

**Original Article:**

**THE JOURNAL OF INTEGRATED SOCIAL SCIENCES:  
EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION**

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**Abstract**

The *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences* is an online initiative designed to provide a platform for the disciplines of the social sciences where students and professionals alike can engage in provoking and engaging explorations of knowledge that push the boundaries of disciplinary lines. Opening space for cross-disciplinary discussions, this journal inspires an intersectional investigation and consideration of the issues that scholars in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognize as most compelling in our changing world. In this editorial, we introduce the questions and expectations that guide the formation of this new journal.

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## INTRODUCTION

“What should our purpose be as Social Scientists?” This has been a recurrent debate in each of the social science disciplines over the last century and a half. From C. Wright Mills’ (1959) conception of the Sociological Imagination to Harold Lasswell’s (1971) formulation of the Policy Sciences, in the social sciences there has been tension between a positivist epistemology, which emphasizes simplification of the social world, and post-positivist approaches, which emphasize the complex, dynamic nature of social phenomena. The positivist project is oriented around the simplification and reduction of the social world to a limited number of variables that can aid the researcher in developing generalized theories of behavior (Ascher, 1981), while post-positivist (or interpretive, phenomenological) approaches emphasize reflexivity in relationships between phenomena in the social sciences and between actors in the social world.

When Lazarus and Steinthal launched their ambitious project in 1860 of uniting various social science disciplines via the journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, it was as if they anticipated what would eventually become a necessity some 150 years later. For Lazarus and Steinthal the goal was to create a synthesis of different ideas that would capture the unique characteristics of different cultures or peoples in an attempt to gain a better psychological understanding of what it means to be human (see Diriwächter, 2004). These efforts gathered an enormous amount of intellectual “fanfare” during the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in Wilhelm Wundt’s momentous 10-volume work titled “*Völkerpsychologie*” (1900-1922).

Today we find that scholars are becoming very specialized in one particular field of study thereby often underemphasizing how their area of expertise relates to other fields of study. Having experts on given topics is, without doubt, absolutely essential in order to advance our understanding of human functioning. It is with this in mind that we are hereby launching the new *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences (JISS)* – a renewed collaborative effort, following the spirit of the intellectual pioneers from the 1860s, to bring together the rich and diverse set of disciplines through the new technology now available to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## THE AIMS AND GOALS OF JISS

Never before has it been easier to share ideas and engage in pertinent and lively discussions about human nature. The internet platform has opened up a low-cost venue that, through the sponsorship of California Lutheran University, allows us to publish free of costs to the reader the results of investigative activities from scholars around the globe. We are particularly interested in reading about the creative efforts of scholars who do not see the social world, inclusive of all its contents, as a static, unmoving entity. Instead, we see the social world as being in a never-ending state of “becoming” and as such, transformative in its characteristics. We feel that works aimed at capturing the dynamics, fluidity, and synthesis of individual and

social phenomena are all too often underrepresented in scholarly journals. We thus especially encourage scholars with an interest in attempting to capture the transformative nature of phenomena to submit the results of their endeavors.

Nevertheless, we do not wish to narrow the focus of our journal since journals with specific areas of specializations already exist plentiful. We intend *JISS* to be an outlet for a vast array of topics to which the investigative work offers a wide perspective both in terms of theoretical orientations as well as for the specifics about how analysis and/or synthesis (e.g., on the nature of the “whole”) is performed.

The central goal of this journal is a move beyond, to paraphrase Torgenson (1993), the “first face” of social inquiry in which scholars focus on narrow questions and dress their value orientations in “garments of objectivity.” *JISS* seeks to provide a home for scholars interested in post-positivist inquiry, one in which social phenomena is looked at comprehensively and holistically. This often includes, but is not limited to, the use of contextual, interpretive, critical, and normative methods. Our interest is in a social inquiry that is intentional about how methods relate to the purpose of study, and how findings relate to the whole.

Furthermore, our aim is to provide a platform where theory and research are not only presented, but openly discussed. In that regard, the inaugural issue of *JISS* can already present cases on how such discussions could evolve. For example, the psychological investigative activity on *sexism* undertaken by Steve Bearman, Neill Korobov, and Avril Thorne is followed by a feminist critique from Jessica Willis, to which the authors of “*The Fabric of Internalized Sexism*” in turn provide a subsequent reply. Similarly, our first undergraduate article “*How to Order a Baby: Confusions and Constructions by a Little Scientist in the Freudian World*” by Kenneth Cabell under the guidance of Jaan Valsiner (faculty sponsor) examines the process of abduction through the merging of Peircian and Freudian models. Subsequently, Mindy Puopolo's commentary suggests some additional factors that could help turn Cabell's ideas into a more integrated and complete theory.

Again, these intellectual exchanges serve as possible models for the diverse directions and possible instantiations of discourse-*Gestalt* (i.e., interdisciplinary or intradisciplinary) that the *JISS* platform aims to provide. As the journal matures, our goal is that more of this kind of debate will ensue, in order to bridge gaps between the various disciplines and thereby foster integration in the social sciences.

Lastly, because we are attempting to serve an international audience with diverse backgrounds, it is important for authors to bear in mind that they need to thoroughly frame and outline their methodological and ontological standpoint. Authors should not assume that readers are necessarily familiar with their approach and therefore need to spend a bit more time in explaining the theory and method that guides their submitted work than they otherwise would for a journal that caters to a select, narrower audience who already shares a particular theoretical framework.

The act of reflectively articulating the specific methodological and pedagogical frameworks from which we speak, supports an ongoing teaching and learning process that

extends the goal of interdisciplinary scholarship. This journal signifies a renewed movement toward increased conversation between diverse areas of study. *JISS* provides a forum for scholars across hierarchical divides and disciplinary lines to engage, challenge and learn from perspectives different from our own, thus introducing knowledge claims that strive for a complex investigation of the social world and everything within it.

Herein lay the benefits of our journal: that diverging ideas and approaches will stand a chance to be heard and hopefully find common ground and eventual synthesis. We are under no illusion that this ought to be a simple task. Au contraire — the challenges of trying to provide a platform for engaging conversations across disciplinary perspectives are abundant. No doubt, this will be a difficult task and only time will tell whether the efforts of the contributing authors and the subsequent discourses allow *JISS* to be a valuable asset for establishing an integrative approach of the social sciences or whether *JISS*, like Lazarus and Steinthal's *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, will eventually fade from peoples' memories. Yet we remain optimistic that the time is right for opening a space for dialogue and debate that will enrich our understandings of the social world as dynamic, holistic and multidimensional.

## METHODOLOGY

Aside from theoretical orientation, or precisely because of it, another important factor in helping establish an integrative approach to the social sciences is a comprehensive discussion on the methods applied to gather data. The empirical world is vast, and we feel that there is a need for more serious reflection upon the methodologies employed in empirical studies. As Jaan Valsiner (2000, p. 63) mentions,

“If construction of general knowledge is the focus of methodology (as in any science), then methodology cannot be seen as a "toolbox" of different ready-made methods. Rather, it needs to be viewed as a process of human mental construction of generalizations. It entails mutually linked components of general assumptions about the world at large (axioms), specific constructed theories of the given target area, understanding of pertinent phenomena, and — finally — ways of constructing specific methods to transform some aspects of the phenomena into purposefully derived data. Data are always constructed, or — better — derived from phenomena, on the basis of the investigator's reasoning.”

As already emphasized earlier, authors cannot assume that the diverse international readership of this journal readily comprehend the approach chosen by a given investigator. Hence, a key requirement for any author wishing to publish his or her work (be it empirically grounded, or purely theoretically oriented) in *JISS* needs to explicitly reflect upon the necessary underlying assumptions (axioms) and, if applicable, on how exactly a methodology was derived to study a given phenomenon. We concur with Valsiner and do not see methodology as a

collection of ready-made methods (a ready "tool-box") that can be applied to any research question in which a social scientist may be interested. We do not give priority to any single approach to investigating phenomena (as the variety of investigative methods presented in the articles of this inaugural issue of *JISS* can attest). Instead, we wish to further the development of unique, creative and well-thought-out methodologies that best fit the task for studying a given observable "fact" – not because of their previously established credo or dogma, but rather for their present suitability in being the best possible approach. Our hope is that through the explicit reflection upon one's applied methodology, other scholars — both young and old — will profit.

The mission of this journal is to provide a home to scholars who seek to identify the "ways in which various milieu overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social life" (Mills, 1959, p. 8). Whereas positivist approaches simplify the social world and value parsimony and "leverage" in theory construction, the ideal contributor to *JISS* will be interested in examining how the social world is organized and will value breadth of explanation over parsimony – even if theories appear to be messy or inelegant.

Where positivist scholars hold the belief that "only by analysis, by chopping up the world into manageable units of inquiry by precision achieved through measurement wherever possible, can [...] science achieve more reliable knowledge" (Easton, 1969, p. 1054), we contend that with a focus on linkages between the parts we are better able to understand the whole. We argue for the development of "middle-level" linking theories that explore interactions between ideas, interests, and institutions in the social world (Hecllo, 1978, p. 94). In this regard, the reader may be reminded of the now legendary *Methodenstreit* (or "methodology-battle") of the late nineteenth-century in which proponents of generalizing and individualizing approaches to the social sciences engaged in acrimonious debates. The controversy that ensued was largely a reaction to positivism whereby Wilhelm Windelband's (1892) distinctions between nomothetic and ideographic approaches and his appeal that the social sciences should not uncritically appropriate the methodologies of natural sciences, coupled by Wilhelm Dilthey (1883) arguing for an interpretative or hermeneutic approach, ought to have made it clear that the social sciences require unique and custom-tailored approaches. Hence, we hope that the lively intellectual spirit of long-gone times will re-emerge and guide *JISS* as an outlet where the development of theories and methodologies within the *Geisteswissenschaften* (or social/human sciences), through critique and debate, come to full-fruit.

### **THE JOURNAL BEGINS HERE**

There are many forms and directions the journal can take as it works to provide a platform that will help bridge the gaps between the social science disciplines in an attempt to help foster interdisciplinary approaches and cross-disciplinary idea exchanges and discussions. We are launching our peer-reviewed journal with several disciplines in mind that we believe are central to the social sciences: Psychology, Sociology, Political Sciences, and Gender Studies. Further disciplines may be added as the journal matures.

In order to help facilitate this exchange of information, we have assembled an international editorial board of dedicated scholars who have generously agreed to donate their time, knowledge, and effort to the journal's cause. These scholars come with a strong background in the four main fields of study from which we are beginning our journey, and will provide an indispensable service in reviewing and providing feedback for the submitted work from the broader intellectual community

Potentially, *JISS* has a normative end as well. The production of social science that is holistic and integrative has the possibility of creating socially relevant knowledge that helps individuals foster, to paraphrase C. Wright Mills, the *social scientific imagination* (Mills, 1959). Mills argued that the pre-eminent role of the scholar should be to help the individual orient him/herself in the larger social context:

“What they need, and what they feel they need, is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves” (p. 5).

Those imbued with a “social scientific imagination” are able to “grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society” (p. 6). Mills lists three questions he feels are central to this imagination:

- (1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole?
- (2) Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing?
- (3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society? What variety are coming to prevail?

While Mills' approach speaks to current social issues, a “social scientific imagination” applies to historical periods as well. Only by understanding phenomena in their totality – i.e., how they relate to the whole – can we produce knowledge that captures the dynamic, transformational, emergent nature of social phenomena. In regards to this *Weltanschauung*, the organicist world hypothesis comes to mind (see Pepper, 1942).

In many ways, Mills' approach is akin to Lasswell's (1971) notion of a *development construct* in the Policy Sciences. The identification of development constructs in the social sciences require scholars to undertake a stern challenge: “taking everything into account, what are the most significant features of the world social process during... historical periods” (p. 982). Viewed from this perspective, those engaged in policy relevant research would focus on how:

Social characteristics and cultural values converge with existing structural and political conditions to create contexts within which... actors jockey to promote competing problem definitions and formulate public policy (Bosso 1994, p. 200).

This venture takes the scattered critiques of positivist approaches to create a home for interdisciplinary scholarship interested in answering questions from an integrated perspective. While keeping these aims in mind, we would like to reiterate that *JISS* will be a home for scholarship from all approaches and backgrounds so that our readership can benefit from the diversity thereby implied. At this point, what we are providing is the corner stone of what we hope will turn out to be a solid foundation for an interesting and productive social science discourse.

We are a community of learners and as such, we would like to emphasize that we believe students are also capable of serious reflection and able to provide new insights that can benefit the scholarly community. Thus, we especially encourage both undergraduate and graduate students to submit, together with a faculty sponsor, their best work to be reviewed by our distinguished editorial board members and then shared with the rest of the community.

It is now up to the individual members of the academic community to use our infrastructure to spread the results of their hard labor. After all, *JISS* can only evolve and produce useful results via combined efforts. In short: *JISS* will only be as good as its participating members. It is with this in mind, that we now follow the footsteps left by the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* to embark on a journey that will hopefully take us well beyond the point which our forefathers once reached.

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