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Home Ecology to Home Economics and Beyond: Ellen Swallow Richards' Disciplinary Contributions

In the spirit of the 110th anniversary of the American Association for Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS), which was celebrated in 2019, this paper traces Ellen Swallow Richards' lasting contributions to the discipline and profession, focusing on the years leading up to its formation in 1909. Within a span of approximately 15 years, she conceived six new disciplines or names for the same: *oekology, home ecology, ecology, human ecology,* and *euthenics,* culminating in *home economics*, which is now called *family and consumer sciences*. Always, her intent, couched in the disruptive change and prevailing ideologies of the Industrial Revolution, was the control or modification of the home environment using scientific knowledge to secure health, safety and sanitation (hygiene), and efficiency for the betterment of society. Serendipitously tracing her visionary journey proved a fitting way to celebrate 111 years of always moving forward.

In 2020, the American Association for Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) celebrates its 111th anniversary. So named in 1994, AAFCS was formerly called the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), which was founded in 1909 at the end of the 10-year Lake Placid founding conferences led by Ellen Swallow Richards (American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, 1993, 2019; Fields & Connell, 2004; Kwallek, 2012; Richardson, 2002; Vincenti, 1997). Ellen Richards' historical contributions still remain of interest to home economists (Miles, 2008), sociologists (Richardson, 2002), chemists (Chapman, 2017), and environmentalists (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017; Kwallek, 2012).

This paper honors celebratory modern thoughts about AAFCS and *family and consumer sciences* (FCS), the new name for home economics in United States (AAFCS, 2019), and concurrently focuses on the history and development of home economics. This approach echoes the sentiments of the first Lake Placid Conference participants in 1899 (Fields & Connell, 2004). There were 9 more Lake Placid Conferences after 1989, with two of those held off-site. Brown (1985) and Vaines (1981) provided interesting profiles of who attended the Lake Placid conferences, where they were from, and the nuances of what they discussed such as the inherent political, philosophical, and ideological differences underpinning the gatherings. As a point of interest, 10 people (men and women) attended the first Lake Placid Conference, growing to nearly 80 participants 10 years later for the last one. A total of 289 individuals attended these over the 10 years, mainly from the U.S. but also from Canada (n = 17), Italy (n = 6), England (n = 4), and elsewhere (unknown) (Hunt, 1912; Vaines, 1981).

Disorienting Discovery

What inspired this particular approach to the AAFCS anniversary? My attention was recently drawn to Walsh's (2015) doctoral dissertation about *home ecology.* An urban design and environmental specialist with a social reform focus, Walsh (2011)

asserted that Richards "established the field of *Oekologie*, or Home Ecology, in the late 1800s" (p. 1127). She then said that home ecology lost its influence when it changed to home economics—when "home ecology became home economics" (Walsh, 2015, p. 95). In effect, Walsh (2015) professed that Richards chose the name *home ecology* for our profession before it evolved into home economics (see also Henderson, 1980; Kwallek, 2012). My intellectual need (an itch) to determine the veracity of this claim inspired this paper.

Walsh's (2015) assertion especially grabbed my attention because I knew Richards was responsible for coining both *home economics* and *ecology* (Clarke, 1973; Dyball & Carlsson, 2017; Hunt, 1912; Richardson, 2002), but the *home ecology* moniker and its relationship to home economics was new to me. My initial reaction to its attribution to Richards was surprise, which morphed into intellectual curiosity. In hindsight, I realize that my reaction was prompted by Walsh's (2015) sometimes conflation of *oekologie, ecology, home ecology* and *euthenics*, which I inadvertently discovered are, in fact, Richards' unique but progressively interrelated creations.

Back to home ecology. After an extensive, intriguing review of related literature, I unexpectedly discovered that Brown (1993), a home economics philosopher, had provided a very detailed discussion of Richards' approach to home ecology couched in a chapter on human ecology (see pp. 360–371, 396–399). Brown actually framed her discussion of home ecology as "human ecology according to Ellen H. Richards" (1993, p. 360). Brown's interpretation of history suggests that Richards herself did not call home economics "home ecology"; instead, the latter came before home economics. As an aside, not everyone agrees with this distinction; the Jamaica Plains Historical Society (2005) (where Richards and her husband had lived in Boston) asserted that home ecology and home economics are the same thing.

Walsh (2015) further claimed that "home ecology as practiced by Richards and her networks was relatively short-lived," changing its name to *home economics* "when it was incorporated into academia" (p. 95). This assertion also will be challenged. To clarify, the network that Walsh referred to was not the cadre of people meeting at the Lake Placid home economics founding conferences but rather the network of like-minded people that Richards had rallied around her vision of home ecology (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017; Hunt, 1912; Richardson, 2002).

Walsh (2015) further asserted that when "home ecology became home economics" (p. 95) (which it did *not*), it lost its connection to nature, context for social reform, and action-oriented praxis. Fields and Connell (2004) conceded that after Richards died in 1911, "the ideology of the home economics

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movement was becoming more politically conservative, less reform minded" (p. 256) but I assert herein that it did not cease *being* home ecology because it never *was*. Brown (1993) maintained that Richards set aside her vision of home ecology when she joined the Lake Placid initiative to create a new discipline that she and fellow founders eventually called *home economics.*

As I strove to reconcile my reaction to Walsh's (2015) attribution of home ecology (relative to home economics) to Ellen Swallow Richards, this paper emerged. I serendipitously discovered that Richards had created several disciplines before and after cofounding home economics, including *oekology, home ecology, ecology, human ecology,* and *euthenics* (see Figure 1). I realized that I could not discuss home ecology, the impetus for this intellectual treatise, without addressing its precursor and descendants. As a caveat, her introduction of these ideas to the world may not have been as linear as implied in this paper but there was a chronological, progressive nature to them nonetheless, reflecting her expanding vision (Wylie, 2005). As a caveat, the term *domestic science* was a forerunner of home economics (Apple, 1997; Daniels, 1994; McNeill, 2018) but Richards did not advocate for this nomenclature.

Oekology (Right Living)

Seven years *before* the first Lake Placid home economics meeting in 1899, Richards went public in 1892 with her idea for a new discipline that she called *oekology* (Richardson, 2002; Williams, 2011). This was her adaption of Ernst Haeckel's German word (with his permission) for the study of organisms in their environment. One set of scientists (male) took it up as the study of nonhuman organisms in ecosystems largely untouched by humans (Walsh, 2015). Richards chose instead to trace the word back to its Greek origins with *oik* meaning "house." With that insight, she creatively proposed the name *oekology* for a new discipline representing her idea of "right living" in the home environment (Chapman, 2017; Walsh, 2015; Williams, 2011). She eventually dropped the "o" and "k" and created the word *ecology* (Wylie, 2005), to be discussed.

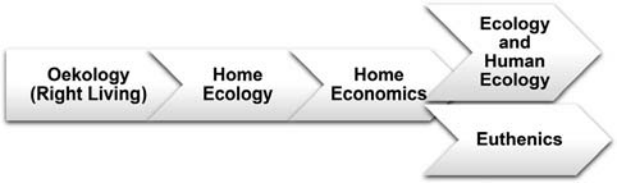

Figure 1. Disciplines created by Ellen Swallow Richards.

Seven years *before* the first Lake Placid home economics meeting in 1899, Richards went public in 1892 with her idea for a new discipline that she called *oekology*.

In more detail, Richardson (2002) referenced the November 30, 1892 *Boston Globe* newspaper front-page article about a public lecture where Richards had announced this newly created and named discipline. Richards is quoted as referring to the "knowledge of right living [with] Oekology henceforth the science of normal lives . . . which teaches the principles on which to found a healthy . . . and happy life" (Richardson, 2002, p. 27). This new academic discipline would pertain to "the science of the conditions of the health and well-being of everyday human life" (Clarke, 1973, p. 120) rather than life in nonhuman ecosystems.

In a subsequent book, *The Art of Right Living*, Richards (1907b) explained in more detail that "right habits of living" (p. 50) pertained to the safe care and preparation of food and ensuring adequate nutrition, sleep, and exercise; a solid work ethic (resolve and sacrifice); leisure time and companionship; appropriate clothing; care of adequate shelter; and sanitation and hygiene. It also involved paying attention to such municipal issues as labor laws, building laws, city crowding, and transportation. To that end, "she was a crusader for establishing a scientific basis for bettering human life" (McIntosh, 1985, p. 20). She was convinced that "a basic knowledge of scientific principles could improve people's lives [by helping homemakers] provide the

healthiest possible environment for her [sic] family" (Durant, 2007, para. 13).

However, Richards' efforts to entrench the idea of oekology met resistance along three fronts: disciplinary specializations (frustrating the interdisciplinary nature of oekology), immigration challenges to the social order and industry, and prejudice against women in a male-dominated society (Clarke, 1973). Durant (2007) observed that after Richards' public talk "it soon became clear that the science establishment dismissed her concept [because] it ran counter to that era's trend toward specialization . . . . [Male] scientists were more interested in focusing on their fields than in forging connections [necessary for oekology to work]" (para. 21).

Home Ecology

Although Walsh (2015) conflated *oekologie* with *home ecology* (p. 86), others do not, especially home economists; indeed, Brown (1993) stated that in the face of resistance to oekologie, Richards proposed a new and different discipline called *home ecology*. Clear definitions of *home ecology* are scarce. Walsh (2011) defined it as "the transdisciplinary, multi-scalar study of the interdependent relationships among humans and nonhuman life in the environments they call home" (p. 1127). As an aside, although Walsh (2011, 2015) did not define these two terms, *transdisciplinary* means at the same time being between, across, and beyond disciplines. This means that research endeavors always involve academics *and* non-academics (Nicolescu, 2014). *Multiscalar* (multiple scales) refers to independent but connected entities acting within their respective competencies ("Multiscalar," 2018).

Archives do not reveal that Richards actually called home ecology *transdisciplinary* (the word was not coined until 1970) although recent scholars have affirmed that her "science encouraged the involvement of non-scientists, such as civil engineers, public works officials, teachers, and business" (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017, p. 23); that is, it *was* transdisciplinary. Her contemporaries characterized her work as interdisciplinary (Hunt, 1912). As to the use of scales (i.e., multiscalar), in a 1910 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) convocation address, Richards conceptualized environments along several scales, "defined first as the family, then with the community, then with the world and its resources" (as cited in Swallow, 2014, p. 21). Dyball and Carlsson (2017) claimed that she was concerned with "the promotion of a clean and healthy [home] environment across a range of scales . . . from the home to the broader environment" (p. 21).

Brown (1993) further suggested that Richards' notion of home ecology focused only on the family unit and not individuals, relationships, or cultural traditions (i.e., social sciences), although Richardson (2002) reported that, at the time of her death in 1911, Richards was "moving closer to including social dynamics into her own theories" (p. 28). Although Richards (a natural scientist) believed the human mind is nurtured in the home and that culture may be important, she "made no place in home ecology for individuation in the processing of knowledge about the environment" (Brown, 1993, p. 366). "In Jungian psychology, individuation describes a process of self-realization—the discovery of one's life purpose or what one believes to be the meaning of life" (Amsel, 2016, para. 3).

Nor was there a place for "human reflectiveness," or how to improve the physical environment of the home, so claims Brown (1993, p. 366). Richards assumed that if people were educated about health (hygiene) and efficiency in the home, they could *apply* that education in *their* home, relying on external expertise rather than personal introspection. Accordingly, Brown characterized Richards' approach to home ecology (a "management science") as "environmental determinism" (1993, p. 366). In other words, *because* people are shaped by their environments, they must in turn create an environment that *shapes* them to value morality, intelligence, and efficiency. Incidentally, determinism is the antithesis of Walsh's (2015) characterization of Richards' work as transdisciplinary, meaning Walsh and Brown disagreed on this matter.

Brown believed that, for Richards, home ecology was a combination of biology, chemistry, and economics applied to human health, safety, and survival (i.e., hygiene) and efficiency in the home; in this light, it was "a science of managing the

environment" (Brown, 1993, p. 367). After all, Richards was a natural scientist (not a social scientist). As such, she devoted her life to humanity by focusing her efforts on using *scientific* knowledge to raise the standard of living at home so as to ensure a better human race. This involved a passion for science, a desire to better society, and a belief that women should be leaders in improving living conditions (Swanson, 2013; Weigley, 1974).

Richards' notion of home ecology was created at a time when Social Darwinism, the principles of classical economics, and the Protestant work ethic (industriousness, frugality) prevailed.

Also of note is that Richards' notion of home ecology was created at a time when Social Darwinism, the principles of classical economics, and the Protestant work ethic (industriousness, frugality) prevailed (Brown, 1993). Brown claimed that "Mrs. Richards embraced [these] traditions of American culture [leading her to narrowly profess a] biological orientation in [her] conceptualization of humankind" (1993, p. 365). This ideological reality caused her to inadvertently eschew the influence of culture and social relations on human development and progress. She was a victim of her time. In contrast, Richardson (2002) claimed that Richards pushed back against these prevailing ideologies, wanting a "rationally 'enlightened' capitalist economy, tempered by active intervention of a democratic government. It was always predicated on the belief that an educated citizenry could come to appreciate the importance of harmonizing technology and its inventions with the preservation of the natural environment" (p. 45). All of this would happen within the *home*; hence her new discipline of home ecology (Walsh, 2015).

Home Economics

Discouraged by the nonacceptance of—and male opposition to—home ecology, Richards decided to "lend her energy to the home economics . . . movement" (Brown, 1993, p. 363). Interestingly, Stage (1997) tells a different version of this professional transition, suggesting that Richards, dissatisfied with her success with home ecology, decided to "seize control of the nascent home economics movement [to ensure that it became] standardized, systematized, upgraded, and professionalized" (p. 25) (like home ecology had *not*). Durant (2007) painted this transition in a more favorable light, claiming that upon "recognizing that her [home ecology] idea was ahead of its time, the ever-pragmatic Richards instead turned her attention to [the home economics] movement for which the time was ripe" (para. 22). Weigley (1974) (as well as Dyball & Carlsson, 2017) shared yet a different story with Weigley explaining that while she was speaking at a non-home economics conference in Lake Placid, Melvil Dewey (of the Dewey Decimal System) approached her about a household science matter. This conversation spawned the idea of holding a conference about home economics the next year with her as the lead architect (see Wylie, 2005).

Whichever version of this part of her life is true, wherein she set home ecology aside, Richards *did* become the recognized and lauded leader of the fledgling home economics movement and orchestrated 10 years of meetings in or near Lake Placid, New York (see Figure 2 for a contemporary image of the boat house where seminal meetings were held). Brown (1993) believed that when Richards took on the Lake Placid initiative, her focus on home ecology ("*home* as everybody's home in nature") shifted to home economics ("*home* as a house with a family living in it") (p. 363). For Richards, "home ecology as an environmental science of the home" was replaced with "*home economics* [which] was devoted to management of the environment *in* the home" (Brown, 1993, p. 363). Richards' contemporaries credited her with discovering rich veins of research within the home when others saw only commonplace, mundane, humdrum, and menial work (Salmon, 1915). McNeill (2005, para. 7) observed that linking up with the home economics movement helped Richards "synthesize many of her scientific and moral interests."

Figure 2. Boat house at Lake Placid, NY, 2009 (Source: Author).

After a decade of "extensive philosophical discussion, the Lake Placid Conference participants settled on [the name] 'home economics' for the field of study they were developing" (Nickols & Collier, 2015, p. 15). In the proceedings of the final conference, home economics was described thus: "After much thought and a full discussion—*home* means the place of shelter and nurture for the children and for those personal qualities of self-sacrifice for others for the gaining of strength to meet the world; *economics* means the management of this home on economic lines as to time and energy as well as to mere money" (Richards, 1908, p. 20).

This definition reflects what is affectionately called "Mrs. Richards' creed" (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 59), published on a small card handed out at a 1904 home economics exhibit (view image at MIT's Ellen Swallow Richards Digital Library http://web.mit.edu/hartman/public/digital/photos/esr011.html). The creed is stated in full in Meisenbach's article in the 1904 proceedings (p. 31). To summarize, it would behoove home economists to help families create a home life that was ideal for contemporary times. They should encourage families to use modern resources to improve their home life, which should be free of factors that subordinate these ideals. They should help families to simplify their material life thereby freeing their spirit to focus on the more permanent and important interests of home and society. Concurrently, the 1904 proceedings contained the sentiment: "home is in the mind and the heart, not in the kitchen" (as cited in Stage, 1997, p. 33).

This so-called *creed* was deemed feasible because a much more balanced Aristotelean concept of *economics* prevailed when the name was chosen in the early1900s (McGregor et al., 2004) with the principles of classical economics as a new contender (Brown, 1993). Aristotelean economics comprises both *chrematistic* and *oikonomia,* representing a counterbalance between the market and the household for the good of society. A focus on the *home*, which is immersed in the *economy*, made sense at the time if home economists wanted to maintain this counterbalance, thereby neutralizing the potentially damaging effect of the market and industry on the home and society—Richards' impetus for home economics.

"*Chrematistic* [pertains to] the manipulation of property and wealth to maximize profit in the short term. It removes the market from the community and seeks unlimited growth. *Oikonomia* [pertains to] the management of the household with resources to increase value to household members over the long term. It considers the market in light of the needs of individuals and society" (McGregor et al., 2004, p. 12; see also Daly, 1996, and Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2009). *Oikos* is both the Greek word for "house" and the basis of the word "economy" (Kwallek, 2012).

When Richards proposed the name *home economics* (to replace *domestic science* and *household science*) (Daniels, 1994), she was defacto deferring to Aristotle's dual concept of economics: *chrematistic* (the rules of money making and of wealth and property accumulation) and *oikonomia. Oikio* represents public and individual households. *Nomoi* concerns adequate norms of conduct as people in those homes earn money, build wealth, and procure property and material goods. This approach ensures that people appreciate the interconnections between economics and ethics and all concerns for life (Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2009).

Anchored in Aristotelean notions of economics, and reflecting a philosophically deep description of home economics, the 1902 conference participants defined home economics as

> . . . the study of the laws, conditions, principles, and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man's [sic] immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his [sic] nature as a social being, and is specially the study of the relation between these two factors . . . . In forming a complete definition, however, it may be possible to consider home economics as a philosophical subject . . . while the subjects on which it depends . . . are empirical in nature. (Henderson, 1902, pp. 70–71)

In the year she died, Richards (1911) again reaffirmed that, for her, the purpose of *scientific* home economics was "nothing less than an effort to save our social fabric from what seems inevitable disintegration" (p. 122).

In the year she died, Richards (1911) again reaffirmed that, for her, the purpose of *scientific* home economics was "nothing less than an effort to save our social fabric from what seems inevitable disintegration."

"With her overriding 'faith in science as a cure-all [sic],' she felt that through the application of the principles of science to everyday living, the environment could be controlled and consequently the quality of life improved" (Weigley, 1974, p. 81). Richards was determined to use home economics to "improve living conditions in the home" (Durant, 2007, para. 20). By being rooted in the *home*, home economics was intended to strengthen families so they could breach societal and industrial walls and improve the human condition (Apple, 2015).

By way of clarification, the discussion of Richards' contributions pertains to both the home economics discipline and profession, which evolved concurrently. As areas of academic study, disciplines are comparatively self-contained and isolated domains of learning that evolve through research and scholarship. They possess their own community of experts (Birkoff, 2006; Nissani, 1997). The emergence of the home economics discipline involved the development of university units, higher education curricula, library holdings, and academic journals and gatherings (McGregor, 2011).

The home economics profession's complex, evolving body of knowledge (BOK) draws on the aforementioned disciplinary scholarship. As with other professions, home economics has standards of admission, requires certification or licensing, needs public confidence, and involves a responsibility to ethically serve the public. The home economics profession depends on codes of ethical practice and legal regulations, both of which are administered by professional associations. Aside from accreditation and licensing (registration under a law), the latter also attends to ongoing professional development and in-servicing.

The discipline and profession depend on each other (Brown, 1993; Kieren et al., 1984; Professions Australia, 2000).

Ecology

Actually, *home economics* was not the only name Richards proposed at the Lake Placid meetings. Despite that participants at the first meeting had agreed to use the name *home economics*, Richards nonetheless proposed *ecology* as an alternate name at the sixth annual meeting (Brown, 1985, 1993). Her version of ecology included humans because not doing so would imperil their health and that of the environment (Chapman, 2017). She earnestly believed that ecology with a human face had timely merit. Richards "saw the term 'ecology' (focused specifically on humans) as neatly capturing her broad concerns for human-created environmental conditions and the health consequences for people living in those conditions" (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017, p. 22).

To explain, Richards' approach to ecology was very different from that of male-dominated "scientific ecology, which . . . separated humans from nature in order to study the environment prior to human influence" (Williams, 2011, para. 4). In contrast, she was interested in how humans themselves could control and influence their environment, tied to her deep concern for "the connection between the environment and human health" (Durant, 2007, para. 17). For Richards, ecology extended "beyond biological systems to include a complex system of relationships that encompassed the home, the economic and the industrial. When industry threatened to disrupt the. . . . balance with . . . inequity, [she] believed that an educated population had the power to introduce balance back into the system" (McNeill, 2018, para. 11).

However, her conceptualization of human-focused ecology did not take hold at the time because the "male gate-keepers to 'proper science'" blocked her usage of the name *ecology* (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017, p. 25)—that is, the men in the biology discipline (Vincenti, 1997; Weigley, 1974). As well, Melvile Dewey advised Richards that she could not use the name *ecology* because it was already being used in the Dewey Library Decimal System with another definition (J. B. Miles, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Dyball and Carlsson (2017) claimed that Richards determinedly hung onto the name *ecology* for home economics for some time but finally acquiesced, settling (compromising) on *home economics.*

Dyball and Carlsson (2017) were further convinced that if Richards' human-focused notion of ecology had not been blocked by her male counterparts, home economics—with her at the helm—would have looked a lot more like ecology. They believed that Richards let the *ecology* moniker go by rationalizing its loss, perhaps exemplified by her following sentiment about home economics: "It is the economy of the human mind and force that is most important, and so long as the nurture of these is best accomplished within the four walls of the home, so long will the word *Home* stand first in our title" (as cited in Hunt, 1912, p. 270).

In 1904, at the sixth Lake Placid home economics meeting, Richards tendered yet another name for the profession—euthenics, a term she had created.

Euthenics

As Weigley (1974, p. 79) put it, the name of the profession "might have been *euthenics*." In 1904, at the sixth Lake Placid home economics meeting, Richards tendered yet another name for the profession—*euthenics*, a term she had created. *Eu* is Greek for "well" and *tithemi* for "to cause," with *euthenics* meaning to be in a good state (Daniels, 1994). At this meeting, Richards "mentioned the new word *eugenics*, coined by Francis Galton to express a better race, and suggested that euthenics or better living might be used to designate the [home economics] field in higher education" (Weigley, 1974, p. 96). Stage (1997) explained that Richards defined *euthenics* as "the science of controllable environment" (p. 27), thereby refuting *eugenics*, which professed social control through breeding. Euthenics deals with improving human functioning, efficiency, and well-being by modifying

controllable environmental factors (e.g., living conditions and education) (Grandy, 2006). It holds that "health, well-being, and capacity for development is [sic] based primarily on the environment" (Walsh, 2015, p. 91).

Although the Lake Placid attendees did not embrace *euthenics* as a name (Fields & Connell, 2004; Stage, 1997), Richards did not give up on this idea. In fact, in a book published posthumously, she launched euthenics as yet another new discipline (after home economics had been established with her as the first President of AHEA): *Euthenics, The Science of Controllable Environment: A Plea for Better Living Conditions as a First Step Toward Higher Human Efficiency* (Richards, 1910, p. 5). By *euthenics*, Richards meant "the betterment of living conditions, through conscious endeavor, for the purpose of securing efficient human beings" (p. 5). For clarification, "the supposed degradation of human efficiency, intelligence, and health in the cities after the mid-1800s prompted scholars to question how humans could be made better. They began to look at external living conditions to solve these social problems" (Swanson, 2013, p. 1).

Richards further believed that human vitality, achievable through euthenics, depended both on what happens preceding birth (heredity) and conditions during life. The latter are better assured through the control or modification of the home environment using scientific knowledge to secure health and safety (hygiene) and efficiency. She believed that the new discipline of euthenics could achieve this "through relating science and education to life [leading to] right living conditions" (Richards, 1910, p. 6). For her, when families were doing things *right*, they would be controlling their environment (informed by *scientific* knowledge) so they could achieve hygiene and efficiency (Richards, 1907b).

Daniels (1994) believed that, ultimately, Richards' broad definition of the environment was the reason euthenics "did not catch on" at the time. Euthenics was somewhat popular for a few decades after her death but without her to champion this new discipline, the last university program (Vassar) closed down in the late 1950s (Chapman, 2017; McNeill, 2005; Wylie, 2005). However, home economics continued to evolve as a discipline with some universities and professional associations re-embracing her earlier-proposed name (Richards, 1907a) of *human ecology* (Brown, 1993).

Human Ecology

Richards is credited with being the first person to use the term *human ecology* in her 1907 book *Sanitation in Daily Life* (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017), building on her earlier notion of *oekology* (Merchant, 2007). She viewed humans as part of nature, not separate from it. Because they are part of it, they are affected by it (Walsh, 2015; Williams, 2011). She thus defined human ecology as "the study of the surroundings of human beings in the effects they produce on the lives of men [sic]" (Richards, 1907a, p. v). She also believed that studying the environment involved concern for both a healthy home (family housekeeping) and a secure and healthy external environment by which she meant municipal housekeeping, not just nature (Dyball & Carlsson, 2017). At the time, municipal housekeeping held that the welfare of a city (i.e., municipality) directly influenced the welfare of homes. Health and welfare within the home thus depended on maintaining the health and welfare of the wider public by focusing on such things as food safety, public hygiene, sanitation, housing, and poverty (Scarbrough, 2015).

As noted, although the Lake Placid founders formally opted for the name *home economics* in 1908 (Richards, 1908), the profession turned again to *human ecology* in the 1960s and 1970s, justifying this movement by referring to Richards' (1907a) original comments (Brown, 1993). But the mid-20th century notion of human ecology was very different from Richards' earlier approach, which was narrowly focused on "the role of applied science in the interior environment" (Kwallek, 2012, p. 11); that is, the home. Her focus was on hygiene (i.e., health, safety, and cleanliness) and efficiency to address humans' decline and inefficiency arising from the social decay emanating from the Industrial Revolution (Brown, 1993; Richards, 1911; Swanson, 2013).

In contrast, contemporary home economists and FCS professionals view human ecology as the

reciprocal relationships among four levels of environments as they unfold over time: humans, human built (interior), socio-cultural, and natural (physical-biological-biosphere) (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993). And while contemporary conceptualizations of human ecology continue to embrace Richards' ideas of hygiene and efficiency (e.g., the sciences: biology, chemistry, physical engineering) (Brown, 1993), they also include (a) social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, law); (b) community and urban studies; (c) administrative sciences (e.g., management [economics, business and hospitality], leadership [political studies and governance] and technology); and (d) the arts and humanities (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988).

Present-day human ecology also embraces human development (i.e., cognitive, moral, and aesthetic) and the achievement of a meaningful, satisfying life (i.e., the human benefits of science in the home)—two things that Brown (1993) said were missing from Richards' (1907a) original approach. Indeed, home economists today link human ecology with critical empowerment and emancipation emergent from successfully leading and managing relationships and resources among the ecological levels.

This brings us right back to home ecology, which Walsh (2015) claimed is focused on "the interdependent relationships among humans and nonhuman life in the environments they call home" (p. 1127). To bring this discussion full circle, Walsh (2015) would have been more correct to claim that home ecology eventually morphed into human ecology, not home economics. This final insight satisfied my initial discomfort with her claim that "home ecology had become home economics," which had prompted this entire enterprise.

Wrap Up

This paper is a culmination of my attempt to determine the veracity of Walsh's (2015) assertion that home ecology, as created by Ellen Swallow Richards, had morphed into home economics. In the process of challenging this claim, I inadvertently discovered that, in order to meet her everlasting passion for bringing applied scientific knowledge into the home for the betterment of society, Richards had actually conceived several never-before-existing disciplines, or names for the same, some more successful than others, all richly, progressively intertwined yet distinct: *oekology, home ecology, ecology, human ecology,* and *euthenics,* culminating in *home economics* (which concurrently calls itself *human ecology, family and consumer sciences*, *home sciences,* and *consumer sciences*, depending on which part of the world is at play).

Richards often closed her correspondence with two simple words: "Keep thinking."

Serendipitously examining what Richards achieved leading up to and after cofounding home economics proved a fitting celebration of 111 years of always moving forward. It highlighted the patriarchal politics, theoretical, ideological, and philosophical underpinnings, and visionary nature of our century-old profession. Richards often closed her correspondence with two simple words: "Keep thinking" (Durant, 2007, para. 25)—a creed that served me well in this case. The very *essence* of our discipline and profession—its intrinsic nature and quality—was made possible by Richards' pioneering work around discipline creation and nomenclature—an enduring anniversary tribute.

Indeed, in a contemporary update, AAFCS, which Richards, in effect, founded, is now actively involved in the Alliance for Family & Consumer Sciences (2019). Founded in 2006 by AAFCS, the Alliance is a U.S.-based coalition (26 stakeholder organizations) whose common purpose is "advancing the value of family and consumer science globally" (AAFCS, 2019, para. 2). Richards' legacy is still alive. This Alliance is a fitting tribute to her seminal role in launching the discipline and profession more than 100 years ago.

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Additional Resource

The full text of Richards' (1910) book *Euthenics* is available at https://archive.org/stream/euthenicsscience00richrich/euthenicsscience00richrich_djvu.txt

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Point of View (continued from page 5)–Carolyn W. Jackson

We have developed content for hands-on learning opportunities using virtual reality or imagery. And our creativity has enabled us to keep our offices "open for business" from our homes. AAFCS' web-based systems made working virtually from each staff person's home a nearly seamless transition. It provided business continuity in a world where so many things seemed upside down.

Already engaged in providing virtual professional development opportunities, we transitioned in-person conferences to virtual ones, easily and affordably accessed from our homes. We will hold our first-ever fully virtual conference in June and we are offering AAFCS exams through remote proctoring.

We have managed our own lives in "stay-at-home" status while helping to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. We have been resilient, creative, and resourceful from our homes. It truly has been a time to focus on homes as a laboratory: a place to experiment and fail or experiment and succeed. We have been perfectly imperfect in our quest but there's no doubt that Ellen Swallows Richards' vision for our homes as laboratories has never been more relevant.