbook and resource publishers.

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Integrating Ethical Education in Fashion Curricula: Preparing Students for Generative AI Challenges and Opportunities

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Purpose: This study examines the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) into fashion education, with a focus on how ethical considerations shape students' perceptions of GAI's role in their future careers. GAI technologies, such as text-based and image-based generative tools, are revolutionizing the fashion industry, creating both opportunities and ethical challenges. This research evaluates the effectiveness of an ethics-focused educational intervention in influencing students' views and identifying key ethical concerns related to GAI.

Rationale: The fashion industry has a history of adopting technological innovations, from automation in garment production to computer-aided design software. GAI, which autonomously generates creative outputs, represents a new frontier, bringing ethical challenges such as authorship, originality, labor displacement, and algorithm bias. For educators, this introduces the dual challenge of preparing students for an AI-driven industry while equipping them with critical thinking skills to address associated ethical dilemmas. Recent literature underscores the importance of integrating ethics into technology education. Studies by Floridi et al. (2018) and Mittelstadt et al. (2019) emphasize that ethical interventions can enhance critical engagement with emerging technologies. In related fields like media and design, incorporating ethical discourse has been shown to improve students' readiness to tackle real-world challenges (McNamara et al., 2021). This study extends these findings to the intersection of GAI and fashion education.

Methodology: This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of an ethics-focused intervention on students' perceptions of GAI. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Mixed-methods research is particularly useful for addressing complex social issues, as it enables triangulation of findings to improve validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research was conducted in two phases:

1. **Pre-Intervention Data Collection:** Surveys assessed students' baseline familiarity with GAI, perceived benefits and risks, and ethical concerns.
2. **Intervention Implementation:** Students participated in a workshop on the ethical implications of GAI in fashion, featuring case studies, discussions, and hands-on activities with GAI tools.
3. **Post-Intervention Data Collection:** Follow-up surveys and student reflections measured changes in perceptions, with attention to shifts in ethical awareness and critical thinking.

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify trends and significant changes in perceptions. Qualitative focus group data were examined using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with iterative coding to highlight themes such as algorithmic bias, copyright and ownership issues, and future ethical concerns.

Findings: The study highlights the importance of ethical education in preparing students for GAI integration in the fashion industry. Key findings include:

- **Increased Ethical Awareness:** Students exhibited greater awareness of ethical dilemmas, such as algorithmic bias, authorship disputes, and the societal implications of automating creative processes. These findings align with studies in technology ethics education (Brey, 2012; Stahl et al., 2017).

- **Nuanced Perceptions of GAI:** Post-intervention, students acknowledged both the benefits and challenges of GAI. While some saw its potential to democratize access to creative tools, others expressed concerns about biased outputs, copyright infringement, and devaluation of human creativity.
- **Role of Contextual Learning:** Hands-on activities with GAI tools, paired with case studies, effectively enabled students to contextualize ethical issues. This finding aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, emphasizing active experimentation and reflection.

Based on these findings, a framework is proposed to integrate ethical education into GAI-related curricula in fashion education. This framework includes:

1. **Hybrid Learning Modules:** Combine theoretical ethical frameworks with practical applications of GAI tools in fashion design. Ethics-in-action workshops and case studies (e.g., AI-authored design controversies) would help students explore real-world implications (Stahl et al., 2017).
2. **Iterative Ethical Reflection:** Embed reflection exercises before, during, and after interactions with GAI tools. Pre-use reflections allow students to articulate ethical concerns, while post-use sessions encourage critical evaluation of their experiences (Kolb, 1984).
3. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Foster collaboration with experts in AI, ethics, and fashion design. Guest lectures, joint projects, and mentorship opportunities would bridge theoretical knowledge and practical expertise (Floridi et al., 2018; Mittelstadt et al., 2016).
4. **Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks:** Introduce established ethical decision-making models, such as Rest's Four-Component Model (1986) or the Responsible Innovation Framework (Maynard & Stilgoe, 2017), to guide students in analyzing and addressing ethical dilemmas.
5. **AI Ethics Lab:** Create a controlled environment where students experiment with GAI tools and address ethical challenges. Activities might include scenario-based learning and collaborative development of ethical guidelines for GAI use in fashion.

Conclusion: This study underscores the importance of ethical education in preparing fashion students for the challenges and opportunities posed by GAI. By integrating experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ethical reflection, the proposed framework equips students with the skills needed to navigate an AI-driven industry responsibly. Future studies could investigate:

- **Long-Term Impact:** Examining how ethical education influences students' professional practices over time (McNamara et al., 2021); and
- **Interdisciplinary Comparisons:** Evaluating the framework's effectiveness in other creative industries, such as media or graphic design.

For educators and industry professionals, this framework provides actionable strategies for fostering ethical engagement with GAI in fashion education:

1. **Curriculum Development:** Design interdisciplinary courses that integrate technical skill development with ethical reasoning;
2. **Industry Collaboration:** Partner with AI developers and ethicists to expose students to the latest tools and debates; and
3. **Policy Formulation:** Use insights from this framework to shape policies on responsible GAI use in creative industries.

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Linking History to the Classroom: FACS Fashion Journey Boxes for Middle School Education

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) is a diverse discipline that focuses on skills to serve both families' and communities' needs and wants. The history of FACS is rooted in a democratization of education, as with the passing of the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1863, it established educational pursuits for the working class. Specifically, home economics, now referred to as fashion education, was a pathway for women to enter the public sector and refinement of the private sector (Shore, 2012; Parker, 2015). In the state of Georgia for middle school education (6-8th grade), the FACS program concentration of Interior Design and Textile Science introduces students to textiles and the various commercial and industrial uses which include fashion apparel products (Georgia Standards, 2023). There are 11 learning requirements, called academic standards for the FACS fashion studies concentration. Educators are always searching for innovative strategies to teach this hyper-dynamic content (Ha-Brookshire & Dyer, 2008; McAndrews & Ha-Brookshire, 2013).

The opportunity to teach and learn with historic clothing and textile objects encourages students to think differently about fashion and textiles; allowing students to touch and handle cloth and clothing situates fashion as an embodied practice. (Entwistle, 2000; Palmer, 2008). From this experience, students are better able to understand the physical experience of wearing the garments shown in artwork and photography, which are the typical ways in which design inspiration is found and communicated (Banning & Gam, 2013). Though the benefits of object-based learning are well recognized, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, university collections have emphasized the need to move towards digitizing collections to improve educational value (Pokkulandgara, 2020). Fashion historian Valerie Steele (1998) believes that it is important not to ignore the role that working with physical historic objects can play in the creation of knowledge, providing "unique insights into the historic and aesthetic development of fashion" (p. 327). Though fashion educators push for hands-on experiences that entice the senses, the use of historic clothing and textile collections can be a challenge or even limiting.

The purpose of this project is to connect Georgia FACS fashion education with historic objects for in-class educational exploration in fashion studies. To accomplish this goal, we created FACS Fashion Journey Boxes. Educational journey boxes have been used to eliminate barriers in education where access, resources, and expertise may be limited (Roy, Petty, and Durgin, 1997). Well-designed traveling boxes can be an invaluable resource for teachers who wish to provide students with the in-depth exposure to fashion issues that are critical in FACS.

To ensure the FACS Fashion Journey Boxes aligned with Georgia academic standards and learning goals, qualitative interviews were employed. First, the research team met with the seven middle school FACS educators in the Spring 2024 semester. Through these in-depth interviews, the research team identified the following (a) strengths and challenges in the fashion studies area; (b) best two learning units to target for the journey box creation; (c) needs and wants of FACS

educators. From this initial data collection, the research team analyzed the data through coding schemes and categories (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003), then worked with a southeast land-grant university's Special Collection Libraries (SCL) in sourcing and purchasing historic objects and developing curricula and teaching aids for the creation of the journey boxes. The FACS Fashion Journey Boxes would be available as a borrowable, no-cost education resource within a surrounding counties' school district area.

The findings from the data revealed the topics of the two journey boxes (a) fashion design and (b) textiles. Each journey box included modules to further dive into each of the topics to satisfy the state learning standard. Each module follows a general case-student format allowing teachers to have flexibility, control and opportunities for varied learning formats which includes learning materials/tools, student activity utilizing the learning materials/tools, introductory presentation, and other materials as needed. The fashion design journey box includes four learning modules (1) historic clothing playing deck of cards, (2) fashion illustration kit, (3) sewing kit, and (4) recreated 1903 Montgomery Ward catalog. The textiles journey box included four learning modules (1) textile and print/pattern swatch kit, (2) textile care and laundering, (3) textile supply chain then and now, and (4) sustainability with second hand clothing market. Each module engages students with historic textile and fashion objects along with learning skills and knowledge to prepare and entice students to potentially seek a career in the fashion industry.

The findings of this project have several implications and applications to any discipline. First, the findings give FACS educators a curriculum to apply in their classrooms that were developed from middle school educators feedback in collaboration with fashion merchandising higher education professors and special collection librarians. Second, this project format can be followed and applied to any FACS subject utilizing historic objects to deliver impact educational resources to public education. Finally, the journey boxes utilized several gamification strategies to help make learning fun and memorable. Further quantitative testing of the journey boxes' impact will be employed in future research, which will help in making this project more generalizable.

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MY CHILD WON'T STOP EATING CANDY AND DRINKING SODAS - WHO BUYS THEM? : MITIGATING CHILDHOOD OBESITY RISKS THROUGH PARENT LIFESTYLE AND HOME ENVIRONMENT

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Purpose and Rationale: Childhood obesity is a global public health challenge of the 21st century that is characterized by a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile for the child's gender and age (Afrin et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2004). The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that 1 out of every 5 American children is obese. Roughly 24.8 % of children classified as obese in the United States (US) are children of color (Maalouf-Manasseh et al., 2011). A child's risk of becoming obese during childhood can be due to genetic or non-genetic factors. Family environment, food parenting styles, home environment, parental lifestyle and social environment can also influence a child's risk of becoming obese (Ningning & Wenguang, 2023). Children's dietary pattern and behavior is significantly influenced by their home environment, family food culture and food parenting styles (Haines et al., 2019). Children less than the age of 13 usually have meals provided primarily by the parents; hence parents largely influence what consumption of children. Children also learn from their environments, including the home food environment largely influenced by the formation of dietary behaviors and patterns (Mahmood et al., 2021). This study sought to modify parental lifestyle and the home environment as an approach to mitigating childhood obesity.

Methodology: This 12-week cross-sectional study employed a mixed method approach. Study participants were North Carolina parent-child dyads who were selected using a purposive sampling technique with snowball effect. Preliminary data was collected using open- and closed-end questionnaires to assess the home environment and food parenting styles of the selected families. Anthropometric measurements (weight, height, waist circumference and BMI) were taken at baseline. Baseline assessments and measurements were done to help assess the effectiveness of the intervention at the end of the study. Using the *Family Connections* workbook, participating families were taken through nutrition education session, engaged in physical activities and guided to make modifications as a family, over a 10-week period. A post-intervention assessment and anthropometric measurements was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Qualitative data was transcribed and analyzed using content and thematic analysis. A descriptive analysis was conducted for qualitative data using SPSS Statistical software Version 28. A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to ascertain whether or not there was any relationship between the anthropometric measurements of the parents and their infants.

Findings: Baseline home environment assessment revealed parents frequently purchased their groceries in bulk. Parents reported grocery shopping of both healthy and unhealthy foods with more than two-thirds of the families reported ultra-processed foods as the easiest to access in their homes. Parents were seldom engaged in physical activities and if they did, they did not involve their children. Seventy-one percentage of the parents and 28.6% of the children were found to be obese at baseline. By the end of the study, parents in this study had adopted some lifestyle and home environment changes such as spending family mealtimes together and using my plate. This

aided in portion control and ensuring the consumption of a healthy plate while also providing children with fresh fruits and vegetables and making them easily accessible within the home, and engaging in physical activities together as a family. These modifications created a shared environment for parents and their children and were evident in the post-intervention correlation analysis. A stronger positive correlation ($r = 0.749$) between the endpoint weights of the parents and children was identified. The rates of obesity among the parents decreased to 57.1% while a plateau was noticed in the increase of obesity rates among the children.

Conclusion and Implications: Food parenting styles, dietary choices and behaviors of parents and physical activity are factors within the home environment that influence the health and wellness of the child. Unfortunately the majority of parents do not pay attention to how their dietary lifestyle and the home environment influence the dietary behavior and patterns of their children. The intervention was effective in creating an awareness on the influence of the home environment and parental lifestyle on the health and wellness of children. Parents were able to make informed decisions about modifying their lifestyle and home environment, which resulted in improving the obesity rates among these families.

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SAYING YES TO FCS: THE FCS STUDENT LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM - INSIGHTS FROM COHORT 1

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Purpose and Rationale:

Home Economics in the 20th Century, now known as Family and Consumer Science (FCS), is an interdisciplinary study focusing on the interactions between humans and their environment (Tyler-Mackey & DeBord, 2021; Werhan, 2013). The FCS discipline serves families, communities and individuals through career fields such as nutrition, child development, family studies, fashion, financial literacy, consumer sciences, etc. (Tyler-Mackey & DeBord, 2021). Student enrollment into FCS programs is experiencing a decline at national, state and local levels resulting in a major impact on the FCS workforce (Bowers & Myers, 2019). This alarming decline in student enrollment, retention and graduation from FCS programs calls for a collaborative initiative that will recruit, prepare and retain qualified professionals in the discipline (Bowers & Myers, 2019). With the aim of increasing student enrollment, retention and graduation in/from FCS programs and workforce, the FCS Student Leadership Pathway; an innovative and collaborative curriculum is designed to recruit, educate, mentor and retain students to pursue FCS careers by developing leadership skills. Utilizing a leadership capacity-building approach, through mentorship, education and training, the FCS Leadership Pathway attracts students to and retains them in FCS programs. This approach also provides an inter-institutional collaboration and partnership opportunity among minority serving institutions in limited resourced communities - North Carolina A&T State University (NCAT), Davidson-Davie Community College (DDCC) and T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) and Lexington Senior High School (LSHS).

Methodology:

Twenty-two (22) students who met the study requirements were selected to participate as Leadership Scholars (LS) - NCAT-11/ DDCC-3; TAMCC-4; LSHS 4. The racial make-up of the cohort one was Black-17/White-4/Hispanic-1 and all were engaged in a comprehensive and interactive leadership training focusing on six key modules: *Communication Skills, Critical Thinking, Cultural Competence, Interpersonal Skills, Problem Solving Skills and Professionalism and Dress*. The curriculum was accessed via the Blackboard platform. LS were engaged in synchronous/ asynchronous leadership activities and team building activities and exercises in each module of the curriculum and weekly mentoring by project investigators. In addition, a weekly professional development series was held via Zoom, in which a panel of FCS leaders/professionals from various sectors shared their varied pathways and journeys in the field. NCAT LS were paired and served as mentors and program ambassadors to the other LS to support their academic journeys. All LS completed the Clifton Strengths Assessment to identify their strengths and maximize their potential leadership potential. At the end of the 10 weeks, all LS received digital badges/microcredentials to digitally display recognition and completion of the FCS Leadership Curriculum.

Findings and Conclusion:

The leadership training and FCS career pathway mentorship provided through this initiative helped to prepare LS in becoming ambassadors of FCS. The initiative was effective providing leadership capacity to FCS students majoring in child development and family studies, food and nutritional sciences, fashion merchandising and design, and consumer sciences. Reflections from LS include:

Being in the FCS leadership program can significantly contribute to my development as a future leader/professional in the field by providing mentorship and guidance, sharing their experiences and lessons learned from navigating the industry.

My three growth areas as an FCS Leader are public speaking, networking, and communicating. Before starting this program, I was not the best at communicating and networking unless I had to. Throughout the program, I learned to grow as a leader, including working on my communication and outreach.

I believe that with leadership I'm able to communicate better with people. This helps me because I'd be able to speak with people in an effective manner and ask for help very easily.

Student reflections demonstrate personal growth including goal setting, adaptability and productivity. The program was also effective in retaining graduating LS into the FCS career workforce and or graduate studies. LS in the first cohort plan to serve as “train the trainers” for the next cohort of LS.

Implications: This project is designed to recruit and retain students into the FCS programming and to enhance the FCS career workforce with competent and well-diverse leaders. The scope of this multi-institutional project is designed to be replicated by other institutions, particularly 1890-land grant institutions to enhance the career pathways building leadership capacity among students within FCS-related disciplines.

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Redefining Mentorship for the 21st Century: A Focus on Retail and Hospitality Students

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Purpose. Nowhere is mentoring needed more than in the retail and hospitality industries as companies struggle with employee recruitment and retention. Approximately 20% of all US employees, or 31 million people, work in the retail and hospitality sector with over 49% indicating leaving retail in the next 3-6 months (Fuller et al., 2022). According to the McKinsey & Company report, lack of workplace flexibility and career development opportunities are the most common reasons US frontline retail employees are looking elsewhere for employment (Fuller et al., 2022). Specifically, retail employees cited concerns of inadequate career coaching, limited career growth opportunities, and little emphasis on knowledge development. Therefore, it is not surprising that many organizations are deploying mentoring initiatives in efforts to recruit and retain talented employees. Mentoring is a term that is often conceptualized differently depending upon the mentee, the mentor, and the specific context. This ‘definitional vagueness’ can impact research clarity, particularly regarding antecedents, outcomes, characteristics, and mediators of mentoring programs (Jacobi, 1991). Our exploratory study aims to develop an operational definition of mentoring that informs both institutions of higher education and retail and hospitality organizations as they develop relevant mentoring programs for the 21st century workforce.

Rationale. According to Kram (1983), mentoring relationships enhance both career and psychosocial development of the mentor and the mentee. Career mentoring functions, such as providing exposure and visibility, sponsoring, coaching, and protecting a mentee can provide direction for young employees. Conversely, psychosocial mentoring functions focus on relationships that foster acceptance, identity development, friendship and connection for the mentee. The question begs, are these functions relevant to today’s college students entering the workforce? What aspects of mentoring from Kram’s model are specific to retail and hospitality industries?

Methodology. The sample consisted of students enrolled in retail and hospitality programs at a large four-year public institution (n=744). Email invitations were sent to all students in the college asking them to participate in the study. Reminder emails were sent at one-week and two-week intervals. One hundred and seventy-nine surveys were completed yielding a 23.79% response rate. The sample was predominantly female (79.41%), employed either full or part time (78.38%), juniors or seniors (76.35%), and underrepresented (65%). Students responded to the prompt, “In a few phrases, words, or sentence, what does mentoring mean to you?” Data was analyzed using qualitative software, NVivo 15. Trained researchers checked for consistency using deductive coding based on Kram’s (1983) Mentoring Functions.

Findings. Student comments (n=157) were coded into two broad mentoring themes, Career and Psychosocial, and further categorized into seven secondary themes. Several comments provided rich and more detailed information allowing for split coding. Overwhelmingly, students defined mentoring within the context of *Career Functions*. There were 133 student comments coded

within this node. Comments related to *Coaching* were most frequently reported (n=80), followed by *Experience* (n=34), *Sponsorship* (n= 8), *Protection* (n=7), and *Exposure* (n= 4). The *Coaching* theme included comments such as “a mentor is someone to guide you and teach you,” and “helping me learn the best way to thrive in a given situation.” The *Experience* theme included comments such as “someone who has a knowledge of which would be valuable to you” and “someone who knows the ins and outs of a specific craft or subject.” *Sponsorship* included comments related to a direct benefit such as “advocating” and providing resources” to support career advancement. *Protection* included comments to help students navigate their careers by “taking them under their wing” and “preventing me from making the same mistakes.” *Exposure* included comments such as “connect you with the people you might need to know” and “someone who is able to show you things you don’t have access to in a regular network.” Surprisingly, only 40 student comments defined mentoring within the Psychosocial Function. Of most importance to students was identifying a mentor who was a *Role Model* (n=18), followed by *Connection* (n=22). The *Role Model* theme was supported by comments such as “someone that I want to resemble” and “someone who sets an example.” Comments related to *Connection* included comments such as “a designated person that has an interest in me and my career” and “someone I know that they will help me with my struggles.”

Conclusions. Based on the results of this exploratory study, retail and hospitality management students conceptualize mentoring with a career framework. This result is not surprising given that college students are intently preparing for their professional career through academic coursework, internships, and relevant work experiences. According to Kram (1983), the mentor/mentee relationship changes over time often beginning with developmental functions (e.g., coaching, teaching, sponsorship) and ending with psychosocial functions (e.g., friendships). Retail and hospitality companies would be well advised to develop mentoring programs that provide individual coaching and teaching to help young college students launch their professional careers. Conversely, academic programs must help students learn to set mentoring expectations, identify potential mentors, and foster meaningful relationships.

Implications. Our research highlights that a mentor is an experienced professional who serves as a role model, coach, teacher, sponsor, protector, connector, and counselor in support of another’s career growth. It’s no surprise that mentoring programs are difficult to operationalize when companies attempt to encapsulate the breath of responsibilities placed on mentors. To meet the growing demand, companies may be called upon to level up with innovative mentoring models which may include AI-assisted mentor/mentee matches, virtual off-site mentors, peer mentors, and special interest mentoring networks. Together, academic programs and industry leaders must commit to a culture of professional development to retain our best and brightest talent in the retail and hospitality sector.

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The importance of FCS post-secondary education for teacher preparation: A review of the literature (2006-2023)

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Purpose: This review of literature examined articles on FCS educator preparation programs published in three family and consumer sciences (FCS) journals between the years of 2006-2023. The aim of the review was to better understand the types of research being conducted about FCS educator preparation programs. The researchers examined trends in the research, practice, and delivery of post-secondary programs for FCS teacher preparation. An analysis of the literature revealed two overarching themes that are explored in detail: the shortage of FCS teachers and the specialized curriculum of FCS educator programs. Focusing on these themes can help inform and concentrate efforts toward maintaining teacher education programs.

Rationale: Preparing Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) secondary teachers has been a central element in the development of the FCS field. As FCS secondary education programs and courses have progressed over the years, emphasis has changed and the place of home economics and then family and consumer sciences in public schools has evolved (Duncan et al., 2017). Family and Consumer Sciences developed as a “women’s” field (Werhan, 2010), focused on the home and homemaking and then broadened to include many aspects of daily living and is now part of Career and Technical Education (CTE), narrowing to training for specific careers (Duncan et al., 2017). As the field has evolved and the names of programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels have changed, professionals have recognized the importance of branding it. However, despite recognizing its importance and the efforts at branding, the field has struggled with a teacher shortage and recruitment (e.g., Bowers & Myers, 2019; Duncan et al., 2017).

Methodology: To better understand the effectiveness of post-secondary FCS programs in recruiting and training teacher candidates, a systematic review of the literature published from the years 2006-2023 – the past 17 years of data - was conducted. The present review focused on articles from three journals: *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, and *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education*. These three journals are each seminal to the overarching field of FCS, which was the focus of the present review. Researchers fully reviewed the journals identifying any articles related to post-secondary FCS teaching programs. Researchers worked in teams of two to review the journal articles. Each research pair was assigned to review articles in a specific journal, and then the journals were divided by years within the pair, with one researcher reviewing articles from 2006-2015 and another reviewing articles from 2016-2023. After reviewing their assigned years, the researchers met with their partner to discuss the articles. The pairs of researchers then reported back to the full group what themes they found in their research. As a full team, all the themes were reported by the journal and then were further analyzed by the research team for overarching themes among the three journals. Only themes that were seen in at least two of the three journals are reported in this study.

Findings: Two main overarching themes regarding post-secondary education programs emerged across the journals, which will be discussed in detail below. These themes were: the FCS teacher shortage and the importance of FCS specific curriculum which had several sub-themes (diversity and social responsibility specific to families, FCCLA, holistic knowledge of the field, up-to-date FCS information, and the importance of service learning/hands-on experiences). Overall, the results indicate that FCS educator preparation programs have creative approaches to recruiting and are developing and preparing FCS teachers to be well versed in the field of FCS through curriculum that is up to date on issues like diversity of family forms and ethics specific to FCS. Each of the themes will be discussed in detail in the presentation.

Conclusions: The present review of literature compiled evidence that FCS post-secondary programs are important because they use the FCS National Standards as a foundation and they teach future FCS professionals about the holistic nature of the field, allow students service-learning opportunities, keep students connected to professional organizations like AAFCS and FCCLA, and ensure they understand and value diversity and sustainability.

Implications: We recommend a variety of future research including studies to examine the numbers of FCS secondary teachers who became teachers via post-secondary educator preparation programs and those using alternative certification programs and the outcomes and knowledge of these educators. We especially think that examining educator knowledge of the BOK, AAFCS, and FCCLA is essential for continuing the FCS field. In addition, research is needed focusing on how AAFCS and state affiliates can help support post-secondary education programs with recruitment, accreditation standards, and other needs to validate the importance of these post-secondary education programs. Finally, it is important that researchers in the field continue to examine the causes of FCS teacher shortages and how to promote policy. Throughout the reviews, researchers found many articles that look at the teaching of FCS specializations rather than FCS educator preparation as a whole. While the researchers for this project found research being done on FCS teaching and educator preparation, much of the research being produced is content-specific (nutrition, interior design, etc.) rather than relevant to teacher preparation. It is important for the continuation of the field to encourage research that specifically looks at the inclusion of FCS teaching programs that bring together all the disciplines in our field. Research on FCS teacher preparation programs specifically could provide help for struggling programs and give credibility to the field as a whole.

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The Relationship between Weight Status and Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Special Diets

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Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is a collection of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently regarded as part of conventional medicine (allopathic). CAM Special Diets is one modality found under the domain of biologically based therapies and is distinguished from conventional diets by being those used by the general public without input from medical professionals. This study examined the relationship between weight status and chronic disease (diabetes and hypertension) and the use of CAM Special Diets among adults 18 – 74 years of age. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between weight status and CAM special diets use. In addition, this study will explore how the relationship between weight status and CAM special diet change in the presence of chronic disease. Currently, research has not revealed these factors to any extent in a free living population. The three independent variables are weight status defined as 1) healthy weight (combination of underweight and healthy weight), 2) overweight, and 3) obese (combination of obese and extreme obese). The moderating variables are chronic diseases - hypertension and diabetes. The dependent variable is CAM special diets such as Atkins, Zone, South Beach, Vegetarian, Macrobiotic, Pritikin, and Ornish. The demographic variables are gender, age, race / ethnic group, education, and region of the country. Data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 2007, including the CAM supplement, will be used to conduct this investigation. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of people using CAM. This increase in CAM usage paralleled the increase in Body Mass Index (BMI) among Americans. However, little is known about the demographics of people who use CAM Special diets or their weight and chronic disease status. The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) CAM supplement 2007 was employed in conducting this investigation. Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical techniques was used to examine the study questions. The study hypotheses were:

- H1: Overweight and obese individuals are more likely to use CAM Special diets than individuals of healthy weight.
- H2: Overweight and obese individuals with a chronic disease are more likely to use CAM special diets than healthy weight individuals with a chronic disease.

The demographic profile of CAM users set forth in the literature was as follows: greater use by women; Non- Hispanic ethnic groups, people with higher income and education, as well as greater use in the western region of the United States (Barnes, Bloom, & Nahin, 2007; Eisenberg, Davis, Ettner, Appel, Wilkey, Rompay, & Kessler, 1998; Foster, Phillips, Hamel, & Eisenberg, 2000; Griner & McFann, 2007). Findings from this study document a similar demographic profile for CAM Special diet users except divorced individuals used CAM special diets more than married individuals. In addition general CAM use was more prevalent in the southern region of the United States. This study found that CAM Special Diet use increased as weight status increased. This study also found that there was no significant change in the relationship between weight status and CAM Special diet use in the presence of chronic disease. Since this was a cross sectional design, it is not feasible to draw useful programmatic inferences from these findings; however, they do provide additional evidence for future studies.

Use of Pre- and Post-Test Analyses to Determine Knowledge Gained by Food Science Students

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Purpose: A pre- and post-test system of assessment was used in four secondary education food science classes, grade levels 10-12, to determine knowledge gained for the 2022-2024 academic years. Purpose of the pre- and post-tests was to assess students' acquisition or mastery of information/knowledge related to the subject-matter areas of basic chemistry, organic chemistry, food preservation and packaging plus the scientific method as linked to the study of food science.

Rationale: To provide students with participation in hands-on food science experiments, a constructivist learning-type classroom was designed. Plenty of opportunities for students to share their experiences with each other, as well as having an open dialogue for asking questions, existed. By asking questions, students analyzed the information; thus, becoming good problem solvers. In this type of constructivist classroom, independent thinking was encouraged and everyone was respected for his/her ideas. The constructivist approach also incorporates critical thinking skills among students that can be learned from their peers as well as the teacher. Pre- and post-tests are a good fit within the pedagogy of the constructivist food science classes to validate (1) if learning occurs and (2) if knowledge is gained and retained from unit to unit as new information is presented.

Methodology: Knowledge gained was determined by the experimental design of pre-test, treatment, and post-test. Pre- and post-tests were used with each of the 13 textbook chapters that were covered in all four food science classes (N=120). Guidelines for utilizing pre- and post-tests were applied based on the I-TECH Technical Implementation Guide: Guidelines for Pre- and Post-testing. The pre- and post-tests for this study were generated by Goodheart-Wilcox publishing company. Students completed the pre-test for each chapter during the first ten minutes of class. When the pre-test task was completed, students were exposed to and learned subject-matter information by participating in hands-on activities; lab experiments; lectures; worksheets; and videos. Upon completion and submission of all required assignments for each chapter, a post-test was administered. Students took the post-tests during the first ten minutes of class, but before the next chapter was discussed. Pre- and post-test scores were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Students received both pre- and post-test scores to see improvements or what topic area would need to be studied for an upcoming exam. From this data the teacher was able to see improvements in knowledge gained; the existence of learning gaps; and assistance needed by students to review information before exams.

Findings/Results: By incorporating blended learning strategies between the administering of pre- and post-tests, the hypothesis was that students in all classes (periods 1, 3, 4, 5) would experience an increase in knowledge gained from one unit to another. Data did not support this hypothesis.

Only the first period class demonstrated that all students improved and gained knowledge throughout the academic years. These students exhibited excellent reading, comprehension, and study skills with no classroom behavioral issues. There were those chapters in which more

knowledge was gained than in others; however, there was improvement. One contributing factor as to why the pre- and post-tests generated increases in knowledge gained for some book chapters and not others may be due to students previously taking health, food and nutrition, sports medicine and/or chemistry classes. Because food science does not have pre-requisites, students can take other classes having similar content. First period students studied and improved grades in conjunction with understanding the food science subject matter.

Third, fourth, and fifth period pre- and post-test results showed erratic movement between high levels of knowledge gained for some chapters and negative results for others. These results may be attributed to classroom behavior issues; low attendance; and/or lack of motivation to learn. Results for the higher scores, like those for first period, may be attributed to students having taken other science-related classes. Due to high student absenteeism, students did not take some of the pre- and/or post-tests. Other students refused to take the tests.

By utilizing pre- and post-test assessments to gather knowledge gained data, the teacher was able to identify one (1) limitation, knowing that others could exist. This limitation refers to this type of assessment as not being able to identify if students are retaining subject-matter information for later use. In this situation, re-testing would need to be conducted. By incorporating hands-on learning activities, creating thought provoking and rigorous food science experiments, and initiating meaningful classroom discussions, this limitation might be resolved.

Conclusions: Some knowledge gaps were closed; combinations of teaching methods were created; and pre- and post-test assessments were beneficial to students' learning processes and to teacher's preparation of food science content/experiments to fill knowledge gaps. Between the pre- and post-tests, students engaged in a combination of teaching methods to create schemas for knowledge gained. According to the constructivist theory, students learn by doing. They learn from their experiences and from reflecting upon those experiences. By constructing meaning from life's experiences, students are able to grow as learners. By scaffolding on previous experiences and merging what already has been learned with new learning experiences, students are able to create more knowledge. Students are encouraged to be actively engaged in learning through experiments and other problem-solving techniques that require interaction; thus, creating stimulation for student achievement with knowledge being gained.

Implications for research and/or practice: Knowledge gained through use of pre- and post-tests relies on instructional decision making or direct instruction so that the student can complete assignments/tasks and other types of activities in a timely manner. It is essential for the teacher to know that students are learning. Assessment must be done. Assessment becomes part of the student-learning process and can guide them toward greater engagement in learning; therefore, becoming more self-confident and successful within the classroom. With knowledge gained being determined, the next step would be to determine mastery of skills within food science classes. Comparing both sets of data would reveal strengths and weaknesses within the food science curricula.