Phronetic implications: making a case for cross-disciplinary conversations in higher education

Mark Fretts
Eastern Washington University

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PHRONETIC IMPLICATIONS:
MAKING A CASE FOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Thesis
Presented To
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Master of Science Communication Studies

By
Mark Fretts

Fall 2013
THESIS OF MARK FRETTS APPROVED BY

____________________________________________ DATE___________
GALINA SINEKOPOVA, PhD, CHAIR GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

____________________________________________ DATE___________
GARY KRUG, PhD, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

____________________________________________ DATE___________
GARTH BABCOCK, PhD, ATC, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE
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Abstract

Problems faced by society in today’s global infrastructure are more complex than ever; these social, political and environmental issues require an interdisciplinary skill set to even begin to understand them let alone tackle them with a comprehensive strategy. Higher Education can better prepare people for real world problem solving by interacting in cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary conversations with peers, faculty, colleagues etc. Professors from across the social sciences at Eastern Washington University that are engaged in an interdisciplinary conversation were interviewed for this qualitative case study. The dialogue generated from these interviews confirms that there are many intrinsic as well as extrinsic benefits to conversing across academic borders. The research presented in this thesis may be used to further explore interdisciplinary efforts, institutional identity and benefits to faculty cross-disciplinary collaboration.
Acknowledgments

Writing this thesis has been a journey, an interdisciplinary journey, and I feel a great appreciation for all the help I have had along the way. Each bit of help was integral to my discovery of the path that led me to finish this paper. When I embarked on this, full of passion for interdisciplinarity and qualitative research, I had no idea how much I would have to learn. I had no idea how much help and encouragement I would need. Help came in so many ways:

Dr. Galina Sinekopova, committee chair, Thank you for your support throughout, I could not have had a better person mentor me through this. You applied just the right pedagogy for me to productively struggle and really get the most intrinsically out of this inquiry. I never thought I’d say this but thank you for having me read soooo much. You said “read promiscuously” well I did and my paper cannot reflect how much you have taught me and how much I have learned, but I acknowledge it here. Sincerely I thank you.

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Members of the CSBS Theory committee, Thank you for your time and honest interpretations of what is happening in your interdisciplinary world. I learned so much from each of you that I may never fully comprehend how much “data” there was to sift through for this paper. It is likely that I will never finish this thesis in my mind as every time I read through or think about it I dive further into the phronetic implications of the social sciences. Thanks especially to Dr. Mimi Marinucci for your help early on. You gave me the trust of the committee and access to this project from the beginning. Also we had many fine conversations about how I would study something so organic. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

Our lives are full of diversity and interdisciplinarity nearly everywhere but within the walls of formal education. The purpose of this study was to understand a local attempt to break down academic borders. I have looked at multiple perspectives regarding an intact cross-disciplinary conversation that is taking place presently at Eastern Washington University in the social sciences.

A discussion concerning the need for deliberate conversations across disciplines was motivated by seminar classes like Advanced Communication Theory and Contemporary Trends in Communication Studies. These classes were taken in accordance to the curriculum for a Master of Science degree in Communication Studies at Eastern Washington University (EWU). After generating a list of large scale problems it occurred to me to ask a seemingly reasonable question, which disciplines solve which problems? An example for this scenario may be climate change and its impacts on our world. Many people look to higher education to shed light on complex issues, but then there is a struggle to identify which journal, department or discipline to turn to. In the case of global climate change they would need to talk to many departments including communications, media studies, economics, engineering, biology, environmental studies, and business to name a few. I then asked where do people learn how to collaborate, integrate, and to work with one another?

I, like many young freshman, began college uncertain of where it would take me. It was evident immediately that the diverse nature of our world requires us to be interdisciplinary. As it turns out I have been on an interdisciplinary journey of my own, but it began in the confines of a disciplinary institution. My first undergraduate degree
was in psychology, and it was obvious that they were fighting against interdisciplinarity and for recognition and prestige as a discipline. The Psychology program felt displaced away from the natural sciences (where it seemed they wanted to be) and situated in the social sciences. This isn’t to their discredit, it is much like the rhetoricians of the Communications department feeling they belong in the College of Arts and Letters or Economics wanting a spot in the Business College etc. I rather enjoyed experimental psychology and finished my degree quickly; however, I was bothered by the many limitations of quantitative research. I enrolled in all the statistics and methods courses available and participated in a graduate research project on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and also assisted in a study on memory taxonomy and recall. We were working with people but somehow controlling the human variable. We were removing the person and the experimenter from the research. I was bothered by this but did not understand alternative ways to do research as I did not have a vocabulary for it yet.

Before graduating I was exposed to the recreation department and began a second major. A degree in outdoor recreation sounds like fun and games, but it was also a journey into the qualitative study of people, group dynamics, leadership and human interaction through the context of recreation. The recreation department seemed to embrace the interdisciplinary nature of the world and borrowed research across disciplinary borders freely. This opened my eyes to, what I realize now as, my motivation for this thesis.

There were redundancies that I saw throughout my undergraduate studies especially before I declared a major. It seemed that each course and department used
different vocabularies and research methods. It was often grounded in theory and methods that overlapped but was not often addressed. I have enjoyed careers both as a counselor working with youth and families and as a professional in outdoor recreation. I taught many courses on group dynamics, expedition behavior, group management and leadership before finding the Master of Science in Communication Studies program at EWU. At each step of the way I was negotiating vocabulary and language in order to work with people from all backgrounds. Context and perspective have become increasingly important in my studies.

It is from my previous experiences and my new framework firmly grounded in communication studies and post modernism that I continue with this qualitative case study look into an interdisciplinary conversation at EWU.

**Interdisciplinarity, Disciplinarity and Academia**

I have used the word conversation casually throughout this paper; conversation can serve as a metaphor for the interactions taking place among the faculty participating in the Curriculum Integration Project in the social sciences at EWU. Klein (1990) explains that interdisciplinarity as a term was not coined until the 20th century and a definitive definition has yet to be decided on, which lends itself to the idea that as a conversation interdisciplinarity is a negotiation. To struggle with a definition of interdisciplinarity is to acknowledge and assume that there is only disciplinarity. Which means to me that we must allow the definition to constantly evolve. In order to have a conversation about what is outside of these deliberate boundaries, there needs to be agreement on a language and set of guiding principles that allows for common ground.
For this thesis paper I have asked faculty and administrators how they have negotiated this interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary conversation.

Disciplines are the result of knowledge areas that have increasingly been segregated in order to specialize and evolve. The word discipline arrives by the late middle ages (Rashdall, 1987); prior to the term discipline the 6th and 7th centuries left us with the Trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy). Boethius, a philosopher from the 6th century is often credited with developing the Quadrivium by writing manuals for their instruction leading eventually the recognition of the discipline (Rashdall 1987). Theology, the arts, law and medicine are credited to be some of the first disciplines, and it is easy to see how the pressure to create professionals in these areas, especially law and medicine, might put pressure on education to focus in.

Continuing to use conversation as a metaphor, disciplinarity can be seen as declarative statements, as opposed to interdisciplinarity which may be riddled with questions. The interdisciplinary conversation is a casual back and forth where terms are constantly revised and informal use of theory may be encouraged to understand each other’s perspective or create context. I will continue to define disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in the literature review and throughout this thesis.

**A Local Case Study**

There is exhaustive research on how to teach and how to structure education, nearly all from a disciplinary perspective. Research into collaborative cross-disciplinary discussions on problem solving may reside in those respective journals. I insist that most elements of the research overlap across the majority of disciplines especially in the social
sciences. Overlapping elements include theory, research methods, learning styles, group
dynamics, communication and more. In order to review and synthesize this overlap I
would have to delve into the different languages of each discipline. It felt like the point
where a lack of shared language began to surface as point of contention when searching
through different academic journals.

I presented the tension with language as a possible area to explore for my thesis to
my Communication Studies mentors. I was pointed in the direction of the Integrated
Faculty Committee working to strengthen the social sciences at EWU. This project was
envisioned in the 1990s and was finally established early in 2000 with the credibility of a
FIPSE grant supporting its start up. Faculty from across the social sciences at EWU were
invited to develop a curriculum that transcended the individual disciplines and created a
core within the college.

Does the integrated multi-disciplinary faculty committee at EWU promote an
interdisciplinary environment for students within their respective college and how? I
wanted to first understand this out of the ordinary expectation, that disciplinary
boundaries inhibit student learning and do not allow it to reach its full potential. It is also
important to question if they are seeing a difference between students that take
interdisciplinary courses than that of their classmates. As it turns out these questions
have been fairly exhausted within this committee as this was a FIPSE grant funded
program started ten plus years ago and has since been evaluated both internally and
externally by consultants on a number of occasions.

Students that took courses from a cross-disciplinary team in social science theory
showed a significant difference in self-report and confidence regarding their
understanding of social science theory. Several audits and consultations of the program have provided the college with substantial empirical data based on self-report, grades and understanding from students and faculty. This information is available in the Dean’s office at EWU.

**A Pragmatic Approach**


I neglect to focus on natural science as a model for interdisciplinary collaboration because they are not always guided by social inquiry but rather empirical discovery. It seems that most if not all research in the social sciences is in the realm of problem solving subjective issues that do not often have solutions that are grounded in one particular field of study. I could argue alongside Foucault (1970) that in order to have a discussion in the natural sciences there also has to be an interdisciplinary conversation
beginning with a much deeper understanding of language and qualitative perspective, but it will take me away from the deliberate attempt to learn from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (CSBS) faculty committee here at EWU.

Stepping back over 2000 years in order to better understand the modern education system, Aristotle’s organization of information has emerged throughout my research. Aristotle like Plato before him began the taxonomy of knowledge with the isolation of mathematics and dialectics while defining the philosopher as someone whom is capable of “synthesizing knowledge” (Klein 1990). Both Plato and Aristotle believed that through the philosopher there is a conversation taking place across disciplines, but they also acknowledged additional ways to organize information.

This thesis continues to be guided by the assumption that most efforts to solve a problem require the work and interpretations of several perspectives linked through a common goal. A common language may not be there initially which I presume would hinder the process of reaching the objective. The current disciplinary models at our institutions of higher education are not as productive as they could be at teaching us how to communicate across specialty areas in order to most effectively work together (Adams 2006, Bakken 1998, Bergman 2007, Davis 2007, Frost & Jean 2003, Gable 1999, Minnis 2005, Policansky 1999, Sternbeg 2008, Wohl 1955).

There is positivist tendency to shift towards more division of labor, more order and more rigorous methods; this tendency has many merits to it and has served education and the collection of knowledge well. However, I shall look at this program at EWU and see if the choices that they have been making in this educational pursuit has pushed back
against the compartmentalization of knowledge in a way that can help to better fulfill the
university mission statement and the pragmatic needs of the students.

Education professionals are not often expected to communicate across academic
boundaries; there are many reasons that contribute to this including competition for
resources, publish or perish tenures, contractual obligations that do not include
interdisciplinary work etc. However, there are few places in the world outside of
academics that do not require us to cross disciplinary borders.

**Research Questions**

My main theoretical premise is that the division that plagues the modern
education system is artificial. My research questions are as follows:

- Can cross-disciplinary collaboration foster an interdisciplinary environment
  for students/ for faculty?
- Do multi-disciplinary conversations bridge disciplines and create a larger
  collective identity?
- How does modern higher educations’ organization effect cross-disciplinary
  interactions?
- What intrinsic and extrinsic factors are at play when participating in an
  interdisciplinary collaboration project from a faculty or administrative
  perspective?

In the next chapter I have pieced together the literature that is out there and
synthesized it into a context that delves further into the idea of interdisciplinarity, social
science and the academic institution. Through the lens of Aristotle, I have used his three
Intellectual Virtues episteme, techne and phronesis to organize the literature review.
Further in yet the case will evolve for qualitative inquiry and case study approach; interviews will prove to be a valuable way to triangulate the particular case here at Eastern Washington University.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Aristotle’s intellectual virtues have been applied as a theoretical framework or lens through which I have explored western thinking and education. Additionally I have continued to work through the languages of several different academic landscapes with the hopes of coming out the other side with some working definitions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity so that I may move forward through the paper and into the interviews.

When university instructors engage in interdisciplinary conversations it leads to a more productive problem solving institute. As mentioned in the introduction, this research has been guided by questions pertaining to the creation of identity and community in academia. These conversations and context dependent situations are the phronetic implications that inundate the university as well as education at large. I have pointed to this at the beginning of this literature review so that I may acknowledge that natural sciences and social sciences are not fighting for recognition or prestige but rather that they are working together side by side under similar principles. These phronetic implications are not isolated in any one academic arena, although they are more prevalent in the social sciences.

Interdisciplinarity has been defined relatively reliably as the act of wading across academic disciplines in order to advance knowledge; Klein (1990) would refer to this as bridge building rather than restructuring. Dresner 2006, Ispa-Landa (2006), Settles (2002), and Sherif (1969) would argue that all disciplines are borrowing from each other without prejudice since the beginnings. The act of accumulating history or writing as Homer did has always been assembled in an interdisciplinary way according to Cohen.
(1994). Many academic institutions define interdisciplinary just as loosely; any effort to diversify knowledge can be considered interdisciplinary. For the sake of this paper I am going to identify most efforts as more multi-disciplinary and further dissect interdisciplinary as an effort to find common ground across academic communities through collaboration and dialogue. This will bring to light theoretical underpinnings, structural similarities and cultural norms that traverse the academic landscape. Klein (1990) accounts that the term interdisciplinary was coined in the 20th century but that as far back as Plato, Aristotle etc there have been “interdisciplinary thinkers.” With this ambiguous attempt at a definition it is appropriate to take a look at the literature and qualitatively allow the definition to evolve with the addition of more knowledge and context.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, I have stepped back to look at the foundations of western thinking. I have turned to Aristotle although, McDonald 1993 asserts that the footings of our modern academic system are actually rooted a couple hundred years earlier with Thucydides insisting that the social sciences and natural sciences grew up side by side borrowing from one another. I have found it difficult to find primary sources in support of this so I begin with Aristotle and his lectures in Nicomachean Ethics.

Aristotle identified three main intellectual virtues in his collection of lectures known as Nicomachean Ethics. Those virtues have been identified as episteme, techne and phronesis. After briefly discussing these three virtues I explored the influence of the organization of knowledge and its relationship to the organization of disciplines and interdisciplines within the context of higher education.
**Taxonomy of Knowledge**

Aristotle’s acknowledgment of the intellectual virtues was a tacit attempt to organize knowledge. This is important to note specifically because this need for compartmentalization seems to transcend time and institution. Aristotle began this organization around 2300 years ago and today knowledge continues to be consolidated similarly. He saw knowledge divided into three basic virtues along the lines of theoretical (episteme), productive (techne) and practical (phronesis).

Beginning with episteme, Aristotle indicated that there is knowledge that transcends time and space, knowledge that is invariable. Episteme is universal knowledge as compared to phronesis which is more variable and practical. Aristotle presented phronesis as a virtue that was context dependent and yet pragmatic (Aristotle, Flyvbjerg 2001). Phronesis is concerned with ethics, deliberation, and practical wisdom. Episteme is much more concrete and related to understanding what is known and how it is known (Aristotle, Flyvbjerg 2001). Aristotle did not forget to identify the arts and technology involved in intellectual pursuits with his virtue techne. According to Flyvbjerg (2001) techne may be understood as “…grappling with social, cultural, demographic and administrative problems” (p. 62). These three concepts are related and are constantly being negotiated between.

The virtues may be used as a lens to organize academia as defined by modern institutions. It is logical to associate episteme with the natural sciences rather than within an area where variables (like people, cultures, society) need to be isolated in order to transcend time and space. Episteme according to Flyvbjerg (2001) is “Scientific knowledge. Universal, invariable, context independent. Based on general analytical
rationality” (p. 57). Epistemology is a term often used to describe education at large but specifically lends itself to quantitative verifiable research in the natural sciences.

Techne, now found to be the root of words such as technology, technique, and technical is closely associated with the arts and professional programs, as well as the order of the institution itself. “Craft/art. Pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward production. Based on practical instrumental rationality governed by a conscious goal” (Flyvbjerg 2001 p.57).

Phronesis clearly transcends throughout higher education and society but has guided the social and human sciences. Phronesis does not seem to be closely connected to any modern words but remains relevant none the less. “Ethics. Deliberation about values with reference to praxis. Pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality” (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 57). I see pragmatic, action oriented, context-dependent research questions in the social sciences especially. After attempting to make a Venn diagram with Aristotle’s Intellectual virtues it seemed obvious that they were all intertwined and could not be separated. The divisions that have been artificially created and drawn across academia are not as resolute as the modern institutions insist.

The Institution of Academia

Using Aristotle’s techne the institution can be viewed as an art that is context dependent and pragmatic. According to Craig & Carlone (1998) “Techne arises in productive art as the ability to produce a definite product as the outcome of a rational course of activity” (p. 132). Experimental methods and conscious design began the deliberate organization of the modern higher education institute. This acknowledgment
sets the stage for understanding how phronetic science struggles to be accommodated in the education paradigm. Foucault (1970) addresses the idea of the human sciences and their contribution to the “…body of knowledge (though even that word is perhaps a little too strong: let us say, to be more neutral still, to the body of discourse) that takes as its object man as an empirical entity” (p. 344). Foucault was quick to say that the human sciences were at a disadvantage from the beginning because they lay dormant for so many years; until the seventeenth century man had not existed yet as an object of study, there was no theoretical groundwork laid. He also insisted that man, whether alone or in groups, should have been an object of science from the beginning of time; this is not debatable according to Foucault.

During the 1990’s an international commission was established, known as the Gulbenkian Commission. They were a group of people from all over the world and all over the academic landscape, including folks from the natural sciences; this group was formed out of concern for the state of the institution and the tension/relationships between the social sciences, humanities and the natural sciences. Immanuel Wallerstein, chair of the commission, organized this group and has written passionately on the subject of social science.

The Gulbenkian Commission discussed the idea that, early on, the natural sciences were at the center of the higher education paradigm; professional programs, history and literature figured they could use the established credibility to provide a place to explore their own academic ambitions. By including the natural sciences in the schematic during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it provided a “mechanism to provide state support for their scholarly work” (p. 8).
The natural sciences dominated the paradigm for the design of higher education from their conception. It was not until the 1800’s when people again started to consciously ask questions pertaining to social systems and “social physics” (at least within higher education) (Wallerstein et al. 1996). A social context dependent perspective was reintroduced and immediately began to but up against the paradigm of the natural sciences. “The intellectual history of the nineteenth century is marked above all by this disciplinarization and professionalization of knowledge, that is to say, by the creation of permanent institutional structures designed both to produce new knowledge and reproduce the producers of knowledge” (Wallerstein et al. 1996 p. 7).

The tension between empirical discovery and context dependent inquiry began a fundamental shift in the overreaching paradigm of the university and is still being negotiated today. They considered a rational division of knowledge to be the most productive way to systematically research the content areas, ultimately leading to the development of disciplines and colleges.

The Gulbenkian Commission agrees that social science has its place in academics and they imply that the strength of the social sciences, although in crisis during the 1990s, have gained political stature. There was an epistemological difference between natural science and social science which emphasized the need for the division. This difference was rooted in the difference between nature and humans or the “physical world and social world.” Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that context is at the core of why social science is important. Knowledge and context should be linked and that is something that is not often accounted for in the natural sciences. Wallerstein (1993) insists that the reason behind the short comings of natural science is this model, “they
nurtured three kinds of expectations that have proved impossible to fulfill as stated in Universalist form: an expectation of prediction; an expectation of management; both in turn premised on an expectation of quantifiable accuracy” (p. 50).

**Episteme and Intellectual Structure of Disciplinary Education**

In Wallerstein’s (2002) article he began by identifying what makes a discipline and here again is this correlation with Aristotle’s intellectual virtues. First he describes what a discipline is by creating a sort of rubric that every discipline must have beginning with “intellectual Categories—modes of asserting that there exists a defined field of study with some kind of boundaries, however disputed or fuzzy, and some agreed-upon modes of legitimate research” (p. 453). Secondly there is what he calls “institutional structures.” In a sense these are political boundaries set up by the institutions themselves that created what is now understood as disciplines or departments of study. There also has to be students that are earning or working toward degrees in very specific areas and these areas are within institutional structures. Here, according to Wallerstein, there is shared terminology on up to shared paradigms for research and theory. “… Conceptual vocabularies always contain a rhetoric of attitudes and a rhetoric of motives. There is no way to do intellectual work without adopting a language that simultaneously defines, describes, evaluates, and acts toward the phenomena in question” (Carey 1988 p. 101). Scholars and students alike tend to feel comfortable in their niches and this creates a sort of community and sense of safety/validity.

Peering into the university’s strategy for collecting and identifying knowledge, it is important to look in areas where there is already overlap and where a common language may already exist. There are three research paradigms that transcend the
institution, but all three are particularly evident in the social sciences according to Wallerstein (2002). Beginning with the “classic nomothetic vision” or quantitative approach to research with a primary focus of making repeatable, generalizable assertions to the population at large. Secondly Wallerstein addresses the “ideographic tradition” which serves to dissect phenomena in a context dependent fashion known familiar to me as qualitative inquiry. Finally there is a group of people who are not comfortable with either of the schools of thought, but rather they use and dabble in both qualitative and quantitative inquiry. This conscious yet ambiguous acknowledgment of research methods may allow us to have a conversation with any department on campus, a point of common ground may simply stem from dialogue about research paradigms.

**Cultural Nature of the University**

Society has entered into a global age where information transcends physical and intellectual boundaries around the world. Problems are no longer simply geographic and site specific they have implications that may reach many others. Social science goes out of its way as a whole, and in each respected discipline, to try and explain what is changing and how to perceive it. Qualitative questioning, observation, reflection etc., is our best way to understand the impacts of the structure of the institution of people.

According to Klein (1990), disciplinarity “was reinforced in two major ways: industries demanded and received specialists, and disciplines recruited students to their ranks. The trend toward specialization was further propelled by increasingly more expensive and sophisticated instrumentation” (p.21). Science is still observed as truth and fact while not science is everything else and is not seen as a valuable place to spend our resources (Carey 1988). It is the case that public universities are segregated
departmentally and are not maximizing their potential for providing an environment that specifically caters to preparation for what exists beyond the walls of the academic institution, not to mention solve the problems within. Researchers are, however, seeing an increase in interdisciplinary programs being offered around the country as the pendulum swings. These programs are encouraged in order to demonstrate unity within a college and to better prepare students for the outside world.

This tension between the realities of everyday life and the norms within a college university is where phronetic science is at home. Each situation is different and unique but that does not mean that I cannot learn from it with the intentions of improving our society. In order to discuss context dependent tensions there needs to be a conversation that transcends academic disciplines, as I have been saying throughout this paper.

Several authors have attempted to identify if there is a reward system for faculty collaboration and they have narrowed it down to basically 3 main barriers. Bohen and Stiles (1998) outlined the problems or barriers as “Academics are not trained to work together, the academic reward structure is biased toward the effort of the individual, and existing administrative structures are not oriented toward promoting or supporting collaborative work, particularly that which crosses disciplinary, department, or school boundaries” (p. 41). Recognizing that this research is context dependent is a first step toward institution wide recognition of the efforts that go into taking on an inquiry such as understanding collaboration often referred to as cultural studies by Carey (1988). I see cultural studies and phronetic science as synonymous; however, like all words, there are connotations and we must always negotiate context in order to understand perspective especially when using a word like cultural or science.
Bohen and Stiles (1998) have noticed that academics are not designed to promote group collaboration. From early on students are independent in their studies and this is only perpetuated as the level of education increases. When referring to graduate studies, according to Bohen and Stiles, studies are isolated, students take very specific course work and focus on a precise area within their discipline to report on with a thesis and/or dissertation. As far as the professors are concerned, the individual research continues in order to remain employed and earn promotions. Bohen and Stiles also agree that departments on campus have to compete for funding, and they do this through recruitment and retention. It would not be in the best interest of a discipline, financially, to encourage students to study elsewhere in addition to the major. “This difference forms an important distinction, which scholars may experience as distance from their colleagues in fields that are neighboring or distant from their own” (Frost & Jean, 2003, p. 122). Thomson (2007) states that “vigorous and successful learning communities demand institutional-wide support” (p. 35). For this interdisciplinary process to engage the faculty and students, there must be collaboration institutionally wide. In order to evaluate the level of collaboration that exists or that is necessary a case study would be appropriate.

Wallerstein’s (2002) article goes onto explain why the disciplinary vs interdisciplinary structures are defended one way or another. He first addresses the folks that will defend their “turf” to the end. He identifies these people first through generational distinctions. He would say that the young have to be pulled in and convinced of the importance of the status quo by putting restraints on them and the “senior seniors” as he calls them are often tired of putting up with the bureaucracy and
have come to some conclusions that push them to explore beyond what they know. It is the age group in the 40-50 years range that have the most riding on keeping things the same. These people have fought to work up through the ranks and have finally established some credibility within their discipline. They are resistant to the restructuring of the social sciences; they, more than the rest, are fully committed to the discipline and are exhausted from the hard work they put in.

As I continue through this paper it is important to note that Wallerstein (2002) is not proposing the dismantling of the disciplines as they stand now; he suggests that the disciplines were created initially for reasons that are different than now. Wallerstein believes that disciplines were created very pragmatically through historical context but now admits that there is reason to change these boundaries. What was once seen as poaching research from other departments has shifted with the modern idea of education and is much more acceptable. He reasons with the idea that if education completely absolved disciplines or combined them into larger areas there would still be folks who group together in corners and continue to distance themselves from the others through this idea of culture and intellectual categories. I also believe that we cannot dismantle the disciplines, nor would that be productive but rather a dialogue that transcends throughout the institution should be facilitated. This conversation will lead to collaboration and context dependent research alliances; it will likely create problem solving work groups like think tanks in the private sector.

A Search for Interdisciplinarity

I have been casually using the word conversation in regards to formal and informal deliberate interactions that are cross-disciplinary attempts to understand
theoretical underpinnings of each social science discipline. Conversation, as I stated in the introduction, is a back and forth; there are often terms and common ground that anchor the interaction as opposed to being a series of declarative statements or findings.

Defining terms without carefully describing context and conceptual differences between each of our perceptions is difficult, especially without communicating about it deliberately. After turning to colleagues in the communications department and professors from across the institution it was apparent that understanding the phronetic implications of the college would truly be an interdisciplinary journey. This strategy of using an interdisciplinary approach to find the literature seemed to work well. Through conversations about what it was I was trying to research I was able to identify terms from several perspectives other than my own. This was helpful when searching databases, in that I could match specific terminology with specific disciplinary journals based on disciplinary context based conversations. Some of the various terms that are not necessarily interchangeable (in the context of a search) are collaboration, interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, team, collective, integration, general education, social research, co-taught, cultural studies and more. These terms may be the subject of future research in that they tended to mean the same things but were used dependent on which academic discipline I was searching in. Once I felt comfortable with the language regarding interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary teaching I was able to find several articles addressing models of faculty collaboration and the benefits of this. As the search became more apparent I also located some of the literature on dissolving the dramatic boundaries between departments and the creation of learning communities for faculty and students.
It was evident right away that in order to search the literature in an efficient and effective way, I had to learn the language that each discipline uses to describe their interdisciplinary approaches to education. What is often considered interdisciplinarity is simply an instructor teaching students from another discipline. True interdisciplinarity would have to begin with multiple disciplines having an ontological discussion and creating a language of its own, or creating a more complex language that is able to identify shared meanings and incorporate the rest, which would seem to create a new interdisciplinary discipline. This does not seem feasible for an institution or an individual to pursue, especially if it is in addition to the other academic disciplines; there is too much information and continuous progress within individual disciplines for one to become an expert in several areas simultaneously. Klein (1990) acknowledges that interdisciplinarity is an ambiguous term; historically it has been defined differently and what constitutes interdisciplinarity also changes often.

When looking at modern definitions the majority of interdisciplinary efforts have been in the form of disciplines combining with one or two other disciplines and creating a new sort of discipline, for example bio-chemistry. There has also been some problem oriented or effort oriented collaboration in the government and throughout the private sectors; NASA could be a government example of this, early on they realized that they would need to combine efforts with physicists, engineers, biologists, economists, etc. this all on a large scale. According to Klein (1990) & Davis (1995) the 1960’s and 1970’s began to promote interdisciplinary efforts with more grants becoming available like the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). Klein (1990) mentions
that there are five themes that stick out in the research of interdisciplinarity in regards to the demands that initiate collaborative efforts:

1. The development of science as the result of two movements: first, increasing specialization leading to the intersection of two disciplines, splitting up of an over-rigid discipline, or setting off into new fields of knowledge; second, the result of attempts to define elements common to disciplines.

2. Student demand: the result of direct student pressure or faculty anticipation, most of the time as a protest against parcelization and artificial subdivisions of “reality.”

3. Problems of university operation or even administration: The result of increasingly elaborate equipment in research centers and the need for budget management in universities, especially in regard to contracts with government or the advent of major technology such as a computer.

4. Vocational and professional training requirements: Educational needs based on student demand and, in some cases, the result of a contract extending outside the university, thereby linked with the fifth demand.

5. The original social demand: Particular needs and new subjects which cannot, by definition, be contained within a single disciplinary frame, such as environmental research (p. 41).

With these five themes in mind the definition of interdisciplinary continues to evolve. Interdisciplinary as defined by Webster’s New World College Dictionary, is “involving, or joining, two or more disciplines, or branches of learning.” This is a simple definition that does not seem to omit any important elements. However, Davis (1995)
makes note that if a definition is accepted for interdisciplinary then it is already assumed that knowledge is arranged in a disciplinary fashion first. An in-depth discussion of this may be saved for another literature review.

After reflecting on this review it seems that in order to further understand interdisciplinarity there needs to be a look at a particular instance of collaboration, again I am talking about context dependent phronetic implications. I have addressed many of the questions from the introduction, but there are gaps in the literature pertaining to identity and its relationship to quality curriculum or sustainability of problem solving teams. Also, there is little information that I came across regarding faculty and student perspectives on interdisciplinarity and the efforts surrounding collective academic ideology beyond that of the discipline. The interviews performed for this case study have hopefully contributed to some of this discourse.
RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

Problems in society inherently involve people and systems that are interdisciplinary; however, the education system is constructed in such a way that often inhibits an interdisciplinary approach to solving these problems. The system has grown in a way that has divided disciplines and nearly put them at odds with each other. It is time to embrace interdisciplinarity once again much like philosophers have throughout history. In order to understand the system and further understand the complex nature of interdisciplinarity and identity, I will need to take a closer look at an institution that seems to go against the norm and supports collaborative integration.

Qualitative Case Study

When thinking of ways to research an idea like interdisciplinarity and the perceptions of it, the use of qualitative inquiry is the obvious choice for my main research paradigm. A qualitative case study approach with the post-modern context dependent perspective will generate an open conversation that should provoke a discussion about interdisciplinarity. I will look for themes that transcend the conversation and expose the foundation of phronetic science research.

Qualitative inquiry allows me to seek dialogue from the people within the structure or system. Furthermore, I am encouraged to subjectively interpret it and assimilate/accommodate it into our collective education paradigms.

My research question guides toward a case study, and through case study I can take a no assumptions context dependent approach to better understand the benefits and barriers to cross-disciplinary integration. A qualitative approach to research allows me to ask questions of a situation and understand it through dialogue and observation without
predicting or generalizing across populations. The qualitative paradigm provides an opportunity to interpret a phenomenon in a way that cannot be done using numbers and statistics.

As Defined by Flyvbjerg (2001) “The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study, cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases” (p.67). Stake (2000) implies that case studies are not necessarily a methodological choice but rather a choice of what is to be studied. And after we choose to study a particular case we may study it analytically, holistically, hermeneutically, organically or culturally.

The case we look at may be a specific person, a group of people, an event, phenomenon or particular system. Stake (2000) identifies three types of case studies:

1. Intrinsic case study: “one wants a better understanding of this particular case” (p. 445)
2. Instrumental case study: “examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (p. 445)
3. Multiple case study or Collective case study: “instrumental study extended to several cases” (p. 446)

According to Stake (2000) we are attempting to understand what is common and particular about a case. In order to understand this we follow a specific sequence or set of data gathering techniques.

1. “the nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning;
2. Its historical background;
3. Its physical setting;
4. Other contexts, such as economic, political, legal and aesthetic;
5. Other cases through which this case is recognized; and
6. Those informants through whom the case can be known” (p. 447).

I will tentatively use this set of data gathering techniques to further outline, elaborate, and provide context for the case study at hand. The concept I wanted to better understand was the idea of interdisciplinarity or integration across disciplines along with the barriers that prevent interdisciplinarity. It was important to look at the possibility early on, of whether it would be more productive to look a system that did not actively and consciously participate in interdisciplinary endeavors or a system that did; as stated earlier in this chapter I felt it was important to use a case that was actively engaged in interdisciplinary work. Also the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences lends itself to the likely ability to generalize some of these findings beyond the walls of EWU.

**Curriculum Integration Project**

After learning about the CSBS curriculum at Eastern Washington University and asking the larger questions about interdisciplinarity it seemed a near perfect fit to take advantage of the system in place. There are also programs devoted to interdisciplinary learning but seemed at a glance a poor fit for this research endeavor; they tend to be focused on students taking classes from a variety of disciplines rather than from an integrated and collaborative curriculum. The CSBS is unique in that it has the committee of advisors from separate disciplines that work together in order to capture the essence of social science.
Eastern Washington University (EWU) is made up of 6 colleges and I will be working within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. EWU is a regional institute that supports about 10,000 students, located in Cheney, Washington. In the CSBS there is a core curriculum that transcends, in one way or another, all of the disciplines within the college, totaling 12 departments. Each core course is negotiated through a collaborative, interdisciplinary committee; these courses represent a portion of the academic requirements for students within the college, in order to earn their respective degrees; this opportunity to study interdisciplinary efforts, could not be passed up.

There are three interdisciplinary courses being offered in the CSBS, including statistics, methods and social science theory. Out of the three, the theory committee seemed to be the most active and accessible in regards to further examination for the purpose of this study. This curriculum integration project seemed to be well established and supported when looking at it initially. There was a significant amount of internal literature available for review, an active committee of diverse faculty from within the college, and an established institutional place within the CSBS. It is a highly functioning program when looking in from the outside.

**Triangulation through Interviews**

Interdisciplinarity is an effort to collaborate on something from different perspectives and paradigms; it is appropriate that it would be studied by talking with people. There are several ways to methodically open discourse with people and all are a subjective approach, so it was important to select which method would most likely give us insight into the case being studied. Through a mixed methods and triangulation
approach I hope to have gathered some insight on what is going on in the interdisciplinary effort at EWU. I have used the transcripts to create a Worldle, a graphic that represents word frequencies. I also used the frequencies to search for themes that stood out across multiple interviews. It is a difficult task to gather information from people and report it in a responsible manner. As Fontana & Frey (2005) report “the spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers. Yet interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans” (697). It was appropriate to use interviews, specifically the open ended/unstructured interview was likely the most practical, accurate and effective way to discuss this particular topic. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995) you may or may not know how to ask the right questions to get at answers you may not know you have, so we can go into an interview well informed but without pre-determined directional questions.

After deciding on interviewing there are a series of steps that most interviewers then consider:

1. Accessing the setting
2. Understanding the Language and Culture of the Respondents
3. Deciding How to Present Oneself
4. Locating an Informant
5. Gaining Trust
6. Establishing Rapport
In this case accessing the setting was not a major issue, I did not have to integrate into another culture or change my own behavior. I am a graduate student at EWU in the same college (CSBS) as the faculty interviewed. There were shared norms that created an opportunity to gain access without too much trouble. As for understanding the language and culture, I come from a background in the social sciences and have common theoretical underpinnings and philosophy to share in order to establish points of reference. In regards to my role as interviewer, it didn’t seem I had a choice in determining the perception of my position. I was a student interviewing faculty and administration, it was assumed that the objective was to sit and be taught. I could have presented myself as an expert on interdisciplinarity, taking a closer look at a program or as a colleague that is intrigued by the nature of the project. My role was quickly established as a ‘learner.’ Locating an insider began with establishing the thesis committee; the first and second chair of the committee are actively involved in the college and curriculum integration project. They provided the “in” to the group of people that were to be interviewed. In regards to gaining trust and establishing rapport it seems that this happened simultaneously. Trusted members of the group introduced me to the committee and through informal conversation and dialogue a sense of rapport was established early on. It seemed that in this setting, showing interest and curiosity went a long way. There were also some informal relationships already established with members of the committee from throughout my master’s program.

**Interviewees**

The participants in this study were, as mentioned earlier, members of the CSBS at EWU. They were also involved to some degree in the curriculum integration project. All
interviewees were EWU faculty or administration either currently or at some juncture during the past 15 years. In regards to education each participant held a PhD in their respective disciplines. They were selected with purpose and were in no way a random sample. The interviewees were contacted by email, in person, or by phone. Nine people responded to the contact attempts and were interviewed for this case study; there were several more people that did not respond or were not successfully contacted.

**Analysis**

Collecting data proved to be a challenge with regards to keeping track of context in the note taking. Hand written notes were the primary source of data collection in the interview process; on some occasions permission was given to use a digital audio recorder. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes on up to an hour. They were set primarily in offices and coffee shops. In each case significant time was spent following each interview in creating an outline of the interview for future use in the analysis/discussion section of this thesis. As for the audio recordings they were used when more clarity was needed in a specific section of the handwritten notes and/or a quote was pulled; no verbatim transcripts were pulled from the interviews.

In regards to the analysis of each interview, notes from paper and from audio recordings were spread out; they were color coded by categories of whether we were looking at institutional, intellectual or cultural frameworks within the organization being studied. After visualizing the interview they were then recorded in an outline format using a computer; this later allowed for an overall view of each interview within certain frameworks. After listening and participating in each interview it was obvious that we tended to begin in the institutional frame and end in the cultural frame leading to a guided
analysis using this structure. Interviews began with introductions or reintroductions and a brief summary of the study at hand. Most interviewees allowed for the use of their names; however, after some consideration letter values were given in the official analysis instead of names. When reviewing the transcripts there was some candid discussion in regards to direction of the curriculum, and it was easier to elaborate in these areas provided all interview notes were anonymous in the final draft.
ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

By now the research problem has been established, there are phronetic implications to disciplinary education that may dampen potential problem solving success outside of academia. I want to know if an integrated cross-disciplinary faculty committee can facilitate a unique approach to interdisciplinary learning. Without talking to students it is hard to know if this collaboration leads to a more productive member of society; however, it is important to ask the instructors and administrators on the front lines how interdisciplinary collaboration effects them and what they think is happening and why. Specifically why do they think it is working, and what can I grasp from their narrative or account of this effort?

The research problem involved understanding the perceived effects of cross-disciplinary integration at the faculty level in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Eastern Washington University. Simply put, what is happening in the theory committee at EWU? The research clearly shows that there are bound to be barriers to their collaboration, but there is also, likely, reward. The curriculum integration faculty have surveyed and audited their efforts frequently and the students, college and university should be proud of their work.

The focus of this research has turned toward understanding interdisciplinarity and identity. It seems as though this integration project inadvertently shifted identity from several disciplinary perspectives to a collective problem solving interdisciplinary perspective. In order to better understand what led to these changes in perspective I asked about the process of implementing the integrated curriculum project and sustaining it, with hopes that it would reveal a formula for interdisciplinary integration.
This analysis was guided by what I learned through the research gathering phase and a series of open ended interviews with administration and faculty. These notes were organized topically by themes that emerged through the research and interviews; the information has been accommodated into subsections working with the intellectual, institutional, and cultural elements of the integration efforts. There was some consideration to looking at it chronologically because most of the participants talked about the program in order from when it began, but ultimately in hopes of revealing qualitative perspectives that lead to their individual commitments I organized the interviews through the lens of the intellectual virtues. This analysis begins with a brief historical perspective, which correlates directly with the institutional framework, in order to provide context for the case study.

The collection assembled as such will act as a themed recount of the interviews, which serves as the main finding or interpretation of what was being said. There was consistent mention of actual and perceived support that surfaced across all interviews.

**Curriculum Integration Program Framework and History**

According to Dr. O (personal communication), this project was first conceived in the 1990’s when there was a five college structure at EWU. The university was determined to reorganize the colleges across campus; they had plans of taking the large college and reducing it in size by distributing the social science disciplines into the remaining colleges.

- Women’s studies       College of Social Work and Ethnic Programs
- Economics
- Government       College of Business
This coincided with a national crisis in the social sciences where they were in jeopardy of dissolving. Several reasons were given for the “dissolving of the social sciences,” beginning with declining enrollments in core social and behavioral science disciplines (Dr. O, personal communication). Other reasons generally given were the loss of students from social and behavioral science curricula to professional schools and career-oriented programs (consensus, personal communication). Boundary disputes among the social and behavioral sciences that lead to overlapping curricula and duplication of courses also were noted. Finally, the lack of coordination and cooperation among the disciplines of the social and behavioral sciences which increased competition for available resources.

The dean and associate dean (Jeffers Chertok and David Cornelius) decided to submit a plan to the president, deans, and provosts at a large meeting where this was going to all be discussed. They proposed a two college model (Dr. O). The two colleges would become the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the College of Arts and Letters. Dr. O indicated they knew this plan would need to show the division to be efficient and cost effective while also resolving some of the reasons social sciences were
having trouble, so they insisted that they could create an integrative curriculum program. This program would save money through sharing faculty in courses like theory, methods, and statistics. The idea was that it would also create a culture that would help to retain students in the social sciences and resolve boundary disputes through collaboration. They agreed that this would create stronger social scientists in theory and research. This approach was also suggested for the College of Arts and Letters but it never took off (Dr. O).

There was surprisingly a lot of administrative support, according to Dr. O, and specifically from the office of the president. Their proposal shocked the other deans and provosts and excited President Jordan. Of course, the deans wanted to absorb these departments and programs in order to grow their own, but President Jordan saw this as an opportunity for EWU to gain national attention by supporting the social sciences through this innovative integration project. As far as the money saving element, they would have shared faculty teaching across disciplines. Also the two colleges would share an office and the only extra costs would be a new dean.

Administrative support was crucial to getting the project off the ground, but they needed approval across the social sciences. The new dean and associate dean of the CSBS went to each department and met during the department meetings to explain the proposal in regards to sharing faculty and resources. As Dr. O explained there was some dissention early on. Communication Studies as a department was confused as to which college to join, rhetoricians felt at home with arts and letters while the rest felt closer to the social sciences. History could not see commonalities with the social sciences and saw little or no need for social science theory and no need for statistics. Psychology believed
they were strong enough and did not need anybody else to support them, they saw their program as being needed to help the others and believed the college or interdisciplinary effort would weaken the department. Economics felt they would be more “at home” with the business college. In the end the CSBS was made up of 12 disciplines, including Women and Gender Studies, Economics, History, Psychology, Communications, Anthropology, Sociology, Criminal Justice, Geography, Government, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Military Science.

Dr. O insisted that this new interdisciplinary effort was really not popular with the departments. The dean and associate dean quickly realized they would need to market it with credibility and some sort of extrinsic incentive. They decided to talk with the grants office and found an application for the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant. After putting together a proposal they received word from someone working within FIPSE that they do not get a lot of grant proposals for social sciences and they should continue to pursue this. The CSBS received a 350,000 dollar three year grant to grow this program for the social sciences. The grant really helped to sell the interdisciplinary idea to the faculty and the departments because it provided the credibility and the incentive, as it was a prestigious well known federal grant and only went to good cause and innovative ideas. As for incentive they could now pay for training, time, books, consultants and travel to conferences for interested faculty.

With the initiation of the FIPSE money, the college would have to begin somewhere so they started with organizing a streamline model for each discipline. This was an attempt at making the social science disciplines at EWU easier to navigate for
students. According to Dr. O and documents provided, the new model consisted of five parts:

1. An introductory course developed by each discipline;
2. A college-wide foundational curriculum for the social and behavioral sciences developed by the college as a whole;
3. A revised core curriculum developed by each discipline;
4. A set of interdisciplinary, career-oriented certificate programs developed by the disciplines working together through College committees; and
5. A capstone class for each major (personal communication).

The creation of the college wide foundational courses proved to be the first major hurdle; for each course there was “a committee to develop the course, 2 consultants, pilot testing, paid training for faculty/instructors and an institutionalized director and committee.” Initially it was perceived that these college wide foundational courses would consist of one course in theory, two courses in statistics and two courses in methods. As for the Career-Oriented Certificates there would again be a committee devoted to development of the certificates, there would be a process to review each certificate, there would also have to be a change in university policy, and lastly the process would be institutionalized.

Institutionally there were some objectives that were created at the onset of the integration program:

1. To strengthen the social and behavioral sciences at EWU.
2. To improve the cost effectiveness of the social and behavioral sciences at EWU.
3. To strengthen the Theory Component of the Social Science Curriculum.
4. To strengthen the Statistics Component of the Social Science Curriculum.
5. To strengthen the Research Methods Component of the Social Science Curriculum (Dr. O, personal communication).

There were quantitative statistical studies done in order to evaluate each of these goals and all the objectives were accomplished with the exception of a demonstration that the research methods component was strengthened. The interviewee suggested that this may be due to some spurious variables and the assessment tool.

Lastly relative to the FIPSE grant and the first years of the curriculum integration project, it was noted that there were several more areas of interest after viewing the initial goals and objectives. The Grant writers and directors of the project came up with a list of activities that were to continue over the following 3-5 years. For instance a list of impacts to the college that could be directly attributed to the project and a brief section on lessons learned (Dr. O, personal communication).

**Motivation and Support**

After FIPSE the integration project has continued although there is diminished institutional support according to all interviewees. It has taken a great deal of commitment from the college and the departments to remain involved after the expiration of the rather significant grant that began it all. After reviewing the interviews I noticed a trend in responses relating to commitment from the college and the institution. The participants specifically addressed three areas when talking about institutional support. First evaluation and assessment often came up as a way to monitor the support of the program. Extrinsic factors like money and incentive play a role when one is trying to determine if they are being appreciated for their work. Lastly it seemed the perceived support and commitment were important factors. This is mostly intrinsic reward that can
only be evaluated by each individual. Regardless of which follow up questions I asked in
the individual interviews it seemed that these three topics were addressed in each case.

Beginning with evaluation and assessment as it was the least ambiguous of the
three trends, Dr. D noted that there does not seem to be anyone checking on student
evaluations of the teachers. These evaluations go to the departments of the instructor and
are not addressed at the committee level. Additionally, Dr. D spoke on the idea that the
faculty teaching the course control the feedback amongst themselves, and it is mostly
verbal, informal evaluation through conversation. Dr. N looked at the larger picture in
regards to assessment and mentioned that to their knowledge there has not been a
program assessment in past several years. Also there are several layers of assessment that
are not accounted for, student evaluations, staff evaluations and department contribution
evaluations (Dr. N). More importantly there is no way of knowing if the students are
gaining from the integrated courses, do they think they are learning (Dr. N, personal
communication)?

In regards to money and incentive several of the interviewees felt this was
important to address. Drs. F and N spoke about the committee directors and how it was a
funded position and recently has become a volunteer position. This was seen in both a
positive and negative light by several of the participants in this analysis. Drs. F and D
believe that this provided a sense of control as a result of not having the pressure to
standardize things. Dr. F mentioned that the dean’s office had to take some of the
function of the paid committee director in order to negotiate the lack of monetary
incentive. According to Dr. D there is also a sense that the committees could easily
disappear without the financial support that was there. “How fragile is this program and
how close are we to losing this, would the college step in and ask someone to take over in the event that the director stepped down” (Dr. D, personal communication)? Dr. N said that “the integration project is in danger due to institutional constraints” (personal communication). Dr. N also believes that this was due to a lack of foresight early on in the project as to how this could be sustained long term while keeping interest, funding and motivation. Following along the lines of intrinsic motivation Dr. P suggested that there are a lot of benefits to being a part of these committees, “we can use the CSBS integration project to challenge the solidarity of disciplinary education” (personal communication). Dr. P also spoke on the idea that with positives come negatives and they must all be embraced or addressed. Dr. P challenged that “as soon as we accept the value of the committee we tend to begin the negative process” (personal communication), the less we are challenged and the less oversight there is (internal or external), the more stagnant and less valuable it becomes. Regarding incentive “students have more options and it relieves some burdens on the departments; there is an efficiency advantage along with the benefits students get from sharing classrooms with peers from other disciplines” (Dr. G, personal communication).

Perceived support and commitment seemed to generate the most discussion. Arguably, assessment and incentive could fit in with perceived support, but it seems as if it was addressed separately and often noted with intent. Early on, Dr. O indicated that with the support of the president, the program was highly motivated at the administrative level. President Jordan found ways to incorporate the curriculum integration project in nearly every speech he made (Dr. O, personal communication). This recognition and pride grew with the program and eventually led to the project gaining national
recognition for being “the most innovative approach to social sciences in the country” (Dr. O, personal communication). This support and Campus wide commitment, led to nationwide networking and internal pride with regards to continuing support and motivation according to Dr. O. More recently it seemed as if as a result of monetary support and institutional commitment there has been a decline in the perceived support and commitment although several people indicated that they continue to feel at least some institutional commitment. Dr. K mentioned that the university support is assumed because “if there was pushback we would know” (Dr. K, personal communication).

Also it was said by Dr. K that the support seems universal within the college “Dr. Shields and Dr. Stafford (Dean and Associate Dean when interviews were taken) have gone to great lengths to keep this going” (Dr. K, personal communication). Dr. G implied that the support of the college is important for this program and the perceived support is very high as a result of looking at the complexities involved in continuing. There are several sections of each course offered every year at EWU (also at remote campuses) and scheduling is done by the dean’s office. This requires a lot of resources and time in order to offer so much (Dr. G). The deans’ support according to Dr. L comes in the form of funding and their participation in the conversations between departments, encouraging support and filling an organizational role.

Dr. K believes departmental support is relative to the individual units and their perceived standing in the college and other complications such as issues with ethos. Also in regards to support according to Dr. K there are issues of perspective when addressing support and commitment amongst departments. There are ideas in academics that self-sufficiency demonstrates strength, and power is relinquished when these committees are
put in charge of scheduling and curriculum decisions. Dr. D suggests that departments shoulder much of the burden. Dr. D also puts a lot of emphasis on the support of the committees and directors to keep it going. Dr. G asserts that for the most part departments are fairly supportive and see the value of the program. Dr. L agrees that departments are responsible for a lot of the support and play an important role in the curriculum integration project. The departments must integrate the courses into the program and simply doing so is a show of support as well as supplying faculty for the course, which includes faculty participation in the committees.

They often get feedback that is encouraging from students, where they have seemingly provoked real breakthroughs in learning and paradigm development; although, this is not always the case as many students are taking this near the end of their program and do not see a value in learning at this macro level (in regards to Theory course), they tend to be more focused on what will get them the job at this point (Drs. P and D).

**Successes and Failures**

I anticipated more concern in and around the areas of perceived success and failure, but after interviews were complete it was apparent that they did not discuss this at great length. There was a sense of established credibility for the program that was inherent. The collaboration had worked for the theory course or it would not have continued this long. Also in the case of the CSBS methods course, it was not working as well and that was that.

There was some acknowledgment of terms in regard to whether we were talking about interdisciplinarity or disciplinarity and the evolving debate over pedagogy;
however, the majority of discussion was on developing curriculum and struggles in streamlining content across sections in relation to the theory course.

In the beginning of the curriculum integration project, as mentioned earlier, there were several classes that were to be implemented into the core curriculum for each department across the CSBS. Also mentioned there has been some attrition regarding who participates in which committees and also who has integrated the CSBS curriculum into their programs. I began with the stats course followed by methods and then theory.

According to Dr. O departments were empowered to decide the degree to which they participated in this program; it was highly encouraged to participate, but the dean and associate dean were to rely on the credibility of the FIPSE grant and the incentive that also came with it. There was a strong logic implied by Dr. O that the undergraduates in the CSBS “needed to have this background (stats, theory and Methods) in the social sciences, because they carry the reputation of social science with them beyond the institution and it is an embarrassment to have them lacking in any area” (Dr. O, personal communication).

As for the development of the core courses it began with assembling the committees and Dr. O stated that the statistics committee was the easiest to negotiate. Drs. O and N believe that statistics is a class that does not offer a lot of room for interpretation. Dr. N stated that the statistics course has been mostly in the hands of the psychology department from the beginning. Dr. O mentioned that this committee was made up of only people interested and familiar with statistics and they all, for the most part, agreed on what a statistics course would look like. It further developed into a two part sequence beginning with an introduction to quantitative statistics and then a course
in computerized statistical analysis. Dr. N said that it is believed that the committee does not meet often but is accomplishing its goal to teach statistics on a regular basis, mostly out of the psychology program. Not all the departments participate in the statistics series as they do not feel it is necessary for their majors to have this in-depth of an understanding (Dr. O). There is an ongoing debate about this according to most interviewees. Several of the departments see a need for qualitative statistics courses that are a closer fit to their research paradigm.

As for methods courses there has been more dissension across the disciplines and their needs. For example, Psychology does not participate in a CSBS methods course as they feel they need to have a more content specific course related to their discipline (Drs. N, O, G and K). History is another department that the CSBS curriculum attempted to accommodate in regards to methods with a documents based methods course. This was not successful and they are waning from participation according to most interviewees. Methods courses tend to invite more tension with the interdisciplinary approach and generalization that social science disciplines are closely intertwined. “The methods course has been bumpy the whole way along, and methods may be an unsustainable commitment due to the college being so eclectic, as far as research paradigms go” (Dr. N, personal communication). However, it was acknowledged that experimental hybrid courses are taking off in the coming years and may take methods in a more sustainable direction.

**Negotiating Social Science Theory**

Most conversation in respect to the organization of the interdisciplinary curriculum has been from the perspective of the theory committee. The theory committee
seems to be the most committed and strongest group out of the three. Most of the participants in this interview have been involved with the theory committee to some degree. The theory course was seemingly the hardest to negotiate in the beginning as far as design and implementation. The theory committee was the best opportunity to understand more about the interdisciplinary vs. disciplinary approach and further discuss the negotiation that took place from the conception to the implementation.

Dr. O said that early on the theory committee was the hardest to get off the ground as there are not many examples as to what a social science theory course might look like. Drs. D, F, K, T and P specifically addressed the idea that we teach from our personal disciplinary perspective and from where we are most comfortable. It is difficult to identify where disciplinarity ends and interdisciplinarity begins. This tension is rooted in the mostly disciplinary paradigm that they each bring to the table. They mostly agree that the interdisciplinary effort comes in the process of negotiating differences and ideologies, from their inherently disciplinary paradigm, at their monthly meetings.

Early on in the committee and still today there are pedagogical conflicts according to most of the interviewees; however, they all agree that this has been a productive debate that lies at the heart of the course. This friction has led to some core debates that relate to goals of the course. Drs. T, D, F, and K acknowledge the debate of whether they are teaching ontology or epistemology in relation to theory. Dr. P also questions this idea of ontology vs. epistemology and questions if “we are isolating theory for theories sake” (Dr. P, personal communication)? Dr. P suggests that theory may be used to discuss principles that address critical thinking and the demystification of the status quo or dominant ideology. There is no concrete conclusion here and it is agreed that each will
teach theory in a way that they are confident in; however, the committee discussions seem to provide them all with new knowledge and strategies that influence their courses.

When discussion led to addressing goals and objectives of the theory committee there were some small differences, but they were seemingly on the same page. Early on there was this ambiguity that led to very interesting conversation and development (Dr. T). They had a course that had no name and no real set goals and objectives other than to cover social science theory. Dr. T said they came up with some initial strategies for developing the course beginning with seeking a better understanding of where they were coming from as far as disciplinary perspective. According to Dr. T a list of questions were typed up in order to organize the discussion, each person was to take the list and reflect in order to come to the next meeting prepared to search for common ground. Additionally, Dr. T stated that the shared language was closer than originally anticipated, but they still needed to get a feel for other disciplines and fields in order to see how they tackled problems while using slightly different language and strategies. As the course evolved into a decision of whether to team teach (which was later rejected), it took on a more artistic sense said Dr. T. Teaching is an art and there must be some intrinsic buy in. Dr. T acknowledged that common ground was found by searching for context; it is clear that the development of the course served as a model for what would be later offered to the students. “We are simply trying to speak to social concepts and theory from our own perspective,” while also developing a confident perspective in the students (Dr. D, personal communication). Dr. L stated that they are “trying to expose the students to the project of social science” (personal communication). Dr. F spoke of the group’s task, in that the original Dean involved (Jeffers Chertok) felt that the conception of the
curriculum integration project spoke “to develop a course that would articulate what it is
that ‘hangs’ the social sciences together” (personal communication). This would in turn,
according to Dr. F, be a meta-theoretical course about theory not in theory. Dr. K looked
at the objective of the course as “giving students tools so that they can engage and
critique in a more sophisticated manner with the world” (personal communication). Dr. P
acknowledged an admittedly ambitious goal which is to…

sort of critically examine what is going on in our own life and social world…with
critical examination of life a method will surface later…we need to encourage
students to go looking, encourage them to seek out answers to problems, not just
give them tools without understanding context or without an ability to engage
(personal communication).

Dr. O’s goal pertained to the original intent of the curriculum integration project similar
to Dr. F, in that “we were trying to preserve the social sciences at EWU” (personal
communication). They all seem to agree that the disciplines in the social sciences share
core theory and are similarly grounded in this approach to teaching social science theory.
It bridges the disciplines and unites the college intellectually.

Culture of the CSBS

I thought that a section on the culture of the CSBS would be easy to organize
from the interview notes but that was naive. These were interviews with very bright
people from across the social sciences at EWU, and with each conversation that I
engaged in there was a specific context and perspective that cannot be articulated
seamlessly. Like most graduate students, I assume, it was also thought that there would
be a fairly straight forward way of introducing these topics. I thought they would fit
together into a coherent outline ultimately leading to an intriguing analysis of the data. After struggling to isolate a coherent and concise theme I have triangulated by using multiple perspectives and assembling the interviews (or portions of the interviews) into a narrative that seemed logical.

This leads me to the phronetic implications which are all encompassing. It is difficult to isolate this section without referring to the previous sections which have hopefully provided some historical background and context regarding the efforts of the involved faculty. It is also difficult to analyze the cultural framework without having first discussed the purposes, goals and struggles that has shaped the people that make up this project. There seems to be a question guiding this section and whole thesis: what is it that makes the curriculum integration project work or tick, and furthermore how is this demonstrated through the in depth look at the institution and intellectual processes that created this project? The theory committee in particular was used to take an inside look at this dynamic within the larger institution.

I began by looking at the theory committee as a group or sub-culture that exists within the college and the university as a whole. This group is symbolic of what is happening in the social sciences at EWU. They have created their own identity, perhaps consciously, within the larger groups that they belong to. All the interviewees expressed that there is this notion of fortune when admitting they have been a part of this project. Dr. L said it’s like going to a conference that you enjoy on a regular basis; it feels like “hanging out, but with people from different disciplines” (personal communication). There is a “sense of belonging,” and this particular committee is one that “you want to go to, it is quite fun and intriguing…it is easy to take for granted because we are seated at a
table of likeminded people, where we never have to support or defend the idea of
interdisciplinarity” (Dr. D, personal communication). Dr. F felt that there was “always
common ground” from which to step back to, in order to translate each other’s language
(personal communication). Dr. K said that “the theory committee is a high functioning
group” that gets along socially while being productive; “we share pedagogical and
philosophical commitment to the value of social science theory” (personal
communication). Dr. T expressed that it was nice to find likeminded people from across
the college that could be trusted. On the same note they all seem to agree that there is a
shared sense of mission. Dr. P addressed the makeup of the committee noting that there
are many people that are strategically placed throughout the university in regards to
ability and power; this was in context with the interview conversation revolving around
program potential and purpose.

Potential surfaced as a common theme when looking back at the interviews. Dr. P
specifically addressed this idea of potential accompanied by roadblocks and conflict. As
mentioned earlier Dr. P said that there are positives and negatives when working in this
sort of interdisciplinary environment with likeminded faculty. Again Dr. P said, “As
soon as we accept the value of the committee we tend to begin the negative
process…there is less challenging and questioning of the intent and motivations of the
process or committee” (personal communication). With Dr. P there was a notion of
concern that the faculty teaching theory are generally critical theorists and that they
(including Dr. P) are not necessarily putting to practice the use of social theory. Theory
should be used to examine what it is that the theory course accomplishes. Dr. T
emphasized that they can now translate and add social context to theory; the committee
can tie pieces together and it will help to be more critical of our respective fields, “we don’t have all the answers and we can share this inspiration with students” (Dr. T, personal communication). Other interviewees touched on this in similar ways, Dr. D explained that the committee may be in jeopardy of becoming stagnant as there has not been a lot of new membership, “new faculty faces would be a good thing as interdisciplinary programs need nourishment all the time” (personal communication). When looking at notes from another interview it seems like stagnation may make the value of the curriculum integration project invisible.

The overall project is not, seemingly, receiving due credit for the creation of a community of likeminded professionals navigating the institution and promoting change in many places. Dr. N explains that interdisciplinarity is by nature ingrained in this college and that “there are a lot of interdisciplinary efforts throughout the college; it does not rise and fall on this particular integration project… there are joint appointments, there are problems that arise and we collaborate by using members from the appropriate disciplines” (personal communication). Dr. O reminds us that this culture and project “was all in response to the potential elimination of social science as a community at EWU” (personal communication). Dr. N asked “as a college do we still have a shared commitment to CSBS core curriculum, like we did 2 years ago or more? Maybe the social science theory course will prevail but others seem to be dropping off” (personal communication). These are important excerpts to understand as they define where this project may be going and ask questions as to the role of the curriculum integration project. A question asked by Dr. D and noted earlier in this chapter was in regards to how fragile this curriculum integration program is. If this conscious attempt toward
interdisciplinary integration wanes to the point where it is no longer present, will there be a regression back to our disciplinary niches (Dr. O), reducing the overall “inherent” interdisciplinary nature of the college (Dr. N, personal communication)?

There is a sense of pride amongst all of the people interviewed for this thesis. Most, when asked how they got involved, said they were enticed by the idea of exploring theory with likeminded professionals, some said they were hired for their experience with and interest in social science theory. Others were immediately interested in EWU or pursuing a position within the CSBS based on the innovative approach to social science. The interviewees were an optimistic group with a passion for social science.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main findings are in and around the idea that cross-disciplinary conversations lead to interdisciplinary curriculum/teaching. When instructors from neighboring academic disciplines in the social sciences work together to create a program that promotes interdisciplinary thinking, they report a shared core identity as social science scholars first and site their disciplinary expertise second. This serves a dual purpose, through trust and dialogue, the social sciences are strengthened and students come out better prepared for the interdisciplinary nature of the real world.

As the understanding of common theory happens at the faculty level, it will likely lead to more productive students who are better prepared for their futures. It is also likely that these conversations will lead to a shared language and shared identity that transcends disciplines and facilitates further interaction inherently. Teamwork, group work and social interactions are important throughout our lives, yet our education system continues to segregate into deliberately independent disciplines that may or may not consciously communicate with each other. It is an essential tool for our toolbox to be able to work with others throughout our lives professionally or otherwise.

This study indicates that an interdisciplinary identity may be achieved through deliberate interaction by instructors that have come through the institution first in a logical disciplinary fashion. Faculty that collaborate to build and implement curriculum for a theory based course in the social sciences are likely to develop an identity as a social scientist grounded in social science research as a result of that collaboration. It seems that this identity may be an important part of the sustainability of an integration project like this. We may also go out on a limb and encourage the social sciences to
continue their struggle with searching for context and common ground; this struggle seems to create a sense of belonging and an inclination to defend and participate in social science research.

With insight from my faculty mentor in the communications department I begin with a word graphic that demonstrates frequencies of words used throughout the interviews. This attempt at mixed methods triangulation with a decidedly qualitative analysis of quantitative frequencies can be seen in this info-graphic; the larger words were the most frequent occurrences.
This word-graphic served as an additional lens through which to look at the interviews as a whole. It helped to expose the areas that may not have seemed significant during a particular interview. When certain areas were deliberately addressed often with the same vocabulary over and over, a word graphic helped to make sure I would not overlook the common ground. These areas of common ground have been revisited and synthesized into the themes below.

**Common Ground**

Throughout the interviews several themes transcended each discussion; the interviewees:

- expressed concern for the program
- consciously made effort to express perceived support or lack there of
- expressed trust in the curriculum and their colleagues
- expressed that the monthly meetings were important to the success and evolution of the course.
- expressed concern for the academic recognition of the social sciences as a worthy body
- explained what the committee is and what the course is
- expressed a sense of pride
- expressed a notion of fortune in regards to being thankful for the opportunity to be a part of integration

This list of common points may contribute to understanding identity and its importance as it relates to academics in higher education. It looks as if by working together to create a course and then sustain and evolve this course they have created an identity that encompasses each of their individual disciplinary identities. This may also be a necessary ingredient for a sustainable future with the interdisciplinary social and
behavioral sciences. These interviews were open ended and very general questions led, in each case, to discussions in the above mentioned themes.

Throughout this process it was clear that the instructors would like to have access to this thesis. They felt that it was important for me to express my opinions and synthesize what I gathered so that I could give critical and constructive feedback. It is important to note that we now have a complete historical context of the program, and it was not known in its’ entirety by several of the interviewees and active members. Taking time to readdress why the CSBS curriculum integration project came about is an important place to start for the continued success of the project. If this context is lost then a lot of the original motivation behind it wanes. The program and people have evolved and changed, but there is still an element of where this fits in with the identity of the university and college. There are echoes of post-modernism, feminism, social theory and cultural studies at play throughout this research. Perspective and context play a role in all things such as the creation, evolution and evaluation of an interdisciplinary program. Remember that this effort began as the university was pragmatically restructuring the social sciences and distributing the disciplines out.

Evaluations of both students and faculty seemed to be a concern for several of the interviewees. Student’s evaluations of faculty members are not seen by the committee. The committee may benefit from seeing what the students are saying to the individual faculty members. It could provoke conversation centered on the idea of improving the course. Also it was pointed out that it would be important to know if the students think they are learning. Each faculty member evaluates this in their own way by providing course work that demonstrates their ability to grasp and pragmatically apply the material
being taught. However, do the students think they are learning. This could be a fun and valuable exercise or goal for the courses.

Money and incentive did not surface in the interviews to the degree that I thought it would. This may be a result of the role I took as a student trying to learn about the programs value, or it may not be as important to the committee as I thought. Some elements did surface, it was said that as a result of the director position now being volunteer, it may open it up to more freedom. There is less self-imposed rigor to the job and put some of the function back in the hands of the dean’s office. This may serve a double purpose in that it surfaces the program in their minds and relieves responsibility from the committee. It seems there are definitely a lot of incentives for students to participate in this program, although they are not communicated well. It is the job of the faculty to market these courses and convince the students of their intrinsic value. A consistent and streamlined campaign could help to promote these classes. As perceived now it is felt that many students look at these classes as hoops to jump through rather than opportunities to really grasp what the social sciences are. This is a fantastic opportunity for the college administration, faculty and students to find their own fitting together in order to create solidarity and buy in of the social sciences as a whole. There should be dialogue at the beginning of each course that extends beyond the syllabus and into the realm of context and perspective.

As for perceived support, this is both departmental and institutional. It is difficult to make suggestions as to where this support must come from. Early on it seemed that there was a lot of buy in and motivation when the program was continually recognized by the president and had full support of the dean. This program could take credit for opening
the college to the idea that it is okay to collaborate with our colleagues from other
disciplines. There are several speaker series and discussion panels that happen throughout
the year across the college, and it could be acknowledged that this CSBS curriculum
integration project is responsible for these opportunities. Without the proposal for a
college devoted to social science and the continued support of cross-disciplinary
communication, would the university be open to this sort of dialogue? The administration
from the dean’s office upward should be afforded the opportunity to see into this program
and attempt to grasp its intrinsic value for the university as a whole. It may be that the
high administration and dean’s office of the CSBS should assemble interdisciplinary
teams both as an exercise and as an asset to solve applicable problems near to the
university. These teams will likely forge relationships that will help to shape an
institutional identity and community, thus further breaking down the disciplinary walls.

Students often ask, when in life they are going to have to work in groups and to
most faculty that is a ridiculous question. Instructors that participate in the CSBS
Integration Project are able to provide an exceptionally valuable perspective for the
students. If the administration is aware of the value of this particular cross-disciplinary
interaction in regards to institutional identity and adherence to university mission
statement, values, goals and objectives, then they would frequently exploit and applaud
this demonstration of progress. As for departmental support, it will fall into place with the
administration and students especially if there is department wide participation in cross-
disciplinary efforts. It seems that departments are set up to be middle ground between the
college, administration and the students, being guided by both sides.
It is believed by the interviewees that the theory course has had the most success in regards to staying together and continued faculty support because it was the hardest to get off the ground. This course was created from scratch and the instructors involved worked hard from the inception. There was a lot of brainstorming and searching that went on in order to even begin somewhere with how to create a course in social science theory. Common ground had to be discovered and is continually revisited in the meetings. Suggestions for this area fall along the lines of simply making a conscious effort at keeping these things on the surface of every meeting. There is trust that is gained by attending meetings and sharing intellectual ideologies, goals, objectives and always the pursuit of context. All of this is accomplished by applying their lesson plans for class to the meetings and program at large.

When the topic of teaching the course came up in the interviews, it was often addressed that there are different people teaching the same course and that this worked because they trusted each other. This trust was gained through consistent dialogue where theory and ideology were often the main topic on the agenda. Simply being a part of an interdisciplinary effort showed commitment to social science theory and praxis. This commitment unites them and thus serves as the context at the same time. By engaging their colleagues with their own ideas they become vulnerable to disagreement. This potential is shared and after a short time they have created context through a like perspective. This seems to allow them a forum for testing their ideas. It is hard to argue that professors should not have the same opportunities for learning as their students. If the administration were to participate I believe we would quickly see more understanding.
and empathy for the distribution of resources and the tough decisions that are made throughout the university.

Goals and objectives often need to be addressed and sorted out, but overall they mostly agreed from the onset. First and foremost they all want students to learn using social science theory. It will be important to keep this on the table; there is a need to have specific goals and objectives for both individuals and the committee itself. These goals and objectives play a large part in understanding the strategic direction of the course. If this is lost or muted the integration project will lose value. Communication plays a big role when continuing the progress of an organization or institution of any type. One interviewee said as soon as the goals and objectives are completely accepted then there is a move toward a stagnant state, ultimately slowing the productivity or making it counterproductive. Effort must be made to be conscious of this stagnation before it slows or halts the progress.

A big component of social science theory is context; this was appropriately a large part of discussions based on how to design the intellectual elements of the course and committee. Through context they can share perspective and seek common goals. Context should continue to be consciously discussed in the theory courses and meetings. Without context it is easy to lose track of the goals and objectives of the committee.

Identity

It was expressed that as a result of familiarity with social science theory, that theory became a common language. This ability to communicate and negotiate theory created a sub culture of likeminded professionals within the college and university.
Through shared language and shared experiences there is a sense of belonging, sense of mission and sense of community.

To belong is to feel as if we are a part of something, as if we are contributing in a way that is productive and helpful to the overall function of the group. It is important to note that as a result of belonging identity is created. It was said on several occasions that one of the biggest benefits to being a part of the committee was sharing time with professionals from the same institution that had similar ambitions and thinking. There was also a sense that they could learn from each other and take a new perspective or understanding back to their respective disciplines.

The committee if intact can always explore their mission and attempt to better understand their community. It would benefit them all to have this discussion as it would continue to solidify their consistency in the classroom. The students will benefit if community and mission were clearly conveyed in each CSBS course. It would also be important to have this conversation with the dean and higher administration so that there is coherency and a solid core message and mission. The EWU community is important but so are the sub-communities that exist. If faculty participate in cross-disciplinary conversations then they will likely belong to multiple communities and retain/regain a core institutional identity. This identity as an Eastern Washington University social scientist will help to reinforce the problem solving, community oriented mission statement of the university.

**Future Research and Limitations**

After reflecting on this interdisciplinary journey and struggle with post-modern scrutiny while rejecting most attempts at positivist social research, I still feel that there
are many opportunities to expand on this narrow inquiry. Simply more interviews would be a great place to start. In particular I would like some insight from faculty who chose not to participate in the integration project. It would also be of value to ask questions of current and past students of the CSBS curriculum. I imagine that it would be difficult to conduct hundreds of interviews and pay each significant attention. This would be an opportunity to take on partners and negotiate an interdisciplinary research project with interest in gathering perspectives and interpreting them. Administrators from outside of the CSBS would likely have contributions to make to a conversation about interdisciplines and identity.

Future research in this topic area can manifest itself in a number of ways. A project that takes an opportunity to go on the road with interdisciplinarity could attend academic conferences and host interdisciplinary workshops that may serve any number of purposes. They would inherently be solving something dynamic in each and every seminar. No doubt an account of these gatherings would continue to shed light on interdisciplinary and phronetic conversations. Also, as I mentioned earlier, the administration, deans, and faculty should create interdisciplinary teams throughout the university in order to reestablish an institutional identity. These collaborations would serve multiple purposes and would likely create a larger sense of community by forging cross-disciplinary relationships throughout the university.

Interviewing faculty from programs that have chosen not to participate in the project would have also been a useful insight into this topic. There are several disciplines that have bowed out of the program or never began and their perspectives should be
heard. Also with the faculty that were interviewed it would be beneficial to have follow up interviews to further elaborate on areas of interest.

Along the lines of these aforementioned populations we could have added a quantitative element. Surveys with demographic information and general questions giving us insight into the sample we are studying would have been helpful in evaluating a program like this. Some sort of testing to see what the students are learning or gaining from the course could prove beneficial when studying the effects of a program. Also trying to grasp the influence these courses have on other courses might surface through quantitative techniques.

With this all said there is a lot of room for further research in this topic area; open ended qualitative interviewing proved to be a very valuable tool when taking an initial audit of the program. I was able to ask the professors what was important and get a feel for what they wanted to talk about, which may not have surfaced using other methods. On that note, it would be important to replicate this research at other institutions and see if there are parallels that could potentially shed light on individual efforts, motivations etc. After struggling through a qualitative account of cross-disciplinary interaction at Eastern Washington University, I think it is safe to say that this deliberate dialogue has led to the strengthening of College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The faculty and administration involved share in their core identity as social scientists as a result of struggling through theory, language and pedagogy. Through cross-disciplinary conversations we are better equipped to communicate across disciplines, which will help us understand inherently interdisciplinary problems like global climate change.
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VITA

Author: Mark Fretts

Place of Birth: Olympia, Washington

Undergraduate School Attended: Eastern Washington University

Degrees Awarded: Bachelor of Arts Psychology & Bachelor of Arts Outdoor Recreation, 2005 Eastern Washington University
