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Transdisciplinarity from Marginal Spaces: Unsettling Epistemic Erasure of Critical and Decolonial Scholars

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**Transdisciplinarity from Marginal Spaces:
Unsettling Epistemic Erasure of Critical and Decolonial Scholars**
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Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end.

bell hooks, 1991, p. 2

The moment has arrived to put the humanities at the service of decolonial projects in their ethical, political, and epistemic dimensions; to recast the reinscription of human dignity as a decolonial project.

Mignolo, 2006, p. 314

The point is not what is new or old, what should be replaced or superseded with what, but rather how each perspective is enriched by the presence of others.

Jann Pasler, 1997, p. 21

Table of Contents

Abstract	5
Acknowledgements	7
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION	8
What is at Stake	9
Thesis Outline	12
Chapter 2: DECOLONIAL IMAGINARIES	18
Decolonial Imaginaries and Transdisciplinary Histories: Research Gap	22
Chapter 3: TRANSDISCIPLINARITY	27
A Note on Vocabulary and Meaning	28
Knowledge Production Paradigms	30
Disciplinarity	31
Interdisciplinarity and Multidisciplinarity	32
Calls for Transdisciplinarity and Politics of Literature Reviews	34
Back to Transdisciplinarity	36
Transdisciplinarity: Traditions, Historiographies, and Exclusion	39
Chapter 4: DISCIPLINARITY	50
Disciplinarity and Critical and Decolonial Scholars	51
Disciplines as Historical Processes	53
17th to 19th Century	53
19th to 21st Century	59
Disciplinary Hegemony	65
Neoliberal Capitalism and Disciplinary Hegemony	68
Chapter 5: (DE)COLONIALITY	72
Key Concepts	73
Eurocentrism as Intellectual Paradigm and the Western Canon of Disciplinarity	76
The Westernized University and Disciplinary Configuration	79
Chapter 6: TRANSDISCIPLINARY WORK BY CRITICAL AND DECOLONIAL SCHOLARS	83
Part I: Orienting Critical and Decolonial Scholars	84
Ethnic Studies as “Discipline” and as Critical and Decolonial Scholars	86

Critical and Decolonial Thought in Ethnic Studies Movements	89
Confronting Eurocentrism from Ethnic Studies	91
Part II: Transdisciplinarity in African Studies and Chicanx/Latinx Studies	95
Africana and African American Studies' Transdisciplinarity	95
Chicanx and Latinx Studies' Transdisciplinarity	100
Toward a Decolonial Transdisciplinary Theory	105
Conclusion	108
Bibliography	112

ABSTRACT

I draw on a *decolonial imaginary* to identify and explore the *epistemic erasure* of critical and decolonial scholars amidst a contemporary discourse and mainstream historicization of *transdisciplinarity* as a knowledge paradigm. Using ‘transdisciplinarity’ as a signpost, I trace the dominant narrative and evolution of this epistemological orientation as it has emerged in recent decades in tandem with a contemporary multidisciplinary endorsement for transdisciplinarity. As I track the historical process of epistemic silencing toward critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse, I purposefully center their analytics and conceptualizations to consider the historical mechanisms of knowledge production in academia broadly, which offer a viable explanation as to *how and to what extent* the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse and history-telling may be occurring, exacerbated, and legitimized. I argue that critical and decolonial scholars have had a *longue durée* as transdisciplinarians *and* have been central and even preceding architects to transdisciplinary knowledge configurations. In fact, as it relates to transdisciplinary historicization and discourse, major proponents have promoted this paradigm as an engagement, reappraisal, and reconfiguration of knowledge production that does not go beyond Western canonical thought. Critical and decolonial scholars are seldom mentioned, and even less resourced, as crucial theoreticians and practitioners of this research paradigm. With this central contradiction in mind, I locate, describe, and detail examples of *transdisciplinarity work* and *transdisciplinarians* in critical and decolonial traditions as a means of (re)membering and actively working against the embedded conical logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012).

Key words: critical and decolonial scholars, transdisciplinarity, disciplinarity, epistemic erasure

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To the organic intellectuals of my families and communities:

Y(our) aim has been long lasting—to tune into the silenced knowledges and open alternatives while recovering, restoring, and remixing along these paths.

To my family: The first philosophy I learned was from campesinos and migrants. You have accompanied me to many places, through many spaces and times. I thank you for your intellectual wealth and communal sustenance. I am here, because we are here.

To my friends/carnales: Our everyday is transdisciplinary. Our work and imaginaries have heavily influenced this work.

To the educational promoters in my life, near and distant: At the center of my learning has been the recognition that you were teaching humans, not topics.

To Aquetza: You are a reminder of the abundance of knowledge. Our wealth of knowledge will be remembered, as will our actions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is a complicit and implicit understanding about what is privileged in current debates. Studies that reiterate the discussion most successfully set the norm for upcoming works. A historian must remain within the boundaries, the borders, the confines of the debate as it has been conceptualized if she/he is to be a legitimate heir to the field. Breaking out of the borders is like choosing to go outside, into the margins, to argue or expose that which no one will risk...It means traversing new territories and disciplines, mapping fresh terrains... (Peréz, 1999, p. 2)

I draw on Emma Peréz's (1999) *decolonial imaginary* to explore and identify the *epistemic erasure* of critical and decolonial scholars amidst a contemporary discourse and mainstream historicization of *transdisciplinarity* as a knowledge paradigm. Using 'transdisciplinarity' as a signpost, I trace the dominant narrative and evolution of this epistemological orientation as it has emerged in recent decades in tandem with a contemporary multidisciplinary endorsement for transdisciplinarity. First, I locate the central contradiction underpinning the epistemic absence of critical and decolonial scholars. On one hand, transdisciplinarity has been promoted as a paradigm engaged in a vast reappraisal and reconfiguration of knowledge production that has a recent emergence (Nicolescu, 2002, 2005b). Yet, there is a stark absence of critical and decolonial scholarship recognized, despite being crucial theoreticians to reevaluating Western philosophical paradigms. Under this context *epistemic absence* is ever more curious. Therefore, I track the historical process of epistemic silencing toward critical and decolonial scholars and purposefully center their analytics and concepts to consider historically, the mechanisms of knowledge production in academia. Through centering their analytics, I offer a viable explanation to how and why the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse and history telling may be occurring, exacerbated, and legitimized. I argue that critical and decolonial scholars have had a *longue durée* (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009) *as transdisciplinarians and they have been central and even preceding architects to*

transdisciplinary knowledge configurations, however their scholarship and intellectual potency are seldom recognized by dominant Western canonical thought. In fact, to extend the contradiction is to recognize that transdisciplinary scholars have discussed their awareness of the Western epistemological order as a reason to further establish a transdisciplinary paradigm, and yet, critical and decolonial scholars are seldom recognized in the mainstream discourse. There is, thus, a necessity to locate, describe, and detail examples of *transdisciplinarity work* and *transdisciplinarians* in critical and decolonial traditions as a means of (re)membering and actively working the embedded colonial logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012) and to the epistemic erasure occurring. Finally, I point to a potential departure to consider the ways in which we may reconstitute transdisciplinarity through *decolonial* and *revolutionary* principles.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

An underlying intention of this project is to trace the *normalized* history of transdisciplinarity as a research paradigm, which is said to emanate from Western canonical thought, *and* to reorient the locus of knowledge articulation of transdisciplinary work toward and by scholars in critical and decolonial traditions. In this thesis, I designate a key void which has seldom recognized the theorization and praxis of transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars, specifically through the works of scholars in Africana Studies and Chicanx/Latinx Studies. In anticipation of retorts that suggest epistemic absence of critical and decolonial scholars in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse occurs simply because of a mismatch of intellectual purposes that exist outside of transdisciplinarity, I assert critical and decolonial scholars as being in a *longue durée* as transdisciplinarians and have been central and even preceding architects to transdisciplinary knowledge configurations (Cole, 2017). This claim is tied to the overarching

inclusion/exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars in the discourse of transdisciplinarity. Indeed, I am not the first to assert this claim, however, I must expand on this notion of critical and decolonial scholars as *longue durée* transdisciplinarians in anticipation of simplistic retorts surrounding the ‘appropriateness’ and ‘likelihood’ of critical and decolonial scholars as being engaged in transdisciplinary work and practice. To follow this counter argument would likely disregard a historical analysis of disciplinarity and coloniality as a means of understanding epistemic erasure. For this reason, I argue that these scholars conducted transdisciplinary work prior to the formal development of the name of ‘transdisciplinarity’.

Further, discourse omissions of critical and decolonial scholars point to the continuing utilization and elevation of colonial methodologies in the social sciences and the humanities at the expense of a diversity of epistemologies, worldviews, and cosmologies (Smith, 1999). Stated alternatively, the epistemic absence of critical and decolonial scholarship in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse should not be regarded as a unique circumstance. Indeed, this thesis makes explicit the case of transdisciplinary erasure into a larger colonial project, which has privileged a Eurocentric intellectual canon at the expense of non-Eurocentric patriarchal epistemological positions and worldviews. Emma Pérez’s (1999) decolonial imaginary is key to this colonial posture, and will thereby afford great dexterity to analyzing epistemic erasures. At stake is the *epistemic erasure* of critical and decolonial knowledge production, specifically as these scholars have enacted work within a transdisciplinary paradigm. This epistemic absence is particularly worrisome as it may point toward a potential continuation and reproduction of colonial structures of knowledge, despite the front of being a ‘new’ intellectual paradigm by mainstream scholars that claim to be attentive and inclusive to a multiplicity of epistemic perspectives. After delineating the problematic history telling of transdisciplinarity in dominant

transdisciplinary discourse I identify critical and decolonial scholars as systematically being erased, devalued, and rendered invisible. In this process, I identify the embedded colonial logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012) and accompanying mechanisms of control as it relates to dominant and colonial modes of knowledge production in the contemporary academy. Finally, as I contend, the epistemological denial and erasure of critical and decolonial scholars is consistent with the colonial history that has continued to erase non-European epistemologies and worldviews through the dual processes of colonization and modernity. Case in point, this thesis suggests that epistemic erasure, as a historical process is not new, but in fact, symptomatic of the historical manifestations of university knowledge configurations and reified through embedded philosophical assumptions of Eurocentric supremacy and universalism. Under these circumstances, epistemic erasure is fortified through contemporary and a deep entanglement of colonialism and capitalism. Thereby, the contradictory exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse (despite promulgations of inclusion; see Martin, 2017a; Montouri, 2013; Nicolescu, 2002, 2008a) becomes ever more concerning and points to a deeper neglect by transdisciplinary theoreticians to misrecognized and side step the necessary interrogation of coloniality and modernity in prospects of nourishing a knowledge paradigm—otherwise, the paradigm maintains hinged to colonial mechanisms of power.

THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis is organized into *six* chapters. Chapter 2 clarifies indispensable concepts that confront and critique dominant colonial historicization. I invoke Emma Pérez's (1999) *Decolonial Imaginary* as a fruitful framework, wherein written historical gaps and silences may be 'heard' and through which historical oppositions can manifest. I align with Pérez's intentions of documenting revisionist histories and seek to employ the decolonial imaginary as an oppositional

historical orientation that directly confronts orthodox methods of writing historiographies from a Eurocentric colonial gaze. Specifically, the Eurocentric colonial gaze has been key to silencing and reproducing historical omissions, particularly those of colonized subjects (i.e., “other epistemologies”). Pérez’s decolonial imaginary promotes a method for archaeological-historical study *and* it is useful as a point of departure for two reasons: (1) to explore and identify the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars amidst contemporary discourse and historicization of transdisciplinarity, and (2) to prioritize the epistemic silencing of critical and decolonial scholars as a potential counter-hegemonic historical excavation and knowledge recovery. In short, this chapter outlines the methodological and historiographic approach that will contextualize this research in order to excavate the erased knowledge by critical and decolonial scholars’ epistemologies as the impetus of this research.

Chapter 3 directs attention toward contemporary conceptualizations of transdisciplinary research. I track a *normalized* history and emergence of transdisciplinary in the 1960’s to more current approaches and advocacy of transdisciplinary in contemporary discourse. As I navigate through this research and discourse, I do not attempt to create a unified definition of transdisciplinarity amidst contention around this concept in the traditional timeline and discourse. I keep in mind that to assert the contradictory exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse, it to allude to a different historicization of transdisciplinarity. Thus, I simultaneously assert a revision that includes critical and decolonial scholarship—this claim will be addressed in this chapter, but will be expanded and explored in subsequent sections, because it raises methodological complexity. In the words of Emma Pérez (1999) she takes note that even radical historiographies are entangled and speak between colonial historiographies (p. 5). With this in mind, I seek to provide guiding characteristics of

transdisciplinarity that have been regarded with authoritative strength and which have led to its wider implementation and call for adoption. For this reason, it is necessary to introduce mainstream transdisciplinary discourse and history while recognizing its limitations as an English 'word' that is culturally mediated and not directly translatable (Cole, 2017). In this chapter, the Western utilization of 'transdisciplinarity' will be useful to trace the historical and contemporary transdisciplinary discourse, however, I later turn attention toward 'meaning' as the complex marker by which discursive practices mediate scholarship visibility and/or erasure. To this point, I am able to locate critical and decolonial scholars as predating scholars to transdisciplinarity in conjunction with a contemporary dawning of the 'transdisciplinarity' by its formal syntax. In sum, this chapter outlines transdisciplinarity as a discourse with a *normalized* history, which must be taken into account in assessing the inclusion/exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars.

Against the backdrop of a normalized transdisciplinary history and discourse, Chapter 4 further contextualizes the decolonial imaginary, and therefore pinpoints where *epistemic erasure* is occurring. With attention to *disciplinarity* as the foremost means of academic organization, I engage the decolonial imaginary in the historicity of disciplines and take on a political-economy analysis of disciplinary entrenchment in academic. To this point, I clarify an additional research intention. Because the decolonial imaginary is a space of negotiation and of potential decolonial alternative telling of history and knowledge, I analyze epistemic erasure from the vantage points of critical and decolonial scholars. This is a vital clarification if I am to engage with the decolonial imaginary and provide grounds for them to offer their analytics as a means of speaking on the epistemic erasure that they encounter. With attention to critical scholarship on disciplinary entrenchment, I specify *disciplinary hegemony* and *neoliberal capitalism* in

academia as the paired and entangled factors that have deepened in a historical process of epistemic erasure. *Disciplinary hegemony* offers a viable explanation as to how the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse and history telling may be occurring, exacerbated, and legitimized in relation to the establishment of disciplines as virtues of academia organization. A discussion of disciplinarity as a historical process that is informed by hegemonic ideologies begins to expand our understanding of the ways in which historicization of knowledge production and the elevation of certain disciplines have created an intellectual landscape that has uplifted certain epistemologies and intellectual tradition at the expense and at the inferiorization of other epistemologies and traditions. More specifically, this chapter argues that the Western US-based academy provides the necessary context and controlling mechanism for the epistemic erasure of social sciences, humanities, and Ethnic Studies, which largely house critical and decolonial scholars.

Chapter 5 explicates two necessary directions in relation to the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse: (1) a necessary *decolonial turn* in transdisciplinarity at-large; and (2) a *decolonial turn* in the reading of transdisciplinary history and discourse in this current project. Building off of the political-economy analysis worked by critical scholarship in the previous section, Chapter 5 points toward the potential of a modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system analysis offered by decolonial scholarship to analyze epistemic erasure (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 215). First, I provide reasoning for reading critical and decolonial scholars in tandem as the communities subject to epistemic erasure and substantiate the claim that critical and decolonial scholars have engaged in a *longue durée* as transdisciplinarians, *however*, their work is systematically subject to strict disciplinary enforcement and colonial mechanism in academia. To be sure, decolonial thought is not in

competition with critical scholarship, but is additive and supplementary in the further analysis of a world-system. Stated alternatively, a critical analysis (Chapter 3) offers greater understanding of *how* epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars have been systematically erased through disciplinary hegemony and neoliberal capitalist ideologies. A *decolonial analysis* begins to develop an understanding of how epistemic erasure occurs in terms of ‘expansion’ through colonial mechanism which enforce colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy through academia’s entrenched disciplinary hierarchies. In brief, this chapter takes a decolonial approach by understanding two phenomena: (a) the colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy and (b) the entanglement of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy in parallel with modernity/coloniality/decoloniality and its importance in the assessment of epistemic erasure.

Chapter 6 is divided into two parts. Part I of Chapter 6 builds directly on a revision to include critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse. Pérez’s decolonial imaginary has been deployed in the previous sections, because it serves as a historical ‘in-between’ space for reconciliation and for alternative futures while being attentive to epistemic erasure. With this in mind, I go on to locate, describe, and detail examples of transdisciplinarity in critical and decolonial traditions as a means of remembering and actively working against embedded colonial logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012). Additionally, *Chapter 6* does not merely recall transdisciplinarity work by critical and decolonial scholars for the sake of remembrance; instead, these explorations will be used as points of departure to consider the ways in which we may reconstitute transdisciplinarity through decolonial and revolutionary principles in subsequent section. I dedicate this recovery and excavation of transdisciplinary knowledge (Pérez, 1999) to remembering transdisciplinary work by critical and decolonial scholars from those who find allegiances in Africana Studies and Chicana/Latina Studies. I trace

several exemplary transdisciplinarity with the intention to connect these practices and research methodologies as part of a longer history and as a long-standing scholarly tradition of transdisciplinarity. In sum, this chapter purposefully illuminates transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars for the purpose of demonstrating an intellectual dexterity that stands in opposition to Eurocentric ideologies of knowledge legitimacy, and more importantly, communities of scholarship that resist the epistemic erasure these works and scholars encounter.

Part II of Chapter 6 takes the excavated transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars from the previous section as points of departure to consider a possible reconstitution of transdisciplinarity through decolonial and revolutionary principles. Chapter 6 argues that if transdisciplinarity is reoriented through explicit and robust interrogations of modernity/ coloniality/decoloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2009), a decolonial transdisciplinary project is potent of revolution, specifically as it relates to the ‘unsettling’ of the Westernized University. To be sure, transdisciplinarity has already been worked by decolonial scholars with these aims. However, I regard the central contradiction in this case; that is, the claims of epistemic inclusivity in transdisciplinarity while seldom seriously critiquing colonial logics in the mainstream. Briefly, I urge a for decolonial thinking in transdisciplinarity and the reconstitution of transdisciplinarity as a decolonial paradigm. Only under these demands can a transdisciplinary paradigm meet the lofty aims of epistemic diversity promulgated (Martin, 2017a; Montouri, 2013; Nicolescu, 2002, 2008a).

CHAPTER 2: DECOLONIAL IMAGINARIES

Emma Pérez's (1999) *Decolonial Imaginary* has proven to be a fruitful framework in which written historical gaps and silences may be heard and by which historical oppositions can manifest. Aligning with Pérez's documenting of revisionist history, I employ the decolonial imaginary as an oppositional historical orientation which directly confronts orthodox methods of writing historiographies from a Eurocentric colonial gaze. Specifically, the Eurocentric colonial gaze has been key to the silencing and reproduction of historical omissions particularly of colonized subjects (i.e., "other epistemologies"). Further, Pérez's decolonial imaginary promotes both a method for archaeological-historical study *and* as a point of departure to (1) to explore and identify the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars amidst contemporary discourse and historicization of transdisciplinarity, and (2) to prioritize the epistemic silencing of critical and decolonial scholars as a potential counter-hegemonic historical excavation and knowledge recovery. This epistemic absence is particularly worrisome as it points toward a potential continuation and reproduction of colonial structures of knowledge, despite the front of a 'new' intellectual paradigm by mainstream scholars that claims to be attentive to a multiplicity of epistemic perspectives. Furthermore, discourse omissions of critical and decolonial scholars point to the continuing utilization and elevation of colonial methodologies in the social sciences and the humanities at the expense of a diversity of epistemologies, worldviews, and cosmologies (Smith, 1999). The epistemic absence of critical and decolonial scholarship in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse, specifically, should not be regarded as a unique circumstance. Indeed, this thesis makes explicit the case of transdisciplinary erasure as piece and parcel of a larger colonial project, which has privileged a Eurocentric intellectual canon at the expense of non-Eurocentric patriarchal epistemological positions and worldviews. Emma Pérez's (1999)

decolonial imaginary is keen to this colonial posture, and will thereby afford great dexterity to analyzing epistemic erasures.

Emma Pérez's (1999) *decolonial imaginary* is both a historiographic reconfiguration and a re-envision. Similar to Pérez's (1999) research with Chicana/o historiography, this study aims to consider *historical significance and visibility*. She argues that the decolonial imaginary holds transformative potency for new futures and transformative agency against the colonial/patriarchal silencing of queer Chicanas as an *in-between reading* of colonial/patriarchal historiographies. Yet, in this way, radical historiographies are also positioned in contact through colonial historiographies (p. 5). Pérez identifies the colonial imaginary as an apparatus within the decolonial imaginary that creates a "time lag" of sorts and an *in-between* space, which holds strength as a "rupturing space" in confrontation with methods of historical linearity and perpetual progress-oriented interpretations of time imposed by colonial powers (p. 6). Specifically, for Pérez, she recognizes that "Chicana/o historiography has been circumscribed by the traditional historical imagination" which is undergirded by the hegemonic historiography of the "colonial imaginary" (p. 5). In other words, dominant historiography has been a colonialist project, which has been pivotal in the *framing and de-legitimacy* of 'other' knowledges and subjectivities, specifically of queer Chicanas. Pérez describes the decolonial imaginary as a way of tracing Chicana cultural and political discourse and subjectivity, through a reclamation and elaboration of epistemology and history, of which have additionally been subjected to epistemic silences under colonial historicization. Markedly, reading *in-between* colonial/patriarchal historiographies for Pérez, who builds off the work of Homi Bhabha, signifies the necessity and envisioning to "occupy" these *in-between* and *time-lag* spaces in where a colonial imaginary can be

seen/interrogated through decolonial thinking, and thus, history and meaning can be reconfigured and negotiated by way of decolonizing the imaginary (p. 20).

Peréz employs a Foucauldian archaeological method to “hear” the historical silences and to confront Chicano historiography as to bring about a complex analysis and various oppositional Chicana histories and experiences through a critique of male-centered, reductionist, and colonialist historiographies (p. 54). Central to this framework, Peréz utilizes the conceptualization of *interstices* and “in-between spaces” as ripe with meaning and the potentiation of *third-space agency* (i.e., third space feminism; p. 5). Through this method, she confronts dominant knowledge systems and colonial/patriarchal dictation of historical knowledge in order to consider the silences and voids in dominant historiographies. It is here Peréz considers the decolonial imaginary as a method/strategy by which colonized subjects may begin to *negotiate and decolonize* identities, historiographies, and epistemologies.

Peréz's use of decolonial imaginary is a framework used to “hear” and interpret Chicana subjectivities, *herstories*, and agencies. The decolonial imaginary does not claim a time-space, but rather is a revelatory framework that is keen to teasing out the narratives of historiography as promulgated by colonial powers and inscribed in traditions of historiography as well as resistant historiographies. Namely, it is *universality* (philosophical universalism) and *modernity* which are at the center of critique in her consideration of historical silences. The decolonial imaginary stands in opposition to the colonial imaginary, which has dictated the legitimacy of historical knowledge in the academy with particular self-subscribed claims of objectivity and universalization (pp. xiv-xvi). To this point, Peréz's methodology enables the present project to attend and “hear” the silenced voices and to agentic histories that are potent toward the dismantling of the apparatuses of coloniality as it relates to epistemological significance and

visibility of critical and decolonial scholars (p.xvi). Utilizing Pérez's theorization of the decolonial imaginary, I intend to grapple with larger colonial historiographical concerns of critical and decolonial scholars' visibility in a burgeoning discourse and historicization of transdisciplinary research. It is by way of engaging the decolonial imaginary through the vantage points of critical and decolonial scholars, which offer robust analysis to condition of epistemic erasure as a historical process while tending to the epistemic silencing as a colonial circumstance.

DECOLONIAL IMAGINARIES AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY HISTORIES: RESEARCH GAP

The decolonial imaginary potentiates counter-hegemonic histories against dominant historicization of transdisciplinarity *and* it is well positioned as a site through which histories may be excavated, recovered, and reimagined. To be sure, this project did not begin in search of epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholarship in transdisciplinary discourse. It was only until the historical silences were made audible, so to speak, that discursive patterns were prioritized and considered against the backdrop of previous knowledge of research that I perceived to be 'transdisciplinary', however these works were seldom referenced or cited. It was with this repeated silence and a reified history of omission that I recalled Pérez's (1999) remarks that, "The language of historiography is enunciate and repeated, authorizing systems of thought, which are not tested nor do they interrogate the subject who utters privilege and authority" (p. 32). In other words, histories are discussed and discursive negotiated, through a series of legitimizing steps, by which the status is attained of normative or normalized (Foucault, 1994; Gandy, 1993). This begins to illuminate a central contradiction in this epistemic erasure. Transdisciplinarity is claimed as an "emancipatory" inquiry-driven paradigm, which draws on critiques of dichotomies in Western thought and seeks to move beyond narrow disciplinary

boundaries as an aim toward a plurality and collaboration of knowledges and research; however, the vast majority of transdisciplinarity discourse seldom recognizes critical and decolonial scholars as engaged in this endeavor (Nicolescu, 2008b). To clarify, it is not only the factor of ‘majority’, but also the mainstream scholarship (read as dominant), which has excluded critical and decolonial scholars and research.

There are few notable exceptions and efforts to include critical and decolonial scholars in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse (Osborne, 2015). When issues of marginalization do emerge in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse, they rarely go beyond a solitary mention of Michel Foucault as a critical scholar or they rarely offer a deep critical analysis of disciplinarity as it relates directly to issues of power and privilege (Martin, 2017b). It is perhaps more concerning that transdisciplinarity as a research paradigm promulgates as being (in its many forms) “emancipatory” and as imperatively concerned with a multiplicity of knowledges and worldviews (Klein, 2004; Nicolescu, 2002), yet they seldom attempt to deeply critique the Western canon from which much of the work emerges. Notably, there have been few attempts to *integrate* decolonial theories with transdisciplinarity (Jahn, Bergmann and Keil, 2012) but these efforts have largely been fraught with watered-down notions of decolonial and revolutionary principles and detached from a historically-grounded analysis of both transdisciplinarity and critical and decolonial intellectual traditions. Certainly, there have been efforts to make apparent the concerning incidents of epistemic erasures in transdisciplinarity previously, however, these limited efforts have not addressed a historical process of disciplinarity nor have there been substantiated connections made between epistemic treatment by colonial mechanism through academia and absence of scholars in transdisciplinary research. Case in point, the literature gap overlaps in the condition of epistemic erasure taken together with identifying critical and

decolonial scholars as offering sharp methodological and conceptual utility toward transdisciplinarity. Thus, at hand is the epistemic erasure through silencing and negation of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse. Through the decolonial imaginary, as a historiographic method, this project seeks to foreground and excavate the history of critical and decolonial scholars in the theorization and implementation of transdisciplinary research without misinterpreting their silence as a deficit of a community or as a complete lack of work (Pérez, 1999). Therein, I utilize the decolonial imaginary as an interrogative and investigative orientation to the historiography of transdisciplinarity as it silences critical and decolonial scholars, whom which, I argue predate the formal term.

First, I clarify how I intend to signal ‘critical and decolonial scholars’. Critical and decolonial scholars are broadly guided by a plurality of critical and decolonial theories (Araújo and Maeso, 2015; Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008; Murji and Solomos, 2005). Critical and decolonial scholars are not bounded by a singular discipline. These scholars converge toward the aims, in theory and praxis, of liberation. Their central analytics locate revolutionary potential in critiques of dominant Eurocentric hegemonic cultures and ideologies, historical colonialism and its modern mechanisms (Dussel and Fornazzari, 2002; Dussel, Krauel and & Tuma, 2000). To be sure, this is not intended to describe a monolithic nor homogenous articulation of social and political critique by critical and decolonial scholarship. Markedly, critical and decolonial traditions are robust political projects and movements of resistance against colonial-imperial global impacts in a number of realms (e.g., education, economics, international relations, and ecology; see Allen, 2016; McLaren, 2015). For the purpose of this thesis, I trace a *critical tradition* as guided by decolonial principles aimed at working through potential forms of nourishing critical consciousness as to engaged in critical engagement (cultural praxis) against

systematic inequalities and violence that can then be employed with toward of social transformation. Comparatively, I trace a *decolonial tradition* as outlined by a theory and praxis in confrontation with colonial modernity and neoliberal capitalist projects as they emanate internationally from the historical impacts of colonialism as well as the modern configurations through the notion of a coloniality of being (Mignolo, 2009) with intentions of decolonial futures and possibilities (i.e., decolonization, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal futures; see Mignolo, 2011). That is, a decolonial turn points toward decoloniality as opposed to modernization in where coloniality is a central issue to be prioritized (Mignolo and Escobar, 2013). A decolonial turn is also regarded as a “giro” or compass of decolonial thinking that offshoots critical theory (Ballestrin, 2013). Forthright, while unity is neither an intention by these scholars, a cohesive intellectual node can be regarded in the critical and decolonial scholarship intentions and aims to disrupt colonial modernity, hegemony and dominance (cultural and ideological). Moreover, the assertion of necessary social and global transformation is initiated by movements and revolutions in order to eliminate and rectify multiple spheres of oppression, as well as to rectify and liberate oppressed groups from the exploitation of a Western-centric, Christian-centric, capitalist/patriarchal, modern/colonial world-system (Grosfoguel, 2012).

These distinctions and realignments of critical and decolonial scholars are necessary to clarify a genealogy and description of these two traditions which endure epistemic erasure. When these two traditions are read in tandem, I argue, both serve to substantiate epistemic erasure as a historical process (Chapter 3), as well situating their interlaced and interrelating knowledge production as *longue durée* intellectual projects in struggle against a Western-colonial canon of thought. Further, critical and decolonial scholars offer different analysis as directed toward a critique of academic organization. Because, I prioritize the epistemic silencing of critical and

decolonial scholars as filled with potential toward a counter-hegemonic historical excavation, the above realignment of critical and decolonial has been a *complementary reading* of these traditions in which the *decolonial imaginary* is also responsive to historical/analytic differences without erasing them for the sake of singularity (Peréz, 1999). More succinctly, the *decolonial imaginary* as a historical methodology is optimal for this thesis because it does not negate and dismiss epistemic differences when considering knowledge production and visibility, specifically as it relates to critical and decolonial scholars.

This explanation is in anticipation of claims that critical and decolonial scholars are in strict contradictory spaces that cannot be read in tandem through a reconciliatory lens, whereby their knowledge production cannot be read in partnership. To this, the *decolonial imaginary* is less concerned with the delineating the pitfalls of each knowledge structure and more effortful in an explicit investment in the (re)constructions of silenced knowledge. This is important, especially for Chapters 3 and 4, where I use the frameworks employed by critical and decolonial scholars to explore knowledge production through the establishment of disciplines in academia. This thesis is a decolonial endeavor in where these scholars “speak” toward their own epistemic erasure. In Chapter 3, I turn to the analytics developed by critical scholars to explain epistemic erasure, specifically as it manifests through a *political-economy analysis* of hegemonic structures of disciplinarity. In Chapter 4, I turn to decolonial scholars to explain the conditions which mark their epistemic silencing through a *modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system analysis*. These chapters both use the *decolonial imaginary* as a strategy to locate mechanisms responsible for the epistemic absence and erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

This chapter directs attention toward contemporary conceptualizations of transdisciplinary research. I track a *normalized* history and emergence of transdisciplinary to recent decades to more current approaches and advocacy of transdisciplinary in contemporary discourse. As I navigate through this research and discourse, I do not attempt to create a unified definition of transdisciplinarity amidst contention around this concept in the traditional timeline and discourse. I keep in mind that to assert the contradiction of exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse, is it to allude to a different historicization of transdisciplinarity. Thus, I simultaneously assert a revision that includes critical and decolonial scholarship—this claim will be addressed in this chapter, but will be expanded and explored in Chapter 5, because it raises methodological complexity. To this methodological ‘messiness’, Emma Pérez (1999) takes note that even radical historiographies are entangled and speak between colonial historiographies (p. 5). With this in mind, I seek to provide guiding characteristics of transdisciplinarity that have been regarded with authoritative strength and which have led to its wider implementation and call for adoption. For this reason, it is necessary to introduce mainstream transdisciplinary (discourse and history) while recognizing its limitations as an English “word” that is culturally mediated and not directly translatable (Cole, 2017). In this chapter, the Western English utilization of “transdisciplinarity” will be useful to trace the historical and contemporary transdisciplinary discourse, however, I later turn attention toward “meaning” as the complex marker by which discursive practices mediate epistemic visibility and/or erasure. To this point, I am able to locate critical and decolonial scholars as predating scholars to transdisciplinarity in conjunction with a contemporary dawning of the “transdisciplinarity” by its formal syntax. In sum, this chapter outlines transdisciplinarity as a

discourse with a *normalized* history, which must be taken into account in assessing the inclusion/exclusion of critical and decolonial scholars.

A NOTE ON VOCABULARY AND MEANING

Here, I present and describe contemporary conceptualizations of transdisciplinary research, which have taken a stronghold on the way it is theorized and implemented through the traditional timeline as emergent in the 1960's to the contemporary approaches and calls for further implementation. While I do not attempt to essentialize or to create a definitive definition of transdisciplinarity amidst contention around this notion, I seek to provide characteristic pillars that have led to its wider implementation and call for adoption as a means of signifying the way transdisciplinarity has been *normalized* (Foucault, 1994; Gandy, 1993). Necessarily, however, it is vital to clarify the indispensable concepts central to the understanding of a historical study and critique of traditional historicizing of transdisciplinarity as a research paradigm.

Transdisciplinarity as a phrase holds much weight and has garnered much contention for those attempting to narrowly define the word into singularity, because these narrowing efforts are part of the motives toward movement away from disciplinarity and toward transdisciplinarity (Jahn, Bergmann & Keil, 2012). Efforts that have sought to convert the “borderless intellectual initiative” of transdisciplinarity into rigid definitions have been considered conformist and alarming (du Plessis, Sehume, & Martin, 2013). At the same time, Julie Klein (2013) tracked this reactionary unconformity to evidence of a *mainstreaming effect* that refers to mainstreaming a limited definition, while also marginalizing research that seeks to take the potential for transdisciplinary seriously (Jahn, Bergmann, and Keil, 2012). Furthermore, toward scholars that engage with arguably anti-disciplinary motives in the mainstream, the main difference of thought is on “whether the focus should be *unification of sciences* [emphasis added] through an all-

encompassing theory or a *unified worldview* [emphasis added] that provides common ground for understanding culture, science, and education” (Klein, 2013, p. 191). However, this latter sweeping effort to unification seeks to contradict the theoretical epistemic-inclusion of worldviews that these scholars site as integral to transdisciplinarity (Nicolescu, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). The former unification of sciences also has potential dogmatic philosophies of exclusion embedded in the definitions, especially if not taken seriously (Balsiger, 2004). In fact, from critical and decolonial perspectives, these circumstances stand as the potential reproduction of exclusionary and authoritative characteristics of disciplinary under the guise of being “transdisciplinary.” Stated differently, there is imaginable oppressive function in the naming of research as it serves as a “guise” of control and power (Foucault, 1993) for alternative motives (e.g., “diversification” of higher education; see Ippolito, 2007).

With this in mind, I take a consideration noted by Cole (2017) to recognize linguistic limitations when attempting to communicate meaning between culturally specific knowledge production spheres. More to the point, Cole points out that there is no linguistic analogue to for the English word of “transdisciplinarity” in his Indigenous language, Māori. He clarifies that this does not indicate the “meaning” of transdisciplinarity is “foreign to my tūpuna” (Māori ancestors, p. 129). Rather, he states that when “we shift our attention away from ‘vocabulary’ toward ‘meaning’ it is possible to show that the antecedents of modern-day transdisciplinarity can be traced back (historically) into former indigenous cultural contexts” (Haavelsrud, 2015; Cole, 2017, p. 129). For this reason, this thesis will mindfully employ the English word of transdisciplinarity while recognizing its intercultural limitations (Cole, 2017), and employing it as a useful term in *written* scholarship as a way of considering “meaning” and not simply “vocabulary” of transdisciplinarity.

With this intention, I briefly attempt to describe and recognize the nuances of transdisciplinarity as a distinct theoretical paradigm while also attending to the subscribed differences between interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinarity. This is not an exhaustive outline of the differences and similarities of transdisciplinary traditions, but rather the scholarship cited describes three complex discursive practices: (1) the contradictory presence of theorized transdisciplinarity and the actual practiced transdisciplinarity (2) normalization of transdisciplinary history and discourse through certain a certain “vocabulary,” in fact, this element underscore the importance of moving from “vocabulary” to “meaning”; however the contradictory condition at hand is perhaps the mainstream conflation of transdisciplinary meaning as transdisciplinarity as the vocabulary. This clarification serves two purposes. First, while transdisciplinarity has limitations as vocabulary, it is important to recognize that it has been this word that has been taken up as integral to the normalized historiography. Second, this theoretical aperture serves as an opening whereby critical and decolonial scholars are especially positioned to push transdisciplinarity forward through decolonial and revolutionary purposes (see Part II of Chapter 6).

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION PARADIGMS

For the past two decades there has been a burgeoning discourse and exponentially increasing call for transdisciplinarity. First, I describe this intellectual ground and make clear that there has been a conversation \about transdisciplinary research that is increasing in the present and that has important implications on its historical visibility in the contemporary. I go on to describe and characterized the main philosophical pillars and assumption that transdisciplinarity takes on. For those familiar with Chicax/Latinx Studies and Africana Studies, this section will allude to the historical void and epistemic silences which have been occurring. But, for those

who are being introduced into critical/decolonial thinking, I provide a shortened description of their methodologies and philosophies, so that the historical voids and epistemic erasure that have been occurring becoming more apparent. First and foremost, I distinguish transdisciplinarity from other research paradigms. Prior to providing characterizations of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinarity, I must clarify that there are a multiplicity of definitions and there is a contentious nature of labeling the typography of paradigms. I side on a cautious note that these paradigms of knowledge production have undergone convergent and divergent conceptualizations throughout different periods through a diversity traditions and trajectories. So, I follow the descriptions of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity as broad identifiers of these research traditions. This is neither an exhaustive list nor a definitive conceptualization.

DISCIPLINARITY

Disciplines have long been asserted as neutral orientations toward the supposed nature of knowledge, however, this neutrality has been put into question (Shumway & Messer-Davidow, 1991). Instead, it is vital to consider the prestige of "boundary work" as the guiding work in academia in the 21st century. Steve Fuller (1991) has identified the "*demarcation criteria* that systematically discriminate the sciences from nonscientific (and especially pseudoscientific) forms of knowledge" from which the "the science/non-science boundary" is structured as a means of casting "aspersions on the legitimacy of particularly pretenders to the title of sciences" (p. 302). In this way, disciplinarity is understood as a system—an organization mechanism—of knowledge legitimacy that hinges on knowledge discrimination and 'demarcation' (Fuller, 1991; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). Disciplinarity has been largely asserted through structuralist accounts of knowledge production and defined as frameworks for "understanding

and interpreting information and experience[s], for judging the validity and adequacy of solutions to problems by defining what is acceptable, appropriate, and/or useful. Implicit in this model is a role for the individual, who interprets, judges, etc., and a role for the disciplinary community, which maintains disciplinary boundaries (Lattuca, 2001, p. 24). Importantly, the structuralist definition of disciplinarity is largely the dominant ideology in universities as the desired organizing principle, and while efforts to disrupt this are present, disciplinarity stands as the stronghold organization system (Lattuca, 2001). To be sure, this definition, along with structuralist philosophies have been criticized for supplying “structural depictions [which] downplay or ignore the interaction of structures and cultures” and “structures that promote conformity and stability,” in where disciplinary efforts for change (e.g., moving toward interdisciplinary research) “is resisted unless it is in approved directions and influence appears unidirectional” (Lattuca, 2001, p. 24). From this point, disciplinarity will be used to signal an ideal of structuring subjects into strict “boundary work” or disciplines as a means to regulate, legitimize, and reify its own structuring principles (Fuller, 1991; Lattuca, 2001; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). That is disciplinarity exists as an effort toward its own reification.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

Comparatively, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary can be situated as poststructuralist efforts and paradigms (Lattuca, 2001; Repko, 2008). Interdisciplinarity signals toward an “integration” of disciplines into cohesive communities as a plurality of ‘Studies’ as opposed to ‘Disciplines’ (Repko, 2008, p. 8). Furthermore, interdisciplinarity is an endeavor to view “the disciplines as a heterogeneous social system composed of individuals with varying commitments to ideas, beliefs, and methodologies—and to one another” (pp. 24-25). Interdisciplinarity intentionally employs a “communal construction of meaning, the existence of

multiple perspectives, and the linkages of individual perspectives to social processes...a more fluid concept of a space in which persons and ideas exist in relation to another” (p. 25). Building on these poststructuralist theories of knowledge, disciplines are understood as “sites of ontological, epistemological, methodological tensions, and these tensions animate structures such as subject matter and methods” (Lattuca, 2001, p. 25). In comparison, structuralist understandings of disciplinarity “abstracts underlying frameworks that are believed to define a phenomenon, while the poststructuralist approach eschews abstraction and attends to the local and the particular, which are time and context bound” (p. 25). From poststructuralist initiatives are derived and broadened into the approach of multidisciplinary, which calls for the involvement of two or more disciplines *without integration* of disciplines, concepts, theories, epistemologies, etc. (Martin, 2017c). Multidisciplinary calls for the *juxtaposition* of disciplines and collaboration, as opposed to a unity of meaning construction from multiple standpoints which is promoted in interdisciplinarity (p. 43). To this point, interdisciplinarity maintains disciplinarity as a foundational principle that can be reworked toward the incorporation of interdisciplinary models to then work inside disciplinary spaces, and multidisciplinary maintains the notion of disciplinarity and simply calls for collaboration across distinct disciplines boundaries (Lattuca, 2001; Martin, 2017c; Repko, 2008).

Under these characterizations, transdisciplinarity is often times at a tension of being both included and excluded as multidisciplinary or designated as an offset of the interdisciplinary paradigm (Lattuca, 2001; Martin, 2017c). However, these claims have been troubling in their lack of coherent understanding of what transdisciplinarity means, signals, and has previously theorized. Transdisciplinarity is distinct from inter- or multi-disciplinarity in that it is grounded in a broad “reappraisal and reformulation of the nature of knowledge and inquiry” (Montouri,

2013, p. 53). So, while I do not contest transdisciplinarity as a form of interdisciplinarity, it is important to consider transdisciplinarity as a comprehensive materializing research paradigm that moves beyond tied notions to disciplinarity (Montouri, 2013; Nicolescu 2002). For the purpose of this study, I delineate direct calls for transdisciplinarity from multidisciplinary by both the direct citation of the phrase as well as research that makes apparent their connection to one of the two schools of thought which have ascended as the authoritative texts and scholars of transdisciplinary research.

CALLS FOR TRANSDISCIPLINARITY AND POLITICS OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

For the past two decades there has been a burgeoning call for transdisciplinarity in a variety of disciplines. Calls for transdisciplinarity and subsequent implementations of transdisciplinary methodologies in mainstream discourse have taken part in sustainability studies, climate change, and natural resource governance (Lamine, 2018; Tejedor, Segalás, Rosas-Casals, 2018; Nicolescu, 2012; Mitchell, Cordell & Fam, 2015) mathematics education (Robertson & Graven, 2018), higher education (Khoo et al., 2018), language teacher identity research (De Costa & Norton 2017), architecture (Kabrónska, 2017); ageing studies, urban studies, environmental psychology and gerontology (Woolrych & Sixsmith, 2017); nursing knowledge in practice (Timmons, Edley, Meal & Narayanasamy, 2016); plant physiology (da Silva & Casetta, 2015); philosophical psychology (Stenner, 2015); place and space studies (McGregor, 2012); and a series of reference and research methodology texts (Gibbs, 2017; Martin, 2017a; Shockley, 2015; Moulaert, 2013; Hadorn et al. 2008). These articles outline the breadth of potential and interest by which the recent conversation of transdisciplinarity has sparked. Additionally, these research efforts make direct claims of advocacy for transdisciplinary research. Distinctly, while these calls for transdisciplinarity are not a phenomenon of recent

years, it is rather the rapid and exponential growth of this research paradigm which merits great attention as a distinct peak in transdisciplinary discourse and historiography. I find this particular moment in time to be significant, because ‘transdisciplinary’ or ‘transdisciplinarity’ as a signpost in research has reached a pinnacle of references since its traditional historicized theoretical beginnings in the 1960s and 70s. From citation analysis, transdisciplinarity has been increasingly visible from single articles to special journal series dedicated toward this paradigm.

It is a complex and often risky endeavor to construct a literature review of transdisciplinarity because it is fundamentally a different way of organizing knowledge that pushes against compulsory unification of literature (Montouri, 2013). For the purpose of this project, I have tracked discursive patterns through citation practices and consider the different modes of transdisciplinarity which have been utilized. Through this inquiry, I observe two schools of thought from which the historical origin of transdisciplinarity is claimed in subtly different ways. The two schools of thought of transdisciplinarity both convergence and divergence in varying discernments. To this point, it is noticed that scholarship visibility is discursively mediated between these two schools of thought, which have risen as the authorities of transdisciplinarity to which a normalized historiography and dominant discourse of transdisciplinarity emerges.

Here, I trace a history of transdisciplinarity as has been narrated by mainstream scholars and institutions of knowledge. Surely, there are a multiplicity of transdisciplinarity endeavors through a diversity of standpoints and methodologies. And, by the very effort to cohere a literature review, I take note of the guidance of Montouri (2013) that: “Transdisciplinarity is *inquiry-driven* rather than *discipline-driven*...In transdisciplinarity, scope is defined by the needs of the subject matter, not determined and guided by the parameters of the discipline” (p. 46). For

this reason, I track a *normalized* history and emergence of transdisciplinary in the 1960's to more current approaches and advocacy of transdisciplinary in contemporary discourse. That said, the issue at hand is epistemic absence in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse in relation to critical and decolonial scholars and literature. Importantly, I did not begin this research with the presumption that critical and decolonial scholars would be absent or in marginal spaces of transdisciplinarity; instead, it is after literature analysis that this condition emerged as particularly significant. With this in mind, I focus on two traditions of transdisciplinarity that have been upheld throughout the past two centuries as dominant characterizations of transdisciplinarity, since its prescribed emergence in the 1970s. Afterwards, I begin to outline the noticeable absence of critical and decolonial scholars from the mainstream of transdisciplinarity research. From this point, I provide significant theorization pointing to broad and plural understanding of transdisciplinarity, which would suggest that critical and decolonial scholars *should* have been referenced in transdisciplinary research from the offset, however, from this point, their absence continues to point toward deeper and more significant academic mechanism which undergird their epistemic absence in the mainstream literature. This central contradiction will be made clearer after a deeper understanding of transdisciplinarity.

BACK TO TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

Transdisciplinarity as a term is largely debated and layered in widespread misuse and misunderstandings. Often scholars discuss transdisciplinarity as conflated in multidisciplinary or simply use it interchangeably with “interdisciplinary” (Martin, 2017a, p. 5). While much of the theory is contested, a general convergence in the mainstream of transdisciplinary discourse seems to point to a broad characterization provided by Jahn Bergmann and Klein (2012), which has been regarded as integral to the beginning of a coherent transdisciplinary approach:

“Transdisciplinarity is a reflexive research approach that addresses societal problems by means of interdisciplinary collaboration as well as the collaboration between researchers and extra-scientific actors. Its aim is to enable mutual learning processes between science and society; integration is the main cognitive challenge of the research process” (p. 4). This characterization, nor any description, has been utilized as the singular definition of transdisciplinarity. In fact, this definition by Bergmann and Klein (2012) does not fully illustrate the “reappraisal and reformulation” of knowledge as described by Montouri (2013), in where the *trans* prefix is the direct indication of knowledge production created “between the disciplines, across different disciplines, and beyond discipline[s]” (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 44). To this point, it is by the philosophical assumptions of *transdisciplinarity* which have been prevented a reductive definition (Nicolescu, 2002; Klein, 2013). At the same time, operationalization of the term has varied largely. For instance, an influential health-related study takes up this rationale of transdisciplinarity developed by the central figure, Basarab Nicolescu (2002), and operationalize transdisciplinarity in terms of “going beyond the bounds of any given discipline” (Hachinski, 2007, p. 1396). Yet, Nicolescu (2002) has warned of such reductive definitions which may encourage confusion with interdisciplinary goals of simply transferring knowledge from one discipline to another. Nicolescu notes that similar rhetoric and misuse of transdisciplinarity as seen in the health study makes claim that knowledge “overflows the discipline, but its goal still remains within the framework of disciplinary research,” which he claims is not transdisciplinarity (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 43). Other studies related to preventive medicine seem to imply transdisciplinary as simply meaning multiple disciplines or use it as a synonym of “collaboration” (Sallis, Linton, & Kraft, 2005). Several studies related to multicultural education have often equated transdisciplinary research with “a multiplicity of interrelated disciplines”

with a vision of an accomplished goal by the research (Ball, Mzamane & Berkowitz, 1998, p. x).

While it may be argued by some that there is a division here of the definition by researchers who are either in the social sciences or in the natural sciences, I caution this advance with several uses of the term that do not simply end at this dividing line of social-natural sciences (Cole, 2017; Klein, 2013; Osborne, 2015). Rather, these invocations suggest the paradigm has both gained increasing traction across many disciplines, but has also struggled to be established in academia for its wide misunderstood axioms (Nicolescu, 2002), and it points to a rhetorical mainstreaming that has marginalized scholars who have placed effort beyond surface level notions of collaboration (Jahn, Bergmann & Keil, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, broad literature analysis suggests that differences in the term's definition are not easily distinguished simply by their previous disciplinary allegiance to either the natural sciences or the social sciences (Cole, 2017; Osborne, 2015). Significantly, if this simple division of social-natural sciences were to be occurring, it would be easier and perhaps more 'parsimonious' of an explanation of the non-referencing of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinarity discourse. Certainly, if this division were occurring it would be effective to suggest that critical and decolonial scholars are simply not in the mainstream transdisciplinary conversations, because they are not in the 'natural sciences' or perhaps some may suggest that critical and decolonial scholars are not 'suited', nor attempt to add anything to conversations in the 'natural sciences'. However, I urge for a deeper analysis of the absence of critical and decolonial scholars in traditional transdisciplinary circles, not because they have been inactive or lacking knowledge in these topics/fields, but rather because there are larger cultural practices (at an institutional and societal level), philosophical

considerations (embedded in these reproductive mechanisms), and historical processes (Peréz, 1999) that must be considering when assessing epistemic erasure.

TRANSDISCIPLINARITY: TRADITIONS, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND EXCLUSIONS

Historically, there have been multiple peaks of interest toward ‘transdisciplinarity’ in research spanning the natural and social sciences and the humanities. Major texts referencing the history of transdisciplinarity typically recall its emergence in different contexts during the 1970’s (Hadorn et al., 2008, p. 4). Some scholars reference the emergence of transdisciplinarity to the First International Conference on Interdisciplinarity held in Paris in 1970 (Tejedor, Segulas, Casalas, 2018). These scholars note the work Jantsch (1972) as a divergent intellectual tradition, who has moved the concept of transdisciplinarity forward and who they ascribe credit for the word (Tejedor, Segulas, Casalas, 2018). Other researchers note its emergence in Switzerland in the 1970s to a Biosphere Program in the Swiss Alps (Tejedor, Segulas, Casalas, 2018, p. 6). Subsequently, there have been two largely prevailing schools of thought toward transdisciplinarity: the *Nicolescuian approach* and the *Zurich approach* who trace their emergence from these two events, respectively (Klein, 2004, McGregor, 2012, 2015; Nicolescu, 2002, 2006, 2012). These schools of thought dominate transdisciplinary discourse, both as the majority of citation referencing and as the traditions which are acclaimed as the authoritative scholarship who have laid the groundwork and visions of transdisciplinarity (Nicolescu, 2008b). The Nicolescuian approach is guided by the work of Romanian scholar, Basarab Nicolescu, founder of the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research and Studies (CIRET) in 1987 in Paris. Two years prior, Nicolescu published his articulation of transdisciplinarity and credits Jean Piaget with the creation of the word, as a research method in *Nous, la particule et le monde* (*Us, the Particle and the World*, 1985). Nicolescu says, “Transdisciplinarity is a relatively young

approach in the history of human knowledge: it emerged seven centuries later than disciplinarity, due to the genius of the Swiss philosopher and psychologist Jean Piaget” (Nicolescu, 2006).

McGregor (2015) outlines Nicolescu’s influence in the development of organizing events in the following years: first, the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity* at the First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity in 1994 in Portugal, then the organization of the Locarno International Congress of Transdisciplinarity in 1997 and finally the Second World Congress of Transdisciplinarity in 2005 in Brazil.

In the *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, Nicolescu (2002) clarifies his intentions of transdisciplinarity: "the prefix *trans* indicates, transdisciplinarity concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across the difference disciplines, and beyond all discipline. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge” (p. 44). Nicolescu’s conceptualization of transdisciplinarity is tied to his studies of metaphysics, quantum physics, and complexity science (McGregor, 2015). Nicolescu envisions transdisciplinarity as being informed by three pillars of complexity, multiple levels of reality, and mediated by the “logic of a middle”:

The discovery of bridges between domains and interactions permits the emergence of unity amidst diversity and coherence among *different levels of reality* [emphasis added]. An open structure of unity replaces reduction with a *new plurality and principle of relativity* [emphasis added]. It also encompasses ethics, spirituality, and creativity. [A transdisciplinary] vision does not simply transfer a model from one branch of knowledge to another. Nor does it propose a complete theory for moving from one level of reality to another, nor constitute a new super discipline or science. It achieves its fullest expression as a ‘moral project’ that is simultaneously transdisciplinary, transnational, and transcultural (as cited in Klein, 2013, p. 193).

This was the transdisciplinary vision from CIRET in 1987. The first pillar of transdisciplinarity is that reality is multidimensional (i.e., multiple levels of reality and multiples interpretations). The second pillars states that 'logic' (formerly understood as binary dualism) should not explain that contradictory positions are either solely incorrect or correct, but in fact both/and. This points toward the engagement of contradictions and the movement from either/or to both/and thinking. The third pillar is that reality is complex (i.e., maintaining wholeness as opposed to former priorities of simplicity, predictive power, and parsimony) (Nicolescu, 2002, 2005b, 2006, 2008b, 2014).

For Nicolescu (2002), transdisciplinarity is a theory of knowledge through three axioms: ontology (multiples levels of reality), epistemology (knowledge as complexity), and logic. However, he does not endeavor to rely on the imperative of an objective reality nor to negate experiential knowledge for the sake of Cartesian dualism. In the above excerpt, the 'logic of the middle' is the space of paradox in dualistic thinking (either/or), by which he justifies the inclusion of the 'middle' to allows for 'both/and' and 'neither/or' understandings to be accurate (Nicolescu, 2002, 2005a). In fact, it is from this critique of the mind-body division of modern science and the separation of a material world and the human experience world, which if pushed toward the extreme, he believes would be detrimental to a human existence (McGregor, 2015; Nicolescu, 2005a, 2014).

It is in the theoretical work which begins to distinguish the Nicolescu approach from that of the Zurich approach which has been inclined toward phenomenological work (McGregor, 2015). Central to the critique set forth by the Nicolescu tradition is a concern of the insular nature of knowledge produced by disciplinarity (McGregor, 2015). Discrete disciplinary knowledge production has been described as "contextless and meaningless knowledge" (Janz,

1998) and as “the helplessness of the application of a proliferation of knowledge and knowledge systems” (du Plessis, 2012) by scholars working through the axioms laid out by Nicolescu (2002). Furthermore, Nicolescu speaks of the troubling fragmentation of the contemporary life and the entrenchment of dualistic thinking (either/or frameworks; McGregor, 2015). McGregor affirms this through the words of Voss (2002) who suggests transdisciplinarity is a means of “approaching problems in a transdisciplinary way [that] enables one to move beyond dichotomized thinking, into the space that lies beyond” (p. 114 as cited in McGregor, 2015). A Nicolescuian tradition of transdisciplinarity, which has been heavily influenced by philosophies of life-worlds, lived-meaning, and experienced phenomenon (McGregor, 2015) is heavily concerned with the lived experiences of people as to promote a positive interaction between people and a broadly conceived notion of the sciences (Nicolescu, 2008a).

In stark contrast, the Zurich approach tends to advocate for a production of more precise hard sciences, wherein the society is centered as the study object, not the human (McGregor, 2015). In terms of axiology, a Nicolescuian (2002) tradition deviates from modern sciences’ inclination to claim a value neutral orientation, in that he posits transdisciplinarity should indicate humanist values. In fact, he goes on to make claim, “What is beyond any discipline? It is, of course, ourselves, the human being” (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 78). Markedly, Nicolescu suggests subjectivity, interpretations, meanings, and experiences are beyond the disciplines which are precisely elements of neglect in single discipline paradigms (e.g., disciplinarity, multidisciplinarity).

In short, the endeavor for transdisciplinarity from a Nicolescuian tradition, is a movement away from disciplinarity which has created insular knowledge production in decontextualized and detached ways from lived realities, as is partly impacted by dichotomizing and Cartesian

frameworks. Instead, Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity seeks to nourish connections and relationships between knowledge and human conditions within contexts and environments in order to address intricate and complex social issues or what are often referred to as “wicked societal problems” (McGregor, 2015; Jahn, Bergmann & Keil, 2012). To these sociological and global concerns of inequality and violence, Nicolescuian scholars have advocated broadly for ‘transdisciplinary methodologies’ as opposed to a unified method, whereas the Zurich tradition tend to view transdisciplinarity as an alternative type of research to be in the service of ‘science’ with the employment of the methodologies that already exist (McGregor, 2015).

The Zurich tradition is said to have emerged from the International Transdisciplinary Conference in Switzerland in 2000 (Hadorn et al., 2008; Klein, Wentworth, & Sebberson 2001; Tejedor, Segalàs, & Rosas-Casals, 2018). Scholars sympathetic to the Zurich school of thought often refer to the 1970s and 1980s UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme (MaB) as the impetus of transdisciplinarity in the natural and social sciences (Hadorn et al., 2008, p. 43). Zurich-oriented researchers tend to place “science” as the primary knowledge system of society. These scholars tend to posit that it is through a transdisciplinary orientation which can “increase [the] unrealized intellectual potential” of science (Häberli et al., 2001, p. 5). By in large, the Zurich approach advocates for “mutual learning” among a variety of stakeholders and researchers as facilitated by partnerships between people in and outside of academia a central characteristic of transdisciplinarity (McGregor, 2015).

Transdisciplinary research, in this view, aims to “enhance...the knowledge of multiple participants...including local knowledge, scientific knowledge and the knowledge of industries, businesses, and NGOs,” because “the sum of this knowledge will be greater than the knowledge of any single partner” (Martin, 2017a, p. 9). Importantly, the locus of transdisciplinarity research

in the majority of Zurich approaches tend to place “the sciences” in a superior position to the humanities. McGregor (2015) highlights this differentiation by invoking the comment by Mitcham and Frodeman (2003), that a broad conception of disciplinarity, such as transdisciplinarity “would step across the divide between the sciences and the humanities and this at once infect, if not transform, economics and politics” (p. 183). To be sure, transdisciplinarity from a Zurich approach tends to operate as an “invitation” for the world to be engaged in research in academia and places locus of knowledge production in the sciences (du Plessis, 2012, p. 44).

While similar to the Nicolescuian approach in their effort to pinpoint and address complex social issues, the Zurich approach differs in their assumptions about knowledge production and dissemination. Namely, they tend to refer to the definitions of transdisciplinarity made by Gibbons et al. (1994) conceptualizations of *Mode 1* and *Mode 2 knowledge production*. Gibbons et al. (1994) describes two *modes* of knowledge production as the starting point to distinguish disciplinary and transdisciplinary research: Mode 1 knowledge is described as a knowledge production dictated by academic interests within the walls of universities (and within disciplinary boundaries) with minimal effort for application. Mode 2, on the other hand, is a knowledge production away from disciplines with specific intentions of researching for (1) application of research and (2) to produce knowledge in the context in where it will be applied (McGregor, 2015). Stated alternatively, Mode 1 knowledge production is described as existing in and staying within the academic community from which it maintains insular (i.e., traditional paradigms of scientific discovery and disciplinarity). And, Mode 2, is “socially distributed, application-oriented, trans-disciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities” (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003, p. 179). To this characterization, the Zurich approach conceives of

Mode 2 as transdisciplinarity and as an effort made up by multidisciplinary teams. Succinctly, the International Transdisciplinary Conference in 2000, made declaration of what transdisciplinarity was to be demarcated as:

Transdisciplinarity is a new form of learning and problem-solving involving cooperation among different parts of society and academia in order to meet complex challenges of society. Transdisciplinary research starts from tangible, real-world problems. Solutions are devised in collaboration with multiple stakeholders. A practice-oriented approach, transdisciplinarity is not confined to a closed circle of scientific experts, professional journals and academic departments where knowledge is produced. Ideally, everyone who has something to say about a particular problem and is willing to participate can play a role. Through mutual learning, the knowledge of all participants is enhanced, including local knowledge, scientific knowledge, and the knowledges of concerned industries, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). The sum of this knowledge will be greater than the knowledge of any single partner. In the process, the bias of each perspective will also be minimized (Häberli et al., 2001, p. 7).

The Zurich approach prioritize society, science, and technology, in where the effort is to *do science differently* as opposed to a Nicolescu approach which critiques the limits of science systems, and thus advocates for new methodologies based in axioms to *understand the world more expansively as well as through multiple epistemologies* (McGregor, 2015). Both of these traditions center the value of wider knowledge dissemination from academia, while the Zurich views holds that knowledge production will likely be maintained inside universities. Additionally, both of these traditions make clear intentions of different epistemological positions; however, to this point, the Zurich school attends greater attention to a science-centric framework, whereas the Nicolescu school efforts for engagement of different knowledge

paradigms (Nicolescu, 2007; McGregor, 2015; Klein, Wentworth, and Sebberson, 2001).

Distinction can also be made in recognizing that Nicolescuian approaches as a being theoretically explicit with their concerns of emergent knowledge through direct descriptions of epistemology, reality (ontology), and logic. Perhaps, subtler in these two traditions is the claim made by Nicolescu to not merely reduce transdisciplinary knowledge in the creation of cohesiveness of multiple worldviews; whereas, the Zurich approach is determined to *synthesize, reconfigure, and recontextualize* “existing and available knowledge” from the main source of science (McGregor, 2015, Klein, Wentworth, and Sebberson, 2001). In short, each school of thought approaches differently a critique, or lack of critique, of the present knowledge organization (i.e., disciplinarity).

The Zurich and Nicolescu approaches are two strands of transdisciplinarity as they have been conceptualized and worked throughout the past two decades. While allegiance to these two transdisciplinary tradition characteristics are given recognition and many scholars adhere to one or the other, it is crucial to recognize complexity even within these traditions and their deployment in research endeavors. Additionally, in the mainstreaming of these schools of thought have been foundational thinkers and commentators in the history and philosophies of disciplines, which have played a key role in the way transdisciplinarity has been written into history. To this point, while Nicolescuian scholars occasionally recognize transdisciplinarity as a paradigm have existed prior to the formalizations of Basarab Nicolescu (while these are rarely referenced or directly cited), they tend to historicize transdisciplinarity only to the inclusion of Jean Piaget’s use of the word in 1972, when he stated:

Finally, we hope to see succeeding to the stage of interdisciplinary relations a superior stage, which should be “transdisciplinary,” which will not be limited to recognize the

interactions and or reciprocities between the specialized researches, but which will locate these links inside a total system with stable boundaries between the disciplines (Piaget, 1972, p. 144)

The presentation of these two intellectual traditions of transdisciplinarity is neither monolithic nor should they be read as evident of all other divergent conceptualization of transdisciplinary theory and practice. However, there is a strong tendency to regard these schools of thought as the central points into transdisciplinary thought and history and as authorities in transdisciplinary discourse. That is to say, these traditions have been far-reaching and gained *normalized* recognition in the historicizing of transdisciplinarity. In fact, a prominent scholar can be pinpointed as an essential architect to the history telling of transdisciplinarity. Julie Thompson Klein stands as one of few influential scholars in the arenas of describing the taxonomies of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (2004, 2013, p. 193) who described the broad call for transdisciplinarity as a different scientific and cultural approach. She does not particularly align with one tradition, but Klein (2004, 2013) has been key to tracing the trends of inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinarity historically and globally. More broadly has been the operationalization of transdisciplinarity which has aligned closely with these early descriptions by Jean Piaget (1972) as a system of thought that links knowledge production from different sources through interdisciplinary principles of collaboration. And, while this does not succinctly align with the theorizations of Nicolescu in particular, this characterization does seem to be the prevailing discourse and historical utilization of transdisciplinarity.

There are few explorations of transdisciplinary beyond the 1970s, no less beyond the tail-end of the 20th century. Wilson (1999), for instance, traces transdisciplinarity as far back as the Ionian Enlightenment during the “Archaic period” of Greece during the 6th century BC.

However, this work is rarely referenced in the dominant narrative of transdisciplinarity. Also, important to note is that Wilson seldom recognizes thinkers outside of white European histories as being engaged with transdisciplinarity work by this formal word nor by any other terminology despite his extended history of transdisciplinarity.

Additionally, there are problematic notions and conceptualizations that run parallel to the call for transdisciplinarity. It is vital to begin with the problematic deployments of transdisciplinary discourse. First, however, we must be weary of conflating critical and decolonial scholarship with discourse of diversity and inclusion and scholarship from the liberal Left. It is key to note, that when mainstream transdisciplinary scholars have used verbiage of “diversity” and “social inclusion”—terminology which is often (and reductively) referenced as being central elements of Ethnic Studies—in actuality what occurs is that critical and decolonial scholars, and Ethnic Studies scholars are left out of their references or even merely alluded to as important intellectual traditions for being in close *proximity* to critical theory. When the concept of transdisciplinarity is conceptualized as a “theme of inquiry,” it is aimed toward a method toward unity of knowledge from which scholars may quickly recognize Cultural Studies as the umbrella of Ethnic Studies (Nowotny, 2004). Literature that has made these connections often conflate European Cultural Studies as the unitary historical origin of Ethnic Studies—removed from US historical context, transnational solidarity efforts and movements, and separate from distinct fields of Africana Studies, Chicanx/Latinx Studies, and Indigenous Studies (Klein, 2013; Nowotny, 2004; Wilson, 1999). Surely, as to which unifying way of knowing is to be central to transdisciplinarity has not been consistent yet concerns as to which knowledges are valued is a fundamental concern. For instance, scholars which posit transdisciplinarity as a “democratic governance of knowledge” (Novy, Habersack, and Schaller 2013, p. 439) do not mention

concepts of radical democracy, decoloniality, contemporary critical theory, or rarely any critical and decolonial scholars and their diverse commitments, as scholarship which has moved these debates forward and into new intellectual territories. These epistemic absences suggest larger mechanisms and processes at play in academia. To this extent, I will not address the liberal Left's rhetorical utilization of "diversity and inclusion" as they mistakenly conflate a transdisciplinary paradigm as simply a research paradigm geared toward values of diversity and inclusion. Thereby, on tracing the characteristic pillars of transdisciplinarity as it relates to the work by critical and decolonial scholars, I am cautious of not conflating a transdisciplinary paradigm with the work of other liberal efforts as simply a claim of diversity and unity of knowledge or of "perspectives."

It is important to remember that it has not attempted nor desired to accumulate and delineate all of the works in existence to their reference to transdisciplinarity. Instead I hope to outline the mainstream telling of transdisciplinary history as a point of departure to consider the inclusions and exclusions of intellectual traditions and to begin to characterize transdisciplinarity as a research orientation to then consider its many manifestations within a larger structure of knowledge production and in context to critical and decolonial studies. To this point, the history of transdisciplinarity has been European and Eurocentric, in the sense that in Wilson's (1999) effort as the majority of transdisciplinarity discourse history. These efforts adhere to searches for knowledge production within the European intellectual canon.

CHAPTER 4: DISCIPLINARITY

Against the backdrop of a normalized transdisciplinary history and discourse, Chapter 3 further contextualizes the decolonial imaginary, and therefore pinpoints where *epistemic erasure* is occurring. With attention to *disciplinarity* as the foremost means of academic organization, I engage the decolonial imaginary in the historicity of disciplines and take on a political-economy analysis of disciplinary entrenchment in academic. To this point, I clarify an additional research intention. Because the decolonial imaginary is a space of negotiation and of potential decolonial alternative telling of history and knowledge, I analyze epistemic erasure from the vantage points of critical and decolonial scholars. This is a vital clarification if I am to engage with the decolonial imaginary and provide grounds for them to offer their analytics as a means of speaking on the epistemic erasure that they encounter.

With attention to critical scholarship on disciplinary entrenchment, I specify *disciplinary hegemony* and *neoliberal capitalism* in academia as the paired and entangled factors that have deepened in a historical process of epistemic erasure. *Disciplinary hegemony* offers a viable explanation as to how the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse and history telling may be occurring, exacerbated, and legitimized in relation to the establishment of disciplines as virtues of academia organization. Specifically, I employ conceptualization of disciplinary hegemony for a twofold reasons: (1) to apply these concepts in a historical understanding of how certain intellectual inquiries and subjects came to be divided, consumed, and organized hierarchically, and (2) as a conceptual partner of the decolonial imaginary in which the analytics used by critical scholars in the field of Ethnic Studies may be included in their emergence in academia (referenced in Chapter 5). A discussion of disciplinarity as a historical process that is informed by hegemonic ideologies begins to

expand our understanding of the ways in which historicization of knowledge production and the elevation of certain disciplines have created an intellectual landscape that has uplifted certain epistemologies and intellectual tradition at the expense and at the inferiorization of other epistemologies and traditions. More specifically, this chapter argues that the Western US-based academy provides the necessary context and controlling mechanism for the epistemic erasure of social sciences, humanities, and Ethnic Studies, which largely house critical and decolonial scholars.

Importantly, while the decolonial imaginary does not claim a space time designation, it urges a questioning of the basis of the dominant historiographic method (Peréz, 1999). To this, I explicitly trace the history of disciplinarity to track a longer historical process that must be factored into the contemporary conditions and configurations that allow and invigorate epistemic erasures. This is to say that I treat *epistemic erasure as a historical process* that emerge from configurations of the modern academy and given that disciplines have emerged as the dominant composition of universities, it is vital to place their historical development up front. While a momentary departure from a direct analysis of transdisciplinary, a history of disciplinarity will be helpful to both contextualize contemporary calls for trans- and other inter- disciplinary paradigms, as well as give context to the space and time from which critical and decolonial scholars emerge. These latter distinctions are subtly different from the development of most other subjects of academic inquiry and are vital to understand the intellectual and political commitments of critical and decolonial scholars in order to properly provide a platform for these traditions to speak on their epistemic erasure. I begin by engaging in the ‘disciplinarity’ of critical and decolonial scholars.

DISCIPLINARITY AND CRITICAL AND DECOLONIAL SCHOLARS

This thesis is grounded in the histories critical and decolonial scholars. Notably in the US, these scholar-activists fought for academic integration and legitimacy through a series of social movements that can be read as culminating with the rise and institutionalization of Ethnic Studies (Cabán, 2003; Dietz, 2009; Guilherme and Dietz, 2015; Gutierrez, 1994). To this point, I have used a broad term of critical and decolonial scholars, specifically because I recognize the umbrella term of Ethnic Studies to not be consistently inclusive towards scholars in Literature, Political Economics, Social-Ecological Philosophies, and Education to name a few subjects in where critical and decolonial scholars may also be located. Furthermore, at the offset of Ethnic Studies movements, many were cautious of claiming itself as a ‘discipline’ (Cabán, 2003; Dietz, 2009, 2016; Gutierrez, 1994) These claims have typically been reinforced in scholars who push Ethnic Studies as a field of inquiry as to directly resist disciplinarity. The resulting complexity is evident in the politics of naming of scholars and their scholarship. This complexity also exposes a series of taxonomic obstacles of naming.

For the purpose of this chapter, I use Ethnic Studies interchangeably with critical and decolonial scholars as a way of addressing the normalized notions of disciplinarity in the academy, but also as a field of inquiry that houses critical and decolonial scholars emergent from social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, which occasionally and paradoxically have utilized disciplinarity as an advantageous means of gaining accessing into the academy. I use the histories Ethnic Studies and critical and decolonial scholars as intellectual projects which have been subject to Western “disciplinary” boundaries as part of both a humanities and social science categorizations (Cabán, 2003; Dietz, 2009, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2012; Gutierrez, 1994). By the same token, I note that while not all scholars would identify themselves as fitting into the

phraseology of being Ethnic Studies scholars, I find Ethnic Studies, as an intellectual project emergent from movement struggles to be an effective term to signal toward a milieu of moral, political, intellectual, and spiritual traditions, strategies, and value-based projects. This distinction is important in a consistent effort to claim critical and decolonial scholars as predating orthodox transdisciplinary discourse.

Ethnic Studies as a ‘discipline’ has gone through a dual process of being formally recognized in institutions of knowledge (institutionalization) and the process of making ‘Ethnic Studies’ the subject of academic study (academicization). These simultaneous processes have fortified its existence in academia and it has received criticism of its legitimacy in academia (Dietz, 2009; Grosfoguel, 2012). Still, Ethnic Studies does not fit into the neat and discrete divisions of disciplines (compartmentalization; see Dietz, 2009). In fact, it may be pointed out that Ethnic Studies is a field (similar to the field of Education; see Hongcai, 2007) and not a ‘discipline’ for its resistance to be defined by narrow methods, aims, and purposes, and not formed by a single method or purpose with all researchers studying through a singular methodology. It is cautiously that I use Ethnic Studies as a ‘discipline’ to signal a certain tradition of thought or research that while it may be described as a field has undergone processes of Western disciplinarity. In this way Ethnic Studies as a discipline is neither a monolithic project nor is it reducible to singular efforts; however, this marks a central paradox, I argue, to the structure of a disciplining a tradition that has long been transdisciplinary. Notably, Ethnic Studies are caught up in this contradictory process in their complex history of ‘becoming a discipline’ of study nationally in the US. This distinction will become pertinent for Chapter 6, but must be formally introduced as to not circumvent and neglect the ‘disciplinary’ rhetoric at play in their emergence detailed below. Now, I turn to consider disciplinarity as important to

understand is the historical emergence of disciplines—this history of disciplinarity with respect to social sciences at large will help contextualize the impetus for this research project.

DISCIPLINES AS HISTORICAL PROCESSES: 17TH TO 19TH CENTURIES

Disciplines have become integral to the structure of modern universities (Ochieng, 2018; Sugimoto & Weingart, 2015; Wallerstein, 1999; Gulbenkian Report, 1996; Shumway & Messer-Davidow, 1991). Notably, Foucault in 1977 offers one of the first conceptualization of ‘discipline’ as a "system of control in the production of discourse" that can be used to think of ways in which "to discipline" have been a set of strategies of control (as cited in Sugimoto & Weingart, 2015; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). While disciplines are often approached with ambiguity and contention, they can be thought of as signposts of assessing, organizing, and legitimizing scholarly endeavors in the academy (Sugimoto & Weingart, 2015). I trace this historical development to directly attend to the common misconception that disciplines are ‘natural’ structures of organizing knowledge for learning and somehow endemic to universities. If we take disciplines as historical process and formations, and not as inherent natural configurations of knowledge, then hierarchies, hegemony, and the embedded racist, sexist, and colonial ideologies can be taken into account.

Globally, there is contention as to when modern disciplines emerged. By in large it is thought that the *systematic* organizing by discipline deeply developed in the nineteenth century from burgeoning institutions and curricular practices in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (i.e., scientific societies; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). As for curricular practices, structured curricula in medieval universities relied heavily on dividing subject matters into separate courses in the 13th century. In the medieval university, “disciplines came to be identified with lists of books, so much so that music was taught at Oxford using Boethius's *de*

musica, (*original italics*) and even medicine was taught purely at the level of theory” (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 204). This circumstance is used to highlight the way in which the scope of learning came to be identified directly through the books taught and the amount of written knowledge that was presently available (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991).

Disciplines, in this case, were assumed to be the corollary of certain texts and single subjects.

Disciplines were guiding principles of curricular organization by way of schooling in universities up to the seventeenth century (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). By mid-seventeenth century, as observed in one student’s undergraduate notebook (John Cole), suggests a systematic articulation of the curriculum of the medieval university (Costello, 1958). Notably, John Cole describes disciplinary organization as being divided into "objective and directive" for the reason that this division "dispose man toward the understanding of things" (as cited in Costello, 1958, p. 37). He uses the terms *objective* and *directive*, which are based in the work of Aristotle and St. Thomas: “objective” referring to science and “directive” to signify the arts (p. 37). Further into this division was the distinction if a topic was “liberal” or “servile.” That is, “liberal” denoted something was directed to the mind and “servile” was that which was directed to the body. From here the “servile arts” were then divided further. This brought with it significant tensions, because "the art of logic necessarily involved a science of its operations” and “the science of medicine” was recognized as working “toward the art of curing” and so while these comparisons were contradictory, “the distinction of the curriculum into activity and knowledge was a cherished dichotomy that the seventeenth century preserved" (p. 38).

By these claims, disciplines were divided into the objective and the directive or the science and the arts. In this notebook, the objective disciplines are listed: "theology, jurisprudence, medicine, and philosophy.” Philosophy was then divided into metaphysics,

physics, mathematics, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, and ethics. Under the arts, the notebook lists: grammar, rhetoric, and poetry (Costello, 1958, p. 39). These disciplines of the arts were "fused" together by "rhetoric," which included history, poetry, drama, epistolary prose, classical geography, ethical dialogues, and sacred scripture reading. These disciplinary divisions are substantiated by claims about knowledge by Aristotle and the curricular claims made by known tutors of the time Holdsworth, Duport (or Barnes) and the memoirs of D'Ewes and by the textbook by Bartholomaeus Keckermann's *Systema Systematum* (1613). As grounded assumptions of the divisions of knowledge by ancient Greek philosophies, the distinctions of disciplines were justified through "logic" and Aristotle's ontological claims of knowledge as "objective" or "directive." This is to say, the curricular organization was not separated from the dominant ontological philosophies of its time; specifically, I point toward these claims that were made because they were used to say people (men) were "dispose[d]" toward these categorizations (Costello, 1958; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991).

A pivotal moment in modern disciplinarity or what may have been regarded as the objective/directive organization of knowledge, lay in the distinction of what constituted 'new' methodology in 'experimental philosophy' in the nineteenth century (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 204). This discursive debate which emanated from 'scientific societies' was alluded to in the varying ways Costello (1958) details divisions between art and science and mind from body. In other words, the nineteenth century debate of delineating who, with contemporary phrases, of who does "research" and who does "application" has a lineage in previous debates of distinguishing disciplines and dividing subject matters as different forms of study. In fact, the scientific society of Paris, Académie des Sciences, for instance came to be instrumental in designating the 'new' natural philosophy method to explicitly exclude Cartesians

and Jesuits who were deemed to not be seeking the ‘truth’ in the emergence of the “modern learned society” (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991; Hunter, 1981, pp. 37-38).

Even prior to these debates, in between the mid-seventeenth and end of the eighteenth century, physics, chemistry, and biology were directly seen as branches of “natural philosophy.” Amidst this distinction, natural philosophy was further charted in the natural sciences (as they may be considered today) at the end of the eighteenth century for the purpose of division based on method and purpose of study. Further, moral philosophy saw a break from “natural philosophy” as it began to be consumed by the social sciences and their engagement with different methodologies (Ochieng, 2018, p. 204). To this end, the “humanities” was later developed as a 20th century term “of convenience for those disciplines excluded from the natural and social sciences” (Ochieng, 2018, p. 204). Thereafter, further divisions led to the “the other modern humanities” formed by classical philology-producing history, modern languages, and art history (Ochieng, 2018, p. 204).

Universities internationally (including in Europe) had prior to the nineteenth century made distinctions between different intellectual projects and knowledge producing institutions. With this in mind, I must be cautious about assuming historical continuity from European medieval universities to modern Western universities (Ochieng, 2018, p. 64). In fact, Ochieng (2018) offers guidance toward a compulsion to read these university and disciplinary developments as a continuous and linear history:

The historical, sociological, and rhetorical reasons for legitimation and naturalization of disciplines as coherent systems are complex and entangled and defy any easy narrativization. But such an account would have to grapple with the alienation of labor wrought by capitalism; the articulation of discourses of white supremacy, patriarchy, class and status hierarchies, and

heteronormativity as “commonsense,” taken-for-granted ideologies; and the ascendance and establishment of natural sciences as privileged producers of knowledge (p. 65)

Precisely, a linear history of “disciplines” should be challenged and complicated, but it is critical to ground these knowledge producing structures in the very context from which they emerge. Namely, disciplines in universities are implicated by labor, capitalism, and the hierarchical entrenchment by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, as well as a parallel ranking of epistemologies and the inferiorization of ‘others’ (Raja, 2013; Westall, 2015) To illustrate this, it is important to recognize that histories of disciplines have largely been traced in European contexts and by European historiography. That is, disciplinary divisions have been tracked through the dominant intellectual genealogy of a Western intellectual canon as a supposed origin and singular emergence in the minds of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers (Costello, 1958; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991).

However, it is key to recognize that these “scientific societies,” such as Académie des Science were not professions of a formal social function quite by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). Case in point, they were exclusive membership-based organizations with blatant exclusion of women and those who, on the basis of class and faith, did not acquire a “liberal education” (Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 204; Frank, 1975). Notably, the embedded exclusion of women, those from poor ranks, and perceived aberrant religious groups were systematically excluded from scientific societies outright. To a point often overlooked, there are two processes at hand: both (a) the systematic exclusion and inferiorization of certain epistemologies and (b) an embedded assumption of inquiry and knowledge production as being created through a disciplinary orientation as justified division.

It has been subsequently argued that academia to date has “served to underwrite current sociological exclusions and epistemic injustices” (Ochieng, 2018, p. 66). While cautious of a linear history reading of disciplinarity, I am convinced that ideological ascendance and the establishment of legitimacy toward disciplinarity, and more so, that there has been a legitimization of “natural sciences” as the holders of ‘true’ knowledge is less contentious and ambiguous. And, by way of inferiorization of women, and poor classes and racialized ‘others’ have been systematically excluded from Western academia.

In fact, to claim disciplinarity as a dominant ideology (Ochieng, 2018, p. 70) will serve as a cogent signaling towards the systemized way in which disciplinarity has been justified, reified, and used in tandem with neoliberal capitalism and the dominance of knowledge configuration as they currently operate. This is to say, there has historically been a continual international epistemological and political affair regarding the formulation of disciplines, which have also impacted the ways universities conceive of “sciences” and the deemed “non-sciences.” Further, we must be read these divisions in tandem with the systematic exclusion of both groups of people as well as their epistemologies from academia. In fact, a major driving force toward rigid disciplinarity has been the rise of the natural sciences as holding the claim of superior knowledge at an international context (Costello, 1958; Shumway, & Messer-Davidow, 1991). This in turn has moved “many disciplines toward mimicking the methods of the sciences or...to believe not only that each discipline has a single legitimate method but also that certain disciplines are reducible to other disciplines” (Ochieng, 2018, p. 67). To be sure, understanding the ways in which knowledge organization through disciplines in academia are key to understand the landscape of epistemic recognition, ascendancy, and of course, *erasure*. With this in mind, it

is possible to detail the explicit rhetoric of disciplinary endeavors after the mid-eighteenth century.

DISCIPLINES AS HISTORICAL PROCESSES: 19TH TO 21ST CENTURIES

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation established in 1993, developed a report titled *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (1996), which aimed to outline the undergirding epistemological differences and methodologies as to consider the construction of the social sciences and subsequent divisions disciplines which were emergent (to varying degrees) and changing in between 1850 and 1945 (Wallerstein, 1996, 1999). The widely publicized *Gulbenkian Report* (1996) identifies several processes occurring during this 95-year span: (1) the expansion and simultaneous division of the social sciences (2) the entrenchment of the "two-culture" notion between the sciences and the arts and humanities (3) the growing contentions about disciplinary boundaries and (4) the emergence of area studies which were by definition multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary (p. 37). From 1750 to 1850 (mid-18th to mid-19th century), academic categorization nomenclature was identified as being inconsistent and various, with few 'social science' disciplines gaining mass support. Before mid-eighteenth century, the *Gulbenkian Report* suggests that the division of 'social sciences' into discrete disciplines was seemingly unknown. Noticeably, an element and influential impetus for the social sciences developed from 19th-century positivism, by which took the methodological elements of 'prediction' and 'control' as "natural signs of epistemic power in the physical sciences" (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, Sylvan, 1993, p. 134). However, there is still contention if these two elements emerged simultaneously from physics onto the social sciences or if these elements of research were further adapted into physics with the emergence of social sciences (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, Sylvan, 1993).

From 1850 to 1945, there may have arguably been a greater amount of discernable 'categories' depending on categorization criteria. Thereafter 1945 to 1996 they reported a growth of legitimated identifiers for scholarly groups and fields of study with growing populations; however, toward the year of publication, the *Gulbenkian Report* contemplated that perhaps those divisions had blurred and categories perhaps looked similar to those between 1750-1850, which provoke the authors to call for a structural change in academia (Wallerstein, 1999). The *Gulbenkian Report* called for a restructuring of the social sciences mainly through the aim of unification of all scientific knowledge. However, this report attained significant criticism, specifically from Michael Burawoy among other critics who claimed:

The Gulbenkian Commission was the project of an elite cut off not only from the actual practice of the social sciences, but also from the real-world problems those sciences are designed to investigate: not to mention from the people affected by those problems. Rather than opening the social sciences, the Gulbenkian Commission was effectively closing them off, not only to the global south but also to most of the global north (Burawoy, 2008, pp. 137-138).

Burawoy (2008) does not contend with the historical timeline offered, but rather with the Commission's intentions. His critique is guided by two questions "knowledge for whom?" and "knowledge for what?" (p. 139). He suggests that the Gulbenkian Commission "suppressed" these two questions and fell to a universalism of European social sciences, but disguised their new endeavor of unification as "pluralistic universalism" (p. 141). To this point, Burawoy points out that sociology "has a different disciplinary configuration in other countries, reflecting different historical trajectories, patterns of higher education and relations among economy, state and civil society" (p. 142). On target with his critique, Burawoy states that the Commission

misplaced their context in a utopian notion of a detached university from state regulated capitalism. He goes on to outline that way in which universities globally are heavily impacted and implicated through state and market forces—namely through laissez-faire capitalism.

Substantiated by a case study of Portuguese sociology, commodification of research, and privatization of higher education, Burawoy concludes by claiming the myopic view of the commission to assume that all countries linearly develop in the same way as Euro-Western countries is their flaw. He states firmly that the commission neglected nineteenth century laissez-faire capitalism as being implicated in disciplinary organization, to which he claims has been further entrenched by the time they write the report in the early twenty-first century.

This is a gap in historical anachronism that I must address. To reiterate, it is not in the timeline which I have provided of the Gulbenkian Report which ails Burawoy (2008), but the positivist, Eurocentric methodologies which are then assumed to be justification for global restructuring of the social sciences from elite researchers who have seldom analyzed the strongholds of state-sponsored capitalism in academia, but whom deploy a utopian dissolution of disciplinarity under the guise of “pluralistic universalism.” Paradoxically, Burawoy identifies the linearity of the Gulbenkian Report as what allows them to unsightly obscure into invisibility capitalist-market relations in contemporary academia, as they missed it as an element in the nineteenth century academia social sciences development.

The contention by Burawoy and the Gulbenkian Report points out two factors pertinent to this study: (1) the depth of disciplinary research which directly attended to political economy in pre-nineteenth century Western and non-Western countries is modest and requires more research, while (2) economic factors have been greatly prioritized because of insufficient economic analysis. Taken together, I point out that pre-nineteenth century seems to hold greater

research of disciplinary development and post-nineteenth century seems to garner greater research on economic and class-based interactions in academia organizations. I do not intend to make universal claims; I rather disclose this pattern as a potential factor to how a history of disciplinarity is being narrated in the present. In short, I have not intended to suggest that disciplinary creation starts and stops in pre-nineteenth century, it is rather the available research which has framed the available telling of disciplinarity.

With this in mind, economic drivers and a global political economy, particularly through the US in a post WWII as it emerged with economic power must be considered as a potential force of disciplinary entrenchment (Gulbenkian Report, 1996; Burawoy, 2008). Jacobs (2014) contends that the formulation of modern disciplinarity is directly implicated through post-WWII conditions, due in part to financial pressure for students to seek applied studies, and an enlarged faculty population working toward specializations in specific inquiry-based research (Gulbenkian Report, 1996, p. 1). A more in-depth analysis through a decolonial approach of global political economy will be taken up in Chapter 5.

To be sure, canonical intellectualizing is neither neutral nor unbiased; it is inextricably impacted by political dimensions, hierarchies, and hegemony, and domination (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2017). Norgaard (2006) argues that disciplinarity reflects dominant premises in Western thought. Under this arrangement, he points to the construction of the “West” as “civilized” and possessing an ‘intellectual pedigree’, whereas, nonwhite societies and cultures were demonized as merely being “religious,” “mythical,” and “irrational” (Salter & Hearn, 1997, p. 66). Disciplinarity has undergirded current sociology of knowledge exclusions and epistemic biases and violence (p. 66). Salter and Hearn (1997) add to this by recognizing that disciplines in the social sciences have often been ignorant of other disciplines in a continuation of poor

disciplinary relations, in particular through the division and ascendance of the natural sciences over the social sciences and the humanities. To date, disciplines with supposed similarities and like-minded epistemologies often have poor relations leading to greater ignorance and the undervaluing of sister disciplines (Salter, & Hearn, 1997).

This suggests legitimized knowledge articulation only to be insular to the walls of the academy (p. 69). What is more, “Perhaps one of the greatest triumphs of modern socialization is the assumption that philosophers, psychologists, rhetoricians, critics, and intellectuals are just those credentialed by universities” (p. 70). This ‘expertise’ is then used to delineate insiders and outsiders of disciplines and claiming who are the holders of knowledge and which subjects are seemingly devoid of knowledge production capabilities (p. 70). This is to say, rigid disciplinarity is further endorse through a hierarchical order of communication that excludes and organizes disciplines through formal communication strategies, and through a credentialization which further distances “academic” knowledge production from “organic” community knowledge (Gramsci as cited in Coben, 1995).

There has been a constant international epistemological and political affair regarding the formulation of university disciplinarity, which has also impacted the ways the state and universities conceive of sciences and the deemed “non-sciences.” Not only has there been discourse that has relegated non-sciences to the intellectual margins in terms of being de-legitimized as valuable knowledge, this occurrence has strengthened disciplinary structures from the natural sciences as superior and then self-legitimizing the hierarchy of disciplines. It is important to reiterate, disciplines have not emerged historically as a supposed ‘naturalness’ of intellectual divisions (Ochieng, p. 69).

Disciplinarity must be analyzed as integral to a framework which looks at epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in the mainstream discourse of transdisciplinarity. In short, disciplines are material and bureaucratic realities of Western universities. In the cogent words of Chilisa Ntseane (2010) “Western people are heard and written about” (p. 618). Disciplinary compartmentalization did not arise ‘naturally’, but rather disciplines and their configuration are manifestations of Eurocentric philosophies which underpin dominant premises of what disciplines and knowledge were at particular times. The emergence of disciplinarity—as a value and assumption of curricular organization—serve to strict and maintain rigid boundaries of inquiry, which must be contextualized in particular historically- and culturally- based events and conditions. And, while disciplines did not emerge from a “thoughtful deliberation on the precise dimensions” of what would be regarded as knowledge or disciplines (Ochieng, 2018, p. 66), disciplines as historical processes have been central modern socializing mechanisms by which disciplinarity as an ideology can be linked to epistemological hierarchies that are directly implicated by colonization, capitalism, and to mechanisms of social reproductive ideologies. Further, to give name to the entities which led to the entrenchment of modern disciplinarity is to identify the Global North Atlantic societies (Ochieng, p. 63).

DISCIPLINARY HEGEMONY

Disciplinary hegemony offers a viable source of explanation as to how the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse and history telling may be occurring, exacerbated, and legitimized in relation to the organization that disciplines establish. Specifically, I employ conceptualization of disciplinary hegemony for a twofold reasons: (1) to apply these concepts in a historical understanding of how certain intellectual inquiries and subjects came to be divided, consumed, and organized hierarchically, and (2) as a conceptual

partner of the decolonial imaginary in which the analytics used by critical scholars in the field of Ethnic Studies may be included in their emergence in academia. This discussion of disciplinarity as a historical process and as informed through hegemonic ideologies begins to inform our understanding of the ways in which historicization of knowledge production and the elevation of certain disciplines have created an intellectual landscape that has uplifted a certain epistemology and intellectual tradition at the expense and at the inferiorization of other epistemologies and traditions. More specifically, this chapter argues that the Western US-based academy provides the necessary context and controlling mechanism for the epistemic erasure of social sciences, humanities, and Ethnic Studies, which largely house critical and decolonial scholars. This intricacy offers detail to how critical and decolonial scholars predate contemporary transdisciplinary discourse and research.

Ideological hegemony as worked by Antonio Gramsci (1992) in *Prison Notebooks*, refers to the dynamics of hegemony incorporated by coercive and consensual relationships of power, communication technologies, and ideologies of dominance. Briefly, I describe the characteristics, interplay, and scope of ideology and hegemony: *hegemony* as worked by Gramsci (1992) is a form of domination with an analytic scope toward the societal level, which uses *ideology* as a mechanism of control/domination; and, *ideology* as worked by Louis Althusser (2006), coupled with the notion of *ideological state apparatus* operate as an mechanism of *hegemony* (a system of ideas and ideals in economic, political, and social forms) *encompassing social institutions and political/state structures* (Stoddart, 2007). For Foucault, power and knowledge are inseparable (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2014) through which knowledge is created by discourse and is, in turn, impacted by power (Foucault, 1991). Ben Agger's (1991) extension of hegemony into the notion of "disciplinary hegemony" is a valuable analytic to look at how and upon which conditions have

critical and decolonial scholars have been erased through mainstream conversations of transdisciplinarity. The following will trace the scholarship which has described and expanded on the ways in which hegemonic forms of knowledge continue to be embedded in social, political, and economic structures, resulting in a persistent *epistemic erasure*. It will be argued that epistemic erasure is one of the resulting conditions of disciplinary hegemony.

Ben Agger (1991) endeavors to create a theoretical formulation of how knowledge industries commodify knowledge, and the ways in which public discourse is produced with intentions of creating a public language that address the asymmetries of power between academia and the public to critically analyze late-capitalism. Agger looks at cultural codes, texts, and practices of the structure of higher education and knowledge production. Agger's entry into critical discourse is through the theoretical underpinnings of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and feminist theory in order to describe what he refers to a "social textual theory of reproduction" through which social science and research and disciplinarity is understood as practices with "metatextual activities which can be opened to deconstruction and critique" (p.xi). Through an analysis of higher education as a knowledge producing institution, Agger (1991) coins the term "disciplinary hegemony" to frame institutions of higher education in a reproductive social process of dominance of knowledge production. Agger goes beyond analysis of sociology textbooks with a foresight of criticism towards the book being mere profit motivation as a driving force of monolithic reproduction to academic articles (Agger, 1989; 1991, p. 111). One of his central arguments stands in the literary analysis of sociological textbooks as undergirding and replicating positivist assumptions through a hidden ideology of "fast capitalism," which has marked textbooks as commodities that are continually replicating the hidden ideology, which reflects dominant ideologies, therein, highlighting a literary practice

of disciplinary hegemony (pp. 106-116). For the purpose of this project, disciplinary hegemony will be utilized as an analytic that sharply details the conditions of disciplinarity explored above into a cohesive framework that extends political/state structures as the authoritative entities of knowledge institutions as well as active forces of epistemic erasure.

Moran (2006) builds on the work of Agger (1991) by contending that disciplinary hegemony is “the systematization of knowledge into discrete, specialized, hierarchical domains” and by claiming that, historically disciplinary hegemony is bolstered by the Enlightenment project that was preoccupied with “classification and codification of knowledge into encyclopedic systems” as a construction of “nature” (p. 74). In this classification, Moran argues that disciplines, therefore were and continued to be about power, hierarchy and control in the organization of knowledge (p. 74). Succinctly, Moran (2006) situates disciplinary hegemony—as a mechanism of epistemological and hierarchical reproduction—and, as an entangled component of the Enlightenment project. In short, contemporary organization of knowledge through disciplinarity have been reflective of hegemonic ideologies, which has run parallel to Enlightenment projects as expanded through racist colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, and has since been sturdily established in academia (Ochieng, 2018; Moran, 2006; Agger, 1991). *In this way, epistemic erasure is both a historical process as well as a self-legitimizing discursive practice.* Furthermore, a foregrounding role in such hegemonic structuring, is the role of neoliberal capitalism and the focus of the Enlightenment project as a key influential predecessor to colonialism (Tricoire, 2017).

NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM AND DISCIPLINARY HEGEMONY

Discourse of disciplinarity must read as existing within neoliberal capitalism, which has served as a potential instigation toward the epistemic absence of critical and decolonial scholars

(Harvey, 2007; Raja, 2013; Van Milders, 2018; Westall, 2015). While I recognize the limited conceptualization, I offer here is far from a full incorporation of a neoliberal critique, I maintain this as a major factor that cannot be misread or overlooked. Specifically, neoliberalism is a set of logics which informs and enforces academic relations through market-based policies (Raja, 2013; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). As a hegemonic mechanism, neoliberalism reinforces hierarchies and authorities of knowledge at the expense of “othered” and non-legitimated knowledges. Furthermore, I briefly trace the ways in which neoliberal capitalism is intermingled with colonial discourse (Mignolo, 2002, 2007, 2014; Quijano, 2000). It will be through this entanglement which will lead toward a decolonial turn in this project *and* to a more full reporting of the historical processes that have undertaken discourse erasure, which directly apply to critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary historicization and discourse.

A Gramscian conceptualization of specifies it as a hegemonic ideology that produces and reproduces legitimization of its own policies—as ‘domination’ and ‘consent’ "which are in practice interdependent and operate on a continuum" (Davies, 2007, p. 70). Further, neoliberalism, as sketched by Rose, O'Malley, and Valverde (2006), who draw on a Foucauldian analysis, understand neoliberalism as a set of rationalities and technologies of state-government assemblages. With this said, it must be formally clarified that academia has seldom endeavors in a “disinterested quest for pure knowledge, but instead has since its inception been closely tied to imperial interests, shaping the criteria for what constitutes legitimate academic knowledge and who is able to produce it (Schwoerer, 2018, p. 58). For this reason, neoliberal trends have become enmeshed on multiple areas in the university as dictated by market relationships which have negatively impacted relationships and subjectivities and critical knowledge production (Schwoerer, 2018). As a hegemonic mechanism, neoliberalism, must also be recognized as a

global hegemonic mechanism functioning through academia, which has exacerbated the epistemic hierarchies and disciplinary hegemony in academia.

Neoliberal capitalism is both preoccupied with hierarchical pedigrees, credentialization, has monetized qualitative data and interpretations, and citation patterns which underwrite the former (Ochieng, 2018, p. 72). Additionally, neoliberal capitalism has been analyzed as inculcating the marketization of knowledge (Trowler, 2001) with the consequence of initiating an academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). That is, in UK and US there have been strident and adamant efforts toward conceiving of students as ‘customers’ and prioritizing efficiency, managerialism, individualized work ethic, competitiveness, and compliance policies that have effortfully been attached pinged to economic security of academics (Cannizzo, 2018; Trowler, 2001). To be sure the “everyday” experiences of neoliberalism must be considered (i.e., knowledge commodification, marketisation, productivity and accountability measures, bureaucratization, economic rationalism and micro-managerialism; Adam, 2012). Through a subtler element, capitalist isolation of labor has in part prompted the efficiencies in divided labor, which are in turn reified through political power, and the resulting disciplinary isolation (both of individual and group) has undergirded “sociological exclusions and epistemic injustices” (Ochieng, 2018, pp. 65-67). Under these circumstances, disciplinary hegemony is characteristic of a modern mechanism of social reproduction emboldened and extended through neoliberal capitalism that both make difficult counter-hegemonic action against rigid disciplinarity as well as reassures the status quo of hierarchical order of knowledge is sustained and legitimized. To clarify, the detailing of neoliberal capitalism as it has developed through academia cannot (nor do I claim) solely explain epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars. In fact, it has been decolonial scholars who have been keen the shortcomings of hegemony-based analytics.

Decolonial scholars have both affirmed the critical analysis of neoliberalism in relation to academia's formulations of knowledge and have valued a nuanced critique of disciplinarity and epistemological rigidity (Grosfoguel, 2012; Maldonado-Torres, 2011; Mignolo, 2013). In addition, decolonial scholars have urged to reorient research with the understanding that “both the pre- and post-neoliberal university is a site of elitism, pain, exclusion, coloniality and Eurocentric thinking” (Cupples and Grosfoguel, 2018, p. 3). It is through this reorienting that we can recall racism, sexism, and classism in academia prior to the timelines of modern neoliberalism. Wherein, we must recognize neoliberal capitalist critique as a single analytic falls short to account for colonial origins and legacies of academia. Epistemic erasure, therefore, cannot be solely accounted for through neoliberal capitalist critique and historical analysis. Capitalism must be recognized to being coupled with colonialism and patriarchy. To be sure, “Legitimizing white middle class heterosexual masculinity, that is, maintaining men's power over women and some men's power over other men, was a central project of early twentieth-century social science (Kimmel, 1993).

Similarly, it will be through this entanglement that I intentionally aim to (re)member the works of critical and decolonial scholars. Additionally, while I do not provide an exhaustive analysis of neoliberal capitalism as a guiding principle of knowledge production in academia, I conjointly consider the ways in which academia at large has feathered ideological dominance and mechanisms of epistemic reproduction, through the saturation of neoliberal mechanisms in institutions of knowledge, specifically the US academy, which provide necessary context to epistemic erasure to humanities and Ethnic Studies scholars broadly as an exacerbating impact of epistemic erasure.

CHAPTER 5: (DE)COLONIALITY

This chapter explicates two necessary directions in relation to the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse: (1) a necessary *decolonial turn* in transdisciplinarity at-large; and (2) a *decolonial turn* in the reading of transdisciplinary history and discourse in this current project. Building off of the political-economy analysis worked by critical scholarship in the previous section, here I point toward the potential of a modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system analysis offered by decolonial scholarship to analyze epistemic erasure (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 215). First, I provide reasoning for reading critical and decolonial scholars in tandem, as the communities subject to epistemic erasure and substantiate the claim that critical and decolonial scholars have engaged in a *longue durée* (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009) as transdisciplinarians, *however* their work is systematically subject to strict disciplinary enforcement and colonial mechanism in academia. To be sure, decolonial thought is not in competition with critical scholarship, but is additive and supplementary in the further analysis of a world-system. Stated alternatively, a critical analysis (Chapter 3) offered greater understanding of how epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars have been systematically erased through disciplinary hegemony and neoliberal capitalist ideologies. A *decolonial analysis* begins to develop an understanding of how epistemic erasure occurs in terms of ‘expansion’ through colonial mechanism which enforce colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy through academia’s entrenched disciplinary hierarchies. In brief, this chapter takes a decolonial approach by understanding two phenomena: (a) the colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy and (b) the entanglement of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy in parallel with modernity/coloniality/decoloniality and its importance in the assessment of epistemic erasure.

I begin from by exploring the political foreground of knowledge production through the lens of decolonial thought. From here I contextualize academia as a state-apparatus enveloped in modern capitalist and colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy and academia's entrenchment of disciplinary hierarchies (Grosfoguel, 2009, 2012; Quijano, 2000; Sithole, 2016; Stein, 2017; Trowler, 2001; Westall, 2015). The prior outline of the disciplinary landscape will be crucial to understand the context by which decolonial projects emerge through an understanding of the *entanglement of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy*. I commit to reading the present epistemic erasure not from a colonial perspective from which it would be marked as a 'lack' of knowledge from these communities and disciplinary hierarchy would be (re)legitimized as a 'natural' and 'just' hierarchy of disciplines; instead I read these epistemic erasures from the voices and theory by and from these intellectual communities as we endeavor to make sense of struggles toward decolonial futures and "space[s] of epistemic diversity where Western social sciences are not the only source of valid knowledge but one among others" (Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 84).

KEY CONCEPTS

First, I clarify what is meant by *decolonial* and attempt to trace the necessary history of a decolonial project as it relates to criticism of Western universities and Eurocentric and hegemonic epistemologies through central critiques of disciplinarity. Because decolonial projects draw on different intellectual histories and emerge in different socio-geographic contexts, I specify through which tradition of thought I trace the meanings of decolonial and decoloniality. I turn to decolonial theories for possibilities in theoretical and articulative dexterity. Namely, I outline decolonial scholars as working broadly in a sphere of research with an interest in economic, political, social, spiritual, educative and decolonial aims, futures and alternatives

(Mignolo, 2011). I approach decolonial thinking as an intellectual paradigm and as a “giro” or organization tool (Escobar, 2007a). A decolonial turn in this thesis, I argue, is necessary in transdisciplinary discourse and in the reading of transdisciplinary historiography, aims to denaturalize the sole reliance and ascendance of a Western intellectual canon in "questioning the disciplinary matrix established in modernity" (Tlostanova, 2010, p. 24). In fact, as a critique of critical scholarship, there are limitations through critical scholarship in the conceptualization and contact with the undergirding logic of modernity and its disciplinarity in the “Western monopoly of knowledge” (Tlostanova, 2010; Mignolo, 2002; Grosfoguel, 2007). Forthright, critical scholarship is not irrelevant—it is precisely in the act of attempting to make universal claims of knowledge based on a political-economy analysis and hegemony theories which are critiqued by decolonial scholars. In fact, critical scholarship has been crucial to beginning a revisionist history of disciplinarity; however, to this point a decolonial turn is necessary in interrogating the very logic of coloniality/modernity.

A decolonial tradition can be outlined as confrontations with colonial modernity and neoliberal projects as they emanate internationally from the modern (read modernity) configurations through the notion of a coloniality of being (Mignolo, 2009). Mignolo (2011) argues that decolonial projects must begin through an understanding that the processes of colonialism and modernity have operated in tandem to construct a '*coloniality of being*'. The coloniality of being and knowledge, Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues, is the entanglement of epistemic ‘breaks’ and paradigmatic changes which can be traced philosophically with origins in European Renaissance and Enlightenment projects. This is to say, coloniality is entangled in the modern nation-state by way of European colonial legacies (Quijano, 2000). To be sure, coloniality differs from colonialism, as stated by Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007):

Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality...refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and everyday (p. 243).

In fact, decolonial projects have existed since the resistance of colonial arrival globally (Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2013; Wynter, 2003). Decoloniality redirects this project and signifies toward an “analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to build a world in which many worlds will coexist” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 54). Further, decoloniality in comparison with decolonial thinking and doing, orients toward a triad framework of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality to indicate that all facets of these framework are being addressed and considered in political and epistemic projects (Mignolo, 2011). Modernity as a project of European Enlightenment coupled with the imperial *telos* of colonization and civilization the rest of the world (Mignolo, 2013; Wynter, 2003). Decoloniality as the reorientation of colonialism to understand it as ‘seeped’ into the world in multiple ways and by multiple means (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wynter, 2003). And, coloniality as the rubric and logic that mediates, legitimizes, and has a stronghold on global epistemic and material supremacy/legitimacy through forms of colonialism in the contemporary (Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2013; Wynter, 2003).

This articulation of a “decolonial option” is taken up in this thesis. By way of examination geared toward academia and disciplinarity, I will now turn to analyzing the entrenchment of disciplinary hierarchies and colonial rubrics of knowledge legitimacy through these former conceptualizations which serve as valuable points of departure toward decolonial thinking in/toward academia. I focus on two dimensions that hold particular strength toward the conceptualization and assessment of knowledge production and epistemic erasure through a decolonial framework by way of employing (a) *Eurocentrism as paradigm* to analyze knowledge production historically with contemporary consequences and (b) the *Westernized University* as one institution of reproduction that (re)legitimizes Western intellectual canon. I do not intend to exhaust decolonial possibilities from this discussion. Instead, I prioritize the confrontation with colonialism that decolonial theory provides in seeing epistemological imperialism as a deep element of the civilizing project of the West (Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres, Saldívar, 2015). To reiterate, by reading critical and decolonial scholarship in parallel, I attempt to both describe the historical processes in the background of epistemic erasure as well as explore the subordination of divergent schools of thought and the epistemologies conceptualized as the ‘other’, wherein we are also capable of accounting for their absence as well as analyzing the continued role of colonialism in epistemological presence and erasure. *A decolonial analysis* will develop our understanding of how in terms of ‘expansion’ and colonial mechanism which enforce epistemic erasure.

EUROCENTRISM AS INTELLECTUAL PARADIGM AND THE WESTERN CANON OF DISCIPLINARITY

Eurocentrism is a global discourse/ideology operating as an epistemological hierarchy (Grosfoguel, 2012). Eurocentrism has been a paradigm for interpreting reality established through/by European and Western historical notions of linear progress and their civilization as

the intellectual pinnacle and ethical superiority (Quijano, 2000) Through these dual projects, specifically, the knowledges and histories of Western males have been privileged and held as the superiors through the basis of “scientific rationality” and “rule of law” (Grosfoguel, 2012; Maeso & Araújo, 2015, p. 1). Grosfoguel (2012) employs the term Westernized University to make claim that the vast majority of the social sciences and humanities privileges the Eurocentric intellectual canon from male thinkers from the narrow scope of five countries, because one does not need to occupy a Western geographic position to directly attain a Western education that induces Eurocentrism (p. 29). As an epistemic standpoint, Eurocentrism is institutionalized globally through “Westernized University.” In this process and condition, the murdering of people is tied to the murdering of epistemologies (de Sousa Santos, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2012).

Grosfoguel (2012) builds on this notion of epistemological inferiorization and erasure of people by tracking four genocides or what he terms ‘epistemicides’ (read epistemic genocides) in the 16th century (as the formative age of Modernity), which he argues created “racial/patriarchal power and epistemic structures on a world scale entangled with processes of global capitalist accumulation” (p. 39). To this, he states that Westernized Universities have “internalized” these racist/sexist epistemologies as commonsense, by which five countries (France, England, Germany, Italy, and the US) have monopolized and placed their intellectual canon as superior to the colonial “other” (Grosfoguel, 2012). Vandana Shiva (1993) rewords this “monopoly” as the “monocultures of the mind” to describe Western imperial knowledge as totalitarian and epistemically nondemocratic (p. 176). Simultaneous with his assessment of Eurocentric racist/patriarchal epistemic project through universities, he interrogates Cartesian philosophy as integral toward projects of knowledge production in the West and soon Westernized. Namely, he argues that a Cartesian legacy has laid out the criteria of validity for science and knowledge

production at large (Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 27); and, since Cartesian philosophy was constructed as a “neutral,” “God-eye view” of the world and “‘unbiased’ knowledge unconditioned by its [lack of] body and space location,” the resulting consequence was a *universalism* of knowledge that both justified European colonialism and their epistemic superiority (p. 27).

As an outgrowth of this historical process and condition, he makes clear that when Descartes wrote ‘I think, therefore I am’, by way of colonialism and the cases of epistemicides he traces, he makes clear the assertion that in the common sense of the 16th century, this “‘I’ could neither be an African, nor an Indigenous Person, nor a Muslim, nor a Jew, nor a woman (Western or non-Western)....this ‘I’ was a Western man” (p. 39). In this way, epistemic erasures and epistemic inferiorization are a profuse consequence of Westernized Universities, but also a systematic, embedded, and an intrinsic value of Eurocentrism and the Westernized University. To be sure the spread of Western epistemology and its impact to knowledge configuration, must begin with the understanding that colonization as epistemic inferiorization and genocide of the ‘other’ (de Sousa Santos, 2015; Saldívar-Hull, 2000; Shiva, 1993; Sithole, 2016; Stein, 2017). Through such forms of colonization, Gayatri Spivak has identified “othering” of knowledge and people occurs—the social discrediting exclusion/marginalization of a group (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2003; Spivak, 1988). In fact, "othering" ideologies are consequential to the visibility of non-Western peoples (Mohanty, 1988). Coupled with analysis of colonization as guided by philosophies of perpetual hierarchy and domination, the ‘other’ continues to be impacted by coloniality, for instance by what is knowledge and the employment of different ways of knowing and difference ways of being are designated as legitimate and which are not (de Sousa Santos, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2015; Saldívar-Hull, 2000).

Importantly, “the emergence of difference is not to be situated within the geopolitical expansion of European empires during the 18th and 19th century but within the European encounter with difference in 1492” (Van Milders, 2018, p. 43). To this point, the European construction of modernity was in a conjoined construction of the non-European, thereby, this is the way in which European epistemology is run along spheres of race, gender, class, language, and religion (Van Milders, 2018, p. 44; Quijano, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2009). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) argues that as a direct result of the Conquest of the Americas was the destruction of knowledges alongside the genocides of people—“epistemicide.” Scholars have also given this process and condition the name of “epistemic colonization” (de Sousa Santos, 2015; Gordon, 2006; Lander, 2000). Through this colonization, Western a methodic knowledge production became normative in European universities, and by way epistemicide, made inferior other forms of knowledge production and expression (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p. 433).

THE WESTERNIZED UNIVERSITY AND DISCIPLINARY CONFIGURATION

The project of the Enlightenment—as guided by a philosophical preoccupation of ‘reason’ through Cartesian dualism— was central to the “coloniality” of disciplines such as psychology and the human sciences in the 19th century (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Similarly, it has been argued that the vestiges of colonialism remain integral to contemporary life, by which has gone under the concept of ‘coloniality of being’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). The coloniality of being, power, and knowledge emerged at a global scale since, at least, the 16th century in parallel with European expansion (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Modern formulations and ‘new’ sciences unravel concomitantly with modernity/coloniality through the European Enlightenment and their preoccupations with rationalization and secularization of ideas and institutions (p. 433). This has been crucial to understanding the ways in which contemporary structuring of disciplines have

formed. Eurocentrism has imposed Western knowledge claims globally, by which have controlled scientific validity and their interpretation (Maeso & Araújo, 2015, p. 1).

Central to the European university was the movement toward a secular science and philosophy in 18th century as a pivotal marker toward the change in organization of knowledge, disciplines, and universities (Mignolo, 2009). Additionally, knowledge making in the modern/colonial world rests on the very concept of “modernity” as the means of legitimacy and knowledge historicity (Mignolo, 2009). Succinctly, it has been argued that epistemic and ontological colonization were fundamental mechanisms to the rise of modern social sciences (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Lander, 2000; Mignolo & Escobar, 2010; Quijano, 2000; Walsh, 2007; Wynter, 2003). This has been crucial to understanding the ways in which contemporary structuring of disciplines have formed. Through decolonial analysis, contemporary formulations and ‘new’ sciences emerge entangled with modernity/coloniality through the European Enlightenment and their preoccupations with rationalization and secularization of ideas and institutions (p. 433).

This formulation has led to developed to a process of disciplinary colonization, which “occurs when the fields of knowledge within ethnic studies are divided on the basis of the disciplinary specializations of the human sciences (social sciences and the humanities) and ethnic studies are carried as thinking “on” or “about” rather than thinking “from,” “with” and “alongside” the ethnic/racial groups in question. Instead of producing knowledge from the critical thought created by racialized/inferiorized subjects, these disciplines impose the Western canon of thought and the Western Cartesian “point zero” epistemology” (Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 87). In this way, epistemic erasure as an active neglect of an epistemology that is deemed inferior in the disciplinary hierarchy. This hierarchy is an embedded system that is consequential to the

entangled processes of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Epistemic erasure is, thereby the historically corollary of disciplinary hegemony since the disciplining structuring of the modern academy and the embedded coloniality of being in the modern academy as well as in Western(ized) societies at large (Grosfoguel, 2012).

Many factors have been identified and described as being integral to this conversation; namely, there has been the ascendance of disciplines, thereby, a disciplinary hegemony in the Westernized University that must be contextualized within a neoliberal context that has further exacerbated—through economic and means of policy implementation—the neglect and epistemological absence of knowledges otherwise enforced to the margins and de-legitimation. Further, I have sketched the development and dynamic changes of disciplinary which forebear dominant ideologies and have since been further entrenched in the intellectual landscape of western universities. That is, the contemporary fortification of disciplines as discreet, ‘objective’ divisions which have emerged through virtue or disciplinary superiority and a hierarchy of ‘nature’ has been challenged; and, instead a rather complex, sometimes accidental, however surely contextualized and political and economically situated and implicated change of disciplinarity is offered. In short, I have focused on the underwritten dominant ideologies and hegemonic mechanisms as read in parallel and intertwined with the emerging entrenchment of disciplinarity, but it would be remiss to discount the powerful impact the neoliberal capitalism and its enforcement on the global labor order and to varying facets of intellectual practice.

Through an analysis of epistemic erasure through academic disciplinarity as it is interwoven through a coloniality of being, I have attempted to explore some of the ways in which epistemic erasure is reproduced, and how this might be visible in contemporary case of transdisciplinary discourse and historicization. To be sure, coloniality is entangled in the

Westernized University. That is, colonial discourse cannot be regarded outside or peripheral to the discourse and knowledge producing of academia contemporarily. Decolonial scholars have analyzed epistemic erasure through the conceptualization of the (1) Eurocentric paradigm, the interpretation of reality is coded through the paired project of Modernity (colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and racism; Maeso & Araújo, 2015), “in which academic narratives and methodologies are embedded in the naturalization of reproduction of racism” (p. 5). Additionally, (2) the historical roots of the contemporary knowledge configurations are reproduced through the Westernized university (Grosfoguel, 2015), which “renders other Western and non-Western knowledges inferior and outside the acceptable canon of thought” (p. 5).

Through these coupled analytics, decolonial scholars have regarded epistemic erasure as a condition and direct implication of Eurocentric racist/patriarchal epistemic projects that have been embedded in colonial discourse and a colonality of being, which authorizes and legitimizes knowledge production. The consequence of epistemic erasure at large, is that the absence of critical and decolonial scholarship simultaneously neglects the central critiques of the western canon of thought that neglects it. Additionally, epistemic erasure often obfuscates resistance scholarship and resistant work. To that extent, the normative hierarchies of legitimized knowledge production is reified. I argue that transdisciplinarity, as part of the reason for the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars, have eschewed the potential of the very theory and practice of transdisciplinarity through an analytic focus that remains incoherent to the very negation to critique and confront the western intellectual canon.

CHAPTER 6: TRANSDISCIPLINARY WORK BY CRITICAL AND DECOLONIAL SCHOLARS

*“It is not a question of you believing in my own truth or someone else’s;
I’m simply saying that I have the right to my own memory, as do my people”
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, interviewed by Juan Jesús Aznárez, 1999 in Aznárez, 2001, p. 111*

This chapter builds directly on a revision to include critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse. Pérez’s decolonial imaginary has been deployed in the previous sections, because it offers historical ‘in-between’ spaces for reconciliation and for alternative futures while being attentive to epistemic erasure. With this in mind, I go on to locate, describe, and detail examples of transdisciplinarity in critical and decolonial traditions as a means of remembering and actively working against embedded colonial logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012). Additionally, this chapter does not merely recall transdisciplinarity work by critical and decolonial scholars for the sake of remembrance; instead, these explorations will be used as points of departure to consider the ways in which we may reconstitute transdisciplinarity through decolonial and revolutionary principles in subsequent section. I dedicate this recovery and excavation of transdisciplinary knowledge (Pérez, 1999) to remembering transdisciplinary work by critical and decolonial scholars from those who find allegiances in Africana Studies and Chicana/Latina Studies. I trace several exemplary transdisciplinarity with the intention to connect these practices and research methodologies as part of a longer history and as a long-standing scholarly tradition of transdisciplinarity. In sum, this chapter purposefully illuminates transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars for the purpose of demonstrating an intellectual dexterity that stands in opposition to Eurocentric ideologies of knowledge legitimacy, and more importantly, communities of scholarship that resist the epistemic erasure these works and scholars encounter.

To be sure, coloniality/modernity has profoundly impacted what it means to human for colonized peoples and more it has established other knowledge forms as delegitimate if violently threatened. For instance, in Rigoberta Menchú's comment, she has engaged in argument of knowledge dissemination, particularly through narratives. She speaks to a circumstance in where narratives, through colonial and Western research gazes have often conceived as 'too' subjective and thus invalid and suspicious (p. 18, Maeso and Araújo, 2015). The epistemological order she speaks to is clear, a Western Eurocentric academia with legitimizing mechanism of knowledge. There is also affirmation in these words that speak to memory and an active assertion of value to different communities, specifically colonized subject. Rigoberta Menchú's voiced declaration offers as a prelude to a decolonial excavation of transdisciplinarity in critical and decolonial intellectual traditions.

PART I: ORIENTING CRITICAL AND DECOLONIAL TRADITIONS

Critical and decolonial scholars have been left out of the mainstream conversations on transdisciplinarity, this, however, is not of a lack of transdisciplinary work emanating from critical and decolonial scholars. On the contrary, critical and decolonial scholars have regularly and with depth held transdisciplinarity at the forefront of their scholarship. Similar to the definitions of transdisciplinarity, I am careful to attend to the contention that delineating intellectual spheres and knowledge boundaries of these scholars. First, I attend to the emergence of Ethnic Studies. I situate Ethnic Studies as a revolutionary student-community based movement in direct confrontation with institutions of colonialism and racist capitalism. Notably, I do not choose to conflate, nor focus on simply critical scholars or mindedly decolonial scholars for their constant traversing and disobedience to simple conceptualizations of their own work—scholarship and personal. Through tracing thematic practices in Ethnic Studies, and particularly

Africana Studies and Chicana/Latina Studies, I intend to connect these practices as part of a longer history and framing of transdisciplinarity in regards to Ethnic Studies is described as a long-standing scholarly tradition and intellectual dexterity. And, too, a single notion of transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars or the field of Ethnic Studies is not intended to replace one elite hegemonic disciplinarity with another elitist conception. I make explicit connections to the ways in which researchers could have implemented Ethnic Studies transdisciplinary methods and theories in their research and praxis, I instead highlight an ‘erased’ history of transdisciplinarity of Ethnic Studies in hopes of writing into being a subaltern history that exists, however, often silenced and/or disregarded.

It is key to note a critical and decolonial project as seeking liberation of knowledge and materiality in several realms—epistemic, social, political, economic, and spiritual. Thereby, critical and decolonial scholars do not emerge directly from academic and disciplinary outlooks (Chabram-Dernersesian, 2006; Giroux and Giroux, 2004; Villenas, 2010). Rather, one reading a critical and decolonial scholarship materializing in academia in the US is under the name of Ethnic Studies in student- and community-led movements of the 1960s and 70s, which can be regarded as transdisciplinary (Giroux and Giroux, 2004). It is important to remember that the narratives of Ethnic Studies, disciplinary history are not linear nor discrete, they have developed in a complex zigzag manner (as a movements) —the following will seek to clarify and trace these histories in order to situate the current question of epistemic erasure in transdisciplinary discourse. For this reason, it is vital to situate critical, decolonial, and Ethnic Studies scholars (which will henceforth, be used interchangeably) as directly challenging Eurocentric knowledge production of the Western canon.

Indeed, many of the social movements of the 1960's and 70s can be read as decolonial in their direct confrontation and demands for de-, anti-colonial spaces of epistemic plurality outside of the Eurocentric canon (Dietz, 2009; Gutierrez, 1994; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Pérez, 1999; Maldonado-Torres, 2011, Villenas, 2010). I consider Ethnic Studies movements in search of inclusion in the Western university, while at the same time being critical of its Eurocentric configuration of knowledge privileging. This brief history of Ethnic Studies movements will be then read in comparison to the previous century's development of disciplinarity, from which there has been an attempt to construct Ethnic Studies as a discrete discipline under which many critical and decolonial scholars would be housed. However, this has been surely resisted. And, through this resistance, critical and decolonial scholars have sought to create robust analytics and critiques of the very structured that they have infiltrated.

Ethnic Studies as "Discipline" and as Critical and Decolonial Scholars

First, I must address a contradictory status of Ethnic Studies in constant struggle and of legitimacy, solidarity, and alliance. At one angle, these scholars are entangled in a complex context of neoliberal knowledge productions which configure and vet knowledge through neoliberal funding strategies and policy research initiatives in universities and global organizations (Hearn, 2016; Plehwe, 2007; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In another aspect, these scholars exist in hegemonic discourses and a colonial organizational machinery as they attempt to enact decolonial epistemologies (Grosfoguel, 2012). To this point, Western epistemology has taken on normative status in the academy and has actively subordinated non-Western epistemologies (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). It is from this recognition that decolonial scholars have cultivated and deployed decolonial thinking (Mignolo, 2002, 2007) as means of articulating liberatory and emancipatory ways of knowing and being. Markedly, the decolonial turn signals

toward a critique of dominant Western research paradigms and simultaneously is an aim to build a decolonial epistemic orientation (Grosfoguel, 2011) with direct intentions to strategically incorporate Indigenous and non-canonical knowledges while critically reevaluating western knowledge in order to commit to a process of decolonizing research methodologies and address pertinent social issues at a local and global scale (Walsh, 2007; Harding, 2008; Escobar, 2007b). In short, a decolonial critique, particularly from Latin American traditions provoke the necessity to transcend and utilize decolonial thought in confrontation with Western canonical thought and epistemology (Grosfoguel, 2011). However, in traditional Western intellectual circles, transcendence and the mission of de-colonization has yet to be recognized, no less realized. It is in this lack of critique toward Western epistemological dominance and the competing intellectual traditions in academia that contextualizes the following historical work.

I invoke *one* reading of the history of ‘Ethnic Studies’ as an emergent study in the university. Namely, the purpose for doing so is to begin to recognize that Ethnic Studies has, since its inception, been in confrontation and competition with Eurocentric epistemologies and the ways in which knowledge has been organized and validated. The following description of Ethnic Studies movements and the centrality of a colonial and Eurocentric critique in these movements cannot be downplayed as secondary features of an insurgent epistemic project. Intentionally, I aim to include this history of Ethnic Studies as an alternative narrative of epistemological representation in the university that must be read concurrent to transdisciplinary discourse which draws heavily in the normative historiography of disciplines. Thereby, it is necessary, once again to interrogate the root subject who has claimed authority of the historiography. Pérez (1999) says it succinctly, “the language of historiography is enunciated and repeated, authorizing systems of thought, which are not tested; nor do they interrogate the subject

who utters privilege and authority" (p. 32). It is through necessity of articulating this narrative of Ethnic Studies, that wholly situates the scholars who I intend to locate in the contemporary epistemic erasure in transdisciplinary historiographical discourse.

The debate to consider Ethnic Studies as “discipline” is wide and contentious (Gutierrez, 1994; Hu-DeHart, 1993). Some argue that to make this claim may result in Ethnic Studies becoming subsumed into the "dominant European orthodoxy" and for scholars to not account for race as a causal factor to the development of the US (Hu-DeHart, 1993, p. 54). Others may make claim that by the very existence in a Eurocentric university, it cannot be subversive to the mechanisms of Eurocentric epistemology. I am cautious of both of these concerns. To the extent that this project seeks to invoke this debate, I take note that despite having a “disciplinary” designation or not, embedded colonial logics of Westernized Universities (Grosfoguel, 2012) as the basis of dividing knowledge production to reinforce colonial hierarchies of valid knowledge—continues to manifest (Grosfoguel, 2012, pp. 87-88). Thereby, in an attempt to anticipate critique of Ethnic Studies as a legitimate “discipline” or not, it is necessary to reconsider whether or not Ethnic Studies should be a discipline, and even more central, it is important to consider whether disciplinarity as an *end* has any potency as a counter hegemonic project when the very conceptualization of singular specialization, works in the favor of reinforcing colonial hierarchies of knowledge.

We must recognize Ethnic Studies as existing in constant tension in the university—one from which is both advantageous at times and potentially defeating in others. Also, I must recognize that while I invoke language such as *disciplinary hegemony*, this conceptual analytic must *not* be read as a means to seemingly consume Ethnic Studies and critical and decolonial scholars as their *raison d'etre* disciplinarians—this would be a misrepresentation. But, rather to

indicate disciplinarity is to employ useful tool toward cogently conceptualizing knowledge configuration in academia while also attending to the complexity of discourse at hand given competing values and paradigms.

Critical and Decolonial Thought in Ethnic Studies Movements

The 1960s political landscape witnessed wide and mass social movements with diversity of ideological resistance, an array of different strategies, and a diversity of claims, demands, and social and cultural critiques. We must not conceive of the 1960 or 70s as encompassing a singular movement with disconnected demands and political commitments. In fact, *'the'* Civil Rights Movement can be read as overlapped and multiple women's liberations movements, Black, brown, and Indigenous movements, Anti-Vietnam War protests and a variety demonstration nationwide (Carbado, 2017; Dryden and Walker, 1993; Lawson, 1991; Le Espiritu, 1999). These movements and protests, while regarded as occurring in and against the US nation-state, they created and nourished international solidarities and global critiques (i.e., Third World peoples as a movement and critique against colonialism and colonial powers, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America). It is these movements which have been, on reflection, transdisciplinary (Burawoy, 2008; Giroux and Giroux, 2004).

In 1968, The Third World Liberation Front (Chung and Chang, 1998; Umemoto, 1989) formed at San Francisco State College. Forming a coalition of ethnically and racially different groups (Black Students Union, Latin American Students Organization, Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE), Filipino-American Students Organization, Asian American Political Alliance, El Renacimiento; a Mexican American student organization) demanded changes toward higher education and simultaneously protesting international oppression, especially of imperial violence and international occupation and intervention in the Vietnam War

(Chung and Chang, 1998; Umemoto, 1989) Later on, as a direct result of student and community activism (including building occupations, hunger strikes, sit ins, etc.; see Fenderson, Stewart and Baumgartner, 2012). Ethnic Studies programs were established at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley initially. In addition to San Francisco based programs, similar Ethnic Studies movements spread across the US. Students of color and whites demanded curricular, administrative, and organizational changes to higher education, of which, the establishment of Ethnic Studies was central to many of these movements as they pushed for curriculum inclusion by historically oppressed cultures, knowledges, perspectives, and voices (Chung and Chang, 1998; Giroux and Giroux, 2004; Umemoto, 1989).

Additionally, these Ethnic Studies movements can be read as emerging in tandem, in solidarity, and through learning from and alongside Black nationalist strategies and movements aimed toward a broad self-determined insurgency of an Africa-centered, Afrocentric, African-worldview in academia and society at large. Such Afrocentric epistemological orientations then withstood "institutionalization" into academia (Maat & Carroll, 2012) as Africana-, African American, and Black Studies in universities. Other programs would also be 'institutionalized' and go by the names Ethnic Studies or Cultural studies, and Native Studies, Native American Studies; Indigenous Studies, Chicana/o, Latino/a, Latinx Studies (Chabram-Dernersesian, 2006; Hu-DeHart, 1993, 1995; Stauss, 2002). These 'Studies', it is important to state outwardly emerged through mass mobilization in tandem with antiwar activism and mobilization of the 1960s and 1970s (Chabram-Dernersesian, 2006; Andersen, 2009). To be sure, these have been a series of transdisciplinary movements (Readings, 1996; Giroux and Giroux, 2004) in that they have challenged "how knowledge has been historically produced, hierarchically ordered, and

used within discipline to sanction particular forms of authority and exclusion" and by "challenging the established academic divisions of labor" (Giroux and Giroux, 2004, p. 102).

Confronting Eurocentrism from Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies has been in a constant tension of expansion and competing efforts to diminish the existing programs in higher education and in throughout K12 (Joseph and Soto, 2010). It is also key to note that while programs are in place and are guided by similar theories, methodologies, epistemological, and political commitments, there is constant negotiation, contention, critique, and adaptations within and between Ethnic Studies programs. As this is the case for many, if not all disciplines. It is also considerate to note that schooling curriculum and societal popular thought is still dominated by Eurocentric ideologies (Araújo & Maeso, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2012; Lowy, 1995). Stated outright, Eurocentrism describes at the least, several interlocked ideologies that have been embedded and reproduce, particularly by 'social sciences' through its imposition of: 1) historiography methods (European dominance/imperialism) 2) "parochiality of its universalism" (universal applications of singular scientifically 'discovered' truths and a Newtonian-Cartesian science) 3) assumptions about Western Civilization (belief of an 'uncivilized' non-European peoples) 4) Orientalism (civilizing the 'other' toward; Western-Oriental) 5) theory of progress (European Enlightenment project; inevitability of progress (the present) through the sciences) (Wallerstein, 1997, p. 169). These ideologies are confronted outright by an Ethnic Studies critique which have ignored, devalued, and disregarded non-Eurocentric viewpoints, knowledges, epistemologies, subjectivities, and voices (Araújo and Maeso, 2015). Grosfoguel, 2012; Lowy, 1995). Ethnic studies emerged through activism at the university level in the US, and thus is inextricably connected to the historical forces and material

and higher education in the US; which is formulated upon historical presence of different groups in the US perceived as threats and detriments to US society (Grosfoguel, 2012)

The purpose of this research is not to insist on a single reading of history that situates critical and decolonial scholars as simply passive subjugated groups nor do I intend to offer a simplistic request that mainstream transdisciplinary discourse merely offer they recognition of critical and decolonial scholars as integral to transdisciplinary historiography. To this latter point, I want to make clear that a liberal politics of recognition is not my argument. Instead I contend a reorientation and ardent interrogation of mainstream transdisciplinary discourse thrive decolonial and revolutionary theories and principles. Case in point, if scholars merely acknowledge capitalism as an integral driving force to the strict disciplinarity in academia, this does nothing to address the embedded colonial ideologies governing the paradigm of research itself. To consider the predating of Ethnic Studies as transdisciplinary efforts is to acknowledge the movements of Ethnic Studies and movements generated through communal struggles as also transdisciplinary. I offer an indication of this transdisciplinarity.

Multicultural movements of the mid twentieth century in the US were grounded in part by a “politics of difference,” and by claiming epistemological alliance with turns of “postmodern” and “post structuralist” philosophies (Dietz, 2009). Briefly stated, multiculturalism went through a complex process of “institutionalization,” “academization,” and “discursive domestication” as it was exposed to greater exposure in academia and society (for further reading: Dietz, 2009). As it became established with social sciences and humanities “ethnic studies” and “cultural studies” emerged in different social contexts and academic discourses (Dietz, 2009, pp. 38-43). The academization of Ethnic Studies occurs inside the academy (Dietz, 2009). Dietz distinguishes two simultaneous factors impacting the integration of multiculturalism

via Ethnic Studies. First, is the universities somewhat attraction “toward the idea of moving away from the rigid disciplinary structure” by creating multidisciplinary and field studies (Gutierrez,1994).

Schools and universities during these social movements were seen as “powerful symbols and bastions of the status quo that had participated in the oppression of ethnic groups. They were consequently viewed as potentially powerful vehicles that could play a pivotal role in their liberation” (Banks 1986, 9). Ethnic studies as an ‘epistemic insurgency’ (Grosfoguel, 2012) was instrumental in creating spaces of critique of Eurocentric epistemologies in universities (Grosfoguel, 2008) in contrast to the Eurocentric epistemologies, which had positioned the “other” as “an object rather than as a knowledge-producing subject” (2012, p. 81). Notably, Ethnic Studies begins with grassroots organizing and community building by which it developed its central values. Taken together, Ethnic Studies begins from communal traditions of social, political, and economic justice by which it then began to gain recognition in formal educative spaces, initially in higher education and later in K12 schools. This is a different path that most recognized disciplines have (Goldberg, 1994; Grosfoguel, 2012).

Ethnic Studies, Women Studies, Queer Studies, etc., were founded within the United States’ Westernized universities, in response to the demands by people of color, women and gay/lesbian movements (Carbado, 2017; Chung & Chang, 1998; Dryden and Walker, 1993; Lawson, 1991; Le Espiritu, 1999; Umemoto, 1989). The goal of these programs is not to produce a particular knowledge that would be ‘added on’ in order to supplement the social sciences and humanities today, but to produce a decolonial social science and humanities, because, as Grosfoguel interprets the aims, these Studies would engage in epistemic diversity as the means of knowledge production (Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 84). Scholars of Ethnic Studies may initially see

similarities between the mainstream characterizations of transdisciplinarity and their own scholarship, however, subtly. *First*, I map the ways in which critical and decolonial scholars have been systematically excluded, and epistemically erased, from transdisciplinary discourse and the guiding historiography that has been told by the mainstream discourse. I draw on the movement for Ethnic Studies as a signpost for an “insurgency” in the Westernized university, that serves as a potent intellectual tradition from which Africana Studies and Chicana Studies emerge in the US, *and* how they can be situated within and between the academia as the Western epistemological hegemonic structure.

In the same vein, Maldonado-Torres (2012) argues that Ethnic Studies is “one of the most important interventions in academic settings” because “it challenges the division of knowledge based on the primacy of explanation and understanding and the European and U.S. American oriented humanities and sciences” (p. 96). Jiwani and Richardson (2017) highlight the potential power of Ethnic Studies in university spaces as holding an explicitly critical and transformative agenda and as an attempt to empower communities from which ethnic studies emanates, which can then be used to transform humanities and social sciences at large in universities.

The discussion by Grosfoguel (2012) and Maldonado-Torres (2012) points to Ethnic Studies as an inextricable entity contextualization within Westernized Universities, which are notable vestiges and living structures of colonialism; and, as structures of domination and hegemony. Ethnic Studies has been a philosophical, epistemological, and a transformative project against these forces, while at the same time working with and between constrictive powers. With this in mind, it is possible to tease out what and how colonialism has embedded itself into the university and the structure of how a university operates (i.e., disciplines, in part, aside from local and national markets, etc.). With the intention to connect these practices and

research methodologies as part of a longer history and as a long-standing scholarly tradition and intellectual dexterity that stands in opposition to dominant western ideology and epistemology. The outlined history above is offered as a kind of counter narrative to the seemingly “natural” division of knowledge and to the elite eminent landscape from which much of Western knowledge is deemed legitimate. To these dominant notions of disciplinary origin is complicated through invocations of Ethnic Studies movements and previous community-based efforts as transdisciplinary.

PART II: TRANSDISCIPLINARITY IN AFRICANA STUDIES AND CHICANX/LATINX STUDIES

This chapter will momentarily depart the main analysis of epistemic erasure to recall, (re)member, and reclaim the forgotten histories of transdisciplinarity, specifically as it relates to Africana Studies and Chicanx Studies. As a dual endeavor, I have attempted to both predate critical and decolonial scholars as transdisciplinary intellectuals, and these sections will serve to recognize their epistemic erasure from mainstream transdisciplinary discourse.

Africana and African-American Studies' Transdisciplinarity

Here, I outline several the ways in which Africana Studies scholars have both (a) used mainstream transdisciplinary discourse as a point of departure, to consider points of turning to a social justice model (Pratt-Clarke, 2010) and have deployed (b) creolization as a transdisciplinary methodology to “creolize the [Western] canon” (Monahan, 2017, p. 7). Namely, this latter point will be recognized as a potential decolonial strategy of transdisciplinary research. In the excavating transdisciplinarity through Africana Studies, transdisciplinary work must be reiterated to not a monolithic study. Many Africana Studies scholars have recognized their work as a resistance to the strict “disciplinary boundaries” of academia (Lyne & Johnson, 2004, p.xvi), which has been notable through deep transdisciplinary visibilities of Black, Africana, Caribbean

scholars engaged with this mode of work. I highlight two ‘uses’ of transdisciplinarity as a methodology by which scholars have endeavored to deploy transdisciplinary thinking: (a) by invoking the historical scholars who they characterize as transdisciplinary and (b) by drawing from methodologies in which the project of transdisciplinarity runs parallels with other research efforts (i.e., Creole theory; creolization of the humanities).

LaRose Parris (2018) embraces a wide-ranging conception of transdisciplinarity as a strategy to *creolize the humanities* through the engagement of the scholarship of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon who, she argues, offer insights into power relations and the dialectics of oppression and resistance (p. 32). In fact, Parris follows in an intellectual tradition (Gordon, 2014) which utilizes *creolization and transdisciplinarity* interchangeably as a way of critiquing and moving beyond strict disciplinary rubrics. She promotes creolization and transdisciplinarity as viable means of critiquing and challenging hegemonic thought, ‘reviving’ the humanities, and promoting critical pedagogy in the academy. She refers to creolization as a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural blending process that occurred among indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, indentured Asian and European laborers, and European planters during Western modernity in the Americas from the late fifteenth century onward. Though creolization denotes both a history of deracination and rupture, it simultaneously connotes a distinct New World culture marked by adaptability and innovation that produced unprecedented cultural productions that, although ostensibly heretical, emerged among divergent groups of people occupying seemingly stratified racial hierarchies and class populations (Parris, 2018, pp. 32-33; Gordon, 2014).

Parris (2018) goes on to employ creolization by highlighting the work of Frederick Douglass and re-characterizes Douglas as a *transdisciplinary thinker/scholar* whose scholarship

has had transdisciplinary influence in Africana Studies, Sociology, Philosophies among other disciplines. She also traces profound works such as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) by Du Bois and Ida B. Wells-Barnett's *A Red Record* (1895), as rightfully transdisciplinary works through their existence and influence through multiple disciplines and emerging from the lives of people who were also engaged in multiple, intersecting, and complexly overlapping schools of thought (Parris, 2018). These texts are often, in fact, recalled as fundamental texts to Critical Race Theory and Africana Studies, at large.

Parris make claim of other scholars who have worked within a transdisciplinary paradigm: Edward Blyden, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois, and C.L.R. James. Parris asserts these scholars' *transdisciplinary methods* to be integral in revealing Western hegemonic domination which perpetuated the enslavement, colonization, and subsequent socioeconomic and political oppression of Africana peoples (p. 36). For Parris (2018), transdisciplinarity is optimally conceived as a transgressive and boundary-rejecting method of inquiry, which is evident in both the lived experiences of the scholars as well as the wide-reaching influence of their scholarship as it refuses to be narrowly defined.

Another example of transdisciplinarity in Africana Studies can be recognized in the work of Reiland Rabaka (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2017) who has been instrumental and ground-'recovering' in his efforts to identify the transdisciplinarity of Africana *organic intellectual activists* from history with the explicit intention of encouraging contemporary Africana critical scholars to engage with the often-neglected histories and experiences of Black/Africana critical revolutionary intellectuals. Rabaka (2006) has conceptualized the works of Frederick Douglass' and W.E.B Du Bois as integral to the intellectual historicization of Africana studies, because

they have created the necessary groundwork (through transdisciplinary means) to Africana Studies, sociology, philosophy, and Critical Race Studies. Rabaka (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010) argues that Du Bois is often incorrectly and narrowly defined as simply ‘being’ and working in “sociology.” Rabaka makes clear that Du Bois’ work goes beyond the finely scripted boundaries that historians often ascribed to Du Bois. In fact, Rabaka (2010) goes on to posit Africana Studies as a “*transdisciplinary human science* that rejects the rules of the *epistemic apartheid* of the European and European American ivory towers of academia” (original italics, p. 21).

Further, Rabaka (2017) coins a useful phrase, “transdisciplinary critical social theorists,” to describe several revolutionary thinkers and theorists who do not and have not conform nor “fit” into the neat compartmentalization of disciplinarity in Western academia (Rabaka, 2007, 2009, 2010). Of the scholars he expands upon as transdisciplinary critical social theorists, Rabaka traces the revolutionary-political-intellectual work specifically of W.E.B. Du Bois and Amilcar Cabral as *transdisciplinarians* (Cabral & Rabaka, 2016). In *Resistance and Decolonization*, Rabaka (2016) intends to avoid simple invocations of Amilcar Cabral as *only* a “military strategist” or *only* a “philosopher” or *only* a “revolutionary.” Rather, Rabaka actively implements *transdisciplinary vocabulary* in describing Cabral as a “transdisciplinary critical social theorist” and:

...even more, he was an extremely innovative and complex *organic intellectual activist* [original italics] whose intellectual history-making dialectical discourse appropriated the wide range of epistemic resources whether from social sciences or the humanities, or the life-worlds and life struggles of the wretched of the earth...these epistemic resources, ...became integral parts of his ever-evolving *weapon of theory* and *intellectual arsenal* [original italics] without any regard whatsoever for the arbitrary and artificial academic

and disciplinary borders and boundaries of Europe's insidious ivory towers and the apartheid-like absurdities of the American academy (p. 19).

Strikingly, *Resistance and Decolonization (2016)*, echoes similar concerns that this thesis claims about the invisibility and epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars with specific relation to Amilcar Cabral. Rabaka (2016) voices his thoughts on this epistemic erasure: "What has long bothered me...is a long-standing tendency to downplay and diminish Cabral's contributions to Africana Studies" and "worst of all, the inclination to render Africana Studies utterly invisible or altogether nonexistent" (p. 17). To this tendency by dominant Eurocentric canon to claim Du Bois as merely a sociologist, Rabaka argues is symptomatic of "disciplinary decadence" as a means of defining Du Bois "in reductive disciplinary terms where his thoughts [are] validated and legitimated only insofar as it can be roguishly reframed and/or forced to fit into the arbitrary and artificial academic confines of this or that decadent discipline" (Rabaka, 2017, p. xix).

LaRose Parris and Reiland Rabaka have sought to identify transdisciplinarity in a long-enduring tradition of Africana Studies and Africana discourse as it emanates from within and outside of the European academia. From the work highlighted, I have largely focused on the scholarship which has aimed to recover and reclaim Africana scholars as influential intellectuals integral to the formalization of Africana Studies. What is more striking is that while these efforts have been generally upheld by Africana scholars prior seldom are they referred or regarded in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse and history.

I have highlighted in Africana Studies both (a) Parris' deployment of creolization as a transdisciplinary methodology and decolonial theory and (b) Rabaka's strident formative language creations of *transdisciplinary critical social theorist-organic intellectual activist and*

Africana Studies as a transdisciplinary human science which push Africana Studies toward revolutionary decolonial and transdisciplinary futures.

In the following sections I employ Rabaka discussion of transdisciplinarity as a particularly cogent, expansive, and exemplary potential definition for transdisciplinarity: a study of "emancipatory intent" with "epistemic openness and radical political receptiveness" (2010, p. 355) that produces knowledge "which transgresses, transcends, and traverses" (p. 13) the "arbitrary and artificial" (p. 37) borders and boundaries of designated knowledge producing spaces. This invocation will be useful to complement with the engagements of transdisciplinarity by Chicana/Latina Studies in the following section. Rabaka's notion of transdisciplinarity will serve as a useful heuristic that takes seriously epistemic diversity while also attending to the necessity of an alternative paradigm of knowledge production.

Chicana and Latina Studies' Transdisciplinarity

Here, I outline several the ways in which Chicana/Latina Studies scholars, specifically through Chicana feminism have engaged with knowledge production as transdisciplinarians. I identify elements of a Chicana feminist worldview through the Azteca philosophy of *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 2002) as a transdisciplinary ontological worldview, and outline ways Chicanas have worked *nepantla* as a transdisciplinary methodology. Nested in claims of the nature of reality and of knowledge, *nepantla* as a space directly implicates on the embodiment of it as a philosophy (Prieto and Villenas, 2012). In this case, I attempt to describe one possible reading of a Chicana feminist worldview as ontologically and by way of being social-political agents (as *nepantleras*) also transdisciplinarians. This may be best described by engaging with the work of Gloria Anzaldúa's articulations of *nepantla* and who identifies as a *nepantlera* , whom I parallel as being a transdisciplinarian.

I reiterate that it is difficult and should be troubled a decontextualized and isolated reading of both Chicana feminisms and *nepantla*. As an entry point into a complex and interrelated worldview, it is important to situate Chicana knowledge production and experiences, specifically in transnational and diasporic human rights struggles (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Flores Carmona, 2012). Importantly, Chicana scholars have been integral to combatting mind-body philosophies and aiming to recenter body-focused theories and practices. This effort of embodiment is not regarded as separate from *nepantla* as word/concept/worldview; in fact, is how *nepantla* as “a space of frustration, discomfort, and always improvised visionary modes of teaching and learning” is articulated (Anzaldúa, 2002; Prieto and Villenas, 2012). Cindy Cruz (2001) brings about these visible interrelated efforts of transdisciplinarity in talking about fellow Chicanas/Latinas in the Westernized University who embody ‘brown bodies’:

Writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Christine Soto work strategically from peripheral locations that are *both inside and beyond the boundaries* [emphasis added].... The mestiza scholar attends to her research with the tools of multiple sources and multiple ways of knowing....What Moraga and Anzaldúa do best is reject the multitude of strategies, methodologies, and approaches to different ways of knowing. Situating knowledge in the brown body begins the validation of the narratives of survival, transformation, and emancipation of our respective communities, reclaiming histories and identities. And in these ways, *we embody our theory* [emphasis added]” (p. 668).

This embodiment of theory is central to Chicana feminist epistemological frameworks which directly efforts to resist dominant paradigms of knowledge production (Bernal, 1998). Because dominant paradigms have been used to legitimate and delegitimized, Chicana scholars have argued that “an epistemological issue” is also “one of power, ethics, politics, and survival” (p.

556). Further, because ‘brown bodies’ are threatened sites of negotiation and intersectional sociopolitical locations, knowledge (and new forms of knowledge and subjectivity) must be situated in the “brown body” of women and queer folks (Cruz, 2001).

Additionally, when Chicana feminist scholars describe traversing boundaries and borders (through embodied and material ways) this does not simply indicate a multidisciplinary idea, but rather, it often articulated in a genealogical signaling and communal conversations through a variety of queer Chicana literature, concepts, and worldviews articulated by Chicana/Latina writers such as Anzaldúa and Moraga’s (1981) *This Bridge Called My Back*, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* (1987), Dolores Bernal’s (1998) *Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research*, Emma Pérez’s (1999) *Decolonial Imaginary*, Saldívar-Hull’s (2000) *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*, Sandoval’s (2000) *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Cruz’s (2001) *Toward an Epistemology of a Brown Body*, Lugones (2003) *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, Anzaldúa’s and Keatings (2006) *Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras*, Villenas et al.’s (2006) *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life*, and Cervantes-Soon’s (2012) *Testimonios of Life and Learning in the Borderlands*. Through these works, *nepantla* as a philosophy and a method of engaging with experiences are recognized as embodied ways of knowing and being as cohesive and complex worldviews and epistemic stances that combat against Western separation of body and mind, and of the disciplinary regulation of valued knowledge in academic spaces (e.g., testimonio as value in pedagogy; see Elenes, 2013).

In these works, Chicana writers discuss “in-betweenness” and boundary crossing of disciplines as an engagement in a multiplicity and complexity of states, times, cultures, conditions, identities processes, contradictions, standpoints—a conceptual framework of

nepantla (Anzaldúa, 1999). As a worldview, *nepantla*, not only holds analytic prowess, but also strength in facilitating meaning making. That is to say, one pillar of queer Chicana epistemologies has been to affirm, reclaim, and hybridize a variety of epistemologies (Cruz, 1991). Similar to Parris (2018) employment of *creolization as a transdisciplinary method*, Chicanas/Latinas have employed *nepantla* as a means of engaging with hybridity and complexity because of historical reality and necessity to engage with Latin American realities of being *mestizas/os* (Anzaldúa, 1993). Forthright, Cruz (2001) along with the Chicanas/Latinas mentioned above, hold an ontological view that knowledge production in of itself is transdisciplinary or even anti-disciplinary by way Chicanas being necessary ‘transgressors and trespassers’ (p. 657). These ‘transgressions’ are in constant competition with dominant Western ideologies of knowledge production, specifically those which claim a body-mind division and racist colonial, sexist, and classist notions of whose knowledge production is legitimate and whose it not (Cruz, 2001; Anzaldúa, 1993; Villenas et al., 2006). In this way, *nepantla* and Chicana (embodied) *nepantleras* make ontological claims of strict disciplinarity being a circumstance of Western ideologies and read as violent and inaccurate assessments of the nature of knowledge through a *nepantla* epistemological worldview as articulated by (Anzaldúa, 1993; Scott & Tuana, 2018).

In actively “remembering” the transdisciplinarity of Chicanx/Latinx Studies, it has been conceived that transdisciplinary thinking is invokes in terms of the corporeality of knowledge production (i.e., body epistemology) and disciplinary boundary crossing as a resistance worldview and methodology against dominant Western ideologies, which are assessed as the cause for such demarcations of knowledge legitimization. That is to say, transdisciplinary thinking is integral to the worldview, because this links the possibility for bodily knowledge

production as *nepantleras* (Anzaldúa, 1993). Additionally, as a methodology, *nepantla* demands for “in-between” spaces of knowledge production as a counter hegemonic tactic against Eurocentric male epistemologies (Cruz, 2001; Anzaldúa, 1993; Villenas et al., 2006). These examples are neither exhaustive of the transdisciplinarity in critical and decolonial traditions, nor should they be read as discrete and compartmentalized notions of which discipline, they neatly ‘fit’ into. I have argued this: there has always been disciplinary resistance from outside, inside, and between Westernized University by these traditions—the central aim is ‘listening’ in toward the epistemic silences and effortfully seek to recover and excavate these knowledges and practices (Pérez, 1999).

This thesis has attempted to claim that critical and decolonial scholars have predated the formalization of transdisciplinarity both as a phrase and in its employment in academia as well as outside of it. In fact, Chicana /Latina *nepantla* and Africana *creolization* are both detailed as a knowledge praxis emerging from everyday circumstances that can then be brought into academia for further exploration and utility (Anzaldúa, 1993; Monahan, 2017). For this reason, I have highlighted Chicanx/Latinx scholars, Africana scholars, and necessarily their communities outside of academia, as transdisciplinarians who have come in contact with the Westernized University and have sought to reconceptualize, reinterpret, and reorient knowledge configurations.

Toward a Decolonial Transdisciplinary Theory

Here, I take the excavated transdisciplinarity by critical and decolonial scholars from the previous section as points of departure to consider a possible reconstitution of transdisciplinarity through decolonial and revolutionary principles. I argue that if transdisciplinarity is reoriented through explicit and robust interrogations of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (Maldonado-

Torres, 2016a; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009) a *decolonial transdisciplinary project* toward the aim of revolution, specifically as it relates to the ‘unsettling’ of the Westernized University, is possible. To be sure, transdisciplinarity has already been worked by decolonial scholars with these aims. However, I regard the central contradiction in this case; that is, the claims of epistemic inclusivity in transdisciplinarity while seldom seriously critiquing colonial logics in the mainstream. Briefly, I urge a for decolonial thinking in transdisciplinarity and the reconstitution of transdisciplinarity as a decolonial paradigm. Only under these demands can a transdisciplinary paradigm meet the lofty aims of epistemic diversity promulgated (Klein, 2004; Martin, 2017a; Montouri, 2013; Nicolescu, 2002, 2008a).

This chapter takes head of this decolonial efforts. As a means of expanding on the knowledge excavated through the decolonial imaginary, I ask the following questions with the potential of nourishing a decolonial transdisciplinary theory: *What would a transdisciplinary theory and practice indicate for the Westernized University and colonial/modern configurations of knowledge, if it were to run in tandem with decolonial and revolutionary principles? In what ways might decolonial thinking permeate conversations of higher education policy to bolster the ‘unsettlement’ of the Westernized University? In what ways might an inter-collective movement (and transnational) be nourished through a decolonial transdisciplinary theory that directly takes into account the widespread circumstances of epistemic erasure?* This section does not offer a definitive movement toward a decolonial transdisciplinary theory—efforts such as this have already been in motion through this formal phrase (Maldonado-Torres, 2016b; Rabaka, 2010).

It is reasonable to suggest that both disciplinary structure and transdisciplinary historicization and discourse narrowly conceived, recognizes, or even includes the works of

critical and decolonial scholarship. With this at the center of analysis, transdisciplinary theories largely remain exclusionary traditions in regard to critical and decolonial scholarship. As a paradigm as that contradicts its own claims of epistemic diversity, a tolerance to critical and decolonial scholarship is insufficient. Epistemic diversity and the engagement of multiplicity of cosmologies and worldviews must be taken seriously (Grosfoguel, 2007, 2012, 2015; de Sousa Santos, 2015; Escobar, 2007b; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2011, 2016; Mignolo, 2002, 2007, 2011; Quijano, 2000; Rabaka, 2010; Sithole, 2016; Wynter, 2003). As transdisciplinarity operates in the mainstream, it has continually approach promulgated its own epistemic inclusivity, while remaining ignorant to Eurocentric and colonial assumptions that undergird the paradigm they articulate.

Considerable possibilities for transdisciplinarity exists in creating platforms for the multiple origins of transdisciplinarity, especially as it extends outside of the intellectual genealogy of the Western canon of thought. Transdisciplinarity, must be cognizant of its Eurocentrism. To be sure, as it emirates in mainstream discourse, transdisciplinarity emerges at similar rate to the 5 countries from which most of academic knowledge is produced (i.e., England, US, Germany, Italy, France; see Grosfoguel, 2015). If the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars is not regarded as important to mainstream transdisciplinarity discourse, this circumstance points to the likely result in a claimed alternative intellectual paradigm that remains unaware and unresisting to the global dominance and epistemological academia monopoly Western intellectual canon (Grosfoguel, 2012; Shiva, 1993; Quijano, 2000). Stated alternatively, there is a risk in suggesting to build a ‘new’ paradigm while both (a) neglecting alternative histories of transdisciplinarity outside the Western canon and (b) seldom engaging in a rigorous and robust critique and interrogation of the Western canon from which most

transdisciplinary scholars are situated within. To this point, a reconstitution of transdisciplinarity, as paired with decolonial and revolutionary principles, must be pursued.

The following transdisciplinarity will be read as decolonial (Mignolo 2011), I suggest these conceptualizations and methodologies strident movements toward a *decolonial transdisciplinary research orientation* from scholars in Africana Studies and Chicanx/Latinx Studies. These communities particularly positioned as vanguards of transdisciplinarity as it may be read outside of the normalized historicization of transdisciplinarity. Revolutionary movements Liberation and revolutions must resist the monopolization of knowledge by the Eurocentric intellectual canon. We must take seriously epistemic diversity as a means of critiquing Eurocentrism and coloniality, if transdisciplinarity has any potency at all. We must recognize that “othered” epistemologies and cosmologies have produced knowledge through multiple modes outside of Eurocentric modernity, in fact in the underside of modernity—a epistemic diversity must be built upon these realities and taken up through a decolonial revolutionary transdisciplinarity theory and praxis. Thus, a conceptualization that does not endeavor to be counter-hegemonic would only preclude decolonial theory and practice. To reorient transdisciplinarity through decolonial theory is one potential option.

CONCLUSION

This thesis makes an effort to explore the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in mainstream transdisciplinary discourse. I traced the dominant historicization of transdisciplinarity from a dominant narrative as originating in recent decades. To this historicization, I tracked the epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse while simultaneously centering their analytics and conceptualizations to consider the mechanisms of knowledge production in academia broadly. At the heart of this

study, I argue, is a reconstructive engagement with critical and decolonial scholars as central and even preceding architects to transdisciplinary knowledge configurations whom have worked at the vanguard of transdisciplinary theory and practice, which can be illuminated when recognizing transdisciplinarity beyond its linguistic limitations and cultural meaning as a Western English word (Cole, 2017). I drew on Emma Pérez's (199) decolonial imaginary to explore and identify epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars amidst a mainstream discourse and historicization of transdisciplinarity.

Recently, Sharon Stein (2017) has similarly argued that curricular pattern of Euro-Supremacy has created epistemic erasure by the epistemic dominant and naturalization of Eurocentric and supremacist values embedded in the political economy of knowledge production in Western universities. Moving forward, we must recognize that disciplinarity, while a recent in historical process, must not be collapsed through colonial logics as justified and natural divisions of knowledge; to be sure, disciplinarity is embedded in a modern colonial capitalist project. Broadly, I have followed in a critical and decolonial tradition that interrogates the reproduction of Eurocentric colonialist narrative of epistemology. As I have assessed, transdisciplinarity should have a purposeful telos of analyzing cartographies of power that are inscribed in historiographies.

A limitation of this project is an incomplete conceptualization of the ways in which women, trans, and non-gender binary folks have also been subject to epistemic erasure through the normative historicization of transdisciplinarity. Additionally, there is fruitful directions to looking more closely at the ways in which neoliberal capitalism implicates in the process of epistemic erasure. While I describe it as intricate and directly implicated with contemporary conditions of knowledge configuration, there is certainly room for further exploration in the

invocation of capitalism at the forefront of historical analytics in academia as it relates to epistemic erasure.

There are several points that are key to this project. First, A political-economy analysis (critical scholars) and a modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system analysis (decolonial scholars) have been read in complementary fashion. Jointly, disciplinary hegemony and the coloniality of knowledge are forceful and enduring mechanisms, which point to the condition of epistemic erasure of critical and decolonial scholars in transdisciplinary discourse. Second, disciplinary hegemony taken has been taken as a mechanism of control and regulation that fortifies insular knowledge production in a way that legitimized knowledge ascends while ‘other’ knowledges are inferiorized and neglected (de Sousa Santos, 2015; Saldívar-Hull, 2000; Shiva, 1993; Sithole, 2016; Stein, 2017). Third, there is an embeddedness of coloniality in knowledge producing institutions, by which epistemic erasure may not be regarded as harmful from a colonial stance, but instead as an integral epistemic condition to the ascendance of Eurocentric knowledge structures (Grosfoguel, 2012; Maeso & Araújo, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2009; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992)Fourth, by necessity, to address epistemic erasure would need a direct and vigorous interrogation of modernity/coloniality, capitalism/patriarchy, and the colonial assumptions universities as well as in the state’s political economy (Grosfoguel, 2012).

This thesis suggests that epistemic erasure is a process symptomatic of the historical manifestations of university knowledge configurations and of embedded philosophical assumptions of superiority and universalism in Western academia. To be sure, epistemic erasure is then fortified through contemporary interactions with former genealogies of colonialism and capitalism. Positioned as a reflection to the neglected transdisciplinary work by critical and

decolonial scholars in Africana Studies and Chicanx/Latinx Studies, I sketch out the intellectual vitality developed by these fields of study to point out two things: (a) dominant transdisciplinarity currently does not interrogate coloniality/modernity thoroughly and (b) transdisciplinarity when reworked through decolonial revolutionary means is potent with methodological and theoretical strategies toward ‘decolonizing’ and ‘unsettling’ the Westernized University (Grosfoguel, 2015). As a call to question, I ask the reader to ponder and engage in an exercise of decolonial thinking: Are we, as critical and decolonial scholars assuming that the only revolutionary stratagem must emanate from Eurocentric intellectual landscape and canon? And, specifically towards transdisciplinarity, in what ways have your intellectual endeavors engages in transdisciplinary ways, and how might we continue to nourish these projects toward decolonial and revolutionary means?

There is vigor and value in the incorporation of decolonial and revolutionary theory, by which can guide transdisciplinary work. I have argued that these political commitments must be centered through transdisciplinarity. There must not be a “sidestepping” of an analysis of colonialism, capitalism, and pariah patriarchy. We must confront these structures directly and strategically. It is not sufficient to be ‘inclusive’ of multiple worldviews; it is necessary to be counter-hegemonic and decolonial and to engage honestly and effortful with epistemic diversity lest we merely reproduce a colonial research paradigm under a new name. Likewise, I have endeavored to make clear that a decolonial project is not a new historical process, and neither are colonial mechanisms of hegemony and inferiorization. It is in this recognition that I sought to excavate and recover epistemologies from our decolonial comrades through the invocation of a decolonial imaginary.

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