McGregor, S.L.T. (2007). Consumer scholarship and transdisciplinarity. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 31*(5), 487-495. Posted with permission from Blackwell Publishing.

Keywords: transdisciplinary, consumer scholarship, leadership, interdisciplinary, consumer studies, civil society

Abstract

A case is made for the place of transdisciplinary inquiry in consumer scholarship. After framing consumer studies as a discipline, the paper explains seven conventional modes of disciplinarity. Then, the discussion turns to the nuances of the transdisciplinary approach, and what consumer scholarship would look like within this perspective. Seasoned and emerging consumer scholars and practitioners are invited to brave the repercussions of stepping outside of their disciplinary boundary onto a rich fertile space where the academy meets society for the betterment of humanity. Consumer scholarship will never be the same.

****

This paper makes the case for the place of transdisciplinary inquiry in consumer scholarship. Transdisciplinarity takes knowledge generated within disciplines, and moves it beyond the boundaries of these disciplines to make new connections between academia *and* civil society. Transdisciplinarity does not call for the dissolution of borders between disciplines, but for the perforation of disciplinary borders leading to the formation of new synergy, new knowledge and new problems to be addressed between academic disciplines, and other sectors of society. People develop relationships in networks as they deal with complex and emergent world problems of humanity: human aggression, resource distribution, tension between world views, and the potential of empowerment through education (Lattanzi, 1998). This approach is very different from that of conventional disciplinary approaches that frown on transgressing boundaries between different fields of study, and think even less of working collaboratively with those outside the academy (McGregor, 2005). In this paper, the spotlight is held on consumer studies, and what it would look like from a transdisciplinary stance.

Consumer Studies as a Discipline

Before developing the idea of transdisciplinary consumer scholarship, a few moments will be taken to clarify the author's understanding of, "What is a discipline?" and "Is consumer studies a discipline?" A recognized discipline provides a practitioner with a home base, a tribal identity, a social stage upon which to perform (Chan, 2001). There are five overarching disciplines: natural science, social science, mathematics and computer sciences, the humanities and arts, and professional/applied arts and sciences (Academic Disciplines, 2007). Colleges and universities are usually organized around these disciplines, or fields of study. Faculty are tenured to disciplinary departments and programs. Concomitant branches of knowledge are taught, academic journals publish attendant research, library holdings are established and managed, and learned societies exist to which practitioners belong (Birkoff, 2006; Polk Community College Library, 2003; Wallerstein, 1999).

Birkoff (2006) tenders a useful discussion of the difference between fields, disciplines, sub-disciplines, and professions. A *field* is loosely knit collection of interests or specializations that may or may not have distinct boundaries. A *discipline* emerges when boundaries are drawn around a field to create a branch of knowledge reflecting a particular area of study. A *sub-*

discipline is field of specialized study within that broader discipline. Sub means below or under, and refers to the division of a discipline into smaller, more specialized sections. A *profession* is an activity that involves a responsibility to serve the public, has a complex, evolving body of knowledge (drawing from disciplinary scholarship), has standards of admission, requires certification or licensing, and has a need for public confidence (Brown, 1993).

Academics often argue amongst themselves about whether their field of study is a discipline, or a sub-discipline. Indeed, fields of study (disciplines) usually have several sub-disciplines or branches, and the lines between them are often both arbitrary and ambiguous (Academic Disciplines, 2007). Consumer studies is no exception. In truth, many people trained in the area of consumer studies and consumer behaviour draw on courses from both FCS and marketing. Consumer studies is regularly classified as a sub-discipline of family and consumer studies (FCS) (home economics) which, itself, is recognized as both a field of study (a discipline), and a profession. Both Ekström (2003) and Beckmann and Elliott (2002) conceive *consumer behaviour* as a new field of study emerging out of the traditional discipline of marketing, also self-conceived as a profession. For further distinction, consumer studies has a focus on consumer empowerment while consumer behaviour has a focus on increasing business growth and profit, by better understanding the consumer.

It could be said that the past quarter of a century has witnessed a sharpening of the boundaries between the traditional disciplines of family and consumer sciences (home economics) and marketing and those of consumer studies. For many years, consumer studies has been perceived by some as a separate discipline[1] with attendant university degrees and programs, journals (of which this is one), professional associations, library holdings, and with professionals seeking accreditation and professional status. Indeed, Chenoweth, Eigsti and Stampfl (1984) report that consumer studies comprises four areas of specialization: (a) consumer sciences, (b) consumer studies, (c) consumer affairs (policy and advocacy), and (d) consumer education. In effect, they suggest that consumer studies is a discipline, with four sub-disciplines. Consumer science refers to the generation and application of *basic* research about consumer economics, family economics and resource management. It analyzes the actions and interactions between consumers and markets. Consumer studies refers to an *applied* approach using the research generated via basic science so as to enhance individual and familial economic security and well-being. Consumer affairs implies consumer activism and advocacy in the political arena and in the marketplace *on behalf* of consumers. Consumer education involves a process of gaining the knowledge and skills needed to manage consumer resources and to take actions to influence the factors which affect consumer decisions.

Some readers may consider consumer studies to be discipline in its own right, with four areas of specializations (sub-disciplines). Others may consider consumer studies to be a sub-discipline of FCS (home economics), marketing, other disciplines, or some combination. Some may be undecided. For the sake of this paper, indulge the idea that *consumer scholarship* can

---

[1] Consumer studies has been shaped, reshaped and reconsidered for over 100 years, with its roots in home economics in the late 1800s. Business and marketing scholars became interested in consumer behaviour in the 1950s. The consumer protection and consumer interest movements of the 60s and 70s gave the discipline further momentum. Other disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology and sociology, also straddled the field of consumption studies (Foxall & Goldsmith, 2005; Goldsmith, 2005).

benefit and grow if it is informed by ideas related to transdisciplinary inquiry.

Conventional Modes of Disciplinarity in Consumer Scholarship

Transdisciplinarity concerns that which is, *at the same time*: between the disciplines, across the disciplines, and beyond all disciplines (Nicolsecu, 2002). Consumer scholarship as we know it is mainly confined to work influenced by a few disciplines (sociology, marketing, psychology, economics, home economics). To respect current comfort levels with conventional modes of scholarship, while calling for a transition to the transdisciplinary approach, this paper will tender a discussion of the different kinds of disciplinarity that have informed general scholarship to date, leading to a fuller description of transdisciplinarity, and its potential for consumer scholarship. Becoming conscious of how the concept of disciplinarity evolved, and how it has shaped the work and thinking of other scholars, is a prerequisite to developing a vision for how to move beyond, to transcend, the disciplinary mode of consumer scholarship.

Disciplinarity is a term referring to a branch of knowledge or teaching, often in the academy. It stems from the Latin roots *disciplulus* for pupil, or *disciplina* for the teaching of disciples (Brown, 1993). Disciplines are understood to be areas of academic study that are part of a larger body of learning. They are comparatively self-contained and isolated domains of learning that possess their own community of experts (Nissani, 1997). When referring to the nature of theory, education, research, and knowledge generation in the academy, several terms are usually employed: monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, pluridisciplinary, interdisciplinary (Regeer, 2002) and, more recently, postdisciplinary. Transdisciplinary was also recognized as a form of disciplinarity nearly 40 years ago at meetings about interdisciplinarity held by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Apostel, Berger, Briggs & Machaud, 1972). In fact, the term transdisciplinarity appeared in academic texts as early as the 1970s (Schneider, 2003).

As Nissani (1997) and Brown (1993) note, many of these terms seem to defy definition. Indeed, Schneider (2003) refers to them as 'close cousins.' Bruun, Hukkinen, Huutoniemi and Klein (2005) call them 'neighbors.' Mittelstrass (2000) claims that pure forms of disciplinarity are very rare, because they are usually realized and understood in the context of their neighbors. Yet, they will be distinguished here, both for the sake of conceptual clarity, and for truly setting transdisciplinarity apart as a powerful new dimension of consumer scholarship (see Table 1).[1]

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Monodisciplinary

Mono means one. This approach to practice, research and leadership means that only one discipline is brought to bear to solve a societal problem. Often, just one branch within this one discipline is drawn upon - evidence of deep, fragmented specialization. People working in one discipline (e.g., law, economics, sociology) study the same research objects, share the same paradigm (world view and set of assumptions about what is real), use common methodologies, and speak the "same" language and lingo (Regeer, 2002). Ertas (2000), among many others, refers to the idea of *intradisciplinary* communication, a form of well-developed, exclusionary disciplinary jargon that precludes any permanent bridges between disciplines. Indeed, Wallerstein (1999, p.222) notes that individual "disciplines are organized like corporate structures in the form of university departments, programmes of instructions, degrees, scholarly journals, national and international associations, and even library classifications." Bevan (2003) suggests that scholars in different, separate disciplines are in competition with each other for funding, and for an intellectual space where they can express their ideas while confined within their disciplinary boundaries. Regeer asserts that while single disciplinary work has its place, it is limiting when

trying to solve complex societal problems, because only one lens is brought to bear on the dynamics inherent in the complexity.

Multidisciplinary

Multidisciplinary research and practice moves us beyond just *one* discipline into the realm of several disciplines. From this stance, someone practicising a root discipline (e.g., economics) may turn to people working in several other disciplines to help them solve a problem. While many perspectives are shared, the intent it to serve the needs of the originator of the collaboration. Once the work is done, everyone goes back to their respective places (McGregor, 2005; Nicolescu, 1997, 2002). If people simply mingle disciplines to problem solve, with each discipline maintaining its distinctiveness, they remain multidisciplinary (Colins, 2002). People from respective disciplines retain their independence, temporarily taking direction from a team leader. This leader is the person who sets the goal(s) of the team's work (Macgill-Evans, Hodge & Darrah, 2002). Brown (1993) adds a further clarification. If people engage in multidisciplinary studies, they simultaneously take courses from many different disciplines, but do not attempt to integrate them in any way.

Crossdisciplinary

Brown (1993) claims that when people, prepared in different areas of study, cooperate to solve a particular problem, they are engaging in work *across disciplines*. They enter this work because they feel that the problem cannot be dealt with adequately within the confines of one discipline. Also, the problem being addressed is limited in scope, usually needing to be solved within a time frame, a particular context, or both. Each field or discipline contributes its knowledge to address the problem. But, no effort is made to create new patterns of integrated knowledge. Instead, the contributions remain separate and parallel.

Ofer (2005) describes crossdisciplinarity from a different perspective. He sees it as the process of viewing one discipline from the perspective of another. It is assumed that one discipline will have hegemony over the other, such that the second discipline becomes a passive object of study rather than an active system of thought. An example is using the principles of physics (the hegemony discipline) to understand the acoustics of music (the passive discipline).

Pluridisciplinary

Pluri is Latin for *more or many*. In academia, it refers to merging two disciplines that are not normally considered to be related to each other. In fact, pluridisciplinary assumes that, in order to be competent in one's root discipline, one must attain and understand knowledge from other disciplines in order to teach, do research, or learn. Brown (1993) clarifies that, from a pluridisciplinary stance, investigation or study in one discipline is *dependent* on understandings gained through study in other disciplines. Knowledge is generated in separate disciplines, *but* practitioners or leaders cannot do their work without drawing on a wide knowledge base. A simple example is the nutritionist who cannot practice effectively unless he or she is familiar with chemistry and biology.

Interdisciplinary

The term 'interdisciplinary' entered our vocabulary in the 1920s (Klein, 1996). While the multidisciplinary approach juxtaposes specialists by sitting them down beside each other at the table, the interdisciplinary approach coordinates their expertise (Lattanzi, 1998). *Inter* means between. So, interdisciplinary means interaction among two or more disciplines. Nicolescu (1997, 2002) clarifies that, while multidisciplinary refers to work that remains grounded in the framework of one discipline, interdisciplinary concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another for: (a) new applications, (b) new analyses, or (c) the generation of entire new disciplines (an

example of which is home economics, called family and consumer sciences in the United States). In its true sense, interdisciplinary work involves integrating several disciplines to create a unified outcome or perspective that is sustained and substantial enough to create an entire new discipline (Colins, 2002).

When solving problems from the interdisciplinary approach, people are organized into a common effort, focused on a common, agreed-to problem with continuous communication (Lattuca, 2003). A team leader coordinates the process of creating group-identified goals and activities. Individual people assume the role of expert in their field and, hence, offer parallel analysis of parts of a problem (Magill-Evans et al., 2002). A new synergy emerges from the transfer of information, and the creation of knowledge among people from different disciplines. But, the intent is not to *understand the world*, just to solve a complex problem in that world. Society loses when leaders use just the interdisciplinary approach because people are not able to deal with the profound complexity of today's problems, including: poverty, unsustainability, exploitation and oppression, corporate-led globalization, capitalism, and free market ideologies. Leaders need another approach that pushes the boundaries of their thinking.

Postdisciplinary

A new hybrid of interdisciplinarity is postdisciplinarity (Sayer, 2003). It brings us closer to transdisciplinarity. It is concerned with dismantling the boundaries between disciplines. It stops short of transdisciplinarity because there is no concern for the link between disciplines in academia *and other sectors*. Postdisciplinary scholars tend to identify with *learning* rather than with particular disciplines. They follow ideas and connections wherever they lead, instead of following them as far as the border of their discipline (Sanghera, 2001). Fahlander and Oestigaard (2004) agree, noting that, from a postdisciplinary perspective, the disciplines do not unite people. Rather, the unifying factors are the *questions* they ask, and the topics they study.

Postdisciplinarians believe that boundaries around disciplines are hindrances and obstacles to gaining new knowledge (Smith, 1998). They reject inherited disciplinary boundaries as they pursue particular approaches to scholarship across a changing spectrum of broad topics. Instead of getting hung-up on maintaining historical boundaries, they opt, instead, to: (a) debate and evaluate different contributions from respective disciplines, (b) question assumptions stemming from particular disciplines, and (c) explore the scope of insights and concepts that are possible beyond the traditional boundaries that hem in disciplines. In effect, they are open to creating an "intellectual playground" where they can be critical and contrary in a safe, valued environment (Jessop, 2006, p.2).

While this approach to leadership is exciting and evolutionary, it is still not transdisciplinary in nature because it is confined to disciplines. Wolmark and Gates-Stuart (2004) refer to it as a hybrid of interdisciplinarity, one that blurs the boundaries between disciplines. Resultant practice tends to be fluid, fuzzy-edged, and intellectually exciting, because it tests the limits of existing disciplinary boundaries while remaining disciplinary in nature. People leading or practicising from this stance are not driven by a compulsion to provide definitive answers or to fulfil prescribed outcomes. Instead, they problem-solve and interact *within discipline* boundaries, which are continually modulating into horizons (Eagleton, 2000, p.96).

Transdisciplinarity

The previous section briefly outlined the "disciplinary legacies of the 20th century" (Parkes et al., 2005, p. 259). This section will elaborate on the two most recent manifestations of disciplinarity, one called "hybrid interdisciplinarity' and the other, referred to in this paper as, "authentic transdisciplinarity." Both are concerned with knowledge generation used to solve

social problems. The former is evolving within the confines of academia while the latter has broken free from disciplinary boundaries to embrace other sectors in society. It is the latter which is the focus of the remainder of this paper, with many ideas tendered about how consumer scholarship is challenged within this new form of disciplinarity.

Narrow Transdisciplinary (Hybrid Interdisciplinarity)

The term and idea of transdisciplinarity appeared in academic texts during the 1970s (Schneider, 2003). At that time, findings from separate disciplinary stances were less and less relevant to the world's complex reality. Approaches to leadership and scholarship were becoming stale and sterile, impeding scholarship and growth (Brown, 1993; Morgan et al., 2003; Regeer, 2002; Schneider, 2003). Ertas (2000), referring to this time in academic history, calls for some level of intellectual control and integration on the *knowledge islands* comprising academia. This separation was recognized in the original OECD typology of disciplinary approaches, which included transdisciplinarity. They used the term to connote research frameworks that rejected the narrow scope of disciplinary worldviews ((Apostle et al., 1972; Bruun et al., 2005).

Transdisciplinarity emerged as a concept designed to deal with the fallout from the fragmentation of academic knowledge into specializations, and the resultant conduction of research in personal isolation, and disciplinary silos. Wolmark and Gates-Stuart (2004) take us forward to the present day, suggesting that times are changing in the academy, that discipline boundaries are becoming more flexible, and that more people are challenging the exclusivity of fields of knowledge, and their concomitant truth. Within the confines of this changing disciplinary context, many academics have opted to stay within familiar territory by narrowly defining transdisciplinarity as a specific *form* of interdisciplinarity, an approach that focuses on the interplay *among disciplines* (Lattuca, 2003; Mittelstrass, 2000; Nissani, 1997; Regeer, 2002). Mittelstrass claims that this form of interdisciplinarity removes impasses among disciplines, blockages that can impair both the identification and development of problems, and their subsequent solutions. The intent of narrow transdisciplinary collaboration is the development of an overarching synthesis. But, this is done within a collection of academic areas of study (a collection of disciplines), not between the academy and civil society.

This paragraph shares four recent examples of hybrid transdisciplinarity. In a description of the transdisciplinary approach to mapping the hydrocarbon molecule, the project leader noted that, "we all went back to our respective *disciplines* (italic added) having found crucial new perspectives" (Schneider, 2003, p. 14). Also, when describing the complex dynamics of creating 'a transdiscipline' in the academy, Ertas (2000) limits the process to knowledge generation *among disciplines* within the academy, and to research organizations. Magill-Evans et al. (2002) clarify that creating a transdisciplinary team of academic researchers entailed "melding knowledge from *each discipline* into a single framework identified [and then used] by the team" (p. 222). No one outside of academia was involved. This was an initiative within the university community designed in such a way that each member could maintain their firm anchor in their home discipline while working across disciplines. Finally, a new Masters of Leadership (Transdisciplinary) degree, at the University of Southern Queensland (2006), in Australia, embraces a narrow, disciplinarian view of transdisciplinary, defining it as an approach to problem solving that makes simultaneous use of *many disciplines* to focus on a problem within a holistic framework. Again, no agents from civil society are involved.

Authentic Transdisciplinarity

The version of transdisciplinarity now in vogue around the world is concerned with the synergy created at the interface between academia *and* civil society, far beyond the walls of

academia (Nicolescu, 2002; Regeer, 2002). The movement from a narrower to a more authentic conceptualization of transdisciplinarity continues to be shaped by Basarab Nicolescu (Bruun et al., 2005), a Romanian quantum physicist. Nicolescu, and his cohorts at the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research http://nicol.club.fr/ciret/english/indexen.htm, strive to broaden the focus of research, scholarship, and inquiry to generate and embrace different kinds of knowledge. Indeed, they strive to genuinely, totally, transcend 'disciplinarity,' while respecting the interim need for separate disciplines. They do so by advocating that people create knowledge while cutting across disciplines, and then integrate and synthesize these content, theories, insights, and methodologies with *any other domain of activity* that will shed light on the human problem being addressed (Russell, 2000).

From an authentic transdisciplinary approach, there is a sharing of approaches and assumptions, in dialogue, in order to weave together new approaches to complex social issues (Lattanzi, 1998). Consumer scholars would move from sharing different analyses or creating new applications to creating a space for shared dialogue. This dialogue would lead to joint analyses using new approaches that could not have existed without the crisscrossing of ideas to weave together a new web of knowledge.

The objective of the current trajectory of transdisciplinarity is to understand the present world, in all of its complexities, instead of focusing on one part of it (Nicolescu, 1997, 2002). Indeed, this genre of transdisciplinary research is being conceptualized as both: (a) a specific kind of interdisciplinary research involving scientific and non-scientific sources or practice; and, more excitingly, (b) a new form of learning and problem solving involving cooperation among *different parts of society*, including academia, in order to meet the complex challenges of society. Through mutual learning, the knowledge of all participants is enhanced. This new learning is used to collectively devise solutions to intricate societal problems, which are interwoven (Regeer, 2002). Out of the dialogue between academia and other parts of society, new results and new interactions are produced, offering a new vision of nature, and reality (Nègre, 1999).

Implications of Transdisciplinarity for Consumer Scholarship

Transdisciplinarity assumes that knowledge is generated and sustained in the context of where it will be applied, rather than developed first, and then applied later by a different group, as is the case with basic science. For consumer scholars, this means that it is the context where the knowledge will be applied that matters, not the agenda of the disciplinary home of the scholars (Gibbons et al., 1994). The result is a new kind of knowledge - transdisciplinary knowledge - that complements traditional, disciplinary knowledge. A *new intellectual space* is formed in which resides a gradual cross-fertilization resulting from the convergence of different paths in the spirit of conviviality and celebration (Lattanzi, 1998). This type of knowledge is globally open. It entails both new visions, and lived experiences. It is also a way of self-transformation oriented toward the knowledge of the self, the unity of all knowledge, and the creation of a new art of living (Nicolescu, 1997, 2002).

The transdisciplinary approach also means that consumer scholars will have to be open to the engagement of diverse perspectives in the knowledge production and generation process. The disciplinary imperative has to be set aside to create a voice for those coming from other types of organizational homes (especially civil society organizations). As well, this approach to knowledge creation requires the use of creativity when applying the new knowledge, and taking steps to prevent the knowledge from becoming trapped into a disciplinary map, useful for only one context. The knowledge belongs to everyone, because it was created by everyone. Novel ideas, generated in the fertile space between and beyond disciplines, can be nurtured and expanded by

ensuring continuous feedback and input of everyone (Nicolescu, 1997, 2002).

With this shared knowledge comes shared accountability for the state of the world. Leaders will not have to feel alone, or that they are the ones to take "the lead." Instead, the broad range of actors engaged in 'creating knowledge in context' share the responsibility for its use far beyond the walls of the academy. This accountability can be more assured if the knowledge creators form strong conditions for reflection at the deepest levels. Rather than being scientists and academics, actors, including consumer scholars, become knowledge creators and practitioners (Gibbons et al, 1994). The knowledge is socially distributed and sustained through network building by mobile practitioners working on transient (Smith, 2003). Being transient will mean consumer scholars will have to become comfortable with not having a specific academic home. Instead, they will accept the idea of having a continued presence in their disciplinary field of knowledge, but do so whilst roaming to network with meaningful connections at the crossroads. Communication becomes key in this itinerant research process.

Also, instead of relying on the integrity of their disciplinary differences, consumer scholars will have to be open to transdisciplinary *de-differentiation* (Gibbons et al, 1994). That is, they will have to respect synergy (Greek *sunergos*, for working together) and sharing, rather than working in isolation, and hoarding. They will also have to change perspectives so they see information as *in-formation* in dynamic contexts, rather than being fixed and proprietary (Wheatley, 1999). Furthermore, the knowledge that is created will be formed through a negotiation between different agents, with different interests. This approach is in direct contrast to the pretense of disinterested detachment that predominates much disciplinary work to create knowledge (Smith, 2003).

Consumer scholars also will have to entertain different ways of identifying new ideas. If scholars assume that the space between disciplines is empty (a Newtonian principle), then it is easy for them to accept that many new ideas will fall between the cracks, landing in the abyss between the disciplines (Nissani, 1997). If the idea or concept is not within the narrow purview of the specific disciplines, the scholars do not have to pay attention to it. Transdisciplinary scholars will not assume that the space between discipline is an abyss. Instead, they will assume that the ground is a rich, fertile space where ideas can take seed, grow, percolate, and be enriched.

Consumer scholars will also have to acknowledge the importance of looking for patterns in this fertile intellectual space, instead of looking for separate ideas. François (2002) proposes that, while we have interdisciplinary teams, we need *transdisciplinary concepts*, which will serve to unify the knowledge being applied from areas that cut across the trenches that mark traditional disciplinary boundaries and society. Developing these concepts (often through the use of metaphors) will provide a way to enhance people's understanding of the interwoven structures and functions that are the essence of complex, social issues. François (2002) and Wheatley (1999) say that people need to look for *isomorphies (*common, predictable patterns) instead of looking for separate ideas. Patterns help people move away from the disparate semantics of individual disciplines toward a purer language, a set of concepts not influenced by each disciplines' opinions and prejudices. These patterns provide a template for people to find similarity between disciplines that are not alike.

The ideas and knowledge generated in the fertile space between disciplines and with civil society *belong to society*. For this reason, consumer scholars familiar with employing positivistic criteria to gauge the robustness of the information (reliability and validity) will have to embrace other notions of robustness. Yes, it is still incumbent on those creating the knowledge to assure that it is of a certain quality. It would not bode well if un-robust knowledge were used to solve

deep, human problems, even if the knowledge was jointly created in context. Smith (2003) and Gibbons et al. (1994) refer to this issue as the 'quality control of knowledge production', and suggest that criteria for socially robust knowledge (instead of empirically reliable knowledge) might include: justice, effectiveness, efficacy, autonomy, and other evidence of success after addressing the resolution of a pressing social problem. From a transdisciplinary stance, consumer scholars would explore the meaning of 'socially approved knowledge' (Smith).

Consumer scholars also will learn to appreciate that their scholarship will take place in departments and laboratories, think-tanks, research centers, institutes, retreats, through consultancy networks, in people's homes and living rooms, even on air planes. Smith (2003) calls this trait a respect for "institutional diversity.' No longer will knowledge creation be relegated to the academic towers. From this stance, transdisciplinary scholarship has the potential to accelerate: (a) the discovery of insights, information and new knowledge; and, (b) the translation of these into practice (Morgan et al., 2003). Consumer scholars will appreciate that the world needs both individual disciplines, including the possibility of new disciplines, and a space for the integration of credible knowledge into a new "whole" in which new insights can emerge (Lattanzi, 1998). New insights lead to creative and more lasting problem resolution.

Consumer scholars embracing a transdisciplinary approach will also have to learn to forego the security of academic freedom. Within the confines of the academy, scholars can dispense with the influence of politics, theology and ethics in the pursuit of disciplinary truth (Fuller, 2003). In the real world, where people will be dealing with deep, pressing human problems, it is not possible, nor prudent, to dismiss the influence of the political economy and the social reality of citizens. Social concerns cannot be kept at arms length. They are the arms which shape the scholarship. Consumer scholars wearing the mantel of transdisciplinarity will accept that their ultimate intent is to understand the world as a complex whole, rather than to understand problems about parts of the world. Obviously, this is a generational goal, a task that cannot be achieved in the short term.

Given this reality, consumer scholars also will to have to learn to deal with uncertainty, take risks, and face perpetual lack of security. They will have to accept that, from the transdisciplinarity approach, there is no one-right answer, no standard approach. With this in mind, consumer scholars will not stop at the first answer that seems to satisfy their disciplinary dictates. Instead, they will dig deeper through dialogue, perspective sharing, and in-formation. They will feel safe doing this because the collective will have created a space for each person to reach their potential, and find their hidden possibilities, rather than relying on the safety of their disciplinary expertise (Lattanzi, 1998).

Intellection Fusion In Flux

Several concluding comments illustrate how the transition from disciplinary to transdisciplinary scholarship will place people in flux. Making the transition from standard notions of disciplinarity to transdisciplinarity will not be easy. Entrenched habits of scholarship are hard to break. Scholars will no longer be able to wear the mantle "founding father" because the knowledge created in transdisciplinary work is a collective initiative, not a singularity (Sayer, 2003). Some consumer scholars may experience the pull to don this mantel more than others, especially because some efforts to form transdisciplinary knowledge can slip back into discipline formation (Smith, 2003). This slippage happens because it is difficult to gain tenure and promotion in an academy that still values disciplinary silos, isolated experts, and elitism. Consumer scholars exploring the transdisciplinary path will have to expect complications and setbacks until academic governance structures, funding agencies and mind sets catch up. The

intent of this paper was to encourage seasoned and emerging consumer scholars to brave the repercussions of stepping outside the disciplinary boundaries into the rich fertile space between disciplines, where the academy meets society for the betterment of humanity.

Consumer scholars can turn to a transdisciplinary charter that was struck at the First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity in Portugal in 1994 (15 articles). It says that transdisciplinary does not strive for the mastery of several disciplines. Rather, it strives to open all disciplines to that which they share, and to that which lies beyond them, emergent as they interact with each other, and other actors. Central to this approach is that new knowledge is generated from people crisscrossing back and forth between disciplines and civil society, going beyond where they were when they entered the dialogue. Notions of zigzagging and going beyond known boundaries are hallmarks of transdisciplinarity. This work, this dance of in-formation, cannot be done in isolation. It has to include academia, the arts, literature, poetry and spiritual experiences, for example (de Freitas, Morin & Nicolescu, 1994; McGregor, 2005; Nicolescu, 2002).

By association, consumer scholars must come to revalue the role of intuition, imagination, emotional sensibility and body in the transmission and creation of knowledge. Shared knowledge through dialogue and discussion should lead to shared understandings about how to address deep, far-reaching societal problems. This understanding, this *intellectual fusion*, is like a fruit that is ripe with: (a) rigor to avoid distortions; (b) openness and acceptance of the unknown, the unexpected, and the unforeseeable; and, (c) tolerance of ideas and truths different from its own. They must value, simultaneously, the collective and individual otherness. They must value transcultural approaches (no culture is privileged), and transnationality (global citizenship as well as nationality) (de Freitas, Morin & Nicolescu, 1994). From this stance, intellectual fusion can happen because, when the separate bits of knowledge, and the people who carry them, came together to dance (to work together), they move faster when they are exposed to each other than when they are alone. They fuse together into a new whole.

The keystone of transdisciplinarity for consumer scholars is that their work will *traverse* and *lay beyond* disciplines in such a way that new visions of reality are created while respecting disciplinary approaches, and the merit of non-academic ways of knowing, doing, and being. Nothing is sacred as scholars search for connections among a variety of areas that may otherwise not recognize how they are pursuing similar agendas (Burnett, 2001). Consumer scholars will be communicating across boundaries, reaching beyond their discipline to the rest of the world. Examples of what this work might look like are tendered by McGregor (2004, 2006a,b).

Emergence

Many of you will have seen yourself in this discussion. Maybe you are a consumer professor who realized that, indeed, you are nervous about doing things differently because it will affect your ability to be tenured or promoted. Perhaps you are a school teacher who realized that your teacher training prepared you to stay within the confines of the existing curricula instead of reaching beyond familiar boundaries to network with civil society members, leading to more authentic curricula. Maybe you are a policy analyst who feels frustrated with ongoing quick fixes to consumer issues, which you know in your heart could be better addressed using insights from many different mind sets, and ways of knowing. Some of you may be scholars and researchers who realized that you really are uncomfortable with being so specialized, that you have an untapped need to create intellectual fusion in dynamic relational networks, rather than continuing to work alone.

Young professionals may have been drawn to the intrigue of dancing together to form new information and knowledge, rather than remaining alone on a disciplinary island, as the sole

expert. As a practicing consumer professional, you may have realized that, when solving consumer problems, you stop at the boundaries of your training rather than reaching to members of society for deeper insights, and other ways of knowing, seeing and being in the world. The interest of administrators may have been piqued. How could your departments and programs be reconfigured so that people could work in the fertile space between the academy, and the rest of the world? All of you now have a choice ahead of you - remain in the comfort zone of the conventional forms of disciplinarity or take a quantum leap into the realm of transdisciplinarity, where the academy meets society for the betterment of humanity. Consumer scholarship would never be the same.

References

Academic disciplines. (2007). In *Wikipedia*; *The Free Encyclopedia*. St. Petersburg, FL: Wikimedia Foundation. Retrieved February 4, 2007 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_academic_disciplines

Apostel, L., Berger, S., Briggs., & Machaud, G. (Eds). (1972). *Interdisciplinarity, problems of teaching and research in universities*. Paris: OECD.

Beckmann, S., & Elliott, R. (Eds.) (2002). *Interpretive consumer research: Paradigms, methodologies and applications*. Denmark: Copenhagen Business School Press.

Bevan, P. (2003). *Towards a post-disciplinary approach to global poverty: Research proposal summary*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://staff.bath.ac.uk/hsspgb/SUMMARY.pdf

Birkoff, J. (2006,October 8-11). *Yes, conflict resolution is a field*. Paper presented at the 2006 Consolidating our Wisdom Keystone Conference. Retrieved February 4, 2007 from http://www.mediate.com/pfriendly.cfm?id=2221

Brown, M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States (*Vol. 3). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Bruun, H., Hukkinen, J., Huutoniemi, K., & Klein, J.T. (2005, August). *Promoting interdisciplinary research: The case of the Academy of Finland*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.aka.fi/modules/upndown/download_upndownfile.asp?id=739D547AF6994623AC202B859A1A94DC&itemtype=UPNDOWNFILE

Burnett, R. (2001). *Disciplines in crisis: Transdisciplinary approaches in the arts, humanities and sciences*. Retrieved May 23, 2006 from the Emily Carr Institute website: http://www.eciad.ca/~rburnett/transdisciplinary.html

Chan, R. W. (2001). Genesis by definition. *Nature, 410* (6826), 307-308.

Chenoweth, L.C., Eigsti, M., & Stampfl, R. (1984). Toward consensus of definition in consumer sciences. *Proceedings of American Council on Consumer Interests Conference, 30*, 21-24.

Colins, J. (2002). May you live in interesting times: Using multi disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs to cope with changes in life sciences [Electronic version]. *BioScience, 52*(1), 75-83.

de Freitas, L., Morin, E., & Nicolescu, B. (2002). *Charter of transdisciplinarity*. Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://perso.club_internet.fr/nicol/ciret/english/charten.htm

Eagleton, T. (2000). *The idea of culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ekstrōm, K. (2003). Revisiting the family tree: Historical and future consumer behavior research. *Academy of Marketing Science Review.* Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.amsreview.org/articles/ekstrom01-2003.pdf

Ertas, A. (2000). The academy of transdisciplinary education and research (ACTER) [Electronic version]. *Journal of Integrated Design and Process Sciences, 4*(4), 13-19. Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://www.sdpsnet.org/journals/vol4-4/academy-2.pdf

Fahlander, F., & Oestigaard, T. (Eds.). (2004). *Material culture and other things: Post-disciplinary studies in the 21th century (Gotark Series C, No. 61)*. Gothenburg, Sweden: University of Gothenburg.

Foxall, G., & Goldsmith, R. (2005). *Consumer psychology for marketing* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson.

François, C.O. (2002). *Transdisciplinary unified theory*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from

http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/~gossimit/ifsr/francois/papers/transdisciplinary_unified_theory.pdf

Fuller, S. (2003). *Interdisciplinarity: The loss of the heroic vision in the marketplace of ideas.* Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.interdisciplines.org/interdisciplinarity/papers/3/printable/paper

Gephart. R. (1999). Paradigms and research methods. *Research Methods Forum, 4* (Summer), http://division.aomonline.org/rm/1999_RMD_Forum_Paradigms_and_Research_Methods.htm February 4, 2007

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge.* London: Sage.

Goldsmith, E. (2005). *Consumer economics: Issues and behaviour*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jessop, B. (2006, January). Head space. *HERO Inside HE*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.hero.ac.uk/uk/inside_he/archives/2006/outside_the_box.cfm?view=print

Klein, J.T. (1996). *Crossing boundaries: Knowledge, disciplinarities and interdisciplinarities.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Lattanzi, M. (1998). *Transdisciplinarity at UNESCO*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001146/114694eo.pdf

Lattuca, L.R. (2003). Creating interdisciplinarity. *History of Intellectual Culture, 3*(1). Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://www.ucalgary.ca/hic/hic/website/2003vol3no1/articles/2003%20pdf/lattucapdf.pdf

Magill-Evans, J., Hodge, M., & Darrah, J. (2002). Establishing a transdisciplinary research team in academia [Electronic version]. *Journal of Allied Health, 31*, 222-226.

Mcgregor, S.L.T. (2004). The nature of transdisciplinary research and practice. *Kappa Omicron Nu Human Sciences Working Paper Series*, retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/transdiscipl.html

McGregor, S.L.T. (2005, May). *The dynamics of shared responsibility: Strategies and initiatives for participatory consumerism.* Keynote at Second Consumer Citizenship Network Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia, Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://www.consultmcgregor.com/top_menu/speaking%20engagements/speaking_files/slovakia%20ccn%20keynote%202005.pdf

McGregor, S.L.T. (2006a). Transdisciplinarity and a culture of peace. *Culture of Peace Online Journal, 1*(1), 1-12 http://www.copoj.ca/pdfs/transdisciplinarity.pdf

McGregor, S.L.T. (2006b). *Transformative practice: New pathways to leadership*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.

McGregor, S.L.T. (2007). International Journal of Consumer Studies: Decade review (1997-2006). *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 31*(1), 2-18.

McGregor, S.L.T., Baranovsky, K., Eghan, F., Engberg, L., Harman, B., Mitstifer, M., Pendergast, D., Seniuk, E., Shanahan, H., & Smith, F. (2004). A satire: Confessions of recovering home economists. *KON Human Sciences Working Paper Series*, http://www.kon.org/hswp/archive/recovering.html

Mittelstrass, J. (2000). On transdisciplinarity. In *Science and the Future of Mankind, Proceedings of Jubilee Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences* (Part II). Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdscien/documents/sv%2099(5of5).pdf

Morgan, G., Kobus, K., Gerlach, K., Neighbors, C., Lerman, C, Abrams, D., & Rimer, B. (2003). Facilitating transdisciplinary research [Electronic version]. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research, 5,* Supplement 1, S11-S19.

Nègre, A. (1999). *A transdisciplinary approach to science and astrology*. Retrieved February 5, 2007 from http://cura.free.fr/quinq/02negre2.html

Nicolescu, B. (1997). *The transdisciplinary evolution of the university condition for sustainable development*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from at http://nicol.club.fr/ciret/bulletin/b12/b12c8.htm

Nicolescu, B. (2002). *Manifesto of transdisciplinarity* (K-C. Voss, Trans). NY: Suny.

Nissani, M. (1997). Ten cheers for interdisciplinarity [Electronic version]. *Social Science Journal, 34*(2), 201-216.

Ofer, G. (2005). *Interdisciplinary studies*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from National University of Singapore, Temasek Defence Systems Institute Web site: Http://www.tdsi.nus.edu.sg/downloads/seminar2005/ids.pdf

Parkes, M., Bienen, L., Breilh, J., Hsu, L., McDonald, M., Patz, J, et al. (2005). All hands on deck: Transdisciplinary approaches to emerging infectious disease [Electronic version]. *Ecohealth Journal, 2*, 258-272.

Polk Community College Library. (2003). *Glossary of information research terms*. Retrieved February 4, 2007 from Polk Community College Web site: http://www.polk.edu/It/Library/glossary.htm#A

Regeer, B. (2002). *Transdisciplinarity*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from the University of Amsterdam Web site: http://www.bio.vu.nl/vakgroepen/bens/HTML/transdiscipliNl.html

Russell, W. (2000). Forging new paths: Transdisciplinarity in universities. *WISENET Journal, 53*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.wisenet-australia.org/issue53/transdis.htm

Sanghera, B. (2001). Sociology and the need for postdisciplinary studies [Electronic version]. *Paper presented at the 2001 Sociology Roundtable,* Kaunas, Lithuania. Retrieved February 5, 2007 from Http://www.cep-russia.yar.ru/education/Balihar's%20article.doc

Sayer, A. (2003). *Long live postdisciplinary studies*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from Lancaster University Web site: http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/papers/sayer-long-live-postdisciplinary-studies.pdf

Schneider, B. (2003, Winter). Knowledge beyond disciplines [Electronic version]. *The Flame: Claremont Graduate University Magazine*, *4(*3), 12-17. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from http://www.cgu.edu/include/news/flame/The_Flame_WINTER_2003.pdf

Smith, M. J. (1998). *Social science in question: Towards a postdisciplinary framework*. San Francisco,CA: Sage.

Smith, M.J. (2003). *Producing and consuming knowledge*. Retrieved February 5, 2007, from the Society for Social and Political Philosophy website: http://www.sspp.us/Protected-Essays/2003-SPEP-Smith.doc

University of Southern Queensland. (2006). *USQ handbook*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.usq.edu.au/handbook2006/

Wallerstein, I. (1999). *The end of the world as we know it: Social science in the twenty-first century*. London: University of California Press.

Weber, R. (2004). Editor's comments: The rhetoric of positivism versus interpretivism: A personal view. *MIS Quarterly*, *28*(1), iii-xii. Retrieved February 4, 2007 from http://www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no28/issue1/EdCommentsV28N1.pdf

Wheatley, M. (1999). *Leadership and the new science*. San Francisco: Berrett Koehler.

Wolmark, J., & Gates-Stuart, E. (2004). Cultural hybrids, post-disciplinary digital practices and new research frameworks: Testing the limits. *Proceedings of the PIXELRAIDERS2 Conference*. Retrieved May 22, 2006, from Australian National University website: http://dspace.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/41954

Table 1

Different kinds of disciplinarity

Monodisciplinary	Members of one discipline work on a problem or issue, alone
Multidisciplinary	Members of one discipline turn to people in other disciplines to help them solve a problem. Even if people mingle to solve a problem, each discipline retains it independence, temporarily taking direction from other disciplines. The work is grounded in only one discipline.
Crossdisciplinary	Each discipline contributes what knowledge it has to address the problem, often within a tight time frame, or a particular context. No effort is made to integrate the shared knowledge. Contributions remain separate, and parallel.
Pluridisciplinary	In order to be competent to practice or work in one discipline, one has to use knowledge from another discipline. Knowledge is generated in separate disciplines. But, people cannot work without drawing on these wide knowledge bases.
Interdisciplinary	Coordinated interaction among several disciplines occurs to generate new applications of knowledge, new analyses, even new disciplines. In addition to people offering expertise from their respective discipline, an attempt is made to integrate the information through synergy.
Postdisciplinary	People from different disciplines leave this disciplinary familiarity behind so they can challenge the discipline's assumptions, discuss different contributions from other disciplines, and explore insights and concepts that are possible beyond the walls of disciplines. They pay more attention to the *learning* that can happen, following ideas and connections where they lead, instead of stopping at disciplinary walls.
Narrow (hybrid) transdisciplinary	Still within the confines of the academy, disciplinary boundaries are more flexible, permeable, fuzzy. People challenge the exclusivity of fields of knowledge, and attendant notions of truths. They attempt to remove barriers between disciplines, barriers that previously blocked synergy - they take down disciplinary walls.
Transdisciplinary (between, across and beyond disciplines)	Far beyond the academy, the synergy created at the interface between the academy (disciplines) *and* civil society is woven together to create new kinds of shared knowledge that shed light on the complex problems of humanity.

Endnote

1. As a caveat, this paper will not explicitly elaborate on the philosophy of sciences (the premises of ontology, epistemology or methodology). Using a more subtle approach, the distinctions between these three are woven throughout the discussion, respectively, (a) the nature of reality, (b) the nature of knowledge and belief, and (c) the principles and assumptions underlying inquiry. There are two main camps of inquiry, namely, (a) positivistic (facts are out there waiting to be discovered using the scientific method), and (b) interpretative (facts are constructed within people's minds and between people in a culture). Deeper understandings of the philosophy of sciences will help readers differentiate among the different modes of disciplinarity in Table 1. Readers are encouraged to solicit and contemplate relevant literature (e.g., Beckmann & Elliott, 2002; Ekstrom, 2003; Gephart, 1999; McGregor, 2007; Weber, 2004). Furthermore, the author acknowledges that the definitions in Table 1 reflect a range of different contexts (research, practice and university study programs). She realizes that these contexts affect how each type of disciplinarity is defined. For the sake of the idea presented in this paper, transdisciplinary consumer scholarship, she is comfortable using the distinctions provided in Table 1.