

# Beyond Interdisciplinarity: Developing a Global Transdisciplinary Framework\*

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**Abstract:** In this essay we argue that the Euro-American academy is entering a new integrative paradigm that is moving scholarly practice beyond the disciplinary/interdisciplinary divide. Drawing on the development of interdisciplinary approaches over the past four decades, we suggest that the theoretical and analytical boundaries between conventional disciplines are becoming less relevant in the creation of lines of inquiry and knowledge production that expressly seek to explore today's complex global world. Combining interdisciplinary approaches with perspectives from the new field of Global Studies, we argue that what is emerging is a coherent, accessible and inclusive paradigm that we call a *global transdisciplinary framework*. The framework makes it possible to study multifaceted global-scale issues in a holistic fashion, deploying various perspectives at multiple levels and across spatial and temporal dimensions. The framework also intentionally includes previously marginalized perspectives and epistemologies in the production of new knowledge. What is being forged, we conclude, is a new paradigm that has the potential to become applicable and accessible to many scholars even when their research interests are not explicitly "global" in nature. In the longer term, it also has the potential to open up western scholarship to non-western modes of thinking, and fostering inclusive, productive and relevant globally informed scholarship.

The field of Global Studies is growing rapidly and today there is a burgeoning array of institutional support for global studies scholarship in leading universities around the world.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, concurrent to such institution building there has been a spate of essays and books engaged with the question 'what is global studies?' that have promoted lively debate and commentary (Juergensmeyer 2011, 2014; Nederveen Pieterse 2013; Gunn 2013; Duve 2013; Steger 2014; McCarty 2014; Darian-Smith 2014; Middell 2014; Steger and Wahlrab 2016; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). These essays reflect a need to move beyond an earlier preoccupation with describing globalization to analyzing its many processes, facets and impacts that characterize the real-world contexts of the 21st century. Despite a "global turn" in scholarship across the disciplines, to date there has been very little conversation about how one should go about studying global-scale processes and impacts. So while scholars are increasingly appreciating that contemporary processes of globalization call for new theoretical and methodological approaches, there is a void in the literature about what these new theories, analytics, methods and pedagogies would

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actually entail. As a result, studying global-scale processes and impacts remains a daunting task for scholars and for the many students universities seek to train. One institutional response is to bring together scholars from multiple disciplines to occupy a single department or research “cluster”. Another response is to expend prodigious resources and gather experts with different specialties from around the world to conduct multi-disciplinary collaborations. However, for a variety of reasons bringing together disciplinary experts to talk to each other does not necessarily guarantee innovative approaches or theories necessary to address the complexity of our globalizing world. As Eric Wolf noted a long time ago in his ground-breaking book *Europe and the People Without History*:

An [integrated] approach is possible, but only if we can face theoretical possibilities that transcend our specialized disciplines. It is not enough to become multidisciplinary in the hope that an addition of all the disciplines will lead to a new vision. A major obstacle to the development of a new perspective lies in the very fact of specialization itself (Wolf 1982:19).

This essay discusses how scholars may go about studying global-scale processes and impacts through a new theoretical possibility that we call a *global transdisciplinary framework*. This framework is new in that it does not advocate an amalgamation of mainstream disciplinary perspectives but rather seeks to tease out new theoretical and analytical modes of inquiry. Put differently, we argue that what is needed is not the multiplication of questions embedded within disciplinary literary canons and mainstream expertise, but rather the fostering of innovative questions of relevance to 21st century global research. We suggest that our framework helps identify these new questions and ultimately makes research more relevant to our contemporary moment. The essay is broken into three parts that build upon each other to cumulatively describe what we mean by a *global transdisciplinary framework*. These three parts follow a chronological trajectory in terms of charting the historical development of innovative intellectual conversations within the Euro-American academy.<sup>4</sup> **Part I** traces the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches that really took off in the post WWII period and was underscored by Jean Piaget’s introduction of the concept of “transdisciplinarity” in 1970. **Part II** explores the emergence of a common transdisciplinary framework. It explicitly discusses eight thematic areas that together represent the most obvious areas of collective engagement across humanities and social science disciplines over the past forty years. Together these thematic areas deploy analytical approaches (ie social constructivism, post-structuralism) that have changed the intellectual landscape of all disciplines in the Euro-American academy. **Part III** then turns to the insights arising out of the emerging field of Global Studies. In this section we argue that combining transdisciplinary interventions with the unique perspective offered by Global Studies create the groundwork for a new coherent, accessible and inclusive paradigm that we call a *global transdisciplinary framework*.<sup>5</sup>

To be clear, we are not suggesting that traditional disciplines (i.e. anthropology, history, geography, sociology, law, political science and economics) and their specialized knowledge and methods are being made obsolete or are in any way less important. Nor are we suggesting that transdisciplinary scholarship is widely recognized or experienced as such in the academy. Some scholars resist any efforts toward interdisciplinarity. However, despite this resistance, we argue that leading intellectuals are – and have been for many decades – actively engaged in integrative scholarship that seeks to transcend disciplinary differences. And it is by building on these intellectuals’ lead with the additional layering of insights gleaned from the emerging field of Global Studies that we can begin to develop new ways of theorizing and designing research projects that speak to the world’s current complexities.

The importance of a *global transdisciplinary framework* is, we suggest, the potential to make knowledge produced in the academy increasingly relevant to analyzing pressing global challenges. Drawing on the insights of Global Studies makes it possible to study multifaceted global-scale issues in a holistic fashion, deploying various perspectives at multiple levels and across spatial and temporal dimensions. Global Studies also demands that the framework intentionally includes previously marginalized epistemologies and scholarship in the production of knowledge. What is being forged, we argue, is a new paradigm that has the potential to become applicable and accessible to many scholars even when their research interests are not explicitly “global” in nature. In the longer term, it also has the potential to open up western scholarship to non-western modes of thinking, knowing, and categorizing. Given the enormity of these potential implications, we think it worth describing what we mean by a *global transdisciplinary framework* and exploring the ways it may be incorporated into a broad range of research agendas within the humanities and social sciences.

## PART I. INTERDISCIPLINARITY/ TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

The academy continues to be plagued by well-rehearsed debates over the relative value of interdisciplinary scholarship. These debates consume a lot of time and energy and tend to rehash disciplinary antagonisms that have remained unresolved for decades. Those scholars that are inclined to defend the traditional disciplines imply that interdisciplinary scholars are dilators or argue that interdisciplinary research is superficial in its efforts to draw connections across theoretical approaches and bodies of literature. Moreover, interdisciplinary scholarship is often seen as too unwieldy, unaccountable, fragmented, and difficult to assess for the purposes of merits and promotions (Jacobs 2009; see also Strathern 2005). On the other side, the champions of interdisciplinary scholarship portray the disciplines as self-marginalizing dinosaurs on the verge of extinction. These debates can be bitter as communities of scholars fight over funding and limited resources within their institutions. In the United States, this has been very much the case in recent years as university administrators have tried to deal with the impact of the economic recession. As a result, there has been a general decline in support for interdisciplinary scholarship across many university campuses in the Euro-American academy.<sup>6</sup> Whether one is a supporter or a critic of interdisciplinary scholarship, one of the central problems is that debates about the relative value of disciplinary/interdisciplinary work are integrally entrenched in modernist concepts, perspectives and logics; i.e. individualism, nationalism, rationalism, and secularism (Ludden 2000). Just as international studies implicitly reaffirm the “national”, interdisciplinary studies implicitly reaffirm the modern disciplines. Interdisciplinary approaches can only extend so far beyond the disciplines against which their innovation and purpose is measured. In an effort to move past disciplinary/interdisciplinary debates and “today’s arid rhetoric of ‘interdisciplinarity’” (Fitzgerald and Callard 2014:4), this essay focuses on broader trends affecting not one discipline, or the interactive space between any two disciplines, but many disciplines concurrently.

We argue that over the past four decades, while the intellectual debate over interdisciplinarity has raged unabated, fundamental changes have overtaken academic practice. It is becoming more evident that leading intellectual contributions are emerging at the intersections between established disciplines (i.e. the contributions of Foucault, Bourdieu, and more recent scholars such as Latour, Sen and Appiah discussed in Part II). These changes reflect a new worldview that began to emerge following WWI and reached a peak in the aftermath of WWII. In the wake of genocide

and nuclear warfare, or what Eric Hobsbawm called “total war”, the foundations of modern rationality were profoundly shaken (Hobsbawm 1996). In many European societies there developed a deep-seated anxiety about the failings of modernity’s promises of science, human rationality, development, progress, democracy and self-determination that had reigned since the Enlightenment. This anxiety manifested across a range of 20th century art and literature movements such as Dadaism, surrealism and the Bloomsbury Group, as well as the existentialist, absurdist and nihilist movements in philosophy. As noted by Immanuel Wallerstein, this was a period when the “centrist liberal geoculture that was holding the world-system together” was essentially undermined (Wallerstein 2004:x). Within the academy, nothing was seen as stable or fixed in a world turned-upside-down. Leading intellectual figures began reaching out beyond the conventions of academic disciplines to explore a new turbulent post-war period that had brought women into the labor force, released black and brown societies from colonial rule, and revealed the violence and depravity of “civilized” European societies.

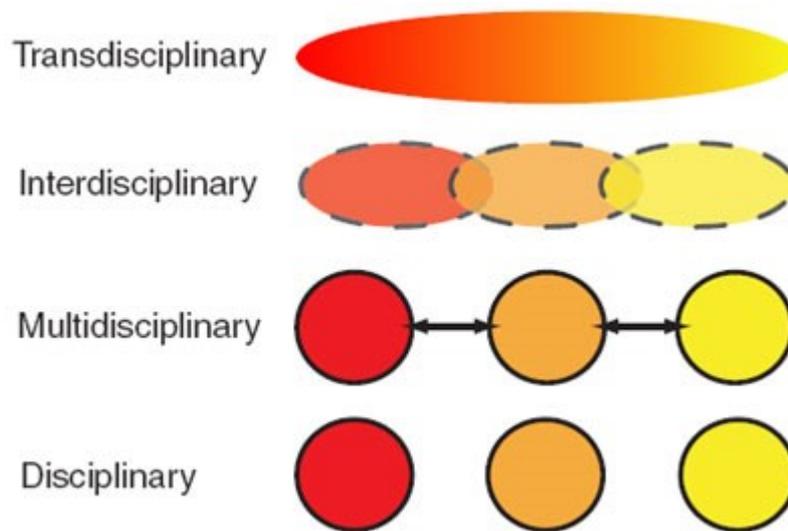
Against rapidly shifting social and political contexts, scholars began “deconstructing” or questioning the basic assumptions underpinning modernity. Taken-for-granted categories of nationality, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity became sites of controversy, exploration, and experimentation. As a result, new intellectual conversations emerged between scholars from across the disciplines who were drawn together in a quest to understand enduring real-world problems at home and abroad associated with racism, inequality, development, neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. At the fringes of these conversations there also developed increasing opportunities for dialogue among so-called third and first world scholars that introduced new ideas, alternative perspectives and competing epistemologies into the western academy that both opened up its knowledge base and at the same time underscored its Eurocentric bias (Wallerstein et al. 1996:48).

Postwar changes in the academy became increasingly complex as pressures mounted for the U.S. academy to look beyond its national borders, as well as respond to the Civil Rights movement and reexamine its domestic agenda. As a result, the 1970s and 1980s saw a proliferation of interdisciplinary programs including area, ethnic, women, gender, religious and environmental studies (Ferguson 2012).<sup>7</sup> The development of area studies in particular represented an explicit effort to initiate new knowledge about non-western countries and places (Chomsky et al. 1997; Szanton 2004; Schäfer 2010). Global complexities jumped again in 1990s with the end of the Cold War and increasing levels of economic and political globalization, again making new demands on academia to innovate and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Against this backdrop, we argue that these divergent academic endeavors have more recently coalesced into a framework that in some ways makes both disciplinary boundaries, and the concept of interdisciplinarity, less relevant.<sup>8</sup>

To understand this intellectual shift it is helpful to revisit a lesser known approach that developed concurrently with the rise of interdisciplinary scholarship, that of transdisciplinary scholarship. A number of scholars are associated with the concept of transdisciplinarity, however it was Swiss development psychologist Jean Piaget who formally introduced the concept of transdisciplinarity in 1970. In his writings he used it to refer to scholarship that “would not only cover interactions or reciprocities between specialized research projects, but would place these relationships within a total system without any firm boundaries between disciplines” (Piaget 1972:138).<sup>9</sup> As Basarab Nicolescu has noted, this description did not mean that Piaget was advocating for the dismantling of conventional disciplines in favor of a new super or hyper-discipline. Rather, Piaget was interested in “contemplating the possibility of a space of knowledge *beyond* the disciplines” (Nicolescu 2008:1).

According to the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research (founded in Paris in 1987), transdisciplinary research complements interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research but is nonetheless quite distinctive (see Fig.1). Multidisciplinary approaches use the perspectives of a number of different disciplines with no necessary overlap, and interdisciplinary approaches use the methods and theories of one discipline to inform others. However, the goal of transdisciplinarity is to move beyond the limits of the disciplines and provide new ways of organizing knowledge and modes of thinking (Blassnigg and Punt 2013; also Gasper, 2010).

Figure 1: *Transdisciplinarity*



Source: [http://www.nature.com/nchembio/journal/v4/n9/fig\\_tab/nchembio0908-511\\_F1.html](http://www.nature.com/nchembio/journal/v4/n9/fig_tab/nchembio0908-511_F1.html)

One of the important elements of transdisciplinary work is that it is problem-based and so concerned with the practical applications of knowledge in the real world where issues tend to be multifaceted and call for multiple analytical perspectives. Transdisciplinary scholarship also explores how knowledge is constituted in the first place as a reflection and product of particular worldviews, ideologies and cultural biases. According to Rosemary Johnston, transdisciplinarity “overtly seeks ways to open up thinking to ‘maps of unlimited possibilities’ ... to create mindscapes that are unfettered by traditional patterns and procedures” (Johnston 2008:229-230). Transdisciplinary scholarship is potentially emancipatory in that it explicitly seeks to free up our ways of thinking and our organization of knowledge in the academy by incorporating western and non-western knowledge into a more holistic approach to pressing contemporary issues. Adds Patricia Leavy, “Transdisciplinarity produces new knowledge-building practices ... that is vital for making academic research an authentic part of the globalized world it claims to study” (Leavy 2011:14).

While transdisciplinarity as a named scholarly approach is relatively new, we suggest that its primary concern, to open up the production of knowledge to multiple perspectives and worldviews, finds resonance in the more encompassing approaches of intellectual generalists that were so influential before the modern disciplines were established and became entrenched. The great figures of

the Scientific Revolution including Francis Bacon, Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, René Descartes and Isaac Newton, along with many others, were not bound by modern disciplines if for no reason other than that the disciplines had not yet been established. Even important scientists of the mid-1800's such as Charles Lyell, Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin were not bound by the limits of disciplinary thinking. The disciplinary boundaries would not become institutionalized until the latter part of the 19th century.

Similarly, the early Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, David Hume, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson were actively involved in pushing the boundaries of conventional thought by drawing upon a vast array of literatures, philosophies, theories and methods. Their broad approaches informed the great social thinkers of the 19th century such as Jeremy Bentham, Auguste Comte, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, again almost entirely unfettered by the disciplines. These classic modern thinkers drew upon many areas of learning, including history, science, economics, politics and philosophy to think about the complex social issues surrounding colonialism, the rise of the nation-state and nationalism, and accompanying calls for democracy, industrialization and modern imperialism that marked the turbulent times in which they lived. In many ways these earlier intellectuals, now often considered founders of their various disciplines, were remarkable for their open and flexible embracing of transdisciplinary approaches.

It was not until the later part of the 19th and early 20th centuries that the modern disciplines began to crystalize knowledge into discrete areas of expertise within the Euro-American academy. Disciplines such as political science, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, and law became institutionalized through professional associations, funding networks, journals, conferences, theories and methodological approaches. At the same time the earlier integrated and holistic approaches to understanding went out of favor. Each of the disciplines developed their own norms and criteria for what counted as authoritative knowledge and functioned as clubs of knowledge production in which non-members were excluded (Pierce 1991; Stichweh 2001). While disciplines such as law and economics claimed to be more rational and “scientific” than others, all the disciplines shared the common feature of being framed by the logics of modernity and were ultimately dependent on western concepts such as individualism, rationalism, secularism, positivism, private property and the nation-state (Foucault 1975). However, it should be remembered that while the production of knowledge was being cordoned off into discrete academic disciplines, the influence of thinkers such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber never declined. Even today we find that these pre-disciplinary scholars provide new ways to identify and engage with the interconnected challenges of our contemporary age.

Since Piaget's founding publication on transdisciplinarity in 1970, the approach has been taken up by a number of scholars from various intellectual backgrounds. Unfortunately, in the social sciences and humanities Piaget's transdisciplinary approach has been overshadowed by the disciplinary/interdisciplinary debate and has not gained widespread recognition in the Euro-American academy. The disciplines are too often focused on defending their boundaries and resources to fully engage in cooperative efforts. For instance, one of the key strategies the established disciplines have used to resist interdisciplinarity is to co-opt emergent interdisciplinary fields. A case in point is the field of **political economy** which can be traced back to at least 1615, two hundred years before the word “economic” took its current meaning in English (1835), and nearly three hundred years before the development of the modern disciplines. This history has not prevented disciplines such as economics, political science and sociology from laying claim to political economy at different times. Another example is **international relations** (IR), an in-

terdisciplinary field established around the League of Nations in 1919. When it was founded, IR explicitly included the disciplines of philosophy, economics, history, geography, law, policy, sociology, anthropology, criminology and psychology among others. Yet political science has more or less successfully laid claim to IR as its exclusive domain, possibly salvaging its own relevance but ultimately diminishing the value of its prize (see Cohen 2014). Similarly, the once exciting and productive interdisciplinary field of **social psychology** has turned into two markedly less productive subfields, one taught in psychology and the other in sociology. Patterns of limited and wholesale appropriation are repeated with respect to cultural studies, media studies and dozens of other emerging interdisciplinary fields. In this sense there is a subtle convergence of the disciplines as they struggle to overcome their own limitations by coopting what were once interdisciplinary approaches (Gass 1972). One result of this kind of cooptation is that many hardcore disciplinary scholars are in fact already doing work that takes them beyond their disciplinary paradigm.

We argue that even though both interdisciplinary scholarship and transdisciplinary approaches have been consistently resisted, undervalued and coopted, in practice mainstream academic disciplines have been influenced by them in many ways. In other words, even within those disciplines most resistant to change, there have been developments internal to all the disciplines that suggest a range of commonalities and connections between them. These developments are cumulatively creating what we call a *transdisciplinary framework* that is increasingly evident in leading intellectual contributions from scholars across the disciplines. This common framework includes shared thematics, theories and approaches that we argue many disciplines – irrespective of training strategies and substantive research focus – are to varying degrees engaging. In short, despite the recent retrenchment of the conventional disciplines there has already occurred in practice a blurring of disciplinary boundaries and formation of common intellectual ground.<sup>10</sup>

## PART II. AN EMERGING TRANSDISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK

The development over the decades of a shared transdisciplinary framework points to the possibility that many disciplines now have more analytical concepts in common than they may be willing to admit. The following is a brief outline of major transdisciplinary themes that have been emerging within the academy in the decades since WWII. Not all of the scholars mentioned would identify as being transdisciplinary or even interdisciplinary in their approach. Nonetheless, their work and insights have impacted scholarship across the humanities and social sciences and contributed to the formation of a common framework. Together these processes have produced an often unacknowledged convergence of thematics across the disciplines as well as created a shared overlay or framework for dialogue between the disciplines. In the words of Patricia Leavy, what has been cumulatively developing over the decades are “entirely new research pathways” that “produced new knowledge-building practices” (Leavy 2011:14).

In the following we identify eight transdisciplinary thematics or topics that together represent an intellectual sea-change across the Euro-American academy. These thematics are not comprehensive by any means. However, they do highlight the most obvious areas of collective engagement across the social sciences and humanities disciplines over the past forty years. Together these thematics inform the research questions scholars ask, and the analytical approaches deployed that seek to answer those research questions. This is not to say that all scholars engage with all seven thematics, but rather pioneering scholars in all conventional disciplines are engaging with

one or more of these substantive topics. These innovative scholars are reframing the production of knowledge to take into account issues such as power, class, race and gender that can no longer be ignored, and in the process building opportunities for transdisciplinary conversations and collaborations.

### **Race and Ethnicity**

The works by W.E.B. Du Bois, though not widely read until after WWII, laid the groundwork for theories of race and the psychology of racial domination. The “color line” that Du Bois described was global in scope and worked across a local-global continuum – dividing the consciousness of former slaves from that of their masters, the Northern United States from the Southern United States, white Europeans from black Africans, and the colonizer from the colonized. Du Bois’ work built on early developments in psychology including Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic approaches that delved into the murky waters of the subconscious, emphasizing the subjective nature of experience and understanding. Leading scholars deeply involved in the politics of race and its subjective as well as geo-political manifestations include Franz Fanon, Patricia Hill Collins, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Eric Williams, Patricia Williams, Henry Louis Gates Jr., William Julius Wilson, Cornell West, Ann Stoler, Audrey Smedley and Howie Winant. Together the work of these and many other scholars have helped in establishing a wide variety of ethnic studies programs that examine the complex cultural politics of such things as multiculturalism, immigration, and diaspora. Today, whether scholars study race or not, everyone works in an intellectual milieu that recognizes race and ethnicity as salient dimensions of social power.

### **Class and Inequality**

The post WWII period also experienced an opening up of the disciplines to new conversations about socio-economic class systems and structures. Antonio Gramsci, a prisoner of war under Mussolini’s fascist regime, developed the concept of cultural hegemony to explain how the values and perceptions of the working classes could be manipulated by powerful elites. Scholars associated with the Frankfurt School examined the symbols and rituals of class behavior, and scholars such as Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu presented a new scholarly emphasis on linguistic and cultural capital informing social class struggles. Following a European re-engagement with Marxist class analyses there was a wider materialist turn as political economic approaches became more common in the Euro-American academies in the 1960s and 70s. Political economic approaches, and analyses of class structures, are now commonplace and continue to generate new fields of influence in disciplines such as geography, communications, media studies, literature, and history, with the notable exception of certain economic departments.

### **Gender and Sexuality**

The academic engagement with gender and sexuality continues to fundamentally challenge the traditional patriarchal underpinnings of western culture that are deeply embedded in its religions, philosophies, politics and jurisprudence. These patriarchal assumptions permeated capitalism, nationalism, modern society and imperialism, and still contribute to the ongoing domination and exploitation of women today. Feminist thinkers from Olympe de Gouges to Sojourner Truth to Betty Friedan championed women’s rights. In the latter half of the 20th century, along with other areas of study, radical and essentialist feminism were transformed by the poststructural turn. In the 1970’s feminist theorist Dorothy Smith developed standpoint theory which underscored that women’s knowledge was different to men’s, that women had different truths, and that alternative

ways of knowing and being were socially constructed and based upon women's lived experiences. The idea that different groups could have different ways of knowing based on their own lived experiences found wide resonance in race, ethnic and sexuality studies. Gender theorists such as Judith Butler explored the social construction of gender and sexuality. Scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins and Marlee Kline developed the theory of intersectionality by expanding standpoint theory to include race, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Intersectionality assumes that the effects of discrimination based on minority statuses are cumulative and form a matrix of domination that over-determines minority status. The idea that minorities are cumulatively disadvantaged by their various statuses is now accepted in a wide range of disciplines and public policies. Whether or not an individual scholar studies gender and sexuality, we all work in an intellectual milieu that recognizes that gender and sexuality as salient dimensions of social power that could be relevant dimensions in nearly any line of historical or contemporary research (Amar 2013; Lowe 2015).

## Poststructural Theory and Social Constructionism

The philosophical movement known as poststructuralism emerged in the 1960s and fundamentally challenged modern schools of thought, particularly functionalism, structuralism and phenomenology. This movement shared certain elements with the French Annales School and British Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson that introduced a new historiographical approach featuring the perspectives of ordinary people rather than a focus on kings, wars, battles, and public events. Poststructural theorists were deeply engaged in a range of French and Continental philosophies and perspectives that drew upon advances made in linguistics, semiotics, Marxism, discourse analysis, and psychoanalysis. Theorists were also influenced by the work of Thomas Kuhn, a physicist, historian and philosopher of science whose work drew attention to the aspects of scientific practices that are socially constructed and consequently relativistic. His work on the production of knowledge popularized both "paradigm" and "paradigm shift," concepts that are still influencing thinking in many disciplines, not to mention this essay.

Scholars often associated with poststructuralism include Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Jacques Lacan, Jean Baudrillard, and Julia Kristeva though not all of them identified with the term. That being said, all were interested in the social power of semiotics – signs, symbols, language, sounds – introduced most famously by Ferdinand de Saussure, but also includes figures such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin (Saussure, 1983[1916]). A focus on the production of knowledge, and how knowledge in turn constitutes the social construction of values and beliefs, opened up new interpretive frameworks that included an increasing focus on individual subjectivity.

Today, social constructionism has become the dominant framework for exploring how people define themselves and others, and how people construct, contest and make meaning within the social structures in which they live (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Nikolas Rose 1989). To put this differently, poststructuralism offers ways for understanding how societies – and individuals within societies – create networks of social relations which construct social realities as well as create the mechanisms for change over time. This inclusion of individual agency in a more dynamic theory of social change was a tectonic shift within the academy that is now largely taken-for-granted. But that is our point. It did not happen in just one discipline. These multiplex changes happened across the disciplines and are now considered constituent parts of all the impacted disciplines. Whether scholars today acknowledge the influence of poststructuralism in their own research, we all work in an intellectual milieu that recognizes that identity, history, authority and social power

are socially constructed and contested.

### **The Cultural Turn**

Within the context of poststructuralism and the linguistic turn, the fields of literary criticism, media studies, cultural studies and interpretive anthropology all contributed to a wider “cultural turn” that shifted attention across the disciplines to the causal and socially constitutive role that culture plays in society, as well as the subjective interpretation of meaning. The humanistic and subjective elements of culture continue to provide an important counterweight to the objective, positivistic and scientific impulses that have historically dominated the social sciences. Following the earlier neo-Marxist Frankfurt School, the interdisciplinary fields of Media and Cultural Studies focused attention on the political dynamics of culture, something previously regarded as apolitical (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1948; Marshall McLuhan 1964; Mary Douglas 1970). Literary critic Raymond Williams (1958) argued that the modern notion of culture developed as a result of the social and political changes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution. Williams’ work at the intersection of class and culture contributed to the foundation of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies where Stuart Hall (1980) and others drew on Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to analyze cultural domination - the ways the ruling classes manipulate the production of mass culture including language, literature, arts, and media, to reflect their own beliefs, ideologies and values, thereby maintaining the dominant culture’s hegemony over the lower classes and various subcultures (see also subaltern culture in postcolonial theory). Culture Studies tied the production of culture to the production of social power, demonstrating that different forms of economic and political capital could be exchanged for cultural capital, and vice versa. In a similar vein, the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) pointed the way on the interpretation of culture and systems of meaning in non-western contexts. The cultural turn added the concepts of hegemony, domination and subculture to our collective vocabulary and from that point forward cultural identity and the processes of cultural production, representation, criticism, reception, interpretation, consumption, appropriation and self-representation, were all understood to be contested political processes.

### **Postcolonialism, Orientalism and Cultural Imperialism**

Postcolonial scholarship over the last forty years provided enormous insights on understanding contemporary cultural flows and tensions within state and trans-state contexts. This understanding has been deeply informed by the theoretical insights of Franz Fanon and Edward Said who established a long trajectory of critical thinking about the subjugation of non-western peoples (Fanon 1961; Said 1979). Specifically, postcolonial theory reveals the violence and the technologies of domination involved in concepts such as modernity and capitalism as well as contemporary state, sub-state and trans-state nationalisms. Moreover, postcolonial theory provides the intellectual bridge linking historical colonial injustices to contemporary global asymmetries of economic, political and social power between a global north and global south.

Postcolonial studies, and postcolonial theory in general, are largely associated with a rethinking of a dominant European historiography that places the “West” at the center of the world (Guha 1988; Amin 2009). Postcolonial studies posits a plurality of cultural perspectives and systems of meaning that do not correlate to a hierarchy dominated by western values and scientific rationality. As an intellectual movement, postcolonialism is associated with South Asian scholarship, subaltern and literary studies, as well as analyses of resistance. It emerged out of the global south in the 1970s and gained an increasing presence in Euro/American universities

(Darian-Smith 2013b). Theorists whose work is often associated with postcolonialism include Dipesh Chakrabarty, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, John and Jean Comaroff, Achille Mbembe, Upenda Baxi, Peter Fitzpatrick, Paulo Freire, Boaventura da Sousa Santos, and Gayatri Chkravorty Spivak. Postcolonial theory acknowledges and recovers the ongoing significance of colonized peoples in shaping the epistemologies, philosophies, practices, and shifting identities of dominant and taken-for-granted western knowledge and subjectivities (Freire 2007 [1968]; Santos 2007, 2014). According to these scholars, colonial assumptions of western superiority endure across time and undermine contemporary attempts to build more inclusive multicultural societies. Today, despite state policies that ostensibly embrace multiculturalism and cultural diversity, racial categories and racialized differences continue to exist in all societies. Whether scholars engage with the consequences of racism, colonialism and imperialism in their own research, we all work in an intellectual milieu that can no longer discount these violent histories that still shape a racialized and neo-imperial present.

## Nationalisms and Identities

The near global spread of nationalism via democratic revolutions, modern imperialism, socialism, fascism and decolonization, makes nationalism one of the most successful political ideologies in history. Over the course of the modern era the nation-state became the cornerstone of the international regulatory system. The poststructural idea that individual and collective identities are socially constructed had a significant impact across the academic disciplines in part because it undermines modern national identities as natural or taken-for-granted categories. As Benedict Anderson argued in *Imagined Communities* (1983), nationalism is a collective form of identity that is socially constructed and contested.

Nationalism also operates internally within the state to categorize and authorize citizens, as well as manage the divide between legitimate citizens and those considered illegitimate outsiders and aliens. Citizenship gives access to the resources, rights and protections of the state, and hence defining the criteria for citizenship has been a source of constant conflict and tension. In the 1960s, the label “identity politics” first appeared in feminist and black social movements in the United States, Britain and other western democracies calling for the recognition of minority political and civil rights (Harris 2001). Over the subsequent decades, identity politics have framed bitter national debates over issues such as immigration, terrorism, abortion, health care and labor rights as well as state policies of multiculturalism.

The onset of global external forces including market integration, regional trade agreements, deregulation, underdevelopment, immigration, racial and ethnic diasporas and new collective identities, the proliferation of NGOs and other non-state actors, along with growing human rights, environmental and other global social movements, all challenge the sovereignty of the nation-state from without. Concurrently, nation-states are also being challenged internally by rising separatist, religious, ethnic and indigenous nationalisms. Many of these separatist movements, particularly in Africa, are historically linked to the “containment” of peoples within artificial national territories in the decolonization movement of the post WWII era. The resulting destabilization and weakening of the nation-state from external and internal forces together contribute to a host of other problems such as economic underdevelopment, regional conflict, ethnic violence, unregulated immigration and over exploitation of natural resources. These issues in turn contribute to the displacement of millions of immigrants and refugees fleeing poverty, violence and environmental degradation, further destabilizing neighboring countries. In the current regulatory system displaced persons go largely underrepresented and unprotected. The displaced may find that

they no longer have a homeland, national identity or the protection of citizenship, leaving them extremely vulnerable to ethnic persecution, economic exploitation, slavery and sex trafficking.

## Decentering the Nation-State

Scholars across the disciplines are studying the various impacts of the nation-state's decentering or destabilization, including rethinking the concepts of sovereignty (Hardt and Negri 2001) and global governance (Falk 2014; Gill 2015). As the sociologist Ulrich Beck argues, conventional scholarship assumes that "humankind is split up into a large but finite number of nations, each of which supposedly develops its own unified culture, secure behind the dike of its state-container ... It structures our entire way of seeing. Methodological nationalism is the unquestioned framework that determines the limits of relevance" (Beck and Willms 2004:13; Zürn 2013:416). Recent scholarship challenges the assumption that nation-states are the primary unit of analysis and social organization (Khagram and Levitt 2008). Transcending the limitations of "methodological nationalism" that have constrained Western political thought opens up new ways of making sense of complex transnational and translocal relations that have been eclipsed by its limited theoretical and conceptual horizons.

Important contributions to scholarship that decenters the nation-state come from global historians who have been particularly important in problematizing the nation-state and forging new modes of inquiry that contextualize nations within intercontinental flows of ideas, cultures, resources, and movements of people (Hughes-Warrington 2005; Bentley 2013; Conrad 2016; Pernau and Sachsenmaier 2016). As a relatively new sub-field of inquiry, global historians reflect upon historiographical conventions and point to the limitations of national histories that have dominated the past two hundred years in the Euro-American academy. They are keen to explore how modes of cultural exchange and conceptual translation that flowed across state boundaries and plural cultures shaped events, including the very construction of nations and nationalist identities. So instead of taking the nation-state as a given and then making comparisons between them, global historians explore how nations developed over time as a product of transnational events, complex social relations and geopolitical forces (e.g. Frühstück 2014; Goebel 2015).

Decentering the nation-state implies that scholars should pay attention to the experiences of people that are displaced by political and economic forces or are marginalized within the nation-state framework. The flows of migrants, refugees, and circulating diasporic communities complicate notions of modern identity and make static and territorialized forms of citizenship increasingly problematic (Cheah and Robbins 1998; Fangen, Johansson, and Hammarén 2012). Scholars should be sensitive to the limitations of methodological nationalism and work to overcome its conceptual, theoretical, analytical and methodological constraints. However, this is not an easy task given the dominant state-centered thinking that still prevails in the Euro-American academy.

## Forging a transdisciplinary paradigm

We argue that the common substantive topics described above speak to a growing transdisciplinary paradigm that is influencing the production of knowledge across the humanities and social sciences in the Euro-American academy. Of course these topics are by no means comprehensive. For instance, systems theory seems to operate across the disciplines in a similar way (Bertalanffy 1968; Baran 1964; Luhmann 2013). Nonetheless, given the quantity and importance of these shared thematics and related analytical approaches it is hard to deny that together they have had an enormous impact on a wide range of academic disciplines over the decades. Their

effects are evident in scholarly approaches and social theories and have shaped concepts such as intersectionality, orientalism, post-nationalism, bio-politics, racial formation and governmentality. Moreover, they have given rise to intellectual movements that are referred to as the “cultural turn”, the “linguistic turn”, the “spatial turn”, and more recently what can be called the “global turn” that have swept across a broad range of disciplinary fields. Together these various theoretical concepts and intellectual movements have crisscrossed cultures, continents and ideologies and brought widespread scholarly attention to the sociocultural dimensions of political and economic power that have become central to many intellectual communities around the world.<sup>11</sup>

Our point is that the transdisciplinary framework has progressed to the point that it is hard to imagine any discipline in the social sciences or humanities entirely ignoring issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and religion and the critiques these subfields deliver. Similarly, most disciplines cannot ignore the intersections of economic, political and social power dimensions across, within and beyond nation-states. Likewise, increasing numbers of scholars are problematizing the centrality of the nation-state as the container and horizon of relevant knowledge and analysis. In other words, no academic discipline has remained entirely untouched by the deep legacies of poststructural, constructivist, linguistic, and interpretivist theories. So whether a scholar has ever read the works of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, or Patricia Hill Collins, scholars across the social sciences and humanities doing innovative and cutting edge scholarship must directly and indirectly grapple with their legacies and contributions.

We are not suggesting that every scholar in every discipline is consciously embracing critical social theories and the perspectives that characterize the transdisciplinary framework. There will always be scholars in the disciplines and sub-disciplines who for various reasons remain uninterested in engaging with interdisciplinary approaches. This is absolutely fine. Specialization, and the production of specialized knowledge, is still a necessary function in the academy and essential for the development of new interdisciplinary approaches and more encompassing frameworks. In short, both specialization and generalization are necessary, just as quantitative and qualitative approaches are necessary. In fact, it is precisely the communication between specialization/generalization and quantitative/qualitative that is essential for innovative scholarship.

To summarize our main points so far:

- (1) New highly complex and interconnected global-scale issues pose new kinds of problems for modern disciplines and increasingly specialized forms of knowledge.
- (2) Transdisciplinary thematics such as race, gender and postcolonialism are substantive topics. But they also present new analytical approaches that challenge the underlying assumptions and categories of modern western scholarship.
- (3) Transdisciplinary thematics inform the ways scholars ask research questions, design research strategies, and deploy analytical approaches. Put another way, transdisciplinary thematics are influencing modes of thinking and the production of new knowledge across the academy.
- (4) Traditional social science and humanities disciplines have been impacted by these transdisciplinary thematics and their related theoretical and analytical approaches to varying degrees.
- (5) Acknowledging the presence of the transdisciplinary framework may help scholars in the Euro-American academy move beyond disciplinary/ interdisciplinary debates and recognize overlapping commonalities and the interrelated and connected dimensions of any issue.

In the next section we build upon the discussion outlined in Part II. We argue that when the transdisciplinary framework is brought together with the insights emerging out of the new field of Global Studies, the result is a more holistic and accessible approach to thinking about today's global complexities that no one disciplinary perspective alone can adequately address. We call this a *global transdisciplinary framework* – a framework that combines innovative interdisciplinary scholarship that has been incrementally expanding in recent decades with a new field of inquiry that foregrounds global perspectives, de-centered and de-territorialized processes, and the necessity of incorporating non-western worldviews into the Euro-American academy.

## **PART III. GLOBAL STUDIES AND THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK**

The acceleration of globalization in the 1990's after the end of the Cold War presented new levels of complexity that strained the state-based geopolitical order and pushed the limits of both disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship. In this context Global Studies emerged as a new field of inquiry and built upon the existing transdisciplinary framework by adding its own contributions that speak more directly to the global challenges of the twenty-first century.<sup>12</sup> The first Global Studies programs were established in the late 1990's and over the last 20 years there has been a flourishing of stand-alone Global Studies programs around the world in places such as Japan, China, Russia, Indonesia, Denmark, South Korea, Australia, Britain, USA, Germany as well as many sub-disciplinary fields (e.g. global history, global literature, global sociology, global legal studies). While early in the development of these programs there was an over-emphasis on macro processes of globalization, Global Studies scholars are increasingly beginning to engage with diverse impacts at the local level and promote engaged research, often through historical and qualitative methods, in an effort to foster culturally informed knowledge production.<sup>13</sup>

Below we explore three specific contributions made by Global Studies to the transdisciplinary framework. These contributions include (1) global-scale issues that manifest simultaneously at several points along a local-global continuum, (2) recognizing the distributed/decentralized/de-territorialized processes that are characteristic of global-scale issues, and (3) an engagement with critical voices and plural epistemologies well beyond the bounds of accepted western scholarship (McCarty 2014b; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). We argue that these contributions are making the transdisciplinary framework relevant to current global issues, as well as making it more coherent, applicable and accessible to scholars across the disciplines. In effect, global perspectives are translating the kinds of transdisciplinary concerns discussed in Part II into a wider context and making it possible to engage global issues holistically.

### **Global-Scale Issues and the local-global Continuum**

Global Studies ostensibly focuses on economic, political and social processes that are truly global in scale. Issues such as economic development, climate change, resource depletion, conflict, human rights and immigration all have at least one thing in common; they reach beyond the limits of the nation-state. These issues are global in scale in the sense that they ignore political boundaries and are impacting all nations, albeit to varying degrees. Up until relatively recently the largest unit of analysis was the nation-state, making it difficult for scholars to see the larger integrated world system within which various state and non-state actors are operating. As a starting point, global perspectives enable global systemic analyses that are not limited to a national/international

analysis.

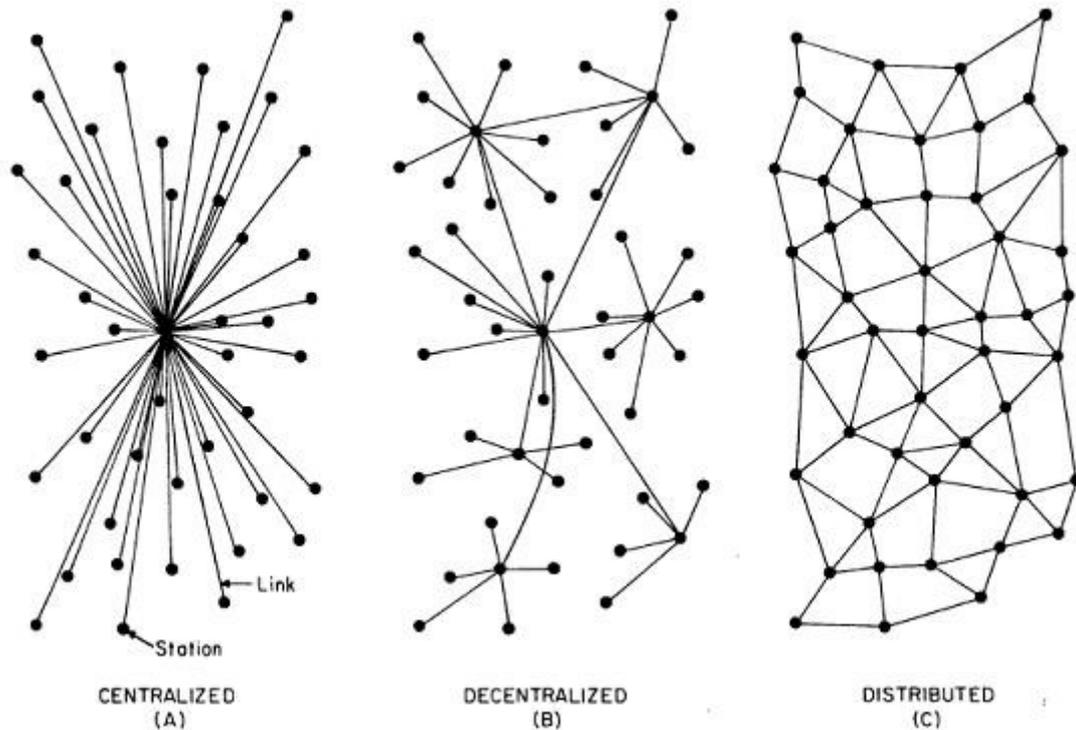
However, it is important to note that “global-scale” does not simply mean big – it does not mean that global scholars only study macro-scale processes or that they need to “study everything and everywhere” (Duve 2013:23). Building on the work of human geographers in the 1980s and 1990s, local places are seen as historically contingent and embedded within and refracted through global processes (Pred 1984; Massey 1994; Swyngedouw 1997; see structuration Giddens 1984). So while global-scale issues may have macro-scale dimensions, they also have localized manifestations. For global studies scholars, global-scale issues require a shift of focus not just from the national to the global, but to the entire local-global continuum (Nederveen Pieterse 2013; Darian-Smith 2014). Hence global studies scholars are necessarily attentive to the ways global-scale processes become manifest in the lives of ordinary people and across the full range of human activities. Depending upon the questions a researcher asks, the global can be found in large cities but also in villages and neighborhoods. The global can be found in multinational corporations but also in the workplace, in mass culture and in the rituals of daily life. The global can be found in grand historical narratives and individual life stories (see Sassen 2008; Roy and Ong 2012; Juergensmeyer, Griego and Sobosli 2015).

For scholars of global studies the local, national, regional and the global are mutually constitutive, creating and recreating each other. Further, global studies scholars argue that these kinds of global-scale issues manifest *simultaneously* at multiple levels and can manifest differently at regional, national, and local levels. One conceptual difficulty is that in some cases the variation of global issues across a variety of cultural contexts at the local level is so extreme that it may challenge the definition of abstract Western concepts (e.g. human rights, development, justice) and their assumed universality (Chakrabarty 2000:9; Merry 2006). Nonetheless, global-scale issues necessarily link large analytical abstractions to their varied local manifestations. This ability to grasp global-scale issues, to integrate larger global systems analysis into a multi-level analysis of the entire global/local spectrum, to see the global through the local and vice versa, and to identify impulses of influence in this mutually constitutive network, is a new way of understanding the world. And it raises new research questions and a conceptually accessible methodology that is not grounded in a particular discipline (such as geography) as it seeks to reveal and engage with various levels of interconnectivity.

### **Decentered, Distributed, and De-territorialized Processes.**

Global issues are not only large and complex, but like the Internet they can also be decentralized and distributed. Global processes may have more than one center or no center at all (Baran 1964; Nederveen Pieterse 2013; McCarty 2014a). They may have no hierarchy, directional flow or even clear linear causality. They tend to have a de-territorialized quality in that they are everywhere and nowhere, or at least not neatly contained within established political borders and natural boundaries in the ways we are accustomed (see Fig. 2).

The issue of immigration provides a pertinent example of distributed and de-territorialized processes. The migration of people no longer happens from one point to another, from the global south to the global north, or vice versa. Immigration, transmigration and return migration have become so widespread and complex that immigration can no longer be said to have a clear directional flow. The sense of violation that accompanies the massive cross-migration of people fleeing poverty and war is not limited to one nation or another. The borders of all nations are impacted by this problem and the crisis is felt simultaneously – although to different degrees – all

*Figure 2: Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed Systems*

Source: [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_memoranda/RM3420/RM3420-chapter1.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_memoranda/RM3420/RM3420-chapter1.html)

over the world. The third world is no longer somewhere “out there”, safely far off as it may once have seemed to those living in the First World. Of course, this is also true for the global south which has had to deal with both the positive and negative impacts of the infiltration of western capitalism (see Prashad 2012).

The point-to-point model of immigration fails to adequately describe the complex flow of people around the world. From a global perspective the ebb and flow of immigrants has over the last two hundred years been closely tied to the flow of global capital through a global economy. Where global-scale issues such as immigration are driven by global-scale economic and political processes these issues tend to defy geographic and political boundaries. This makes it difficult to study global-scale issues using territorial categories such as the nation-state. It follows that in terms of a global analysis the data sets that nation-states collect are also territorially bound and essentially flawed. If immigration is a distributed issue driven by decentralized global-scale processes then it should be no wonder that national immigration policies based on flawed nation-bound understandings of immigration will fail to adequately deal with the issue.

### Critical Voices and Plural Epistemologies

When dealing with complex global issues there is not just one side, or even two sides, to every issue. It is important to recognize that people around the world have their own cultures, religions, values and their own ways of knowing grounded in historical traditions and validated by

lived experiences. This means that there is never just one community, history or truth since each cultural tradition has its own epistemologies, understandings and systems of meaning. The ability to understand an issue from multiple perspectives is an important part of critical global scholarship. This makes cultural relativism, standpoint and intersectional theories, pluralism and cosmopolitanism key concepts in Global Studies (Smith 1977; Collins 2000; Appiah 2006; Gunn 2013).

In the same way that transdisciplinary scholars seek to integrate alternative voices and plural epistemologies, scholars in Global Studies endeavor to recover critical voices that are typically disregarded in the discourse of globalization. Too often, focusing on economic processes of globalization can overemphasize the dominant processes of capitalism, global markets, international trade, development and regional trade agreements. A macro-economic analysis can displace localized processes and further marginalize voices from the periphery of the global economy. Global Studies seek to balance the macro focus by encompassing the entire local-global continuum which necessarily includes the voices of women, minorities, indigenous peoples, unemployed, postcolonial subjects, people living in poverty, immigrants, refugees and other displaced persons, among others. By definition then, Global Studies scholars seek to incorporate multiple intersectional dimensions of discrimination – gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, health and citizenship. All analyses must include marginalized voices, many which bear witness to unfairness in a global system that includes gross inequality, extreme poverty, human rights abuses, exploitation of human and natural resources, environmental degradation, governmental corruption, regionalized violence and genocide. It is only by deliberately making room for these critical voices and alternate epistemologies, as well as sharing with non-western scholars editorial power in the production of new knowledge, that the emerging field of Global Studies gains the potential to recognize and engage with the many facets of the most serious global issues facing the world today (Featherstone and Venn 2006; Darian-Smith 2014).

However, it must be pointed out that valorizing and legitimating non-western epistemologies involves much more than providing passive moral support or active material support. Western scholars must overcome their ethnocentrism and be prepared to have their own worldviews changed by pluralistic ways of knowing (Santos 2007). This is very difficult for some scholars in the global north who remain convinced of their own intellectual superiority. Yet the unpacking of dominant paradigms should be considered positively, as a creative, constructive and inclusive process that challenges us to confront our own parochialism and at the same time make new analytical syntheses possible. In short, it is an opportunity to overcome the ‘provincial, arrogant, and silly’ posturing of western scholars who assume their work applies to the entire world (Rehbein 2014:217). More significantly, it is the surest path to surmounting the inherent limitations of western scholarship, making new productive avenues of inquiry possible, discovering new ways of looking at global issues, and producing more just and sustainable outcomes.

This recognition of the fundamental need to promote, embrace and learn from people outside the Euro-American worldview builds upon the sociology of knowledge literature which points to the need for thinking beyond the nation-state. Notes Michael Buroway, this new interdisciplinary approach ‘has to be distinguished from economics that is primarily concerned with the advance of market society and political science that is concerned with the state and political order – Northern disciplines ever more preoccupied with modelling a world ever more remote from reality’ (Buroway 2014:xvii). Adding to this conversation, Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell argue that ‘the *epistemological* case for a remaking of the social sciences has been firmly established. The great need now is to develop *substantive* fields of knowledge in a new way, using perspectives from the South

and what might be called a postcolonial theoretical sensibility' (Dados and Connell 2014:195). This requires, says Boike Rehbein compellingly, 'not more and not less than a critical theory for the globalized world' (Rehbein 2014:221).

We argue that the bringing together of the three Global Studies contributions outlined above to the transdisciplinary framework that has been incrementally developing within the academy has resulted in the formation of a new analytical paradigm. The hallmark of this new paradigm is that it shifts scholarly focus to the entire local-global continuum as an object of study and wider context of analysis (McCarty 2014c). We call this new paradigm a *global transdisciplinary framework*. This framework is both post-*disciplinary* and post-*interdisciplinary* in the sense that it moves past the inherent limits of conventional academic disciplines, making it possible to engage holistically with the kinds of multifaceted global-scale challenges the world faces today. We argue that a *global transdisciplinary framework* is applicable to research in both mainstream disciplines and new fields of inquiry, whether or not research foci are obviously global in scale.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A *global transdisciplinary framework* requires us to recognize that global issues are nearly always multifaceted, transected by social, political, economic, spatial and temporal dimensions, with intersecting dimensions of race, ethnicity, class, gender and religion. All these dimensions can manifest simultaneously and in different ways at local, national, regional and global levels. For the individual scholar, designing a theoretical and methodological approach to studying today's complex global processes can appear overwhelming.

Fortunately, adopting a *global transdisciplinary framework* offers a way forward in studying and producing new knowledge that speaks to the interconnected complexities of the 21st century. Evidence to support this claim comes from our own research and teaching experience. We find that applying a *global transdisciplinary framework* helps students design viable research projects. Students do not need to analyze every dimension of a particular global issue, however they do need to recognize that various dimensions are present and may be relevant, or not, depending on the objectives of the study. Likewise, students do not need to analyze all the levels from local to global, yet recognize that the issue they are dealing with may be operating at any one or all of those levels, and that the interaction between levels may be the most fascinating and important aspect.

The challenge in conveying a *global transdisciplinary framework* is made easier by the fact that many of our students understand that the academy needs to develop new approaches to the new kinds of complex global problems that the world faces today. Young people tend to be less invested than established scholars in a worldview that privileges nation-states and the disciplinary-bound production of knowledge. In short, globalization is not new to them and adopting a *global transdisciplinary framework* for understanding their highly integrated world simply makes sense. Moreover, students find that the framework can be liberating and empowering given that every day they are confronted with headlines that present the world as a dizzying array of apparently disconnected and chaotic events. A *global transdisciplinary framework* encourages students to identify persistent patterns across time and space that make it possible for them to connect the dots. In this way, the framework can transform students' understanding of a wide range of current global issues. And in the process, it encourages young scholars to reach beyond the boundaries of

their own cultural values and western modes of thinking to embrace a wider humanity that has the potential to transform their fundamental understanding of the individual's role in society and our collective place in the world.

Our experience in research and in the classroom leads us to argue, somewhat counterintuitively, that a *global transdisciplinary framework* makes analyzing global issues more accessible. The framework enables the operationalizing of an integrated approach to address pressing and multifaceted global issues from a variety of perspectives, selectively analyzing relevant historical, spatial, economic, political and social dimensions and engaging with a range of theories and methods driven by one's research questions rather than one's disciplinary training (see Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). This approach allows the deployment of micro, mid-range and macro theories and qualitative and quantitative methods at different levels of analysis as needed. Further, we argue that this more holistic framework is productive, analytically flexible, and surprisingly practical to implement with the limited resources scholars typically have at their disposal. The ability of our students to grasp this integrated paradigm, use it to understand current events, and then apply it in their own real-world research, is evidence that a *global transdisciplinary framework* can be effectively communicated and productively applied. This in turn points to the possibility of communicating the value of a *global transdisciplinary framework* to wider audiences including university administrators, funding agencies, policy makers and ultimately the general public.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>**Professor Eve Darian-Smith** is Department Chair in Global Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara. Her award-winning publications include *Religion, Race, Rights: Landmarks in the History of Modern Anglo-American Law* (2010) and *Laws and Societies in Global Contexts: Contemporary Approaches* (2013). Forthcoming books are *New Indian Wars: The Global Challenge of Indigenous Sovereignty* (Cambridge University Press), and *The Global Turn: Theories, Research Designs and Methods for Global Studies* (with Philip McCarty, University of California Press).

<sup>2</sup>**Dr. Philip McCarty** is a lecturer in Global Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara. His recent publications include *Integrated Perspectives in Global Studies* (2014), "Communicating Global Perspectives" (*Basel Papers in European Global Studies*, 2014) and "Globalizing Legal History" (*Rechtsgeschichte*, 2014). Forthcoming books are *Introduction to Global Studies* and *The Global Turn: Theories, Research Designs and Methods for Global Studies* (both with University of California Press).

<sup>3</sup>The Global Studies Consortium, established in 2007, lists approximately thirty institutions around the world that offer undergraduate and graduate programs in global studies. These programs are rapidly growing in number. In the USA, Indiana University established the School of Global & International Studies in 2012, the Global Studies Department at the University of California Santa Barbara launched the first doctoral program at a Tier-1 research university in the country in 2014, and Roberta Buffett gave a gift of over \$ 100 million to support global studies and a new research institute at Northwestern University in 2015.

<sup>4</sup>We appreciate that this presents an unbalanced perspective, but talking about scholarly trends beyond the Euro-American academy is also beyond our expertise and we invite others to contribute to these conversations.

<sup>5</sup>A *global transdisciplinary framework* has several significant analytical, methodological and pedagogical implications, only a small number of which we touch upon in this essay (see Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017).

<sup>6</sup>It is important to note that this reduction of support for interdisciplinary work has not been matched by leading funding agencies. For instance in the United States, the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health have increased their budgets over the past five years for interdisciplinary and collaborative research and are on the whole embracing innovative research theories and methods. See also footnote 8.

<sup>7</sup>The push toward international studies was sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York who worked collectively to support interdisciplinary area studies as a matter of public policy (Lagemann 1992). Under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the introduction of Title VI grants, funding was made available to approximately 125 universities to support area studies, language studies and education abroad programs which were known as National Resource Center Programs. This resulted in a diverse number of academic units being developed such as African Studies, Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, East Asian Studies, European Studies and Pacific Studies that together reflected the United States' expanding neo-colonial reach and imperial development aspirations into other parts of the world.

<sup>8</sup>Neuroscience is a salient example in the natural sciences. The field "has become a combination of anatomy, physiology, chemistry, biology, pharmacology, and genetics with a profound concern for culture, ethics, and social context ... To survive in the 21st century the neurosciences will have to link all of their parts even further and bring genetics, the environment, and the sociocultural context together in order to develop more complex models of [the] mind" (Burnett 2008:252; see also Fitzgerald and Callard 2014).

<sup>9</sup>The term was first used by Jean Piaget but then picked up by Erick Jantsch and André Lichnerowicz at the international workshop on interdisciplinary research and teaching organized by OECD in collaboration with the French Ministry of National Education and the University of Nice (see Apostel 1972).

<sup>10</sup>In the United States this practice can be seen in the university teaching curriculum. Despite institutional barriers to advancement for interdisciplinary scholars, since 1985 there has been a sharp increase in the number of interdisciplinary degrees awarded to students. For example, between academic years 1985 to 2010 the number of multi/interdisciplinary bachelor's degrees awarded increased by 307 percent (from 13,754 to 42,228). Source: Table 313 of the Digest of Education Statistics 2013, U.S. Department of Education National Center of Educational Statistics (NECS). [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12\\_313.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_313.asp).

<sup>11</sup>A number of scholars currently publishing in the Euro-American academy including Jürgen Habermas, Bruno Latour, Judith Butler, Saskia Sassen, David Harvey, Mike Davis, Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Kwame Appiah, Paul Farmer, Talal Asad, and Noam Chomsky, and many more unnamed, stand out for making contributions that are influential across numerous disciplines. Such scholars can be controversial, but they all have the ability to reach beyond their theoretical or methodological training and make their specialized knowledge speak to wider audiences. In many ways, these scholars represent the kind of flexible and innovative thinking that moves beyond conventional disciplines and posits new ways of producing and organizing knowledge.

<sup>12</sup>See for instance Featherstone, Lash and Robertson 1995; Featherstone et al. 2006; Appelbaum and Robinson 2005; Steger 2009; Gunn 2013; Nederveen Pieterse 2013; Juergensmeyer 2014; Steger and Wahlrab 2016; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017.

<sup>13</sup>To foster intercultural understanding and local engagement the Global Studies Department at the University of California Santa Barbara requires students to study at least two languages and encourages travel overseas for considerable lengths of time, preferably for a year.