

SPECIAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The July 2016 exchange went something like this:

Hi Bill, let's edit a book together....Not really interested in doing that Sven, since I am just now retiring from being AIS Executive Director, though working with you would have been nice....Well since you are retiring, how about I edit a Newell *Festschrift* to help honor your service to IDS and AIS, and it will let you and me talk together about your work....OK, Sven, if you want to do that, put a proposal together and run it by *Issues* co-editor Gretchen Schulz and the AIS Board of Directors to see what they say.

Yes! said Gretchen. Yes! said the Board. And here we are.

This *Festschrift* starts with an in-depth interview of the honoree, and I will preview it after introducing the articles.

Of all our contributors, Julie Klein and Bill Newell have known each other the longest – 35 years – and the quality and productivity of this long-lived, friendly association was evident when she edited the 2016 AIS *Integrative Pathways* newsletter tribute to Bill upon his retirement. It is fitting that she leads off the scholarly contributions for the Newell *Festschrift* with “‘Advancing’ Interdisciplinary Studies: The Boundary Work of Integrating, Complexifying, and Professionalizing.” For each of these areas of Bill’s work – integration, complexity, professionalization – Julie synthesizes the history of the idea, lists prominent critiques, and highlights promising developments. The discussion of professionalism leads Julie to consider recent transdisciplinary developments of policy analysis and inter-professionalism. She calls attention to new metaphors in transdisciplinary work, relationality and translation: “The implications of relationality and translation for thinking about interdisciplinarity are profound. They signify a shift from thinking in terms of transferring and applying insights from disciplines to transactivity, emphasizing shared knowledge that emerges in the course of working together.” At the end, Julie reflects on conflicting priorities of interest to many in AIS and other organizations – the relationship of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, and distinctions and commonalities in organizations working in interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. Julie concludes,

Newell’s 2013 reflection on theory of interdisciplinary studies, as understood within AIS, documents the importance of explicit attention to shared concepts in communities of practice.... The most important lesson to emerge from Bill’s call is the need for

reciprocity, learning from each other to strengthen both shared concepts and imperatives as well as diverse contexts and agendas.

In “Beyond Interdisciplinary Theory: Revisiting William H. Newell’s Integrative Interdisciplinary Theory from a Critical Realist Perspective,” Stuart Henry sets out to correct some recent scholarship about Bill’s views on the connections between interdisciplinary studies and complexity. We hear a lot about common ground in AIS, and Bill and Stuart clearly share common ground as scholars in the field. In a carefully developed, step by step argument, Stuart shows us how Bill’s views are on *solid* ground (they also share). Philosophers call solid ground “ontology,” which translates as “the study of being” and has to do with what is ultimately real. Stuart notes that critical realists, in recent scholarship on interdisciplinarity, overlook or inadequately address Bill’s ontology. His article highlights what they miss and also why they miss it. “Critical realism is rooted in the physical world of science but fails to fully engage the constructionist and post-modernist critique that the social world is fundamentally different from the physical world.” Stuart highlights human agency and a social network view of social structure in his argument for a constructive (rather than critical) realism in integrative interdisciplinarity. He concludes that “Newell’s embodied constructivist-realist ontology, conceiving of reality as a complex open system comprised of linear and nonlinear relations that are simultaneously objectively real and socially constructed, was way ahead of its time.” Using Bill’s strategy of aligning and hence connecting opposing concepts on a continuum, Stuart corrects the critical realists by connecting the human agent, the social world, and the physical world. “His continuum approach...leads to a modified version of interdisciplinary epistemology, and to a wider holistic approach to complex problem solving.” Stuart has made an important contribution to the philosophy of interdisciplinarity by defending the ground upon which Bill’s theory of interdisciplinary studies sits.

Like Stuart’s article, Heidi Upton’s article is inspired by Bill’s views of the connections between interdisciplinary studies and complexity, as expressed in his 2001 “A Theory of Interdisciplinary Studies” published in this journal. Heidi asks us to reflect on the street corners of everyday lives through a comparison of Bill’s work and that of well-known philosopher Maxine Greene. “Integrating Experience through the Work of William Newell and Maxine Greene” focuses on Bill’s theory of interdisciplinary studies to explore the sensory, spatial, temporal dimensions in the architecture of urban form. The lens for the focusing is Greene’s arts-based methodology known as aesthetic education. Of interest to both thinkers is

“futuring.” Heidi writes,

The street corner experience, for all its immersion in the present moment, in what is, is also one of transaction in the context of possibility, of “future,” in the context of what might be as one integrates one’s perceptions into a whole: pavement, facades of buildings, wide and narrow streets, people performing their daily “ballet,” shops, traffic, commerce, noise, smells.

In trying to understand the complex phenomenon of the street corner experience, she uses “experiential mapping” to “capture information and experience in a single construct as a means of interdisciplinary and aesthetic integration.” To be precise, carefully using the interdisciplinary research processes and stages described by Newell, and invoking Greene, Heidi organizes an aesthetic integration of the street corner experience. For Heidi, the street corner is a complex system. It is “a kind of collective work of art, and an opportunity for the person-in-development to confront the complexity of the ‘colored, sounding, problematic world’ and its ‘nonlinear relationships’ through an integration of interdisciplinary and aesthetic inquiry.” Why compare Newell and Greene on the corner of everyday urban architecture? Heidi concludes,

The contention of this comparative discussion... is that the integration of interdisciplinary research methods through consideration of complex systems theory and aesthetically aware transactions with the world and its works of art may provide a dynamic educational approach that helps us... to understand aspects of this world deeply enough to imagine wide-awake societal change for the better.

Well said, Heidi.

What happens when the interdisciplinary practice of perspective-taking is expanded to include global-perspective taking? Citing Bill’s ideas about how atypical experiences, inside the classroom and out, strengthen IDS learning, Tami Carmichael goes global in “Global Perspective-Taking: Extending Interdisciplinary Pedagogies into International Classrooms.” The goal of Tami and fellow educators in a study abroad program is to enable students to address complex global issues by becoming (for a while) international students studying international concerns. Since 2010, faculty and staff at the American College of Norway (ACN) have been using Bill’s theory – that “interdisciplinary learning enhances high impact learning experiences like study abroad” – to contextualize their work with students. This article examines three of these learning experiences and their outcomes within the framework of Bill’s theories. The first, a linked course

experience integrating insights from courses on environmental studies and human rights, involves “all three components of Newell’s model for excellent undergraduate learning: disciplinary understanding, interdisciplinary learning, and real world application,” to which ACN faculty add a fourth component of “international perspective building.” The second, a thematic learning experience linking students from Norway, South Africa, and the US, takes advantage of access to the Nobel Peace Prize Institute (Oslo) and the Nobel Peace Prize Forum (Minneapolis, MN) to help students better understand the issue of global, sustainable peace. Tami describes how students and faculty created their own student Peace Committee. The third thematic learning experience is Tami’s course situating art study within the context of global, environmental issues. Tami writes “I wanted them to *participate* in the interdisciplinary activity of art creation.” Her account of the students’ culminating project – a temporary student art gallery – is poignant. As Tami says of their project, “the result was breathtaking.” And she argues persuasively that the lesson of all three of these learning experiences is that students’ perspective-taking capabilities can grow remarkably when international study is combined with interdisciplinary learning.

Rick Szostak, whose article is next in the *Festschrift*, was the first scholar to follow-up on the challenge posed by Bill’s 2001 article by offering an article further developing the connections of interdisciplinarity and complexity in 2002, the very next year in this journal, and he has continued to develop interdisciplinary theory ever since. In “Interdisciplinarity versus Anti-Intellectual and Anti-Democratic Impulses,” Rick explores the practical application of interdisciplinary theory in improving public discourse (especially discourse about politics) and deflating biased thinking. “The public may have absorbed the lesson that scientists can be mistaken, but needs also to appreciate that there are sound strategies for moving toward superior understandings through time. Interdisciplinarity thus recommends a constructive skepticism in place of nihilism.” He endorses bringing interdisciplinary studies into K-12 education. There, as later, the skill of perspective-taking can be learned, possibly enlarging the capacity for empathy and other values encouraged by IDS. But to *institute* such practices and values in schools, we must change the *institutions*. “Institutionalizing interdisciplinarity within the academy is an important first step in combating anti-intellectualism. If we can educate students in interdisciplinary attitudes and strategies – ideally in K-12 as well as in the university – we can prepare future generations for constructive and respectful discourse.” In fact, argues Rick, we can change political institutions as well. He has in mind novel institutional innovations, such as involving citizens in transdis-

ciplinarity, election by lottery, and holding citizen's fora where "randomly selected groups of citizens can be gathered, exposed to all sorts of expert advice, and invited to make public policy recommendations." Many of us are concerned with the tenor of public discourse today, especially around political issues. Rick is optimistic that IDS, if it can be nurtured effectively in K-12 education, as well as later, and in political institutions themselves, can help restore reasonableness in public discourse.

As a penultimate closing to the Newell *Festschrift*, James Welch IV reflects on the influence of Bill's work in "The Impact of Newell's 'A Theory of Interdisciplinary Studies': Reflection and Analysis." James is in a very good position to reflect on this seminal article in the field, not only as current AIS president, but also as a scholar-teacher in the thick of recent historical transformations of IDS theory. He writes,

I approach this effort from a particularly insightful vantage point. I began my academic career under the mentorship of Allen Repko, who was composing the preliminary drafts of what would become *Interdisciplinary Research: Theory and Practice* (2008)...The book was heavily influenced by Newell's ideas, and presented a refined version of the integrative research process found in the 2001 article.

James explores responses to three main ideas from that 2001 article: that complexity is a precondition for interdisciplinary research, that interdisciplinary research employs disciplinary perspective taking, and that integration of insights drawn from disciplinary perspectives is the goal of interdisciplinary research. Regarding the idea of complexity, James concludes, "Although systems theory has not become the underlying theoretical model for all interdisciplinary research, the concept of complexity has helped provide a focus and rationale for the importance of interdisciplinary inquiry." As for IDS and disciplinary perspective taking, James shows how "Newell's indefatigable work...has resulted in general re-examination of the problems of [disciplinary] specialization, an acknowledgement of the need for collaboration, team science, and input from a diversity of stakeholders when solving complex or contentious problems." Concerning integration, James contends that Bill was then arguing as he has continued to argue, that "integration enables communication between disciplinary experts" by allowing scholars to see disciplinary paradigms as "intertwined facets of a more holistic system." In summarizing his reflection and analysis, James writes, "The impact of Newell's 'A Theory of Interdisciplinary Studies'...reconfigured the entire landscape of interdisciplinary studies."

Our final article connects Bill Newell and our first ever AIS conference

in Europe. In “With AIS to Amsterdam 2019: Friendship and Interdisciplinary Studies in Global Contexts,” Machiel Kestra uses the AIS acronym to chart a course from the 2006 conference in Atlanta, the first he attended, to the 2019 conference he is helping to organize in Amsterdam. In introducing his article, he writes,

Musing upon the words behind the acronym AIS, and anticipating its historic first conference outside North America in Amsterdam in 2019 (see <http://www.aisconference2019.nl>) what follows is a brief reflection upon friendship and interdisciplinary studies and the ways Bill has connected the two.

“Association,” from “ad sociare,” whose implications he discusses, is about organization and friendship. Machiel notes that academic organizations bring together like minded-people whom it is easy to call “companions,” and perhaps in time, “friends.” The first AIS member Machiel ever met, arriving early at the Atlanta conference after a transatlantic flight, was Bill Newell. They hit it off then (and in the years of friendship following) leading to Machiel’s AIS presidency and our first European conference. The second terms in Machiel’s reflections are “Interdisciplinary” and “Integrative.” It turns out that one line of argument for changing the name of the organization from Association for Integrative Studies to Association for Interdisciplinary Studies was championed by Machiel who pointed out that “interdisciplinary” has a more academically developed meaning in Europe and would be better understood by others there and beyond. He writes about Bill’s openness to the name change as well other ways Bill and AIS itself have been listening to global voices and encouraging international expansion. Perhaps Machiel is providing us more examples of Tami Carmichael’s “global perspective-taking” but this time performed by AIS members rather than students we teach. “Studies,” the final term among those Machiel discusses, is interpreted as a traveling process, and as co-organizer of the Amsterdam 2019 conference, Machiel encourages us to travel, literally as well as metaphorically in quest of further friendly and productive “Association” with interdisciplinarians from around the world. He offers us enticing information about the event (what could a *solution room* be?) and extends the warmest of invitations.

My interview with Bill, “Integrity in Education: William H. Newell in Conversation with P. Sven Arvidson,” frames this *Festschrift*. It was joyful work. I got to ask Bill all the questions I wanted – on the record! The result is a candid Newell intellectual history, very much an intellectual history of IDS and AIS, and one which includes important horizons for interdisciplinarians to think about. Yes, I am proud of the interview. But I also feel

dwarfed by what Bill has accomplished. I kept saying to myself “I didn’t know that” and “I should have known that” and “Now I know that.” Readers can replay this inner dialogue for themselves. Bill discusses an array of fascinating topics that I leave you to discover (including who would play him in the film “The Bill Newell Story”). The interview is followed by an important and long overdue bibliography for the field of IDS, “Comprehensive Bibliography of William H. Newell from 1973 to 2018.” By the time you reach the end of the interview where this bibliography starts, two senses of the main title I have chosen – “Integrity in Education” – may become apparent. In general, “integrity” means a consistency and wholeness in convictions and actions within the context of a good community (a community that worries about goodness). Bill’s published work, which this *Festschrift* celebrates, centers on integrative interdisciplinarity studies and integrative education. Success in these integrative activities, respectively, as researcher and student, involves consistency in thought (a constituent of integrity) and a concern for one’s whole person (another constituent). In addition to “Integrity in Education” as kinds of research or learning, a related second sense of “integrity” is from classical philosophy. For Plato, the person of integrity becomes identified with their convictions by living them, and the best activity one can do is to educate or lead others (his analogy: go back into the cave). In this sense, integrity is a characteristic good teachers and leaders hope to model for others. Bill’s teaching, mentoring, and leadership, his scholarship, and his many, many generous consultations, at home and abroad, model and nurture integrity in interdisciplinary studies. It is his integrity in educational leadership that has enabled the founding and sustaining of integrative interdisciplinary studies and AIS. From all of us... Thank you, Bill.

I thank the AIS Board for entrusting this task to a relative newcomer two summers ago. I also thank Gretchen Schulz for being with me every step of the way. I am “special editor” of this *Festschrift*, but in my opinion we are fully and equally co-editors of it. The marvelous cover photo is provided courtesy of Susan Hopp and Bruce Decker.

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