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Scope and Concerns

THE DISCIPLINARY WORK OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Each of the sciences of the social is marked by its distinctive disciplinary modes—the thinking practices of Anthropology, Archaeology, Behavioral Sciences, Cognitive Science, Communications, Cultural Studies, Demography, Economics, Education, Geography, Humanities, Law, Management, Media, Politics, Policy Studies, Psychology, Social Welfare, Sociology, to name a some of the principal sciences of the social. The disciplinary variation is so broad that practitioners in some of these areas may not even consider their discipline a ‘science’, whilst in other disciplines there is a general consensus about the scientific character of their endeavor.

What is a discipline? Disciplines represent fields of deep and detailed content knowledge, communities of professional practice, forms of discourse (of fine and precise semantic distinction and technicality), areas of work (types of organization or divisions within organizations such as academic departments or research organizations), domains of publication and public communication, sites of common learning, shared experiences of apprenticeship into disciplinary community, methods of reading and analysing the world, ways of thinking or epistemic frames, even ways of acting and types of person. ‘Discipline’ delineates the boundaries of intellectual community, the distinctive practices and methodologies of particular areas of rigorous and concentrated intellectual effort, and the varying frames of reference used to interpret the world.

And what is a science? Some of the studies of the social habitually and comfortably call themselves ‘sciences’, but others do not. The English word ‘science’ derives from the Latin ‘sciens’, or knowing. Return to the expansiveness of this root, and studies of the human could lay equally legitimate claim to that word.

‘Science’ in this broadest of senses implies and intensity of focus and a concentration of intellectual energies greater than that of ordinary, everyday, commonsense or lay ‘knowing’. It is more work and harder work. It relies on the ritualistic rigors and accumulated wisdoms of disciplinary practices.

These are some of the out-of-the-ordinary knowledge processes that might justify use of the word ‘science’, not only in the social sciences but also in the natural, physical, mathematical and applied sciences:

Science has an experiential basis. This experience may be based direct personal intuition of the already-known, on interests integral to the lifeworld, on the richness of life fully lived. Or it might be experience gained when we move into new and potentially strange terrains, deploying the empirical processes of methodical observation or systematic experimentation.

Science is conceptual. It has a categorical frame of reference based on higher levels of semantic precision and regularity than everyday discourse. On this foundation, it connects concept to concept into schemas. This is how science builds theories which model the world.

Science is analytical. It develops frames of reasoning and explanation: logic, inference, prediction, hypothesis, induction, deduction. And it sees the world through an always cautiously critical eye, interrogating the interests, motives and ethics that may motivate knowledge claims and subjecting epistemic assumptions to an ever-vigilant process of metacognitive reflection.

Science is application-oriented. It can be used to do things in the world. In these endeavors, it may be pragmatic, designing and implementing practical solutions within larger frames of reference and achieving technical and instrumental outcomes. Or it may be transformative—redesigning paradigms, social being and even the conditions of the natural world. What, after all, is the purpose of knowing other than to have an effect on the world, directly or indirectly?

Science can be any or all of these experiential, conceptual, analytical and applied things. Some disciplines may prioritize one or other of these knowledge processes, and this may be the

source of their strength as well as potential weakness. In any event, these are the kinds of things we do in order to know in the out-of-the-ordinary ways worthy of the name ‘science’.

The Social Sciences conference, journals, book series and online media provide a space to discuss these varied disciplinary practices, and examine examples of these practices in action. In this respect, their concern is to define and exemplify disciplinarity. They foster conversations which range from the broad and speculative to the microcosmic and empirical.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK OF THE SOCIAL AND OTHER SCIENCES



Interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work crosses disciplinary boundaries. This may be for pragmatic reasons, in order to see and do things that can’t be seen or done adequately within the substantive and methodological confines of a discipline. Broader views may prove to be more powerful than narrower ones, and even the more finely grained within-discipline views may prove all-the-more powerful when contextualized broadly. The deeper perspectives of the discipline may need to be balanced with and measured against the broader perspectives of interdisciplinarity.

Interdisciplinary approaches may also be applied for reasons of principle, to disrupt the habitual narrowness or outlook of within-discipline knowledge work, to challenge the ingrained, discipline-bound ways of thinking that produce occlusion as well as insight. If the knowable universe is a unity, discipline is a loss as well as a gain, and interdisciplinarity may in part recover that loss.

Interdisciplinary approaches also thrive at the interface of disciplinary and lay understandings. Here, interdisciplinarity is needed for the practical application of disciplined understandings to the actually existing world. Robust applied knowledge demands an interdisciplinary holism. A broad epistemological engagement is required simply to be able to deal with the complex contingencies of a really-integrated universe.

The Social Sciences conference, journals, book series and online media are spaces in which to discuss these varied interdisciplinary practices, and to showcase these practices in action across and between the social, natural and applied sciences.

WAYS OF SEEING, WAYS OF THINKING, AND WAYS OF KNOWING



What are the distinctive modes of the social, natural and applied sciences? What are their similarities and differences?

In English (but not some other languages), ‘science’ suffers a peculiar semantic narrowing. It seems to apply more comfortably to the natural world, and only by analogy to some of the more systematic and empirically-based of the human sciences. It connotes a sometimes narrow kind of systematicity: the canons of empirical method; an often less-than reflective acceptance of received theoretical categories and paradigms; formal reasoning disengaged from human and natural consequences; technical control without adequate ethical reflection; an elision of means and ends; narrow functionalism, instrumentalism and techno-rationalism; a pragmatism to the neglect broader view of consequences; and conservative risk aversion. These are some of the occupational hazards of activities that name themselves sciences—social, natural or applied. In studying the social setting, however, it’s not good enough just to have a rigorous empirical methodology without a critical eye to alternative interests and paradigmatic frames of reference, and without a view to the human-transformational potentials of knowledge work.

Humanistic methodologies sometimes address the social in a deliberate counterpoint to science, distancing themselves from the perceived narrownesses of scientific method. This move, however, may at times leave science stranded, separated from its social origins and ends. The

natural and technological sciences are themselves more subject to contestation around axes of human interest than the narrow understanding of science seems to be able to comprehend. Whether it be bioethics, or climate change, or the debates around Darwinism and Intelligent Design, or the semantics of computer systems, questions of politics and ideology are bound closely to the ostensible evidence. Faux empiricism is less than adequate to address the more important questions, even in the natural and technological sciences. Science can be found lacking when it is disengaged from the humanistic.

The humanistic, however, has its own occupational hazards: disengaged critique and supercilious inaction without design responsibility; political confrontation without systematic empirical foundation; ideological fractiousness without apparent need for compromise; the agnostic relativism of lived experience and identity-driven voice; voluntarism that leads to a naive lack of pragmatism and failure in application.

A reconstructive view of the social, natural and applied sciences would be holistic, attempting always to avoid the occlusions of narrow methodological approaches. It would also be ambitious, intellectually and practically.

In this context, the Social Sciences conference, group of journals, book Imprint, and online media pursue two aspirations, two openings. The first is an intellectual opening, founded on an agenda designed to strengthen the theories, the research methodologies, the epistemologies and the practices of teaching and learning about the social world and the relation of the social to the natural world.

The second opening is pragmatic and inventive. All intellectual work is an act of imagination. At its best, it is ambitious, risky and transformative. If the natural sciences can have human ambitions as big as those of the medical sciences—the fight against MS or cancer or Alzheimer's, for instance—then the social sciences can have ambitions as large as to settle the relation of humans to the natural environment, the material conditions of human equality and the character of the future person.

Interdisciplinary Models of Teamwork in Augmentative and Alternative Communication

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Abstract: Augmentative and alternative communication is a specialization in speech-language pathology that aims to help people with complex communication needs. Gestures, signs, pointing to symbols or technology are examples of methods that can be used to facilitate the communication of thoughts and needs. Clients seeking an augmentative and alternative communication assessment must be evaluated by a team of professionals, which includes a speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist. Members of the team need to work closely together, within what is considered to be a transdisciplinary model. The speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist work closely with other professionals in order to help people needing augmentative and alternative communication. These other professionals can include: technicians, communicative disorders assistants, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and teachers. A conceptual model encompassing multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice has been proposed for the assessment and intervention of people who have complex communication needs.

Keywords: Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Interdisciplinarity, Speech-language Pathology

Introduction

Health care professionals have struggled to define their identities, values, spheres of practice and roles in patient care (Hall 2005). Although the value of teamwork is growing, “fatigue and stress can [...] cause team members to retreat into their individual professional silos, where there is safety, clear limits, recognition of professional value and license to work autonomously” (Hall 2005, 193). Nonetheless, since interprofessional teamwork can facilitate creative solutions to challenging problems (Drinka, Miller, and Goodman 1999), its popularity is steadily increasing (Chettiparamb 2007). Use of interdisciplinary work is also increasing in research, teaching and politics (Chettiparamb 2007). For a study to qualify as being interdisciplinary, it must be conducted by researchers from more than one discipline (Aboelela et al. 2007), or by one researcher integrating many disciplines of study (Bastide 1967). In health care, interdisciplinarity can be achieved when professionals from more than one discipline work together to help a client or patient (Hall 2005).

Although the collaboration of many disciplines is needed within the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and that multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity teamwork is often recommended (Beukelman and Mirenda 2013), these terms are unfortunately often used as synonyms. Furthermore, the contribution of the team members within the numerous models of interdisciplinarity has been poorly defined. Is there one single model of teamwork within AAC or are there multiple models of teamwork when several professionals work together? The purpose of this article is therefore to investigate the level of collaboration between team members and bring to light the various models of teamwork that are comprised within AAC clinical and research settings.