International Journal of Consumer Studies: decade review (1997–2006)

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Historical overview

Thirty years ago, in 1977, Ann Maree Rees founded the *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics*, renamed the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* in 2001. It continues to be based in the UK. With the passing of the founding editor in 1997, Katherine Hughes, a Board member at that time, assumed the Editorial role in 1998, and continues in this capacity. Blackwell Publishing has always been the publisher.

In this time frame, this young journal had two physical face lifts. In 1977, it was a small, aqua-green document. In 1998, it morphed into a full-sized orange document with a black bar code on the cover. In 2005, it changed again into a green/blue colour with an image of earth on the cover. The inside of the journal has changed as well. And, that is what this paper is about. Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) included the Journal in their comparison of four consumer sciences research journals that published between 1980 and 1999. Strugnell (1994) shared an analysis of the research presented in the Journal from its inception in 1977 to 1993. In 2002, Strugnell prepared an unpublished report for the Editorial Board, in which he analysed the Journal's growth and evolution between 1994 and 2001 (the name changed in 2001). This paper shares a review of the past decade (1997–2006),[1] a time of positive transition for the Journal.

Purpose of decade reviews

A lot can happen in the life of an academic journal over the span of 10 years, and decade reviews serve to document that change. They enable the Editor and Board to gauge any growth and character change in the Journal over time, vis-a-vis the stated mission, mandate, scope, aims, or vision. They reveal trends in popular or waning theoretical frameworks, research designs, methodologies and analytical frameworks over time. Conceptual and theoretical developments (or lack thereof) can be tracked and explored. Coverage and patterns of topics and nuances of issues and context can be unveiled. Insights are gained about whether the Journal's collective body of knowledge is serving the needs of the profession, discipline, or both.

Such reviews enable readers to decide if they want to use the Journal as their chosen venue for their scholarly work. If needed, analyses conducted during the review can identify prolific and emerging scholars, point to trends of collaboration and interdisciplinary work, even identify funding and research grant sources. The results of the review can inform editorial practices and policies. They can serve as a comparative benchmark against which to gauge the success and scholarly direction of the Journal vis-a-vis 'academic competition', or in another paradigm, 'academic partners'. Most significantly, decade reviews hold the Journal accountable to the attendant discipline(s), areas of professional practice and subscribers. This is important because Olk and Griffith (2004) confirmed that journals represent the primary source of knowledge in a field or discipline. They explained that scholars on the vanguard of a field push the boundaries, but that the main body of knowledge (the wide path) needs journals to ensure its advancement.

Method

Only those papers accepted and published were included in the study. Some decade reviews include rejected papers as well (Taylor, 2001). A coding sheet was developed (in consultation with two board members and the Editor) to document information about the papers, authors, topics, theoretical and conceptual orientations, and types of research (including data collection methods and analytical approaches), taking direction from Felstehausen and Couch (2001). It was pilot tested twice before it was used to collect the data. The Journal's aims and scope were determined by examining the inside of the back cover of each issue, by reading the Editorials, and via confirmation with the Editor. Only one person coded the issues, using an iterative process, meaning several passes over each document to garner various types of information. This resulted in a minimum level of intra reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The iterative process aided in detecting and correcting some errors that emerged due to coder fatigue, conceptual fuzziness, or both. This rudimentary approach is less than desirable, but was deemed sufficient as a means to identify basic trends,

 International Journal of Consumer Studies **31** (2007) 2–18

in anticipation that future analyses will entail inferential statistics, especially some level of cross tabulations, and maybe even a factor analysis.

Results and discussion

The intent of this review was to reveal trends, patterns and the changing character of the Journal. Results will be presented in such a way that readers will gain a sense of the scope, structure and editorial policies of the journal followed by who is contributing to the Journal, the basic traits of the papers, the issues being explored, the methods and analytical approaches embraced by the authors, and the nature of their scholarship. This paper will meld the results with a discussion and expression of opinions about what the findings mean. This strategy serves to move ideas forwards, and to help people read the analyses selectively.

Scope, organization and format

As with most academic journals, the scope of the journal is published to inform people of the remit of the journal. In this Journal, it is placed inside the back cover of each issue, and at the website. This next section of the review is predicated on the assumption that people pay attention to this information as a guide to determining whether their research is appropriate for the Journal. By association, what actually gets published in the journal should reflect the terms of reference as set out in the Aims and Scope. The Editor also confirmed that people's perceptions of the Journal also effect what they choose to submit, and that the Journal can only work with what is submitted. She reiterated that the topic of 'consumer studies' lends itself to an eclectic range of papers. The world has changed in the past 10 years, and the Journal reflects these changes vis-a-vis issues under the umbrella of consumerism (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, 29 September 2006). The following text supports both positions: (a) the role of a stated aims and scope section; and (b) the academy's interpretation of a changing world, and the perceived relevance of their scholarship for a journal with the notions of international and consumer studies in its title.

In 1997, the first year of the decade in review, the journal scope was devoted to nine *areas of study*: food, textiles, housing, sociological studies (home and family), consumer, energy and fuel, material sciences, comparative education studies, and tourism and leisure. This scope was in place until March 1999, when the scope narrowed to 'provide an international forum for academic and research papers about consumer affairs'. Five topics were cited as acceptable areas of study, down from nine in 1997: consumer studies, home economics, social studies, health, and energy and fuels. The topics of tourism and leisure, comparative education and material sciences were set aside, and home economics was added as an area of study, encompassing the former foods and textiles. Housing was added to social studies (along with the previous home, family and consumer). Health was added as a new topic.

The name of the Journal changed in 2001 to the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* (home economics was dropped from the title, and international was added). Although the scope of topics stayed the same at this time, the subtitle 'Scope of the Journal' was replaced with 'Aims and Scope'. The stated focus was still a journal which 'provides an international forum for academic and research papers about consumer affairs'. The description of the journal changed to: 'an international, interdisciplinary, interconnected journal for consumer studies and takes the holistic approach to this ever-expanding discipline' (inside back cover, December 2001).

The Editorial Board is very active with the growth and management of the Journal, unlike other scholarly venues. In this spirit, the Board engaged in lively, ongoing discussions around the appropriate scope of the Journal (both in person and via virtual board meetings). They concurred that the intent was to refine and hone the scope of the journal at a time when the field, and the world, was changing as well (technology, globalization, economies in transition, wars and terrorism, etc., all threats to the well-being of consumers). These discussions lead to a restated Aims and Scope in January 2004, reduced to four topics: consumer studies, family and social studies, environmental issues, and economic studies. The latter two topics were new areas of interest for the Journal. Health was subsumed under family and social issues. Home economics (food and textiles) was housed (pun included) under consumer studies. There was no explicit mention of housing anymore, replaced with issues of transportation, sustainability, technology, global marketing and such (under the two new headings of environment and economic issues).

The aims and scope published in January 2004 were further clarified by the Board in September of the same year, and published in the January 2005 issue. The aims changed in such a way that '*about consumer affairs*' was replaced with '*a focus on how consumers can enhance their security and well-being*'. In 2004, the notion of *themes* was added to supplement the original notion of topics covered by the Journal. Now, three themes are intended to help shape the Journal's content, and four topics are outlined (refined from nine *areas of study* in 1997).The themes are: consumer sciences and their application, consumer policy, and consumer affairs.[2] The four topics include: consumer protection, consumer behaviour, the consumer ecosystem, and family and household studies. The latter domain encompasses the former ideas associated with home economics in earlier years of the Journal (housing, food, clothing, textiles, health and well-being, plus quality of life). Ecosystem is operationalized to include: globalization, sustainability, technology, ethical consumption, gender issues and citizenship. Consumer protection is seen to be broader than laws and includes empowerment, entitlement and security. The conventional understanding of consumer behaviour holds: marketing, retailing, and goods and services (see Table 1).

Size of the journal

When the Journal physically changed size (from 23×15 cm to 26×21 cm), the page allotment was reduced to cover the same number of words as in the 1997 issues. It remained at this level until 2000, when it was increased to 72 pages per issue, and has increased every year since. Until January 2003, the Journal was published four times per year, at which time it began to published five times per year, with an increased page number to 432. Two years later, in January 2005, the decision was made to expand the Journal again to six issues, increasing to 560 pages. In January 2006, the page number was increased to 624 pages, still with six issues. This translates to a 244% increase in the size of the Journal

Table 1 Topics of papers organized by scope of the Journal (themes and topics)

	Percentage
Consumption related	**52**
Consumer sciences and its application, policy and education (three themes)	15
Consumer protection (empowerment, entitlement, safety, standards, economic security)	21
Consumer behaviour (goods and services, business and marketing practices, retailing)	48
Consumer ecosystem (globalization, sustainability, technology, ethical consumption, gender issues, citizenship)	16
Family and household studies related	**48**
Foods and nutrition	65
Health	12
Clothing and textiles	12
Quality of life, well-being, shelter, childcare	11

since its inception 30 years ago. The majority of this growth happened within the past 3 years (see Fig. 1). A further increase in pages is anticipated for 2007. The physical size of the Journal increased to accommodate more submissions, quicker publication rates and an increase in the number of special issues. As well, the new size format for the Journal allows for an increase of 20% with no additional cost (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, September 2006).

Peer review

One of the first tasks set for the new Editor, in 1998, was to implement a peer review process. Referees are usually recruited from the field's pool of successful authors. But, the Editor does occasionally send out calls of interest, and regularly uses the Editorial section to invite people to apply, or recommend others, to be a reviewer. In 2003, the Journal had 150 referees from 21 countries. In 2006, the Journal has 220 reviewers from 25 countries, a 47% increase. The target is 30 new reviewers per year, anticipating attrition. Reviewers continue to receive guidelines, interested scholars can web-access a document about how to prepare their manuscript, and editorial policies are continually updated, and posted at the web site (Hughes, 2006a).

Upon reflection, the Editor believes that the peer review process has been a major factor in the development of the journal – enhancing quality, ensuring relevance and technical competence, and scholarship that is of interest to an international audience. She feels that the way in which reviewers are consulted, engaged, supported, informed and, perhaps, treated as members of a scholarly club or community of practice is a particular feature of this journal that has led to continued interest in the journal, and in the generation of the topics of the special issues (to be discussed). The journal prepares a 6-month update for the panel of reviewers, and reviewers have free access to the Journal as a form of professional recognition for their contributions (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, 28 September 2006).

Acceptance rates

The current acceptance rate for the regular issues of the Journal averages 47%, a significant change from 10 years ago, 71%, a 33% decrease. The Editor reports that there has been a marked increase in the number of manuscripts submitted to the Journal, with fewer of them being accepted, a factor in a discussion of

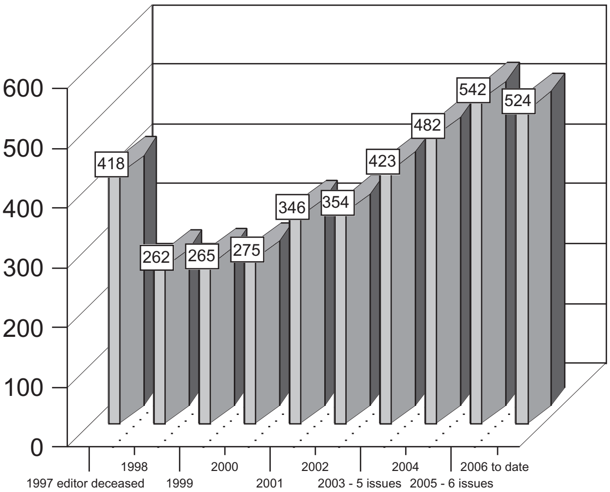

Figure 1 Number of pages per year.

acceptance rates. In 1998, 30 papers were submitted (26 accepted). In 2006, 150 manuscripts were submitted (400% increase), with 60 accepted and published (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, 28 September 2006). The ratio of submitted to accepted manuscripts shifted from 1:1 to 1:2.5 (meaning far fewer manuscripts made it to publication). Most editors assume that a lower acceptance rate reflects higher rigour. An interesting situation can appear with regards to peoples' perceptions of high acceptance rates. Some scholars may submit manuscripts to a journal because they feel they do not have to fear rejection, while other scholars may not submit if they perceive that it is too easy to get published. When seeking promotion, applicants like to share the acceptance rates of the journals in which they have published as proof of the rigour of their scholarship. The validity of using journal acceptance rates in this manner is an ongoing quandary in the academy.

Web presence

Not only have reviewers received targeted attention by the Editor; authors have, too. To date, author services have specifically related to the production process. In early 2007, the Journal will move to an online submission system introduced by Blackwell, *Scholar One's Manuscript Central*: http://www.scholarone.com/products_manuscriptcentral.html, wherein the Electronic Editorial

Office will be used to manage the whole process (Hughes, 2006b). This is a web-based peer review system designed to accelerate, simplify and expedite the review process, increase submission rates, and publication rates. It boasts robustness, security, increased productivity, leading to richer journal editorial management. Hughes admits that scholars will have to adapt to the system, but she believes that it will be good for the Journal. The Journal also switched from the Vancouver to the Harvard Referencing System in January 2006.

In 2005, a Statistical Editor, Dr Stephen Sapp from Iowa State University, was appointed to the Journal to meet the needs of (a) perceived statistical weakness in some submissions, and (b) the lack of some reviewers to assess statistical papers. The Journal is accepted onto the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts database, but not on Econlit, the American Economic Association's electronic bibliography of economic literature. Apparently, Econlit felt the Journal had too few economics papers (Editor's Report, June 2006). The process of gaining Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) accreditation is addressed in the next subsection of the paper.

In May 2005, the Journal became part of *Blackwell's Synergy Online Early Service*, thereby ensuring that papers can be published within 6 months of being accepted. The papers will now have a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) number for searches (http://www.doi.org/faq.html). 'The implementation of the Online Early service . . . represents our commitment to get manuscripts available to view to the academic community as quickly as possible, reducing time to publication considerably without sacrificing quality or completeness' (Hughes, 2005, p. 169). This seems to have really made a difference. In a 1999 Editorial, Hughes confirmed that the usual turn-around time from submission to publication was 6 months. Now, the average turn-around time is 4–5 months, a 33% reduction in time (Editor's Report, June 2006). While this copy flow reflects a healthy interest in the Journal, some authors still experience longer wait time to publication.

From its beginning, once each year, the Journal provided a list of key words as well as author and title indices. Hughes (2006b) reported that Blackwell Publishing is seeking to drop the latter two features, so extra pages can be gained for editorial content. She noted that most users are searching online using keywords and author names, in detailed, often interfaced, databases. In 2005, papers from the Journal were downloaded 54 000 times through Blackwell Synergy, and other online hosts.

The Journal had a web presence in 1997, with Blackwell Publishing, and this is still maintained today. It serves as an information hub for consumer studies with an international focus. As with other academic journals, many technological innovations have unfolded during the past decade. Since 2000, the Journal has been available online through Blackwell's service called Synergy (http://www.blackwell-synergy.com). The Journal is listed under Business, Economics, Finance and Accounting (and then under Business and Management). Authors now can track the progress of their manuscript online, http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/bauthor/publications.asp. Members can have online subscriptions, and non-members and others can purchase papers online. There is an email alert system now, wherein those registered receive early table of contents. Papers in line for publication now appear Online Early (as of Spring 2005), well before they appear in print. Authors now can access a list of the annual top 50 downloads at the web site. Free access to the Journal is available within institutions in the developing world through the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative with the World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/hinari/en/).

In 2003, Hughes reported that the web presence, in conjunction with consortia deals, wherein libraries subscribe to a whole group of journals, had increased the Journals' exposure and potential readership, dramatically. The number of libraries accessing the Journal increased by 68% in 2005, and continues to rise. There are only 17 individual people subscribing to the Journal, with the balance being consortia (95%), and institutions (4.6%). This form of subscription is evident in the numbers for online readership. It bears repeating that downloads are increasing, up 43% in just one year.

The ISI impact factor (marker of journal quality)

The status of ideas housed in a journal depends on people using these ideas. Usage can be taken as an indicator of journal quality – high usage equates to high status (Popescu, 2001). This section highlights the natural concern for the perceived quality of the journal. There are numerous strategies available to gauge the quality of any journal: subscription rates, readership rates, user rankings, electronic hit rates, citation rates, tiered journals, and other spin-offs (Saha *et al*., 2003; Walter *et al*., 2003). This discussion will focus on citation rates measured by impact factors, specifically the ISI impact factor, an acronym that stands for Thomson *Institute for Scientific Information*, recently renamed Thomson Scientific. The Journal is trying to gain accreditation from Thompson Scientific, so it can gain an ISI impact factor. ISI impact factors are gaining wide credence as 'the' indicator of a journal's quality, despite the flaws.[3] Despite these widely recognized and contested flaws, the impact factor is used to: (a) determine research output, and (b) make staffing and promotional decisions. As a business, it is to their advantage to presume (correctly or not) that 'professionals worldwide have long acknowledged citation data and impact factor as crucial benchmarks for quality' (Thomson Scientific, 2005, p. 8) inherent in this tool (see especially Seglen, 1997). This perception affects whether scholars are attracted to particular journals over others (Monastersky, 2005).

A more detailed discussion of ISI impact factor is available in the endnotes.[4]

Simply put, the impact factor purports to reflect the frequency with which a journal's papers are cited in the literature. If scholars choose to cite work published in a journal, that journal must be important, making a difference. Using a very specific formula, an impact factor index is created. The numbers are released each year in September. The higher the number, the more alleged the impact. Most journals have impact factors below 2. An ISI above 4 is regarded as a high rating (Saha *et al.*, 2003). Apparently, over 2000 journal editors apply for accreditation each year, with 10–12% gaining a place on the master list of 7500 'accredited' journals from 200 disciplines. If a journal manages to get on the list, it is considered to cover the 'world's most important and influential research' in a particular discipline (Testa, 2004). Once a journal is added to the list, it takes 3 years before the first impact factor can be released.

The Journal recognizes that academics often cannot gain promotion, tenure, even be hired, unless they publish in ISI-accredited journals. The Journal assumes that gaining accreditation will better enable it to attract more international scholars from countries and schools that rely heavily upon the ISI impact factor as a quality indicator. To that end, the Journal first applied for accreditation in 2001. Although rejected, Hughes (2001, p. 2) reported Thompson Scientific's affirmation that 'the Journal articles were considered to meet the quality threshold required by ISI' (see endnote three). They just were not being cited by other journals in the Thompson Scientific stable. The Journal reapplied in 2006. Thomson Scientific again rejected, citing the same reason. The feedback was generally positive saying that the issues are produced on time, that the Journal has good international representation, and it has grant-supported research. Because of these positive points, the Journal has been scheduled for re-evaluation in 2008. While the Journal recognizes that people publishing in journals outside the purview of Thompson Scientific are citing IJCS scholarship, the Journal intends to pursue an ISI factor. It is unrealistic, at this point in time, to ignore the fact that the impact factor, despite its flaws,[3] has become one of the yardsticks for hiring, tenure and grants (Monastersky, 2005). To not strive to obtain accreditation would be to fall out of step with this global trend.

Research Assessment Exercise 2008

Because the Journal is based in the UK, the Editor and the Board try to accommodate the needs of UK scholars working within the context of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), http://www.rae.ac.uk. About £5 billion of public research funds was distributed in response to the results of the 2001 RAE, the most recent RAE (there are also 1992 RAE and 1996 RAE). The next RAE is in 2008, and there is a debate unfolding as to whether it will be the last RAE. In the past, it happened every 4–5 years. Universities make submissions to the RAE panels. The people sitting on these 15 panels (with 67 attendant sub-panels, http://www.rae.ac.uk/panels/members/members.xls, and see http://www.rae.ac.uk/news/2005/spchairs.htm) are appointed by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The Quality Profile (a number rating) they assign to the university's submission ranges from 4 stars to 1 star, plus a lower fifth category of 'Unclassified'. The ratings reflect judgments about how well the research meets national or international 'levels of excellence': originality, significance and rigour. The submissions are judged on research outputs, research environment and esteem indicators (Research Assessment Exercise, 2005). The results will be published in December 2008.

Institutions will be asked to identify in their submissions up to four pieces of work for each researcher they chose to include in their submission. This means that each individual UK researcher is expected to have published four papers by 31 December 2007. As explained by Lyon (2006) and Hughes (2006a), the Journal is taking special steps to help UK colleagues, who are currently producing high-quality work, have their work published in the Journal so that they can meet this deadline. The Editor and Board have agreed that the Journal will offer the opportunity to publish papers Online Early (well before they appear in print), provided the papers are submitted to the Journal by July 2006, and accepted before July 2007. Authors are asked to state when submitting their papers that they are subject to the RAE.

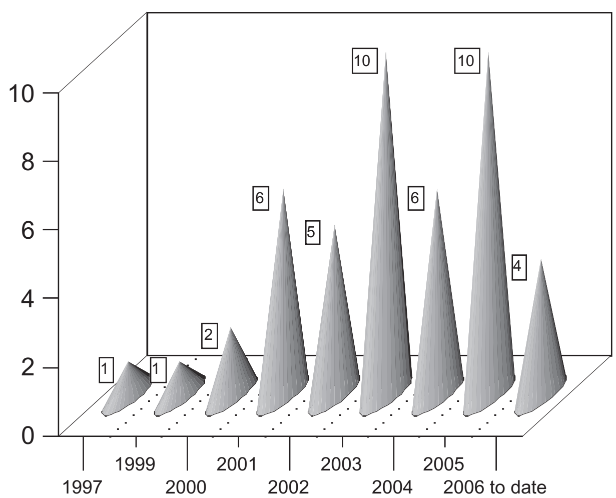

Figure 2 Number of book reviews per year ($N = 45$).

Book review section

Since 2000, the Journal has had a standing book review section. A book review is a paper which describes and evaluates a book within a few years of its publication. In 2000, Sue McGregor accepted the invitation to be the Book Review Editor for the Journal (reporting to the Editor and the Board), and continues in this role. In this time, the Journal published 45 book reviews, an average of six per year, or one per issue (see Fig. 2). Table 2 profiles the themes of the books that were reviewed, loosely organized around three topics: consumer focused, home economics philosophy and leadership, and other.

Dr McGregor was responsible for 88% of the book reviews (see Fig. 3). Seven different scholars contributed the remaining nine

Table 2 Book review themes (with sub-themes) ($N = 45$)

Themes of McGregor's book reviews ($n = 36$)
- Consumer focus (61%, $n = 22$)
  - Children as consumers (6)
  - Globalization (5)
  - Consumer policy (4)
  - Consumer Society (3)
  - Ethical consumption/fair trade (3)
  - Resource management/debt (2)
- Home economics philosophy (27.8%, $n = 10$)
  - Leadership or well-being theory (5)
  - Rethinking home economics (2)
  - Biographies (of a sort, embedded philosophy) (2)
  - Philosophy (1)
- Other (11%, $n = 4$)
  - Pedagogy (critical thinking, strengths) perspective, global/peace education) (3)
  - Street markets (1)

Themes of other scholars' book reviews ($n = 9$)
- Household choice and decision-making behaviour
- Globalization and alternatives
- Tourism
- Food quality (2)
- Children as consumers
- Statistical analysis and research techniques

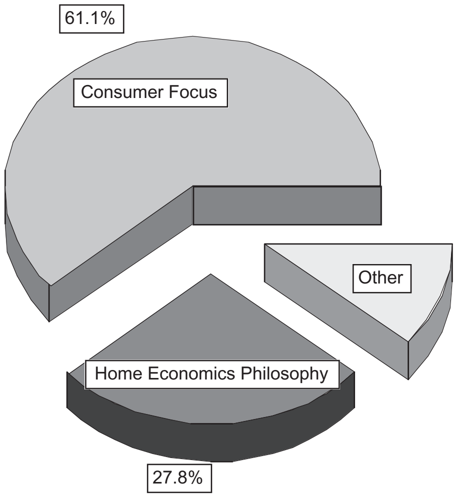

Figure 3 Themes of reviews written by Book Review Editor ($n = 36$).

reviews, one of which was a student's review. The books they reviewed fell mainly within the consumer focus theme. A little over two-thirds of all books reviewed ($n = 28$, 68%) had a consumer focus. This pattern bodes well for a journal with the words and concept of consumer studies in its title (see earlier section on Scope, Organization and Format). The focus on home economics philosophy and leadership (a quarter of the books) respects the Journal's original roots in home economics, and the institutional arrangement with ICS (incorporating Home Economics). It also respects the reality that many countries still refer to the profession as home economics (and those who do not do so still have their roots in home economics). The remaining 8% fall within the purview of general professional development (research methods and pedagogy).

Usually, the Book Review Editor chooses which books to review. But, some welcome trends are emerging, as well. Board members are recommending more books. Dr Ron Goldsmith (Florida State University) has agreed to prepare special reviews of research textbooks (several have been published already). Publishers are now sending books directly to the Book Review Editor (a recent development in the past 2 years). And, the Book Review Editor makes a concerted effort to find books related to Special Issue topics, with Guest Editors starting to recommend appropriate books for their themes. The Journal Editor also sends books to the Book Review Editor or recommends them for review, if they move across her desk.

Special issues and conference issues

Since 1999, the Journal has published special issues. Olk and Griffith (2004) found that special issues have a greater impact on knowledge development than regular issues. They report that special issues for scholarly journals have become more common in the past decade. In step with this worldwide trend, the Journal now develops special issues, and sometimes prints papers from conferences. Special issues, usually published on an occasional basis, serve a key role of agenda-setting for research and policy. Implementing special issues is perceived as an example of innovative editorial policy. The issues can reflect a single topic, or an entire disciplinary area. They tend to draw leading, international experts to the Journal, especially in the role of guest editor (Avison *et al.*, 2001). Olk and Griffith found that special issues can reflect exceptional papers, relative to the quality of regular issues. They serve to define the 'state of an issue', and its prospects for the future. The attendant analyses provide direction for future scholarship, curricula and policy. They also extend the exposure of the Journal in the academic world, and beyond.

The first issue, in 2002, had a focus on food and nutrition, but was not billed as a special issue (there was no Guest Editor). Table 3 profiles the themes of the 10 special issues, all with Guest Editors: banking and financial services (focus on consumer protection), consumer education (international dimension), health care, consumer protection and empowerment, globalization and consumer welfare, children as consumers, consumer participation in policy consultations, consumer education and empowerment, risky consumption, and political and ethical consumerism. The second issue in 2007 will be on ethnic minorities (diversity in consumers and businesses), and a call for papers for tourism has recently gone out. Other topics being considered are e-commerce, consumerism and debt, and value laden consumer labelling (Hughes, 2006b).

A quick analysis shows that the special issues seem to focus on the traditional, yet unequivocally significant, topics of protection, empowerment and education. Conventional consumer issues of consumer participation and financial security appeared as special issues. The larger trends of globalization, diversity (ethnicity), risk and health are covered. The hot issues of political consumption, ethical consumption, kids as consumers, and leisure and tourism (at a time of global unrest) are very recent themes. The Journal seems to be fulfilling its role vis-a-vis setting agendas, and contributing to worldwide dialogue on leading issues.

Goldreich (2003) claimed no justification for having special issues devoted to a selection of papers from a conference that has a scope that matches the one of the Journal. On the other hand, Olk and Griffith (2004) concluded that conference presentations were as likely to address the same breadth of research topics as journal issues. The Board considered this logic, and decided to use four issues to publish conference papers: one issue for the Standing Conference for Consumer Studies, two for the Institute for Consumer Sciences conferences, and one for the International Federation of Home Economics congress. This decision is partly informed by the special arrangement the Journal has with the UK Institute of Consumer Sciences (incorporating Home Economics), formed in 2000. Institute members can subscribe to the Journal at substantial rates of discount. This is a respectful working relationship, providing exposure for the Institute and the Journal via attachment to the conference, and the publishing of select papers from the conference. People are more likely to attend the conference if they know that there is a chance their paper will be selected for publication in a peer reviewed journal. This is a win–win situation for a journal that is independent of any formal professional association.

Author traits

This section profiles the traits of who contributed to the Journal during the past decade. During this 10-year time span, almost 900

Table 3 Special issue themes (*N* = 10) and conference issues (*N* = 4): 1999–2006

Year	Special issue theme and conferences
1999	NOTE – this was the first year that the Journal had a special issue
Issue 2	Banking, Financial Services and Consumer Protection
2000	
Issue 2	Consumer Education: An International Dimension [Includes papers from the 1999 Standing Conference for Consumer Sciences (Belfast)]
2001	
Issue 2	Consumers and Health Care
2002	
Issue 1	*Special focus* on Food and Nutrition. This was not a special issue, but the editor noted, 'This issue has a focus on food and nutrition'.
Issue 3	Protecting and Empowering Consumers
2003	NOTE – in the 2003 January issue, the editor announced that, as of 2004, there would be two special issues per year
Issue 3	*Conference abstracts* for, then pending, 2003 1st International Research Conference, Institute for Consumer Sciences (Cardiff)
Issue 4	Globalization and Family/Consumer Welfare
2004	
Issue 2	*Conference issue* for 2003 1st International Research Conference, Institute of Consumer Sciences (Cardiff)
Issue 4	Children and Young People as Consumers
2005	
Issue 2	Consumer Consultation and Participation in Decision Making
Issue 4	*Conference issue* Papers from the 2004 International Federation of Home Economics congress (Kyoto, Japan)
Issue 5	Consumer Education and Empowerment
2006	
Issue 3	Risky Consumption
Issue 4	*Conference issue* Papers from the 2005 2nd International Research Conference, Institute of Consumer Sciences (Liverpool)
Issue 5	Political and Ethical Consumerism

scholars published papers in the Journal. As with most journals, some authors were more prolific than others, with multiple submissions (to be determined in a secondary analysis of the data). But, generally, the cadre of scholars shaping the knowledge base supported by the Journal comprises a collection of hundreds of different authors from around the world. Indeed, a stellar feature of the Journal is the international nature of its authorship. Papers have been published by authors from 42 countries. They are based on five continents (Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia). The majority of authors are based in Europe (UK and mainland Europe, 46%) and the Americas (33%), followed by Asia (10%), Africa (7%) and, finally, Australia (3%). The European authors are based in 13 countries (with two-thirds stemming from the UK, and another 14% from Sweden and Finland, amounting to 80%). The African authors come from eight countries (52% from Ghana), and the Asian authors live in 10 countries (including the Middle East, Russia and India). Three quarters of the Asian authors live in South Korea or Japan. The Americas' authors stem from the US (73%), Canada (24%), and Haiti and Trinidad/Tobago (3%) (see Fig. 4).

About midway through the decade, fewer submissions from the UK were published and more papers were accepted from other areas of Europe (Sweden, Finland, Turkey), as well as from Asia and Africa. More papers were published from Canada during the latter half of the decade, with submissions from the US remaining quite constant over the 10 years. Submissions from India and the Middle East were often in concert with US authors.

There is a definite gender component to the character of the Journal. As a caveat, some papers were published with the author's initials instead of his or her full first name. This means that the gender of 66 authors (8%) is unknown. These papers were not included in the attempt to determine gender balance in authorship. In total, over two-thirds of the authors were women (67%), and about one-third were men (33%). In fact, nearly half of the papers were written solely by women, or teams of women (46%). One quarter were written solely by men, or teams of men (26%), and the remaining quarter (27%) had male/female authorship teams.

Paper traits

Of all the papers published during this decade (*N* = 380, averaging 38 per year, see Fig. 5), only 35 (9%) involved authors from more than one country, with 88% of these involving two countries. To date, the pattern has been for authors to work within their own region, rather than partnering with scholars from other geographic areas. An interesting spin-off from this finding is some reflection on whether inter-geographic scholarly work is a requirement for multi/interdisciplinary work. Cross-national scholarship widens the perspectives available for conceptualizing, designing, conducting and interpreting research. Right now, the Journal's contribution to the field is definitely grounded in mono-national scholarship. Those setting editorial policy may want to explore the appropriateness of calling for inter-geographic scholarship as a way to create and share inclusive, innovative ideas, concepts and ways of doing things in the field. This would be a novel strategy.

While most of the papers were written by university academics, 16% were authored, or co-authored, by people associated with non-university agencies. A striking pattern was that over 90% of these papers appeared in Special Issues. This finding raises the possibilities available from marketing the Journal as a vehicle which is open to scholarly contributions from the civil society, non-profit and government agency sectors, a natural stepping stone to a future strategy for transdisciplinary scholarship

Decade review 1997–2006

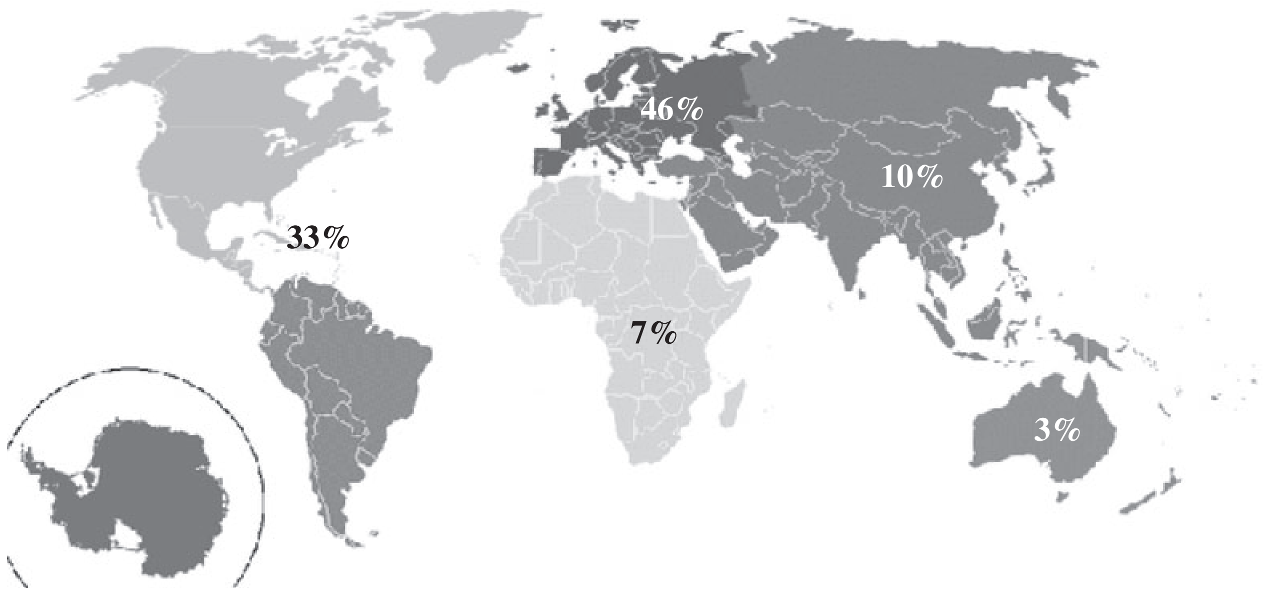

Figure 4 Continent of origin for authors. Copyright permission at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:BlankMap_World.png

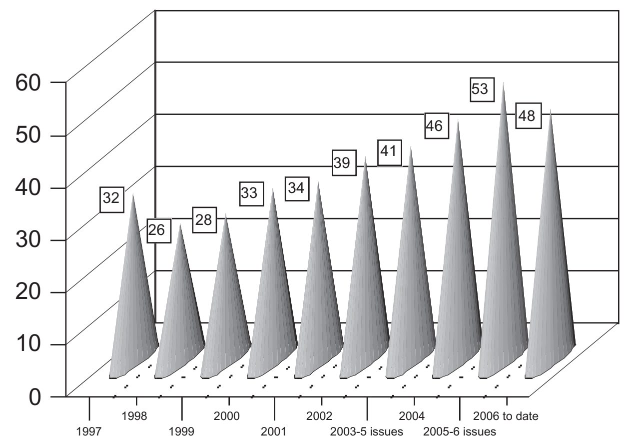

Figure 5 Number of papers published per year ($N = 380$, average $n = 38$ per year).

(McGregor, 2004; 2006). This would entail creating synergy between the academy and civil society to address the deep, perennial problems contributing to the human condition (lack of peace, security, freedom, justice, rights).

Except for the Memorial Essay Award winners, none of the authors were identified as graduate students [although the Editor confirmed that, in her correspondence with authors, it was apparent that multiple authors from the same university were often visiting students, or graduate students with their advisors as second and third authors (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, September 2006)]. Regarding the Award, in 1998 the Board decided to establish an essay competition in memory of Ann Maree Rees, the founding editor. It was first held in 1999 (Sue McGregor), again in 2000 (Kelly Gallagher), with two scholars sharing the award for the last time in 2001 (Linda Burke and Jennifer Gray). All four papers were published in the Journal, along with photos in the editorial section. The rationale for discontinuing the competition was to find other ways to move the journal forward (Hughes, 2002).

Type of paper or research

The coding instrument was designed to try to gauge the nature of the research, or the type of paper. The distinction between basic and applied research is not always clear, making it difficult to code. Basic research lays down the foundation for the applied science that follows. The main motivation is to expand our knowledge, not to create or invent something, or solve any particular problem. If basic work is done first, then applied spin-offs can eventually result from this research. Applied research is designed to solve practical problems of the modern world with the goal of the applied scientist being to improve the human condition. A useful benchmark is to ask, ‘How long will it be before some practical application results from the research?’ If a practical use is only a few years away, then the work can be defined as strictly applied research. If a practical use is still 20–50 years away, then the work is somewhat applied, and somewhat basic in nature. If a practical use cannot be envisioned in the foreseeable future, then the work can be described as purely basic research (Spengler, 2006). For this analysis, the work was coded as basic research if the scholars said they wanted to explore or find out more about something, and then ‘suggested’ how the results could be applied in their recommendation section. If the authors expressly stated that the reason they conducted the research was to address a particular problem (even though the results had not been applied yet), it was coded as applied science.

A rudimentary analysis revealed that half of the papers (50%) were original, basic research. About one-fifth (18%) were original, applied research, and 15% were discussion papers. Eight percent involved conceptual or theoretical work (including principles, taxonomies, typologies, models, conceptual frameworks), and 5% were of a pedagogical nature (e.g. evaluating a teaching strategy). One paper was philosophical in its approach, and 4% were coded as other ($n = 14$). These other included, in descending order: interpretative ($n = 3$), testing questionnaires or survey instruments ($n = 3$) and action research ($n = 3$), with one each for meta-analysis, discursive analysis, policy analysis, a consultation process and a heuristic study (see Fig. 6).

In a world characterized by the positivistic paradigm, it is not surprising that the research published in the Journal was basic science in nature. What is surprising is that, even though the profession is known, and self-identifies, as an applied field, only 18% of the original research was applied in nature. What is also telling is the lack of focus on other ways of knowing aside from the positivistic approach. Only three or four authors (out of 900) actually used the words narrative, interpretative or phenomenological in the description of their research. This finding confirms that the Journal is currently reflecting a very narrow concept of what counts as knowledge – the positivistic paradigm. There should be a space for research that values an approach which attributes to people only the ideas that they expressly say they hold, only motives, reasons and actions articulated in narrative, art and non-scientific ways of expressing truth. Such scholarship would strive to comprehend the phenomenon under study, synthesize a portrait of this phenomenon that accounts for relations and linkages, theorize about how and why these relations appear 'as they do', and put this new knowledge back into the original context where it was articulated – recontextualize it (Thorne, 2000).

Another interesting finding is that special issues tend to be discussion papers, rather than original empirical, or interpretative research. Discussion papers serve several key purposes in advancing the knowledge base of a profession or discipline. Foremost, they are scholarly papers developed with the objective of contributing to the cumulative improvement of theoretical knowledge (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, 2006). They are a forum for stimulating discussion, dialogue and debate about: (a) preliminary ideas; (b) larger ideas at an advanced stage of conceptualization; (c) the results of current research; or (d) policy consultations. They are often written for specialized audiences with the purpose of generating and creating discussion on a specific topic. They may not represent the official position of the sponsoring organization. But, they do reflect the intent of the organization to foster scholarly dialogue about emerging issues in a discipline or profession.

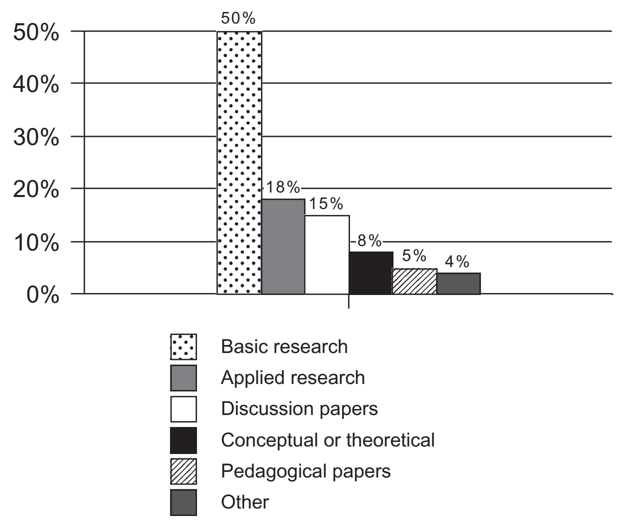

Figure 6 Types of papers or research.

One reason authors may be preparing discussion papers for special theme issues is, rightly so, because special issues can be about leading edge ideas that may be at the early stages of empirical work, ideas that need a wider and deeper venting before empirical work can be conceptualized. In the case of the Journal, discussion papers appeared in special issues dealing with political consumerism, consumer protection advances relevant to new financial services, the impact of globalization on family and consumer welfare, consumer involvement and empowerment, and risky consumption.

Types of scholarship

Given the current trend of seeking ISI accreditation (a process totally steeped in positivistic, empirical science tenets), it is imperative to gauge the importance and influence of the knowledge base accumulated in the Journal through a lens other than the scientific, positivistic lens. To aid in this exercise, Boyer's (1990) four views of scholarship were applied to determine which types of scholarship were prevalent in the Journal during the past 10 years. In addition to the traditional, basic research scholarship (which he referred to as 'the scholarship of discovery'), there are three other types: integration, application and teaching. Each type is described in some detail.

The *scholarship of discovery*, called enquiry, is essentially the work of basic research, often referred to as pure, fundamental research. The main motivation is to expand knowledge, to generate knowledge for the sake of having more knowledge. That which is discovered can include new or revised theory, models, principles, knowledge or creations (Boyer, 1990). In its purist sense, what people do with the knowledge is not the concern of the scientist.

The *scholarship of application* involves applying knowledge in a creative way to a compelling problem in the community. This form of scholarship moves the academic out of the ivory tower into work which addresses pressing societal problems, and significant social issues. As Boyer explains, application scholarship involves using knowledge or creative activities to effect development or change in the community. In an ideal world, the community itself would set the agenda, not the academician. Also, new intellectual underpinnings can arise out of the very act of applying the knowledge to community and societal issues (Boyer, 1990; Campbell, 1991).

The *scholarship of integration* refers to enquiry that creates a new whole by weaving together parts from different origins – in effect, creating new knowledge by making connections between and among disciplines. Integration also entails placing specialities in disciplines in a larger context, and illuminating data in revealing ways by bringing together otherwise isolated and, on the surface, unrelated knowledge from different fields or disciplines. By bringing new insights to bear on original research, larger intellectual patterns are created, yielding richer and deeper meanings and insights than would happen in isolation. In practice, research would involve multidisciplinary teams of scholars (e.g. economists, home economists and psychologists) striving for synergy and new insights gained from working together. As well, research conducted by one person could be conceived using ideas from several disciplines, or the results could be interpreted by a team of scholars (Boyer, 1990; Campbell, 1991).

Finally, but not least, is *teaching scholarship*. People engaged in the scholarship of teaching take time to keep current in the literature in their fields, strive to improve and innovate their pedagogical practices, and seek to stimulate active learning and critical thinking in co-learners. Done well, the scholarship of teaching develops the knowledge, skill, mind, character and ability of others because they are respected as active participants in their learning. Knowledge is generated, transferred and transformed through the challenging intellectual work inherent in teaching and facilitating learning. The basic premise of this type of scholarship is that teaching is scholarly work that generates valuable knowledge – teaching involves the search to know. Teaching is problem-based, intentionally designed, theoretically grounded, peer evaluated and accountable. It is scholarship (Boyer, 1990; Bender and Gray, 1999).

Furthermore, the scholarship of teaching entails thinking hard and consecutively about the frameworks of learning constructed by academics (texts, syllabi, assignments, evaluation schemes), and how they move within these frameworks. Scholars of teaching know they must use what students learn as data to inform changes in practice. Also, they must make 'what they learn about teaching' one of the essential topics of conversations within disciplines, and do so by publishing results of such enquiries. The scholarship of teaching frames classroom work as ceaseless and generative enquiry, a worthy form of scholarship in the academy (Bender and Gray, 1999).

The analysis of the body of knowledge housed in the Journal over the past 10 years reveals that, overwhelmingly, scholars are engaged in the scientific scholarship of discovery (50%), followed to a much lesser degree by the scholarships of application (18%) and teaching (5%). There was little evidence of integrative scholarship, of multidisciplinary teams of scholars (e.g. economists, home economists and psychologists) striving for synergy and new insights gained from working together. Admittedly, there were multimember and gendered research teams, but not necessarily from different disciplines, and not necessarily designed to bring a multi-lense perspective to the analysis or the interpretation of results. Please note that this is a rudimentary attempt to gauge this concept, using type of research as a proxy for type of scholarship. Future analysis should be undertaken to explore, in much richer detail, the nature of scholarship in the Journal.

Topic trends

Although there are many legitimate approaches to analysing topic trends, these patterns were discerned through the lens of the scope of the Journal, as set out in Table 1. The coder also deferred to the author(s)' stated purpose of the research to aid in the coding process. Every attempt was made to code the topic for each paper only once for this exercise, even though virtually every paper could have been coded two or three different ways. A paper on children's influence on their parents in the grocery store could have been coded children as consumers, food choices, family dynamics and consumer behaviour. Consumer preference for a particular peanut grown in Malawi could have been coded as food science, food sensory or food choices, even consumer behaviour (food producer actions and consumer choice/preferences). The latter example was coded as food because the bulk of the paper focused on the food sensory evaluation experiment instead of the consumer's choice behaviour in the marketplace. Using this approach, it can be concluded that half of the papers dealt with the broad concept of consumption (52%), and the other half (48%) dealt with the even broader notion of family and household activities (conceptualized as the traditional approaches to home economics) (see Table 1).

Consumer-focused research

Naturally, more insights are gained when more detail is teased out. The topic of consumption is truly multifaceted, and was a challenge to code. Again, the guiding principle was the scope of the Journal. From this perspective, the bulk of the papers were coded as consumer behaviour (48%) followed by consumer protection (21%), consumer ecosystem (16%), and consumer sciences (and its application), as well as policy and education (15%). In addition to retailing, marketing and business practices and goods and services, *consumer behaviour* was conceptualized as research that focused on anything to do with consumer decision making: preferences, information, beliefs and values, intentions, innovations, expectations, perceptions and competence. There was an emerging preponderance of papers that were retailer-focused, almost as if the scholars were using the retailer or producer as a proxy for consumer choices. The assumption seemed to be that if one understood the actions of the retailer, one could better understand consumer choices (related to food in general, organic food in particular, biotechnology, fair trade and e-commerce).

As far as trends go, papers on consumer ecosystem and consumer education appeared especially during the past 5 years. Within the notion of consumer ecosystem (as defined by the scope of the Journal), topics that are gaining popularity include: sustainability, consumer citizenship, political consumerism and ethical consumption (including consumer morality). Popular ideas within the scope of consumer protection include consumer involvement and voice and consumer empowerment, also within the past 5 years. Less than 5% of the papers dealt with consumer education. The traditional approach to this topic recently has been augmented with a citizenship, global and sustainability perspective, as well as an empowerment focus.

The concept of economic security received conventional treatment by authors: consumer debt, finances, credit, bankruptcy, and family expenditures and income distribution (about 7% of the papers). There was little focus on consumer policy in the Journal, reflected in less than 15 papers over 10 years (about 4%). Perhaps scholars are using the *Journal of Consumer Policy* or the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* as the preferred outlets for policy-related consumer research.

Family and household studies research

Under the rubric of family and household studies, over two-thirds of the papers dealt with foods and nutrition (65%), followed by health (12%), clothing and textiles (12%), quality of life, well-being and shelter, as well as childcare (collectively, 11%). There were only three papers in the entire decade that dealt with shelter (housing policy and the homeless). Only one paper, self-identified by the authors, dealt with family studies or dynamics. Within the foods and nutrition category, issues ranged from, in descending order, food choices (one-third), food issues, food sensory evaluation, teens and children, labels, alcohol/smoking/drugs, food science and obesity, as well as nutrition issues. Two-thirds of the papers that related to clothing and textiles focused on apparel and fashion (mainly Asian in their source), with one-third targeted textile science (mostly African in nature).

Trends and patterns

The stated scope of the Journal really does impact the focus of the papers that are submitted to the Journal. And, it became more challenging to code the focus of the papers published in the past 2 years (11 issues). They seemed less dedicated to one 'topic', and more inclined to strive for integration between topics (but not analysis or interpretation). This is an exciting development. It is indicative of deeper and more reflective thinking in the field, thinking that strives for richer connections between the multiple dimensions of consumer studies.

For example, in the first half of the decade, it was easy to identify the focus of the paper: food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, etc., the conventional approach to home economics. Then, authors started to focus on particular genres of consumers (children, teens, elders), acting in particular markets (e-commerce, health markets, fair trade/organic). There was less focus on a particular good or service, and more attention to the larger context within which consumption and production are happening: biotechnological innovation, globalization, telecommunications and technological innovations (especially e-commerce), mono-cultures and localization. There was more balance between studying how consumers make choices and understanding how retailers prepare to engage with consumers. Authors also started to augment effective and rationale consumer decision making with ethical and moral perspectives. Whereas consumption was understood in the conventional sense in the first two-thirds of the decade, more recent contributions to the Journal have added the more complex cultural and political dimensions.

Theoretical orientations

This section describes the nature of theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning scholarship published in the Journal, a strategy also used by Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) when they reviewed the Journal. The coder approached each paper looking for a heading, 'Theoretical Framework'. This actual heading appeared so seldom (maybe three times) that an alternate strategy was used, that of reading the literature review section to see if there was any reference to any theory. The one compelling finding that emerged when coding for theoretical underpinnings was that authors tended to site studies in the literature that pertained to their work, rather than the theories that shaped the research. Or, they would refer to theories related to the issue, but chose not to use those theories to inform their work. Strong theoretical foundations must exist in order to explain the data and results, and to place them in the larger context of the discipline's knowledge base. Indeed, von Schweitzer (2006) argued that the profession needs an unmistakable, independent conception of scientific discourse and sense making of its practice. She maintained that home economists who are not able to argue cogently, knowledgeably and forcefully, because they lack theory as a basic blueprint, are losers in any scholarly dispute.

The Journal maybe bucking this trend. While 58% of the papers did not have any theoretical framework identified or evident in the paper, a respectable 42% did specify the theoretical framework(s) shaping their scholarly endeavour (see Fig. 7). Amazingly, authors referred to over 100 different theories, models, conceptual frameworks, typologies, approaches, or perspectives. Those that were mentioned three times or more fell into the following categories, in descending order: consumer behaviour and decision-making theories and models, consumer socialization theory, economic theory, consumer movement theory, consumer education classification system or typologies, risk perception theory, and the theory of planned behaviour. Family life cycle, socialization and related theory, consumer rights frameworks, moral development theory, social marketing, systems theory, social learning theory and innovation adoption theory were mentioned twice. All of the other theories were mentioned once ($n = 75$).

Another very interesting trend is the change in proportion of papers that did not have theory compared with those that did have a theory (see Fig. 8). In 1997, the ratio was 7:3. In 2006, the ratio was 4:6. This is a most exciting finding. In every issue, readers are now more likely to read research grounded in some theoretical framework. It also means that more scholars are not only grounding their work in theory, but also taking steps to articulate that theory in their publications. This effort yields data about which theories are deemed relevant to consumer studies-related research. Related to this development is the minor trend of scholars starting to refer to the ideological and paradigmatic underpinnings of their work. While only five papers referred to this aspect of scholarship, they did so within the past 2 years, meaning there is an opportunity

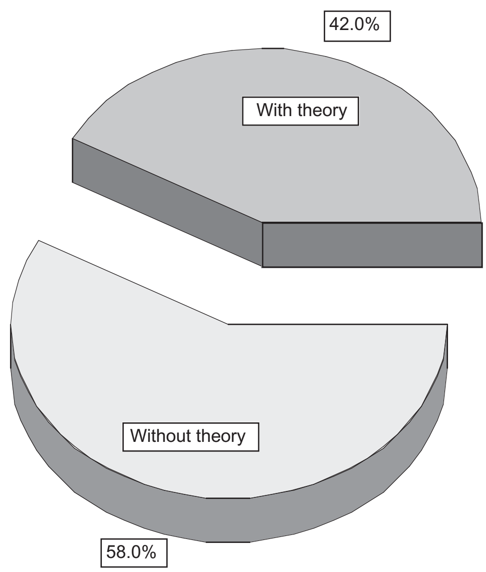

Figure 7 Presence or absence of theoretical frameworks.

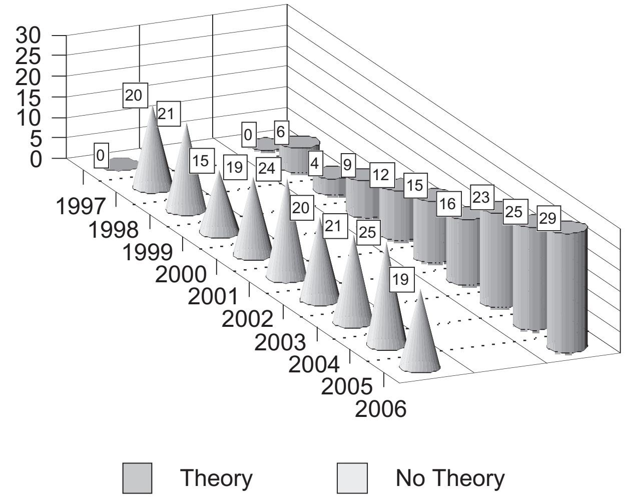

Figure 8 Changing ratio of papers with(out) theoretical frameworks.

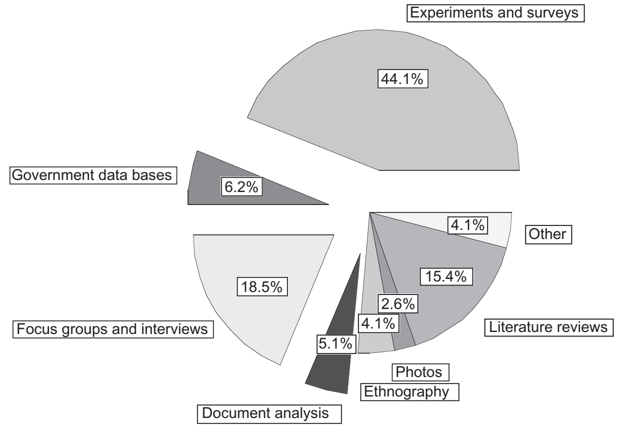

Figure 9 Data collection methods.

for the Journal to capitalize on this potential pattern, thereby making the knowledge base supported by the Journal even more rigorous and accountable. Ideologies and paradigms dictate the relevant theories and methodologies. Yet, to date, only the latter have been reported in the papers. Specifying ideologies and paradigms opens the way for richer discussions of power relationships at play in the global context shaping the human condition.

Methods and analytical approaches

Also of interest is the array of methods used to collect and analyse data. The code sheet was designed to 'capture' the common data collection methods, and attendant analytical approaches. Seventeen research methods were listed on the code sheet and 13 analytical approaches were listed, both with 'Other' categories. Methods for data collection will be discussed first.

Methods

Of the 17 methods of data collection included on the coding instrument, all were used by scholars except for praxis and oral histories (see Fig. 9). Only one Delphi study was conducted. If analysing menus counts, it can be said that two instances of artefact analysis to determine embedded meanings were reported. There were just two reports of scholars using lay person accounts.

Since 50% of the papers involved basic science, it makes sense that conventional empirical data collection methods would be used. Collectively, experiments (including sensory evaluations) and surveys accounted for nearly half of the data collection methods (43%). Of these, surveys were most common (74%) followed by experiments/sensory evaluations in lab environments (26%). Government-generated survey data were used 6% of the time. Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) found the same patterns for the Journal in work published between 1980 and 1999.

From a more qualitative (albeit usually positivistic) approach, focus groups and interviews accounted for one-fifth of the data collection methods (19%) (note that 18% of the papers were applied in nature). Individual interviews (70%) were used more often than focus groups. In 21 cases (4% of the time), ethnographic approaches were used. Documents were used as the source of data (usually analysed using thematic or content analysis) 25 times (5% of the time). Photographs, line drawings or illustrative cards were used 12 times (2% of the time). It was assumed that each author would review the appropriate literature. Hence, the only time this 'method' was coded was if the paper was a discussion paper, or a work that focused on theoretical development. Fifteen percent of studies in the Journal involved a literature review as the sole mode of data collection. This approach was especially evident in special issues.

It also makes sense that very few of the interpretative methodologies were coded since the character of the journal is definitely empirical and positivistic (mostly generated by UK, American and Canadian scholars, as well as African and Asian scholars). This pattern seems to be changing in the latter half of the decade, namely through the leading edge work of European scholars (especially from the Scandianian countries). Their recent work is characterized by the use of such interpretative techniques as essay writing, mind maps, citizen juries, public consultations, e-blogs for lay person accounts, oral rhetoric and existential phenomenological interviews. These were coded under 'other' ($n = 18$, 3.5%).

By way of brief explanation, the interpretative research paradigm concerns itself with meanings and understandings held by people, and with participant involvement and researcher self-reflexivity. It is a research approach that looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world. The Scandinavian scholars seem more concerned with social phenomena than with simply gaining more knowledge generated using the scientific method. They value a methodology (an understanding of the way things are done) and data collection methods (the way things are done) which involve interviews, essays, field observations, etc., methods that generate data which are then transformed into texts, transcribed or recorded, and interpreted for meanings and understandings. Their role is to reconstruct the reality and lived experiences of people as expressed in their dialogue, conversations, art, or writings (Crotty, 1998; Ekstrōm, 2003).

Only 30% of the papers in the Journal used more than one method of data collection. If this did occur, the average strategy was to use two approaches. However, the number of papers using more multifaceted research designs increased exponentially over the decade, escalating from 2 in 1997 (7.6%) to 21 in 2006 (44%). Simplistic approaches to methodology and method selection can hinder a deeper understanding of the issue or problem under investigation, and how it interfaces with other issues. Simplistic approaches also make it more difficult to justify the claims made by the authors as a result of their findings (Boote and Beile, 2005).

Virtually all papers were confined to the positivistic research paradigm (with the few exceptions being papers from Scandinavian countries in the latter part of the decade). Only these scholars actually used the words: discursive, feminist or gendered, grounded theory, phenomenological, heuristic, hermeneutic, or interpretative research. It could be said that a clean line has been drawn in the Journal between the two main research methodologies. This is not a desirable state for the Journal, given the current global conversation about the merit of many ways of knowing and understanding the world. The Editor affirmed that all papers that are adequately global (have an international dimension), acceptably written, and technically sound are sent for review, whether they are positivistic or interpretative in nature. Currently, reviewers are not asked to assess innovativeness in methodology and research paradigms, although that could be a matter for future board deliberation (Katherine Hughes, personal communication, 28 September 2006).

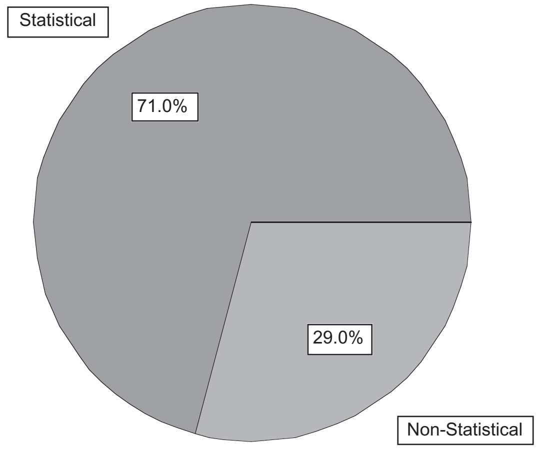

Figure 10 Analytical approaches. **Statistical**: 29% used only descriptive statistics (means, averages, frequencies, percentages); 42% involved basic descriptive and inferential statistics; 29% used some form of theoretical building statistics; 65% used regression analysis; 20% used a factor analysis; 8% cluster analysis; 5% Structural Equation Modelling; 2% conjoint analysis. **Non-statistical**: content analysis: 8%; thematic analysis: 7%; policy analysis: 4%; comparative analysis: 3.5%; case studies: 2%; grounded theory: 2%; narratives: 1%; dietary analysis: 1%; discourse analysis: 0.2%; phenomenological: 0.5%.

Analytical approaches

In the early years of the decade, authors tended to note the statistical software used to analyse the data, but neglected to specify which statistical procedures they used. This trend changed in the latter half of the decade, with more scholars explicitly stating the approach they used to analyse the data. To reiterate, the coding sheet included 13 analytical approaches, and a category for 'Other'. Close to three quarters (71%) of the studies used some form of descriptive, inferential or theory building statistics, as opposed to qualitative, non-statistical approaches (29%). Of those papers which used statistical approaches, over one quarter (29%) used only descriptive statistics (means, averages, frequencies, percentages). Nearly half (42%) involved basic descriptive and inferential statistics, with the latter including ANOVAs, chi-squares, etc. Twenty-nine percent used some form of theoretical building statistics. Of these, two-thirds (65%) used regression analysis, one-fifth used a factor analysis with the remaining papers using cluster analysis (8%), Structural Equation Modelling (5%), or conjoint analysis (2%). Of the 78 studies that used theoretical building statistics, 66% did so in conjunction with inferential statistics, and to a lesser extent descriptive statistics. Nine of the methods coded as 'Other' were empirical in nature and included: sensory analysis, often using scales; chemical analysis; and, bacteria counts (2% of total). Again, Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) found the same patterns for the Journal in work published between 1980 and 1999.

Twenty-nine percent of the studies used a qualitative analytical framework. In descending order, these included: content analysis (8%), thematic analysis (7%), policy analysis (4%), comparative analysis (3.5%), case studies (2%), grounded theory (2%), narratives (1%), dietary analysis (1%), discourse analysis (0.2%) and the phenomenological approach (0.5%). Almost all of the analytical approaches coded as 'other' fell into the qualitative mode. They included: correspondence analysis, framework analysis, hierarchal value maps, SWOT analysis, situational analysis and frame analysis (see Fig. 10).

At this point in time, no attempt was made to explicitly determine whether research designs incorporated elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods, although there did seem to be superficial evidence of this practice. There were definitely studies that used both approaches. Such paradigmatic combinations are desirable, because they would help the Journal promote many ways of knowing. As well, integrating the two paradigms may give the best results in many circumstances (Niglas, 2001).

The character of the Journal (a.k.a. summary)

International Journal of Consumer Studies is an eclectic, international journal. Eclectic is from the Greek eklektikos, to be selective or to gather, and that is what this Journal does well. This past decade reflects a collection of 380 papers (45 issues) gathered from 42 countries on five continents, and from over 900 authors (with some redundancy). Each year, readers can choose from an average of 38 papers, and each volume holds an average of 380 pages, about 10 pages per paper.

Contributions come mainly from universities, but also from government agencies, industry, and civil society organizations and institutes (especially in the special issues). The presence of civil society authors in special issues is an interesting character trait of the Journal. These alternative perspectives are a valuable way to stimulate new directions for research, new problems to address, new applications, and even new analyses.

There is a gender imbalance, reflected in mainly women scholars (over two-thirds). Also, not very many papers are prepared by gendered teams (slightly over one quarter). Most papers are written by one author, likely explaining why most papers have authors from one country. This mono-author approach could impact the richness of the interpretation of the data, even the research questions and research methodology. Several 'eyes' are always better than one.

Related to this is the reality that few papers are co-authored by cross-national teams of scholars, even though this is the 'international' journal of consumer studies. Although not coded for this analysis, anecdotal evidence suggests that many researches dealt with issues in specific countries (Turkey, India, Russia, Finland, Ghana, Korea, Japan, Canada, US, UK, etc.). The findings of these papers were not generalized to the wider world population, as might be expected from an 'international' journal. This is not a criticism, simply an observation. The Journal could assume a compelling character if potential contributors were encouraged to engage in inter-geographically (and by implication) more inclusive and diverse research.

The collection of papers housed in the Journal has a predominate focus on consumer studies (52%) (affairs/policy, education, protection, ecosystems, economics), followed very closely with a focus on family and household studies. Of interest is the preponderance of papers on the topic of food, almost one-third of all papers submitted to the Journal. Other trends include a new focus on consumer genres and market types, a lens on the ethical and moral overtones of consumer behaviour, attention to the ecological and sustainability aspects of consumption, consumer education reframed as enlightened empowerment, and more attention to the global context, as well as the cultural and political dimensions, of consumption. Future reviews of the Journal may want to follow Abdel-Ghany's (2001) lead, and try to place the scholarship housed in the journal within historical, social, institutional and economic events that are shaping the field.

Asian scholars tend to choose the Journal to publish textile and clothing papers. African scholars are more likely to submit works that are applied in nature. As well, they tend to set the research in the context of the daily life challenges of African citizens. This became evident when the iterative readings revealed that many papers from Africa dealt with pressing, life and death, issues of malnutrition, oppressive poverty, HIV/AIDS, entrepreneurship and family income, and other development-related issues. Contributions from Turkey have consistently dealt with the role of women as wage earners. Most other contributions to the Journal (from the Americas and Europe) seem to be focused more on the nature of what it means to 'behave as a consumer'; hence, their focus on *consumer behaviour* (whether it be decision making, experiences with particular goods or services, retailer activities, policies that protect the interest of the consumer vis-a-vis business, educating people in their consumer role, and more recently, the impact of technology, globalization and sustainability on consumer welfare and well-being).

Unequivocally, the current knowledge base housed in the Journal is positivistic, scientific and empirical in nature. This is reflected in the research design, data collection methods and analytical approaches. It is also reflected in the type of research or paper, with half of the work published in the Journal characterized as basic science, or basic research. Other forms of scholarship are not as evident. This split between positivism and interpretativism is a recognized reality in today's consumer research (Ekstrōm, 2003). In this Journal, this narrow conceptualization of what counts as knowledge is being challenged recently by an emerging trend towards more interpretative scholarship, at least from Scandinavian scholars. The American, Asian, European and African scholars who have contributed to the Journal have consistently remained in the positivistic paradigm, and have done so for decades (Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany, 2001).

The Journal title contains the term *consumer studies* taken to mean the employment of an applied approach using the research generated via basic science so as to enhance economic security and well-being (Chenoweth *et al.*, 1984). Yet, the bulk of contributions to the Journal are basic in nature, more in line with how Chenoweth *et al.* defined the term consumer sciences (now a theme of the Journal). Not to make too big a deal of this, but the journal 'title' invites people to contribute applied science; yet, they are submitting basic science. What could be causing the disconnect, and to what effect is it shaping the character of the Journal?

Missing from the Journal, or woefully lacking, and thereby shaping the Journal's character, are non-conventional methods and approaches that explore peoples' voices, lived experiences, meaning-making, power relationships, etc. in a consumer society. There is little evidence of the 'phenomenology of consumption' that deals with the experiences and understandings (meanings) gained by those who consume. Since this approach to research and scholarship is deeply shaped by the prevailing world view and underlying, often unspoken, assumptions of truth, it is very telling that only five papers out of 380 even used the words ideology or paradigm. This is a noteworthy character trait of the Journal, granted, only evident from reading a full decade of contributions. It would not be readily apparent if one were to read just an issue, or even a yearly volume.

Still, this review revealed that, in its current state, the body of knowledge contained in the Journal conforms to established standards and practice within the field, with only tentative evidence of scholarly work that punches through these boundaries, and stretches intellectual engagement. The over-representation of the standard use of surveys or questionnaires, analysed using inferential or basic descriptive statistics, raises the unpleasant impression of unsophisticated research. The heavy reliance on regression analysis and factor analysis is also telling. On the other hand, the recent emergence of interpretative, phenomenological, hermeneutic scholarship is a harbinger of more intellectual curiosity, scepticism (not the same as cynicism), and thinking outside the box about consumer studies. Ekstrōm (2003) also reported these trends emerging in the early 2000s in the consumer behaviour research field (a subdiscipline of marketing and a theme of this Journal). Also, the number of papers using more multifaceted research designs increased exponentially over the decade.

Another observation about the character of the Journal is the presence of so many papers with no theoretical framework. In the papers that do contain specific theoretical orientations, there is a plethora of theories (over 100), so much so that the Journal content reflects a fragmented state of theoretical agreement in the field. Some would say that the presence of so many theories, conceived as germane to consumer studies, is a positive development, and that it is now a feature of the consumer research field (Ekstrōm, 2003). The insight about theoretical fragmentation versus plurality is not a critique of the Journal; rather, it is an observation about the possible state of theory in the field. What is very encouraging is that, over time, more and more people grounded their work in theory.

Related to the issue of theoretical foundations is the telling absence of scholarship that strives to develop new theories, conceptual frameworks, taxonomies, typologies, etc. Only 27 contributions dealt with the development of new theoretical orientations for studying consumer-related issues. The bulk of these papers appear in special issues (2002, 2005 and 2006), dealing with consumer education, empowerment and political consumerism. This development could be the beginning of a trend that sets the Journal up as the go-to source for new theoretical and conceptual development, via special issues.

Indeed, special issues and book review sections are not unique to this Journal. But, they do contribute greatly to its character. Ten special issues have been published to date, and 45 book reviews. Both of these standing elements of the Journal reflect the three themes and four topics of the Aims and Scope of the Journal. A unique contribution of the Book Reviews is the focus on home economics philosophy ($n = 10$ books to date). As expected in a journal about consumer studies, the special issues and book reviews deal with consumer policy, protection, behaviour, ecosystem, socialization (especially children as consumers), empowerment, and involvement or participation (voice).

The Journal's association with Blackwell Publishing is productive and innovative. It has a powerful and growing web presence. Management of the Journal is advancing towards an electronic model, with online issues, online submission and manuscript management, and subscription formats. The pursuit of an ISI impact factor will be of interest to many Majority World scholars and other academics who need some numerical indicator of the Journal's perceived quality for their career advancement. Indeed, there has been a marked increased in the number of submissions from Majority World scholars (Editor's Report, 2006, unpublished), a development actively encouraged by the Editor, and the Board.

Conclusion

All in all, this review has illustrated that the character of the Journal is one of growing scholarly integrity, and consistent, widening, global representation. More, and larger, issues are being published, more papers are being published, and an increasing number of people are reading the Journal, evidenced by a 43% increase in downloads in just the last year. Both the academy and civil society (as well as government and, to some extent, industry) are regular contributors, with civil society offerings appearing in the Special Issues. These issues are appearing more often, and are growing in size, as well. The Scope of the Journal seems to be attracting a full range of international scholars, more likely to be women. The Journal is taking on large social, technological and political issues, from a consumer perspective, in the form of political consumerism, diversity, empowerment, citizenship, global tourism, technological innovations (especially e-commerce developments), children as consumers, and health. It is encouraging a shift from simple consumerism to socially conscious consumerism, and consumer citizenship. The focus shifted from consumer affairs to consumer well-being and security. There is room for expansion to include a focus on the human condition through a consumer lens (dealing with issues of justice, rights, security, peace, equity and freedom).

Most exciting is the emergence of scholars' perceptions that the Journal is as an outlet for interpretative consumption-focused scholarship, in addition to conventional, positivistic science. This inclusive trend implies that the Journal may also come to be seen as a vehicle for research reflecting the scholarships of integration and teaching. It does market itself as a journal that takes a holistic approach to an ever-expanding discipline.

The maturing character of the Journal validates and legitimizes its continued presence as a respected member of the small core of consumer studies-related Journals in the world. It continues to be a viable venue for home economics-related scholarship, as well. Building up a strong and healthy body of knowledge in a Journal is a pursuit that requires a step-by-step and steady effort, over time (Tierney, 2006). With the continued commitment of the Editors, Board members, reviewers and the publisher, and with continued global, scholarly interest in the Journal, and the topic of consumer studies, the Journal will continue on its journey towards being a respected repository and steward of consumer studies-related scholarship with international and global dimensions.

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End Notes

[1]This review was completed before the final November issue for 2006 was published.

[2]The Board's discussions about themes and topics were shaped by a seminal document published in the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. Chenoweth *et al.* (1984) suggested four specific consumer areas, and the themes of the Journal reflect three of these: (a) consumer sciences (and their application), (b) consumer policy, and (c) consumer education, with the fourth reflected in its title, consumer studies. Respectively, consumer sciences refer to the generation and application of basic research about consumer economics, family economics and resource management. More specifically, the label refers to a field that uses basic science to analyse the actions and interactions between consumers and markets. To cloud the issue somewhat, the title of the Journal contains the term consumer studies (identified as well by Chenoweth *et al.*), taken to mean an approach that employs an applied approach using the research generated via basic science so as to enhance economic security and well-being. The Board substituted its earlier use of the term consumer affairs with consumer policy (the same thing, according to Chenoweth *et al.*). Consumer education is now an explicit theme of the Journal, whereas previously it was subsumed under the topic 'consumer studies' (see also McGregor and MacDonald, 1997 for more information on these labels).

[3]First, Testa (2004) recognized that it can take years for citations to peak in areas other than the natural sciences; that is, reach a meaningful number of citations. Many research papers remain uncited for 3 years. This means slower moving fields are at a disadvantage. While older papers are frequently cited by scholars for a range of reasons, the impact factor includes only papers written in the last 2 years. Of special concern is that classic papers are cited frequently, even after several decades, yet they do not get counted, although they are obviously having an impact (Monastersky, 2005).

Second, the impact factor ignores the prestige of the citing journal, capturing only the popularity of the source cited. Third, the accreditation process does not measure the scientific merit of the ideas. It measures only the level of interest in a topic, or a particular author's idea (Monastersky, 2005). Fourth, one-third of all citations captured by the ISI factor are self-citations (citing one's own work), raising doubts about the impact the work has on others, and the field. And, scholars can refer to others' work in order to judge it as suspect or poor. So, even though it was counted to create the ISI factor, the reference actually said the work was not making a difference because it is poor work. Fifth, it is faulty reasoning to assume a correlation of quality between a specific paper, and a given journal (Walter *et al*., 2003).

Sixth, the lower the denominator, the higher the impact factor (The PLoS Medicine Editors, 2006); that is, the fewer papers published in a journal, the higher the impact factor (indicating a higher-quality journal) because there is a smaller pool from which more people can cite. This reality presents an opportunity to manipulate the system. Related to this is the reality that most papers published in a high impact factor journal are really cited much less often than the impact factor may suggest, because the bulk of evidence justifying an ISI factor often reflects a small fraction of the actual number of papers in the Journal (Editorial, 2005).

Seventh, Garfield (2005) suggested (citing Hoeffel, 1998) that the best journals are those in which it is most difficult to have a paper accepted. By association, he equated acceptance rate with citation rates. Most of these journals existed before the impact factor was devised (the early 1960s). He contended that these journals are the ones that now have higher impact factors, implying that newer journals have a steep, up-hill journey ahead of them in their attempts to get certified and receive an ISI factor. Eighth, the fact that a scholar may be citing a paper because it was written by a particular person (regardless of the journal) is not captured with this measure (Walter *et al.*, 2003). The ISI process assumes that referring to a paper in a journal is a vote for the journal, not the person.

A ninth issue is that publication rates, citation rates and peak impacts vary widely from field to field, and among different disciplines. Things need to be placed in context, and in perspective. How can people know if the impact factor allotted by Thomson Scientific has any meaning, if the other journals in the field do not have an impact factor? For this reason, people need to know the average citation rate of the field and discipline, even particular journals, before they can assess an individual's impact (Popescu, 2001). Though the impact factor was originally intended to be an objective measure of the reputability of a journal, it is now increasingly applied to measure the productivity of scholars (Editorial, 2005). The impact factor, for many reasons noted, is not representative of individual scholars, journals, fields, even countries (Seglen, 1997).

Finally, the Journal accepts papers dealing with consumer sciences, consumer policy and consumer education. Each of these is also deemed to be a speciality of its own, with attendant sister journals. As well, many of 'the topics' covered by the journal are subdisciplines or specialities in their own right: gender (feminism), nutrition, food, textiles, housing, health, economics and consumer behaviour. Again, these topics are covered in sister journals – some would say 'the competition'. At issue is that different specialities within disciplines can exhibit different impact factors. This reality complicates the calculation of the impact factor for journals that cross boundaries between disciplines and fields of study (Testa, 2004).

[4]Thompson Scientific is part of the Thomson Corporation, a huge player in the information industry. In the early 1960s, Eugene Garfield of ISI invented the journal 'impact factor' idea to help scholars and librarians gauge the relative importance of journals within a given field. His assumption was that if someone is citing a work, the original work is having an impact. By counting the number of citations, there would be numerical evidence of making a difference. Each year, since the mid 1970s, ISI has been publishing these ratings in the *Journal Citation Reports* (now online – *JCR WEB*).

The basic calculation is based on 3 years of data. The basic formula is to divide (a) the number of times papers published in a 2-year period were cited in indexed journals a year later by (b) the number of papers published in this 2-year period. For example, if 200 papers were published by a journal in a 2-year period (say 2003/2004) and, during 2005, 75 citations to these 2 years were made, the 2005 impact factor is 0.375 (75/200) (Garfield, 1994, 2005).

Also, Thomson ISI only runs the calculation on the journals in its own database. If scholars are citing the work in papers not indexed, these citations do not get counted (Monastersky, 2005). If the media, civil society organizations, non-profit or think tank institutes, even government agencies, cite the work, it does not get counted. Furthermore, a majority of a given year's impact factor can be generated by a small percentage of papers, painting a misleading picture of the quality of the journal (Editorial, 2005). Walter *et al.* (2003) found that even though two journals they analysed had a high impact factor, more than half of the papers published in the journal were not cited. It is fortuitous that the Journal changed its name 5 years ago, because a name change can affect an impact factor rating for 2 years (Garfield, 1994).

Despite these shortcomings, Thomas Scientific generated a master list of 7500 'accredited' journals from 200 disciplines. These journals are accredited (get on the list) by their staff, referred to as 'editorial experts' (see http://scientific.thomson.com/mjl/). Those who make the list score high on such criteria as: impact, influence, timeliness (number of issues published matches number promised), peer review, use of the English language, relevance of content, and global and regional representation (Testa, 2004). Once on the list, Thomson Scientific's editorial experts monitor the journals to ensure they maintain the standards and relevance that earned them a place initially. If the journal is deemed not useful, it is deleted (Thomson Scientific, 2005). Thomson Scientific assumes that only a relatively small number of journals publish the bulk, the core, of significant 'scientific' research. Hence, they feel that they do not need to include all journals in a discipline, and they feel it is necessary for a journal to prove its worth (that it is important and influential) in order to get on the list.

Garfield (1994) does advise that ISI does not depend on the impact factor alone in assessing the usefulness of a journal, and cautions that neither should anyone else. Careful attention is also paid, by ISI, to other phenomena that influence citation rates, and ISI counsels people to use the impact factor in conjunction with the peer review process within academic communities.