

Presidential Address

Advancing the Social Sciences Through the Interdisciplinary Enterprise

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Although interdisciplinary work in universities has expanded in recent decades, the influence of academic disciplines is pervasive. The article makes explicit the opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinarity for the social sciences. The strategies offered for enhancing the interdisciplinary enterprise include selecting appropriate group members, establishing ground rules, explicating and bridging epistemological and methodological differences, and promoting infrastructural support.

The influence of academic disciplines in the university is dominant. Colleges are organized by departments of separate disciplines, faculty are hired and promoted by colleagues within their discipline, the identity and career development of faculty are enhanced by disciplinary guilds and professional associations, and students are expected to specialize in a discipline to meet graduation requirements.¹ While serving very useful purposes, academic disciplines create barriers that sometimes run counter to the very intellectual purposes of those who created the university.²

A quote from Margaret Mead's *Blackberry Winter* captures vividly the rationale for the interdisciplinary enterprise:

Perhaps I can best illustrate the meaning of my thoughts by going back to Oppenheimer's felicitous metaphor of the house called "science." I would like to see us build a *new* room in that vast and rambling structure. This room, like the others, would have no door and over the entrance would be the words, *thought, reflection, contemplation*. It would have no tables with instruments, no whirring machinery. There would be no sound except the soft murmur of words carrying the thoughts of men [and women] in the room. It would be a Commons Room to which men [and women] would drift in from those rooms marked geology, anthropology, taxonomy, technology, biology, paleontology, logic, mathematics,

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psychology, linguistics, and many others. Indeed, from without the walls of the House would come poets and artists. All these would drop in and linger. This room would have great windows, the vistas our studies have opened. Men [and women] singly or together would from time to time walk to those windows to gaze out on the landscape beyond. This landscape in all its beauty, sometimes gentle, sometimes terrible, cannot be seen fully by any one of the occupants of the room. Indeed, it cannot be known fully by a whole generation of men [and women]. Explorers of each generation travel into its unknown recesses and, with luck, return to share their discoveries with us. So the life of the *new* room would go on—*thought, reflection, contemplation*—as the explorers bring back their discoveries to share with the room's occupants. This landscape that we gaze on and try to understand is an epic portion of the human experience.³

This metaphoric perspective calls attention to the need for interdisciplinary efforts to facilitate the integration and synthesis of knowledge toward a more complete understanding of the whole. The new room would be inviting to diverse scholars who bring their own methods and areas of expertise. But other than a prescription for thinking, reflecting, and contemplating, the metaphor stops short of informing scholars about how they might work together in that room. After affirmation of the opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinarity for the social sciences, several strategies for enhancing the interdisciplinary enterprise are suggested.

The **intellectual argument** for interdisciplinary work is that ideas in any field are enriched by theories, concepts, and methods from other fields.⁴ Specialization in disciplines and subdisciplines has yielded tremendous gains in knowledge, but specialization is also the fragmentation of mind and subject matter. Specialties have become so defined and so isolated as to be quite distinct from each other. When a subject needs context, other disciplines are indispensable, forcing boundary changes. At their best, interdisciplinary programs go beyond intellectual integration to create a community of learning among faculty and students. This climate fosters group norms supportive of creative intellectual inquiry and facilitates approaching the same or related problems at different levels of analysis.

The **practical argument** for interdisciplinarity is that problems of the world are not organized according to academic disciplines.⁵ The social sciences are an important intellectual resource in addressing virtually every problem of the day. Within the social science disciplines, some overlap exists in the subject matter considered. Topics concerning human motives, family, groups, institutions, and political and economic life, for example, are the focus of many social science disciplines. Understanding and finding solutions to pressing problems such as health, pollution, communications, and defense require perspectives and knowledge across several disciplines. Many of the most exciting developments cross traditional disciplinary lines encouraging the developments of new fields such as neurosciences, genetic engineering, informatics, and urban studies.

The **pedagogical argument** for interdisciplinary studies (i.e., that learning is hindered by fragmentation in the curriculum) has received a resurgence of support.⁶ Several national reports of the past decade have called for greater coherence and

integration in undergraduate education. Given this driving force behind academic reform, interdisciplinary studies are now mainstream requirements and take many forms: topical freshman seminars; required core courses in the humanities, social, sciences, and natural sciences; advanced courses centered on problem or intellectual themes, and senior projects involving research, seminars, or artistic productions.

The historical development of disciplines provides an important context for the concept of interdisciplinarity.⁷ Long ago the grand coherence of the medieval summa gave way to the trend of specialized diversification among the branches of knowledge. For many centuries the sciences showed a monarchical organization, constituting a system of subordinated members under the direction of one leading science such as theology or philosophy. What are now called disciplines and specialties are products of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the empirical disciplines one by one exerted their independence. Increasing specialization and segregation of disciplines affected all intellectual life.

In recent decades, signs clearly indicate a move again toward unity, but not the medieval type where disciplines were related under a strict system of subordination. The contemporary view is that disciplines exist in an open-minded confederation and that knowledge can be understood and advanced through interdisciplinary work.⁸ One tendency has been to regroup disciplines according to fields of study. Engineering, for instance, involves mathematics, physics, and business administration among others, while nursing requires a different but equally diverse configuration including biology, chemistry, sociology, and psychology. Another tendency has been to create new disciplines (e.g., biochemistry, psycholinguistics) that cross traditional disciplinary lines.

Although interdisciplinary research and educational programs were launched in limited ways after World War II, the interdisciplinary experience in universities is only a few decades old.⁹ Universities devised mechanisms to offset the risk of narrow specialization: joint course listings, joint faculty appointments, interdisciplinary thesis committees, research centers, special committees, and interdisciplinary majors.¹⁰ Today, agencies that award research and training grants expect that some provision for cross-fertilization will be included.¹¹ Departments appoint faculty with academic preparation outside the discipline. For example, a few sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers are likely to hold faculty positions in medical and business schools.

Higher education continues to experience significant new growth in interdisciplinary scholarship and programs. Most colleges and universities have made, or are in the process of making, reforms in their general education curricula. Surveys also document the increase in research programs, special study centers, colloquia, conferences, journals, and undergraduate degree programs.¹²

Although the interdisciplinary trend has been described as irreversible to the point of no return,¹³ it is not without difficulties. Many research projects cease to be interdisciplinary after the funding is received. Social scientists are merely tolerated in some professional schools because it is fashionable or necessary for accreditation. Many interdisciplinary conferences consist of elbow rubbing among colleagues from different disciplines who talk at each other—not with each other. And many journals purporting to be interdisciplinary merely publish manuscripts from different disciplines.

DEFINITIONS OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Collaboration between disciplines is possible in many forms, ranging from the relatively intimate self-regulated cooperation between two specialists who proceed in a friendly spirit to elaborately organized specialists supervised by complex administrative structures. All these efforts have their origin in a dissatisfaction with the compartmentalization of the disciplines and the productive expectations from a collaborative model.

The term interdisciplinary has been confusing and something of a misnomer.¹⁴ In the literature the term interdisciplinarity is used in both broad and narrow senses. In the broad sense interdisciplinarity literally means between disciplines suggesting the basic elements of at least two collaborators, at least two disciplines, and a commitment to work together in some fashion in some domain. In the narrow sense, interdisciplinarity describes a specific type of nondisciplinary effort that is distinguishable from other nondisciplinary approaches to research and education such as crossdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. To confuse matters further, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary are often used interchangeably, usually in the broad sense.

In an early attempt to clarify interdisciplinary research, Gordon W. Blackwell¹⁵ characterized a continuum of types of research undertakings using the dimensions of number of people doing the research, kinds of actions involved in the research process, and the number of disciplines involved. On one end of the six-point continuum is the lone researcher working in one discipline and the last point is multidisciplinary team research where researchers from more than one discipline work collectively on a problem. Others¹⁶ have followed attempting to develop descriptive terminology or clarify meanings. Despite these discussions, notwithstanding their positive contributions, no consistent usage appears to be accepted by the scientific community.

The following uniform terminology is suggested for clarifying definitional concerns and underscoring the thrust of this article. As shown in Figure 1, at the base of the typology is *intradisciplinary*, within disciplinary work, followed by *crossdisciplinary*, a viewing of one discipline from the perspective of another. Examples of crossdisciplinary activity are a physics professor describing the physics of music or the art department offering a course in art history. *Multidisciplinary* is a level higher and involves several disciplines who each provide a different perspective on a problem or issue. A multidisciplinary example is faculty members from history, literature, and sociology who teach in a women's studies program or study women's position in society. Other examples include most general education courses and most social sciences conferences. In each of these cases the student or conference participant is required to integrate the often diverse ideas. Higher in the typology is *interdisciplinary* where integration of the contributions of several disciplines to a problem or issue is required. Interdisciplinary integration brings interdependent parts of knowledge into harmonious relationships through strategies such as relating part and whole or the particular and the general. A higher level of integrated study is *transdisciplinary*, concerned with the unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives.¹⁷

The emphasis of this article is interdisciplinary in the narrow sense, although some of the issues and strategies for interdisciplinarity apply in a limited sense to other nondisciplinary activities. Although interdisciplinary is more productive than multidisciplinary, most activities in the social sciences are multidisciplinary rather than inter-

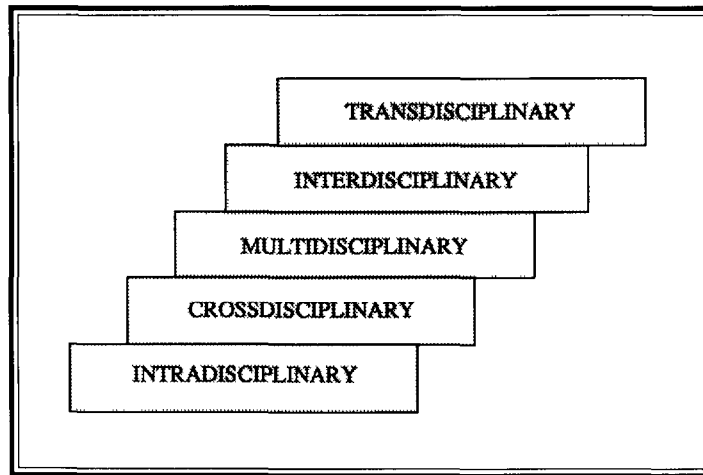


Figure 1. Typology for Enterprises Within and Across Disciplines

disciplinary A genuinely interdisciplinary enterprise is one that requires more or less integration and even modification of the disciplinary contributions while the inquiry or teaching is proceeding In interdisciplinary efforts, participants must have an eye toward the holistic complex of interrelationships and take into account the contributions of others in making their own contributions

Interdisciplinarity, then, is a complex endeavor that seeks to explicate relationships, processes, values, and context using the diversity and unity possible only through collaborative approaches To do so successfully, Stephen H Cutcliffe suggested that it:

means developing an understanding, both generally and in specific instances, about what values are, how people come to hold them, and how values evolve It means understanding the genesis and function of societal institutions in the political, economic, and cultural realms It means understanding in some general sense the internal essence and operation with major current concepts and methodologies, with design and modeling strategies in the disciplines being studied It also requires a holistic understanding of the complex interactions among these diverse components And as if this were not enough, it also implies the study of these complexities as reflected in art, literature, philosophy, and history as well as through contemporary political, economic, and sociological analyses ¹⁸

Interdisciplinarity holds great promise for understanding the holistic complex of interrelationships The challenge is to increase our capacity for truly interdisciplinary work

STRATEGIES FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK

Interdisciplinary research and education are difficult endeavors imbued with both pleasures and problems While nothing may be more positive than imagining a dedi-

cated group of clear minds working as one toward a common goal, the real process is often difficult at best. Crossing disciplinary lines that involve such diversity as the humanities and the sciences poses even greater problems than crossing lines that represent merely historical and probably necessary divisions of labor.¹⁹ In recognition of these problems, strategies for the conduct of interdisciplinary work are suggested including selecting appropriate group members and leaders, establishing ground rules, explicating and resolving epistemological and methodological differences, and gaining infrastructural support.

Selecting Appropriate Members and Leaders

Commitment to a common interest is a paramount criterion for group membership. Successful interdisciplinary teams require a common focus for their work.²⁰ This clear, recognizable idea may be advanced by a single individual who is able to generate sufficient enthusiasm in others or it may be imposed by some external demand. Blackwell²¹ suggested that a problem is more suitable for interdisciplinary study when a single discipline appears inadequate, the problem is on the fringe of two disciplines, conceptual integration of previous work is needed, and relevant disciplines appear ready and able to collaborate. Even though the problem may be initially broad and vaguely articulated, a strong commitment to the common interest from each member will facilitate and sustain cooperation throughout a project.

Successful interdisciplinary individuals are much like successful people in any endeavor, but several characteristics are notable. First, each person must be secure and have recognized competence in at least one discipline. Interdisciplinary efforts seldom work when members are not fully competent in their own field. Second, they must be broad in their perspective, have a taste for adventure into the unknown and unfamiliar, and have flexibility and versatility in semantics, theoretical orientation, and modes of inquiry.

Personal competencies, those qualities, skills, and abilities that allow people to function as a team, are also required. The most important include the ability to work toward outcomes, the ability to relate to feelings and needs of others, conveying interest and respect; the ability to schedule time and prioritize, handling multiple activities and meeting deadlines, the ability to be oriented to the team, the ability to act mature, being willing to be open and act responsibly when dealing with people and situations, and the ability to secure information, compare data, identify issues, and be creative in a group setting. In effective teams, the delicate balance of differentiation and integration is achieved.²²

The right combination of commitment to the common interest, disciplinary competence, broad interests, and personal attributes may be difficult to determine, but no one of these is sufficient. Without a sufficient inclination for adventure, a competent disciplinarian may retreat from the group project. Similarly, someone with insufficient expertise in one discipline is likely to struggle even more in an interdisciplinary environment, treating important matters superficially at best. Difficult personalities are likely to jeopardize the fragile nature of interdisciplinary groups.

Individuals enter interdisciplinary activities with varied motives.²³ Some participants are drawn to the project by the strength of their interest in the problem. The time

might be right for others who are sufficiently free of other obligations to have time to participate. Others are opportunists for whom collaboration is a chance to enhance personal prestige by working with someone of higher prestige or to establish a reputation in an important new substantive area. While the latter motives may be viewed as less worthy, they frequently operate in building an interdisciplinary group. Understanding motives may be helpful when critical problems occur.

Interdisciplinary efforts are easier when the participants and their respective disciplines enjoy a parity of prestige and standing within the scholarly community. However, great disparities are likely to exist. Teams often are composed of disciplines of unequal status and a mixture of senior and junior faculty members. Faculty in more prestigious departments have higher salaries, more eminent colleagues, lower teaching loads, more able students, better facilities, and better libraries.²⁴ They often glory in the rigor of their discipline and the contributions they have made.

Unfortunately, most social scientists are not among the more prestigious disciplines. Using their collaborative experience with physicians, Elina Hemminiki and Hellevi Kojo-Austin²⁵ noted that as long as social scientists work in a subordinate position performing tasks given to them, they are accepted by the medical profession. However, when they introduce paradigms from their own scientific area or suggest foci for study, conflicts arise. Conflicts were proposed to stem from professional imperialism, myths, and the unequal power. Imperialism is the tendency of a discipline to monopolize and control certain phenomena and to expand the empire by redefining others' problems in its own terms. Myths include the myth of experience (e.g., physician experience with patients is more valid than systematically gathered data) and the myth of simplicity (e.g., with just a little learning, anyone can conduct a sociological study). Power imbalance was consistent with occupational prestige. Recognition of the traits of professional imperialism and its myths may help to understand the underlying assumptions and dynamics of the interaction. Strategies for reducing power struggles should be employed including initial sets of meetings suggested for maintaining intellectual integrity and for explicating epistemological and methodological differences.

Leadership in research projects or educational programs is needed to synchronize the efforts of the individual members or teams. Such a director or coordinator must have the responsibility and authority to oversee the activities. Essential qualities for this individual include the ability to establish ground rules, develop a process-oriented activity, maintain professional and intellectual integrity, identify and resolve epistemological and methodological differences, and facilitate integration.

The time commitments for the administrator is often underestimated. James McEvoy, III²⁶ suggested applicants for interdisciplinary grants consider budgeting full support for their administrator. Similarly, administrators of programs must be relieved of teaching and other administrative duties in order to provide adequate supervision, monitoring, and integration.

Establishing Ground Rules

While a permissive attitude must generally pervade the workings, establishing a few operating guidelines is fundamental. One relating to process is a commitment

that the group chooses to work in a congenial and rewarding atmosphere versus one of mutual bickering. To do so, some procedural rules should be applied. R. Richard Wohl²⁷ suggested initially establishing time for relatively free exploration of the problem from each participant's point of view. In turn, each specialist should have the opportunity to inform and educate the other colleagues presenting both theoretical and methodological views.

As the team works together in regular staff meetings, the responsibilities and timetables for completion must be made explicit. Generally, periodic presentations of progress are more helpful than finished reports. Such updates involve the work of all members and the thinking of each member or subgroup, yet maintains sufficient autonomy for each person to proceed to partial conclusions.

Other ground rules that provide some guidance are general decisions about approach. For example, does the group wish to formulate some prior conceptualization versus letting the theory emerge from the data? Agreement about multiple data sources versus a single data source is an example of a general methodological decision. Documenting all decisions in some manner provides an audit trail that is likely to reduce confusion and avoid redundant discussions.

Publication arrangements require early discussion and agreement. Multiple authorships are often difficult. Collaborators should have opportunities to play leading roles in different publications. Individuals and subgroups should be encouraged to explore their own disciplinary issues as well and to publish articles in their own fields. Because publications are such an important measure of personal achievement, they should reflect both individual and joint contributions.

Explicating and Resolving Epistemological and Methodological Differences

Observers of interdisciplinary group process²⁸ note that discussions often are reduced to the lowest common denominator. Failing to understand, appreciate, or agree with another perspective results in participants retreating to a common level shared by all. But such a level cannot make use of the disciplinary insights and it compromises the professional integrity of the members.

One of the most important investments of time and effort in commencing an interdisciplinary enterprise is the preliminary exploration by all members of what the discipline can offer to the problem of interest. Each exploration of the problem through the eyes of the various specialists should stress the positive contributions made by a particular discipline. To maintain professional integrity, participants must initially avoid confronting fundamental differences and requiring premature closure on important issues. In these meetings, fundamental questions concerning perspective and method should be reserved for later discussion and debate. Similarly, the temptation to establish consensus should be resisted. While a rough synthesis is sometimes useful, discontinuities of method and perspectives are to be tolerated and even celebrated as indicators of pluralism and diversity, hallmarks of interdisciplinary efforts. This intellectual hospitality²⁹ creates a canon of decorum and polite behavior, creating a constructive and comprehensive atmosphere. Few specialists can resist the opportunity of educating colleagues about their own disciplines.

In addition to seeking out potential contributions of each discipline and communicating basic elements, Blackwell³⁰ suggested that the team should explore whether the separate and additive use of concepts is needed to accomplish the research or whether new concepts are needed to develop integrative theories. Further, he encouraged an early interplay of empirical and theoretical work rather than potentially sterile theoretical discussions.

Participants need to recognize that different disciplines have different cognitive maps and that learning at least part of these maps is essential for turning multidisciplinary work into interdisciplinary work.³¹ Hugh G. Petrie's³² definition of cognitive maps includes basic concepts, modes of inquiry, what counts as a problem, representation techniques, standards of proof, types of explanation, and general ideals of what constitutes the discipline. Unless maps are shared, information will be misunderstood in terms of one's own map or participants may be unable to see the relevance of their colleagues' points of view. The overlap of cognitive maps may be great or small. Failure to learn concepts and other parts of another's disciplinary map results in communication at the lowest common denominator.

Further, members bring their own personal biography to the enterprise. To function together well, there must be an awareness of how persons locate themselves in the world. Particular life situations influence experiences and expectations. Every individual interprets from diverse angles and particular vantage points because of both professional and personal backgrounds.

Team members must work at cultivating diversity, respect for each other in their pluralistic views, as well as promoting meaningful exchange. Socrates and Plato offered some direction for meaningful exchange when they distinguished kinds of interaction between thinkers. "Dialectic" occurs when the participants have subordinated the demands of their egos and have a paramount desire for discerning what is meaningful and true in what the other says, if meaning and truth exists there and can be coaxed out. On the other hand, the "eristic" type of exchange includes the consuming desire to be persuasive to one's own view, philosophy, theory, or method—to overwhelm the other and to secure what must appear at the time to be a victory of wits and argumentative skill. Brilliance and wit are not enough for interdisciplinary progress. This work requires respect for the others' capabilities and intentions; commitment to common interests or problems; exceptional patience; the ability to hold in abeyance one's own position, theory, idea, or method; and a willingness to struggle to get inside the issues as presented.³³ As Horace Freeland Judson stated, "Science is enormously disparate. Nobody has succeeded in catching all this in one net. . . . behind the diversity lies a unity."³⁴

Recognizing and explicating epistemological differences is one challenge, but reconciling or resolving those differences is another concern. Several strategies may be employed. Parallel coexistence of different paradigms (like parallel play during early childhood) is one way to solve the problem. A combinationist approach is another. While either may be more productive than choosing only one paradigm, the separatists will continue their advocacy of uncontaminated methods while combinationists will continue to select, sometimes indefensibly, methods from any or all coexisting paradigms.

The preferred solution may be the use of the Transcendent Paradigm.³⁵ Redefining

diverse paradigms as complementary rather than contradictory and viewing methods as logically independent fostered the evolution of this paradigm that not only permits but empowers investigators to examine the fullest context of phenomena by using multiple philosophies and methods. The Transcendent Paradigm was named because its intent is to go beyond the limits or the boundaries of the prevailing paradigms or disciplines, it seeks to transcend the limits of philosophical stances, research methods, data collection, and analytic procedures. For example, the nature of reality is singular and multiple, objective and subjective, as well as particularistic and holistic. Similarly, the paradigmatic assumption regarding the nature of truth is that the world is stable and dynamic. Both individual uniqueness and commonalities across individuals are highly valued. Investigators have the freedom to choose a mix of methodological attributes from currently prevailing paradigms that best fit the demands of the phenomena under study.

New or revised modes of inquiry that advance interdisciplinarity are needed. Another challenge is to expand approaches that assist in integrating and interpreting the knowledge generated through various research strategies. Various forms of triangulation have been suggested.³⁶ The dialectic approach³⁷ has been proposed in which different paradigms are given equal status and dialectical reasoning assists in reconciling two seemingly contradictory responses. Others³⁸ suggested using structural and theoretical integration, metaphors, or models. These and other modes of integration need further articulation such that knowledge derived through interdisciplinary work can be synthesized.

Infrastructural Support

Infrastructures must be created to sustain and promote interdisciplinary efforts. Institutions often view interdisciplinary programs as low cost because relatively few new faculty resources are required.³⁹ But if the program is designed to be more than multidisciplinary, more faculty time is required for team-taught courses, development of new courses, and interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinary programs may also require an administrator, space, support staff, and research support.

The debate continues about where to locate interdisciplinary programs.⁴⁰ Some advocate housing them in cluster colleges while others argue they must have a departmental base. If the programs are structured so they rely on faculty from other departments, sustained departmental support would be evidenced by continued faculty assignment, faculty reward decisions, and support for courses offered. To support interdisciplinary programs, departments may have to violate their own self interests because of the increased demands on existing faculty.

Margaret A. Miller and Anne-Marie McCartan⁴¹ argued that interdisciplinary program heads need some degree of fiscal autonomy including an independent operating budget. They also noted that resources are required for faculty development toward inspired programs and for faculty support including graduate teaching and research assistantships.

Colleges and universities also need to address the effect of the disciplinary structure on faculty rewards. Promotion and tenure are pervasively awarded within disciplines. The exceptional letters from a psychology colleague for a chemist seeking tenure

may be perceived with little relevance. Similarly, publications in interdisciplinary journals may not be evaluated as those in prestigious disciplinary journals. McEvoy⁴² noted that interdisciplinary research is utterly without a professional reward system to sustain it. Interdisciplinary programs with some autonomy (e.g., department or division status) have the potential for rewarding individuals for their interdisciplinary roles and productivity.

While institutional support and the creation of supportive formal structures are likely to enhance the success of interdisciplinary programs, they cannot produce it. Wohl cautioned that “disciplines do not, like so many flowers, ‘cross-fertilize’ each other, but that clusters of scholars must be united in self-sustaining and satisfying social ties before creative collaborative work becomes possible.”⁴³ Institutions must create conditions that foster continued interaction between specialists of different training and different outlooks to submerge those differences, temporarily and for particular purposes, to work on problems of common interest.

Interdisciplinary efforts do not suggest abolishing the distinction between the existing disciplines nor is a total reorganization of the university advocated. What is needed in most cases is a careful selection of a small number of people of different backgrounds who are concerned with related problems and are willing to engage in interdisciplinary effort, and arrangements that permit and reward joint efforts. Joseph J. Kockelmans⁴⁴ noted that the greatest problem in interdisciplinary ventures is still the development of coordination and cooperation among people who can pull together, instead of being pulled asunder, by disciplines, schools, and organizational pressures.

A CHALLENGE TO THE ASSOCIATION

It has been my pleasure to serve as the President of the Western Social Science Association and for this opportunity I am grateful. An old proverb states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” In my view, to thrive, and maybe even to survive, the Association needed to systematically reflect on its past and anticipate its future, creating the preferred future through deliberate planned action. The blueprint for the next decade was established in the **Ten Year Plan: 1990–1999**. If I leave any legacy, I believe it is portended in this article. While WSSA has been in the forefront of advancing study, research, and teaching in the social sciences, the annual conferences and the Association’s publications reflect primarily disciplinary, crossdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary activities. Included in the vision I have brought into focus for WSSA is interdisciplinarity. WSSA should continue to maintain and appreciate the contributions of all social science disciplines, but it should enthusiastically nourish and cherish the interdisciplinary richness within its reach.

Interdisciplinary professional associations such as the Western Social Science Association help to construct and maintain the “new room” needed in the metaphorical house of science. As educators and scholars, we need to collaborate with other disciplines in our attempts to understand our expansive world. As Maxine Greene in *Landscapes of Learning*⁴⁵ suggested, we need to seek paradigm shattering, emancipatory processes to engage in futuring, a going beyond, to what is not yet, but might be. The spirit of interdisciplinary work acknowledges a critical consciousness of the voids and liberates the mind.

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NOTES

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