

Leavy, Essentials of Transdisciplinarity

some things to keep in mind after reading Leavy

- we spend a lot of time thinking about ‘your discipline’ in this class
- part of the purpose of this reading is to begin to think about your academic training and how it begins to prepare you to address the kinds of problems in which you are interested (or not).
- As the authors claim, universities are organized by discipline and this organization affects the way that knowledge is created, what questions are asked, what “disciplinary discourse” you are versed in, etc.
- keep in mind the problem-based approach to writing project 1: what kinds of sources did you end up finding that were relevant (either topically or methodologically) to your problem? Were you pulled towards another discipline? Or many other disciplines? Could you imagine what it would look like to design/organize/begin projects along the whole spectrum of disciplinarity-multi-inter-transdisciplinarity? How would a transdisciplinary approach change your approach?

key quotes and examples

“All disciplines offer unique but limited perspectives onto the social reality they study” (15)

“Professionals within disciplines also develop a shared language of ‘disciplinary discourse’” (17)

- obviously, this is something we are interested in for this class; but you might also think about the degree to which your experience (thus far) in the professional world has differed from the disciplinary discourse you’ve learned in your academic training—in what ways are workplaces disciplinary-multi-inter-transdisciplinarity? How might this affect the discourse we use or the genres we enact to get things done?

“[W]hile transdisciplinarity points to the limitations of disciplinary modes of knowledge production, it still relies on them. In other words, *the growth in transdisciplinarity does not mean the abandonment of the disciplines* ... [A] firm grounding in one’s ‘home’ discipline is a vital asset in transdisciplinary research projects” (34).

key terms and definitions

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Table 1.2 A Comparison of Multi-Disciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity

	Level of Collaboration between Disciplines
Multi-Disciplinarity	Collaboration between two or more disciplines without integration
Interdisciplinarity	Collaboration between two or more disciplines with varying levels of integration of concepts, theories, methods and findings
Transdisciplinarity	Collaboration between two or more disciplines with high levels of integration causing the development of new conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks

- *disciplinarity*: "Disciplines have common research objects, questions, methodological tools and exemplary cases;" they have "prevailing worldviews or paradigms that are widely shared"
- *multi-disciplinarity*: involves collaboration between two or more disciplines on a research project; "however, each discipline maintains its own assumptions, values, and methods" (18). See example on p. 19; "multi=disciplinary approaches to research essentially offer a slightly broader perspective or multi-perspectival view on traditional research questions" (20).
- *interdisciplinarity*: Like multi-disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity suggests collaboration between two or more disciplines, but that integrates the two disciplines more thoroughly than in multi-disciplinarity. See example on p. 21. Important concepts here include *emergence* (of new concepts, problems, or solutions being supported by a synthesis of diverse perspectives); and the criteria suggested to assess the level of interdisciplinarity of a particular project:
 - the number of disciplines involved
 - the distance between the disciplines involved
 - the novelty and creativity in combining disciplinary elements
 - the degree of integration
- *transdisciplinarity*: "generally understood as an approach to research that involves the integration of multiple disciplines in a project aimed at a social, human, or 'life-world' purpose" (24). That is, as an approach to research, it is problem-centered (rather than discipline-driven) and, often, aimed at promoting social change. Principles of transdisciplinarity include (see Table 1.1, 30):
 - issue- or problem-centered
 - holistic or synergistic research approach
 - transcendence

- emergence
- innovation
- flexibility