HUMANITIES, CULTURE, AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

The Changing American Academy

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Chapter 8
DEFINING OTHER AMERICAS

Douglas Bennett calls identity fields a kind of "sacred edge" in the re-opened battle over inclusion and exclusion (144). American studies was a staging ground for interests in race and gender. However, former President Mary Ellen Washington recalls, when the Radical Caucus of the American Studies Association (ASA) formed in 1969, African Americans were relatively invisible. The loosening of disciplinary boundaries was part of a new synthesis that should have made African American and American studies natural collaborators. That did not happen (3). By the mid-1970s, members of the former Radical Caucus were being elected to the ASA Council. They were subsequently joined by members of the Women's Committee. The general community of American studies was also becoming more diverse, and new programs finding support (Horwitz, "American Studies" 115; Mochling, "Axioms" 10-11). In order to develop their interests fully, though, the "others" had to create their own fields.

Identity fields represented another "America" on the edge of the traditional frame (Campbell and Kean 10). They provided homes for studying previously neglected topics, imparting new personal and sociopolitical relevance, fostering collaborative work, and establishing interdisciplinary approaches capable of refiguring existing concepts, ideas, and frameworks (Garcia and Ratcliff 119, Olguin and Schmitz 439). In forging new pathways in the study of American culture, they also created a counterpressure on both the disciplines and American studies. In the case of American studies, the pressure was compounded by changes in departments of English and of history where studies of American literature and social history were securing a place (Mochling, "Axioms" 10). This chapter compares the trajectories of two major exemplars—African American and women's studies. The objective is not a full account of each field, but an understanding of how they forged new pathways for the study of American culture. Several related questions follow. How do these fields differ from other interdisciplinary fields? What parallels appear in the early period? What were the major gains and impediments in that period? What role have the concepts of unity and disciplinarity played in their evolution? How has disciplinarity been defined and practiced? What is their current status in the academy? What lessons about the academic home of disciplinarity emerge from these and other identity fields?

Interdisciplinary Prospects

Identity fields are qualitatively different from other interdisciplinary fields because they emerged from external historical events. They were the academic arm of movements that began in the social and political arenas: in challenges to the political, social, and economic order; in struggles for ethnic, racial, and gender equality; in cultural and educational projects anchored in self-definition and pride; and in efforts to create curricular parity and build transdisciplinary paradigms. "Ethnic studies" is an umbrella term for fields that focus specifically on the ways that race and racism have shaped ethnic reality in America. The most frequent approach has been ethnic-specific studies located in separate programs, centers, and departments. Ethnic studies also became a component of American studies programs and departments, though far less often (Butler 96-97, DeSoto 302). Identity fields emerged at roughly the same time. The civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s and student activism in the mid- to late 1960s stirred widening protests on campuses. In 1968, San Francisco State College became the first predominantly white institution to establish a black studies program, and demands from coalitions of women and other groups followed. In 1968 and 1969, Asian American studies began at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley. And in 1970, San Diego State University and Cornell University launched the first women's studies programs (Levine and Ndifor 78; Mattbag 83). In each case, the object existed before the field.

The Rise of Black Studies

The precursors of African American scholarship and teaching date to the early 1900s. Pioneering works included writings by W. E. B. DuBois, Arthur
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other—a radical nationalist perspective—was composed of black student organizations and faculty who were dissatisfied with traditional disciplinary approaches. They sought a new approach rooted in the political objectives of black cultural nationalism. Believing the field should be relevant to their communities, they linked theory and praxis in the service of alleviating social problems, and many advocated a race-specific ideology toward education (xxii-xiii).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of courses, programs, and departments increased, with estimates running as high as 1,300 institutions offering at least one course (R. L. Allen 494). The number of programs and departments is usually tallied between 350 and 350, though it reaches 500 and 700 in higher counts. Local focus varied, depending on the perceived student and community population as well as the. Between the number of faculty available to teach a course (Butler 96–97, DeSoto 302). When Little, Leonard, and Crosby examined 400 programs in 1981, 251 units were issuing one of three models. The “disciplinary model” offered few options that could be tailored to individual interests and addressed a limited range of concerns. The most common disciplines were history, sociology, or literature. The “interdisciplinary model” also drew on the disciplines. Courses were inclined toward special interests, and most departmental curricula focused on correcting the historical record. In contrast, the “multi-disciplinary model” was based on autonomous units with faculty control. The majority of multidiplinary curricula were structured in one of four ways: (1) social sciences and humanities courses with a double specialization, (2) social sciences or humanities courses with only a specialization in social sciences, (3) with a specialization in humanities, or (4) a social science course with specialization in a profession (699–701). Although the terms “multi-disciplinary” and “interdisciplinary” are not used here in the conventional way, reversing the customary degree of integration, these categories mark the dividing line of disciplinary primacy. When the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) was founded in 1975, the new professional organization endorsed departmental structure. It also recommended dual majors in a core curriculum that moved from an introduction to survey and advanced courses in social and behavioral sciences, history, and cultural studies to a culminating senior seminar (Alkalimat 400). NCBS favored departmental structure because it offered a more direct and permanent connection to the power structure of an institution and greater autonomy over curriculum, budget, and staffing. Programs, though,
Interdisciplining "America"

were the more typical structure. They offered greater flexibility for team teaching, multi- and interdisciplinary collaborations, and community projects. Yet, even if they offered majors and minors, programs rarely conferred degrees, there were not enough formalized programs, and they tended to rely on joint appointments, interdepartmental cooperation, and coordinators, directors, or committees lacking the authority of departmental chairs. They also exhibited the same tendencies that Little, Leonard, and Crosby found in their first and second models. Many lacked a coherent or comprehensive body of knowledge in a specific area, they rarely presented a philosophical or theoretical conceptual underpinning, and they typically did not address fundamental questions of the field (Walton, "Critical" 530-33; Hino, "Overview" 51; Adams 104; J. O. Smith 479-81; Drake 666-67; Little, Leonard, and Crosby 701-04).

Despite progress in the first era, the gains were undercut in the 1970s by a nationwide economic recession, parallel economic retracements in higher education, a lessened commitment to the sociopolitical objectives of black studies, and attacks on the integrity of the young field. In 1973, the percentage of black youth entering college also decreased for the first time in a decade, the movement waned as students prioritized individual career objectives, and a parallel retreatment occurred within the larger society in social welfare, education, and housing programs (Stewart, "Field" 43-45). In 1975, Nathan Huggins declared that the decade of ideology was over (254). At least 200 black college teachers had a primary allegiance to the field and a professional organization in place. Yet, most programs were surviving at a bare level, and their faculty were often invisible and relegated to being outsiders in their institutions (Hayes 599-600).

From Female Studies to Women's Studies

The early years of women's studies exhibit striking parallels to the rise of black studies. Knowledge about women was historically a by-product of work in disciplinary contexts in which women and gender were traditionally minimized or ignored. Initially called "feminist studies," the academic field evolved from efforts to combat discrimination, to establish journals and a professional organization, and to build the first programs. In 1969, roughly sixteen courses in the United States were devoted to the subject of women and gender. By the time the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) was founded in 1977, there were 276 programs nationwide. In scholarship, the production of knowledge followed a typical pattern in interdisciplinary fields. The first generation addressed errors, distortions, and omissions in the disciplines, accumulating data and information in order to fill gaps in existing knowledge. Elaine Showalter characterized early feminist criticism as "an empirical orphan in the theoretical storm" (186). More accretion of woman-centered topics and information was not enough, however. A transformation of knowledge and consciousness was needed (Coyner 349; Stimpson, "Feminist Criticism" 297; Christ 1).

In Disciplining Feminism, Ellen Messer-Davidow chronicles the role of three organizational fields in building resources and circulating ideas: the publishing industry, the higher education system, and the disciplines. First-generation feminists used their own venues to pry open the doors of mainstream scholarship. Their efforts counter the gatekeeping myth that feminist work did not appear in the mainstream because it lacked significance or quality. Disciplinary gatekeeping controlled who was allowed in and what kind of work was published. In the 1970s, commercial presses also backed away from feminist trade books that hybridized elements of academic discourse and the feminist social movement. The corporatization and commodification of the publishing industry had both positive and negative effects. The quest for profits and popularity of transgressive scholarship in some disciplines led publishers to bring out feminist books. Yet, the level of support and output in mainstream venues paled in comparison to that of feminist conferences, journals, and presses (139-54).

Verifying another pattern in the early history of interdisciplinary fields, citation data from the late 1980s and 1990s reveals that most scholars retained a strong disciplinary character. The deepest differences were methodological. Even when feminists focused on the same topic, their work often bore the stamp of a particular discipline. Dubois and colleagues' study of publications from 1966 through 1980 in history, literature, education, anthropology, and philosophy revealed uneven impact, despite a general increase in receptivity. A significant portion of scholarship also continued to appear in women's studies journals. Crucial as they are to building a literature, field-specific journals do not substitute for sustained consideration in the mainstream. Moreover, research frameworks and analytic concepts such as "family," "class," "race," "community," "socialization," "social control," and "social conflict" needed to be reformulated to encompass new understandings of women as well as relationships between men and women.
Messer-Davidow's review of course data from 1971-72 and 1976 reveals a similar pattern in the classroom. From the beginning, feminist pedagogy prioritized an interactive learning environment, a more equal partnership of instructors and students, bridging of academic and self-knowledge, and active projects involving interaction with the community. The first generation of teachers, though, had to assemble a curriculum from courses based primarily in departments. Despite widespread talk of being "interdisciplinary," most programs consisted of a small core of introductory, senior seminars, and feminist-issues courses combined with cross-listed, department-based courses. Most introductory courses were partitioned along disciplinary lines, and cross-listed courses were oriented toward disciplines. They also tended to appear in certain departments, rather than others, especially literature, history, psychology, and sociology. The dominant pattern was a "multidisciplinary melange" rather than an "interdisciplinary hybrid." This tendency persisted through the 1980s. Moreover, faculty were hired unevenly across departments and tended to be clustered in lower ranks and less prestigious institutions where teaching loads were heavier and part-time employment was the norm. Feminists found their status to be tenuous, their intellectual credibility impugned, and their educational agenda resisted. They aspired to be cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral, but were contained by disciplinary and institutional limits. They sought to hybridize activist discourse and academic discourse, but the venues they used often formatted discourse along scholarly conventions (Disciplining 152-58).

As a body of feminist knowledge developed, Catharine Stimpson recalls, three activities supplemented, corrected, and sometimes overlapped each other: defiance of difference, celebration of difference, and recognition of differences among women. Practices ranged widely, drawing on traditions of liberal humanism while challenging established canons, crafting strategies of reading that emphasized differences within language, and using methods and theories derived from structuralism and poststructuralism, neo-Marxist theory of ideology, postcolonial experience and identity, and cultural studies. The subsequent turn into gender studies encompassed feminist interests along with lesbian and gay studies and studies of masculinity and sexuality ("Feminist Criticism" 239-67; "Women's Studies" 1978, 14-26). Like black studies, women's studies was multipurpose. Feminist practices engaged the boundaries of knowing and doing; subjective and objectified consciousness; gender, race, class, and culture; academic and other forms of knowledge; and disciplinary, professional, and interdisciplinary affiliations. In both fields, interdisciplinarity also had more than one meaning. The term connoted creating a broader and more complex approach to understanding race and gender, developing alternative curricula, borrowing disciplinary methodologies, breaking down disciplinary boundaries, providing community service, performing political work, and forging a body of knowledge based on a self-defined epistemology.

Continuing Growth and Limits

In the post-1970s, mainstream professional associations began to establish sections devoted to topics of race and gender. The movement to foster awareness of cultural diversity in the United States also widened (Butler 58). Nonetheless, African American and women's studies continued to strengthen their own fields.

Expanding African American Studies

Norman calls the period from 1985 to 2000 a time of institutionalization. In 1984, the NCBS estimated that approximately 250 schools were offering black studies programs. A resurgence of energy and productivity promised to carry the field from ad hoc experimentation to permanence. However, a lot of work remained. Innovations from the 1960s and 1970s needed to be protected and the field consolidated into a strong community. The role of the NCBS must be secure, the professional journal literature codified in the classroom, and national conferences unified (McWorter and Bailey 624-16). A stable cadre of faculty must also be established. The earliest units, Carlos Brossard recalls, tended to draw on any African American faculty, even individuals lacking pertinent intellectual interests or preparation. Young graduate students and new Ph.Ds who taught in the first departments had to undergo a process of self-resocialization to the emerging field and to interdisciplinary work. White faculty might be involved, but, especially early on, black faculty were usually preferred (66).

Black studies gained an academic foothold as undergraduate teaching, not as research training. Akin to women's studies, developing new modes of teaching and learning was an important part of this mission, with emphasis on active learning, self-reflection, integration of knowledge and experience,
the relationship of theory and praxis, and community studies (Bressoud 66). By 1990, the majority of autonomous departments were awarding RA degrees. Some of the remaining units had majors and most offered minors, but the more common format was a concentration. Few units offered masters, and graduates who went on to PhDs did so in traditional disciplines. Typical of interdisciplinary fields, local programs differed in size and prestige, relating to host institution, balance of breadth-versus specialization, and in the case of black studies emphasis on humanities or social sciences and orientation towards disciplines or professional programs (Hine "Overview").

Like women's studies, black studies was also confronted by its marginalization of women of color. From the beginning, feminists aimed to formulate multiple identities (Messer-Davidow, Disciplining 199). Yet, the founding generation of academic feminists was criticized for universalizing the nature of women's experience. African American, Chicana, Native American, and lesbian scholars undertook projects that produced a more complex understanding of differences within particular cultural groups as well as modern consciousness and transnational identities. In the 1970s and 1980s, black women's studies emerged, and black women's history and feminist literary criticism became key sites in bringing intersecting issues of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation to the forefront (Addelson and Potter 265; Dullois el al. 65). New work has encompassed theory, recovery of a black female literary tradition and popular culture, studies of the role of black women in slavery as well as the economic and political system, the church, the family, and the community. Obstacles remain, though, including lack of a critical mass of scholars, gatekeeping in the publishing industry, and the small number of courses on African women in their own right (Alldridge 160, 162; see also Collins).

The current status of African American studies reflects both cumulative gains and persistent limits. In 1997, NCBS reported a total of 380 programs. At least 140 were offering degrees, approximately 2 to master's degrees, and 4 doctorates, with PhD programs in the works and other doctoral institutions offering concentrations in African studies or the African diaspora. Few historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) offer degrees in black studies, though the HBCUs incorporate an African American focus into the disciplines, imbuing the curriculum with a black perspective (Moskowitz 82-83). In 2003, the NCBS website listed 350 institutional members, including school districts and community organizations, and about 20,000 individuals (http://www.nationalcouncilforblackstudies.com).

When James Stewart took stock in 1993, he judged the majority of scholarship to still be contributionist in nature. Most studies, he reported, embodied a "rationality by negation," disputing traditional claims that ancient Egyptian civilization had little connection to sub-Saharan Africa. Stewart called for a more continuous intellectual history and balancing Knetic studies with investigations of other classical civilizations and societies as well as communities in the Western Hemisphere ("Higher Ground" 356). In another assessment of the field, Floyd Hayes urged broadening the scope to include policy studies and advocacy, critical theory, critical cultural studies, women's studies, social and political ethics, futures research, organizational development, and leadership preparation. He also anticipated greater "transdisciplinary" and global interests as the field responds to the postindustrial managerial society and global political economy (604). More recently, Norment judged the field to be at a crossroads. Scholars today, Norment reflected, are less concerned about justifying its place in the academy. They are working to transform the lives of everyone with Afrocentric and African-centered scholarship. Yet, he exhorts them to continue expanding the theories, methodologies, and epistemologies of African American studies while evaluating its political, intellectual, social, and cultural roles (xxxvii).

Expanding Women's Studies

Once again, women's studies exhibits striking parallels. By 1992, there were over 30,000 women's studies courses at the undergraduate level. Joan Korenman's current links to programs, departments, and centers worldwide number 700, with additional programs on the NWSS website and a count of 754 U.S. programs in 2002 (Cooper 349; Simpson, "Feminist Criticism" 257; Christ 13; http://www.nwss.org). The difference between 1970 and 1995 is striking. In 1970, Messer-Davidow recalls, women's studies was barely institutionalized. Roughly a hundred courses were being taught by marginal faculty, a half-dozen emerging programs existed, publications were often mimeographed, and the knowledge base consisted of little more than brief accounts of women's lives and declarations against patriarchy. By 1995, the field had an infrastructure of roughly 610 programs, hundreds of curriculum projects, more than eight campus-based research centers, national associations of feminist scholars, feminist committees and divisions in every disciplinary association, plus thousands of academic-feminist presses,
book series, journals, and newsletters. The knowledge base consisted of an extensive body of data, scholarship, and theory across the full range of disciplinary and professional fields, social groups, and societies. Feminine techniques such as turn-taking, small-group discussion, and integration of everyday experience were being widely used in colleges, high schools and grade schools. Some disciplines had also been restructured and feminine subfields established in others (Disciplining 85).

Nonetheless, the picture remains mixed. When NWSA examined the state of the major in the late 1980s, it found more students taking courses than majoring in the field, and double majors were the norm ("Women's Studies" 144). When Messer-Davidow examined thirty programs in 1992, she also found a persistent multidisciplinary melange. On average women's studies programs had six program-based courses and fifty cross-listed courses oriented to disciplinary subjects and methods. Most cross-listed courses appeared in disciplines that had welcomed, or at least tolerated, feminist work since 1980: namely, American studies, classics, comparative literature, composition, education, history, sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, religion, theater, rhetoric, social work, speech, English, and German and Romance languages (Disciplining 158-62).

In 1997, Carol Christ reported parallel findings in scholarship. Women's studies had moved more quickly to the center of disciplines where paradigms were under discussion. The controversy over Theory in literary studies, anthropology, and to a lesser extent history legitimized the challenges posed by women's studies. Feminist interests also found a more secure home in disciplines that are "thickly descriptive," such as history, literature, and anthropology. It had easier entry into text-based disciplines, and it was more readily established in psychology and anthropology. In history, its presence and early development were hand in hand with increasing attention to social history. In philosophy, the dominance of analytic philosophy worked against a concern with gender or social relations (18, 21-22).

Even so, Messer-Davidow also found a surprising number of courses in fields that were traditionally less hospitable. Courses cross-listed with business management, criminal justice, labor studies, natural resource management, and urban planning were as numerous as cross-listings with art history, philosophy, and economics. At institutions with thriving ethnic and area studies programs, interdisciplinary courses were cross-listed with African American, Asian American, Chicano, Native American, Judaic, Near Eastern, and South Asian studies. Programs offering cross-disciplinary intro-

structions were organized as grids with identity categories crosshatching disciplinary and/or feminist issues. Yet, introductory and advanced courses in women's studies programs exhibited a tilt toward disciplinary integrity. Some advanced courses—such as women's biology and feminist philosophy—facilitated feminist study in disciplines that were traditionally more resistant. Others—such as feminist literary criticism and women's history—repeated offerings available in mainstream departments. Feminist theory courses were the most immune to disciplinary titling, and every program taught social change as a subject embedded within topics courses (Disciplining 159-61).

Messer-Davidow's account of interventions into the American Sociological Association and the Modern Language Association illustrates how existing infrastructures can be used to change the dominant order of knowledge. Second-wave feminists called conventional practices and precepts into question, used new methods in old paradigms, built new critical positions, forged alliances that connected dispersed groups, and situated their work inside those disciplinary organizations. Taking stock in 2002, Messer-Davidow cited significant gains in proliferating objects, knowledges, specialties, and hybrid relations with other fields. Feminist studies reconstructed traditionally fashioned categories of "women" and "men," denaturalized "sex" and "sexuality," modeled "sex/gender systems," multiplied "identities" and "oppressions," and problematized all such categories. The transformation beckoned in theory did not pass out in practice, although not for the reasons feminists anticipated. They understood the power of academic institutions to suppress their interests, but not the power exercised by letting them go forward. The institutional—disciplinary order predetermined feminist studies from the start. Feminist studies produced an abundance of differences, but the gap between scholarly knowledges and social activism is now entrenched in institutional structures that are largely separated from national political struggle (Disciplining 101-11,165-66).
From the beginning, notions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity have been intertwined in African American studies. Little, Leonard and Crosby advocated an "interdisciplinary discipline model" (691), and Dusadi Ajani ya Atillo called black studies both "an interdisciplinary field and a singular discipline" (477). Stewart distinguished two rationales for the field. "Weak multi/interdisciplinary rationales" take the existing disciplinary structure as a given, with black/African studies providing "added value" by developing knowledge that represents disciplinary syntheses. Scalp attention is paid, though, to underlying theoretical constructs. The "strong multidisciplinary rational grounds" analysis in philosophy of science and subject areas, not disciplines ("Reaching" 352-353). Karemga's notion of an "interdisciplinary discipline" illustrates the strong rationale. He advocated seven interconnected and interdependent core subject areas as the basis for a curriculum: black history, black religion, black social organization, black politics, black economics, black creative production (art, music, and literature), and black psychology. Outside the field, they are taught as separate disciplines. Inside, they are transformed into subject areas that contribute to a holistic picture and approach to black experience with a dual thrust of scholarship and praxis ("Problematic" 83, Introduction).

Karla Spurlock calls interdisciplinarity the one connecting link across differing structures, ideologies, course content, and degrees of community involvement. In specifying elements of a "truly interdisciplinary" approach, Spurlock included organizing groups into common efforts centered on common problems, engaging in continuous intercommunication, maximizing the disciplinary mix in teaching, designing a co-evaluated curriculum with field-specific seminars that draw on a common store of knowledge, team teaching on a wide scale, and supporting interdisciplinary journals and conferences that help to consolidate an identity and concretize a common language. The end point of the interdisciplinary continuum would be unified "trans or undisciplinarity" in which disciplines are blended into a new discipline. Without a concerted effort to achieve interdisciplinarity, Spurlock cautioned, the field might slip back into a more multidisciplinary coexistence. Interdisciplinarity, she added, provides not only multidisciplinary breadth and a holistic vision, it stimulates creative thinking. Simply adding the word "black" to course titles or creating a curriculum of related courses from different disciplines is not enough. Creative synthesis emerges when ideas from different and potentially conflicting
disciplinary methods “bang against one another.” The student/scholar is put in a “virtual intellectual crucible” (64-80).

Norment identified five major philosophical frameworks for an interdisciplinary field: traditional/innovative, self-determination/nationalist, Marxist-Leninist, black feminist thought, and Afrocentricity (286). The epistemology of Afrocentricity is rooted in an organic cultural philosophy that is African-based. All elements of life are interconnected, weaving the material and the spiritual, the practical and the conceptual. Afrocentricity, though, does not ignore the diversity of experience across the diaspora. It is a metadisciplinary synthesizing framework for a variety of knowledges and projects that acknowledge the simultaneity of commodity and difference (Asibo 426). In specifying “truly interdisciplinary” elements, Sparrow identified unifying core concepts as the centrifugal force in the “interdisciplinary” orbit. To illustrate, she cited James Bank’s proposal that history be made truly interdisciplinary by funneling analytical concepts from separate disciplines into a historical framework. Banks identified seven concepts in social sciences: conflict (history), culture (anthropology), racism (sociology), capitalism (business), power (political science), self-concept (psychology), and region (geography). The partial disciplinary perspectives would be marshaled to focus on a particular social issue such as poverty (676-80).

The problematic paradigm, Maulana Karenga observed, centers on the question of whether black studies would be “creature rupture” or “routine competence” (“Problematic” 292). Cornel West called for a “de-disciplinary” form of teaching that requires disciplinary critique, new institutional structures and programs, and new modes of teaching and learning. Perry Hall concurred, arguing that a “truly interdisciplinary” body of knowledge or field does not simply cross-boundaries—it obliterates them. Hall demonstrated what a “truly interdisciplinary” approach would mean in the classroom with the example of the Harlem Renaissance. Teaching would not be grounded in literature but would present the Harlem Renaissance as one of several forms of cultural reflection of the urban transformation of black experience in the early twentieth century, accompanied by insights into historical and social context as well as sociodemographic and macroeconomic changes. The systematic and thematic principles foster a “wholly interactive and mutually transforming” understanding. The systematic principle of Transformation, for example, is the perpetual rearrangement of material and social structures that shape the ways people live, think, work, and relate. It is widely applicable and involves the global forces, factors, or conditions in which black communities emerge, develop, and transform. Interdisciplinary analysis is built around the themes of Western European expansion, technologicalization, colonization, industrialization, and anti-colonial resistance and struggle. Historical periodism is another principle. Systematic and thematic principles underscore the increased salience of double-consciousness in African American experience and identity, engaging older dichotomies such as form/essence, folk-popular/high-elite traditions, and dass versus cultural frames.

When the National Council for Black Studies filed a report to the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) in 2000, as part of AAHE’s national project on rewarding faculty, the NCBS representatives likened African studies to an Africana village. A broad ideological umbrella provides a cover for a wide variety of activities and structures. They called the current developmental trajectory of the field “postdisciplinary.” It is an evolving intellectual enterprise that recognizes “indigenous cultural knowledge” outside traditional boundaries of humanistic and scientific discourse, and in visual and oral accounts. At the same time, it is a “discipline” in which the character of published research has changed as the training backgrounds of faculty have changed. The first generation was trained solely in traditional disciplines. As graduate programs produce new faculty trained in the field, alternative methodologies are being introduced in classrooms and journals. The forces of gatekeeping, though, continue in publication venues. NCBS reaffirms the importance of departmental status for control over tenure and promotion decisions and creating synergies between Africana studies and traditional disciplines (Diamond and Adam).

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gloria bowles speculated that one day the renaissance mass might be replaced by "the interdisciplinary woman" (qtd. in M. docter 87). In the inaugural issue of Signs, the editors foresaw several patterns of work, ranging from one person skilled in several disciplines and focused on one subject to several people in a discipline focused collaboratively on a subject to a group of disciplinarians publishing randomly in the same journal. Three years later, stimpson acknowledged that the interdisciplinary promise was proving more difficult than envisioned. Resistance to moving outside of one's expertise was as strong in women's studies as in other fields. Stimpson
called for translators able to "interpret the languages of one discipline to persons in another" (qtd. in M. Boxer 685-87).

Women's studies illustrates one of the defining characteristics of critical interdisciplinarity. Conditions of originaryity are also conditions of strength. The epistemological power of the field depends on its location in spaces where conventional boundaries are blurred ("Women's Studies" 3.10-11). Spatial metaphors depicted the field as the "outside within" a "fortress" or "citadel" from which scholars were "barred" (qtd. in Kanes 3-9). Feminist critics had the choice of being "camped" on the edge or working to defuse the minefield, lest they be reduced to a "tributary" in the "backwater" or confined to a "ghetto."

The field illustrates the "both-and" strategy of interdisciplinarity. Feminists work simultaneously in disciplines and in opposition to them, wielding their forms of power and authority for feminist purposes. In order to change the disciplines, one program coordinator remarked, women's studies had to be "of them, in them, and about them" (qtd. in Boxer 671, 695). Like African American studies, women's studies is both disciplinary and interdisciplinary (Wiegman, "Introduction" 3).

The field offers an intellectual community and an institutional site for feminists who do most of their work in disciplines, legitimating gender as a category of analysis (Addelson and Porter 271). Within their disciplinary locations, they disperse centripetally into specializations. Within the shared space of women's studies, they move centrifugally to "cross-disciplinary" research and teaching (Hartman and Messer-Davidov 5). Most scholars Ansenberg and Harrington interviewed preferred "cross-disciplinary" to discipline-bound inquiry. They see it as more flexible, more responsive to the needs of their students and more collaborative than the more exclusive behavior of their colleagues. They also see it as more "disciplinary" to women's studies faculty, students, or directors—more than the kind of work performed (349-53).

Susan Stanford Friedman's description of working in two locations illustrates the lived experience of the both/and strategy. Her disciplinary home base is literary studies and she has worked to reframe the discipline in light of femininity and race. Her interdisciplinary home base is feminism. It provides an approach to asking questions about gender, power relations, other systems of stratification, and an ethical commitment to social justice and change. Friedman travels from these two homes to other interdisciplinary homes, bringing back what she learned and what is most useful to her projects. Travel stimulates new ways of thinking, exposing the constructedness of what is taken for granted, dislodging unquestioned assumptions, and producing new insights, questions, and paradigms. Often these insights and questions cannot be translated back to any "home". Like spatial travel abroad, however, the dangers of epistemological and cross-disciplinary travel are real. Misunderstanding, appropriating, and misusing or decontextualizing the "other" may result (4-5).

Diane Elam defines the space of women's studies as both a "discipline of difference" and an "interdisciplinary discipline." Reconstituting disciplinarity as cross-disciplinarity does not elevate feminism to a theoretical metallingue or a totalizing master narrative. Borders are crossed through continuous inter- and interdisciplinary crossfertilization. Elam endorses departmental location, countering the objection that it deprives women's studies of radical politics. Departmental status harnesses funds and tenure lines for that purpose. It also draws strength from multiple disciplines without being reduced to any of them. The interdisciplinary project is defined and advanced in the space of women's studies ("Ms. en Abyme" 234-98, "Taking Account"). Mindful of the small number of full-time appointments in the field, Robyn Warhol advocates a different strategy. By paying greater attention to the changing character of disciplines, interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship can be expanded to more places and faculty and administrators at those locations urged to ensure that new hires and tenure lines be inclusive of women's studies. Warhol's strategy of infiltration is a hedge against retrenchment and piecemeal allocations, although the dual professional life of joint appointments has a downside. A double appointment can lead to a double workload and accompanying tensions about which home is primary.

Like American studies and black studies, women's studies is also moving in new transnational and transdisciplinary directions. Karen Kaplan and Inedal Grewal link transnational feminist practices to the changing nature of migration and global flows of media and capital. Recent scholarship differs from older modes of comparative study. It is reworking the nationalism and regionalist nature of area studies, the exceptionalism of American studies, the cultural nationalism of ethnic studies, and the domestic focus of mainstream women's studies (75, 73-76). Dolling and...
Hark associate transdisciplinarity in women's studies with critical evaluation of terms, concepts, and methods that transgress disciplinary boundaries. Greater reflexivity is crucial to avoiding loss of the critical potential. Women's studies also reminds us that even in a single field, all versions of interdisciplinary may be present and in conflict. Stimpson described the field as a "portfolio of maps," not a single map ("Feminist 257). Some see the field as filling a lacuna, others as a critique of disciplinarity. Some want women's studies to achieve the status of a discipline, with interdisciplinary being an intermediate step. Others challenge the prevailing orientation of programs in universities. Some work to reconnect disciplines to deal with issues the field raises. Others use the field as an avenue for raising questions about the very purpose and orientation of the academic and research enterprise (after Vickens, Saltier, and Hearn).

Like America studies, identity fields are rife with complaints about the preponderance of multidisciplinary approaches. Simply claiming that fields are "inherently" interdisciplinary is not enough. Robyn Wiegman urges greater attention to "the daily difficulty of interdisciplinary teaching and research." (Introduction 1), and Senga Gumu calls for learning more about "integrated interdisciplinary" (49-51). Cindi Katz cites reading, studying, and attending conference presentations that move across disciplines as the "integrative interdisciplinary leaven." The difficulty of interdisciplinary work is compounded, however, by the bulk of parts that must be brought to the task, including both constitutive disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. Time constraints in courses, Kathleen Blee notes, rarely permit more than quick excursions or detours into intellectual genealogies. This limitation underscores the importance of theory courses that establish historical and theoretical understanding of the field, exemplary models of interdisciplinary work, and a secure location for thinking about the commonalities and differences among disciplinary approaches and jargons (180-81).

The importance of theory courses was underscored when Nancy McCamphell Grace examined exemplary syllabi from the women's studies literature and a NWSS Report to the Profession in 1991. In conducting her evaluation of the nature, strengths, and problems associated with the seven categories of courses she identified, Grace used "The Guide to Interdisciplinary Syllabus Preparation" adopted by the Association for Integrative Studies. What defines interdisciplinary study as a problem-focused process using two or more disciplinary perspectives, exploring the methods and as-s
key decisions and the curriculum, affiliations with other identity fields, and the existence of a center. Current initiatives point in four major directions: globalizing women's studies, diversifying core faculty and curriculum offerings, responding to growth in graduate education, and expanding the interdisciplinary nature of research. Integration is being promoted by a critical cross-cultural interdisciplinary that is forging metis methodology standpoints and methodologies, curriculum transformation, and program development that also advances integrative goals (Diamond and Adams).

A Question of Home

Identity fields are caught in an institutional contradiction. If the topics associated with them are only allowed in departments of those names, Stanley Bailis warns, each will have to become a virtual university and dispute teaching its subject matter in other departments. Yet, without some claim over topic domains, they may disappear as conventional departments hire their faculty and teach their courses. "Multicultural" opened up an enormous domain conceptually, but it has a limited face. As universities hired scholars to develop emergent fields, they tended to take of two paths—disputing among established discipline-based departments or concentrating in new programs, departments, and schools. Both paths were contested, and people using one have blocked traffic on the other. Multiculturalism expanded the meaning of culture, the study of American materials, and the scope of American Studies. Yet, it also intensified the problem of intellectual coherence ("Holism," "Babel"—93).

A new universal paradigm is not the answer. Giles Gunn likens feminist criticism to African American criticism, postcolonial criticism, and cultural critique. Feminist criticism is a composite methodological site where other interdisciplinary modes cross and recross, including reader-response criticism, semiotic analysis, psychoanalytic inquiry, cultural anthropology, other ethnic studies, and gender studies. Ultimately, Gunn suggests, interdisciplinary studies may not be a specific or unified field so much as a preposition to view all fields as potentially vulnerable to recreation in the partial image of others. Akin to Roland Barthes's notion of "transversals," their ongoing reconceptualization would produce or recover meaning that previously configured relations tended to blur, camouflage, or efface ("Interdisciplinary Studies" 43; Thinking 198).

Defining Other Americas

American studies has been envisioned as the place where alliances between fields might form, generating new intellectual linkages and support in a tight academic market. In her 1997 presidential address to the American Studies Association, Washington described ASA as a "principal gathering place" where ethnic studies constituencies meet annually in their own border-crossing dialogues (20). Yet, Jotheila Butler finds, the cultural pluralism espoused by the multicultural movement reflects a continuing oppositional duality that—on the one hand—celebrates difference and—on the other—engages power relations and differences in a vision of a shared, cooperative, and relational pluralism. The growing presence in ASA of scholars of color and scholars interested in ethnic studies underscores the importance of exploring how American studies and ethnic studies can coexist in mutually supportive ways (92–98). Vicki Raiz called ASA the home of choice for most Chicano/a scholars. Yet, there are limits. Steve Sumida called ASA a "dormitory" more than a "home" (93/4 in Washington 6). Native American studies is a particularly compelling case because it is usually neglected and, in its greater marginality, underscores the problematic of inclusion and exclusion.

A Home for the Native Other?

A panel on American Indian studies at the 2002 ASA meeting and subsequent special section of American Quarterly addressed the question of home. Philip Deloria recalled Washington asking, as she prepared for her 1997 presidential address to ASA, why so few Indian constitutional scholars found ASA to be the same type of intellectual home as scholars of other fields. Demography is one answer. The 2000 census listed American Indian and Alaska Native populations as less than 1% of the total US population. As a result, the pool of academic intellectuals is smaller. Indian people are also qualitatively different from other groups. Because they have ongoing treaty relationships with the federal government, they must understand and negotiate forms of tribal governance that hybridize local knowledge with external American constitutional models. Given this reality, a significant number of prospective Native American intellectuals choose a law degree or master's in public policy over a six-year PhD program. Hence, "interdisciplinary" might mean political science, law, education, health, and language as much as it does history, literature, film, performance studies,
exist in method, subject matter, and interdisciplinary graduate training. Yet, lack of critical mass means that Native studies are still marginal. In actual practice, O'Brien concluded, ASA is more of a "shelter" or "umbrella" for ethnic studies than a "truly transformative space" and many scholars find shelter elsewhere.

Commenting on the 2002 forum, Washington underscored the limitations and possibilities inherent in her call for change. Listening to the others speak, she was struck initially by the thought that intellectual homecoming is not so much a problem as a sign of progressive and radical politics. Recalling Smail's remark about still feeling like an outsider in the "dormitory" of ASA, she questioned the supposition that ethnic studies has found a ready place. Washington crafted her presidential speech, she concluded, and American studies must reach out to Native scholars from multiple positions without professing a new form of intellectual imperialism or assimilation.

Taking stock, Robert Warrior reported that despite the accomplishments of stand-alone departments, some graduate degree programs, many undergraduate programs, and significant research and writing, Native American studies does not have its own academic association, annual meeting, or a single "must read" journal. Scholars are scattered across ASA, the Western History Association, the American Anthropological Association, the Modern Language Association, and the American Society for Ethnology. Jean O'Brien agreed, adding that, with the exception of the American Anthropological Association, more Native scholars go to ASA meetings, although they also attend other smaller forums. Their multiple presence makes the field more visible. Yet, Warrior commented, it is hard to keep track of currents in the field. Native scholars must navigate the identity politics of those organizations. ASA offered refuge from "intellectual homelessness," but attention to Native topics has been irregular. Like other identity fields, Native American studies needs a regular space to define and develop its interests. O'Brien deemed American studies more than a mere refuge, but observed that ASA is only an "occasional visit" for many and a "completely foreign country" for most Indian scholars. American studies came to be a logical home because of its lenses of multiculturalism, interdisciplinarity, and postmodernism. Yet, underlying assumptions about "nation" and sovereignty as a category of analysis must be constantly tested. Warrior stressed the importance of a "provocative presence" in ASA, challenging both old and new orthodoxies. Convergences already
the typology of German studies as an alternative interdisciplinary space for reflection on itself and its critical and academic practices. The various discourses about Germany—and, by extension, "America"—are situated at the in-between space where the clash of multiple subjectivities can foreground difference. This middle-of-the-road position does not produce a harmonious resolution or missense. It calls for a more hermeneutic view that acknowledges the oppositional potential in the friction between borders.

Boundaries are not dissolved, Peck adds. They are continually crossed, reconfiguring disciplinary and academic territories so that different forms of knowledge continue to emerge and engage. Whether national or regional, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, cultures are not bounded objects that are complete and finished. The idea of a knowledge boundary encompasses both static and flux, fixing and permeating, identity and relation, formation and navigation, structure and ecology. The word "ecology," Michael Winter reminds us, derives from the Greek word oikos, meaning household or settlement. The verbs associated with oikos suggest inhabiting, setting, governing, controlling, managing, and other activities in a complex intertwining of fields of social action. Spatial dynamics of place and organic dynamics of production are not mutually exclusive, however.

They operate simultaneously. Spatial metaphors highlight formation and maintenance. Organic metaphors—crossing, interdependence, and interrelation—highlight connection. Spatial and organic models may even be combined, Weaver suggests, to form a third type, highlighting interactions between social groups and their environments. Organism and environment imply one another mutually. Both are territorial, competitive, and expansionist. The underlying idea is to make and reinforce jurisdictional claims, analogous to the territorial claims that humans and animals make in ecological niches. At the same time, organisms, environment, and knowledge communities exploit resources to produce new life-forms and settle new territories. Thus, border crossings, intersecting, merging, fusing, and producing new hybrid forms.

Given that they have been part of the academic system for only three or a half decades, identity fields have accomplished a lot. Yet, they face new threats in the current economic and autonomies of higher education. Departments may be reduced to programs, programs summed to "cross-departmental committees, and all interdisciplinary studies lumped together.

Speaking in 2004, NCBS President James Stewart admonished professors to continue defending African American studies. In many institutions it is still tenuous, despite programs and departments at roughly 200 colleges and universities. Black studies has gained academic acceptance, Christopher Lucas affirmed. Yet, it is still charged with being both too narrow, with its focus on one group, and too broad, with its wide compass of disciplines. There will always be the peephole, but, Lucas argued, black studies programs will survive because of dedicated faculty ("Black Studies").

Similar caveats are voiced in women's studies. The history of identity fields, Guinn concludes, is marked by understanding, marginalization, and lacking the time and resources to achieve interdisciplinarity fully as intellectual and pedagogical terms (30-41). Robyn Wiegman contends, adding that identity-based knowledges which used interdisciplinarity as one of their primary explanatory arguments are still working to achieve equal footing with disciplinary projects. Interdisciplinarity continues to exist at a level of the student, and disciplines dominate in upper-division and graduate training, leading fields relying on cross-listed courses. Even if they achieve autonomy, they may be reduced to "solo engines" for undergraduate education, especially multicultural health requirements ("Introduction" 8-9). Their viability depends on defining interdisciplinary cores of knowledge and education with a rigor that does not derive from generalized distribution or disciplinary accumulation. Otherwise, they will be a dependent variable rather than a category of knowledge that informs other categories and the concept of "America."