Deterritorializing Disciplinarity: Toward an Immanent Pedagogy

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Abstract
This article speculates on the pedagogical consequences of deterritorializing disciplinary knowledge. I suggest a move from knowledge as discipline to knowledge as an emergent potential of a field. Through this move, I propose an immanent pedagogy, based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in which students and teachers become active participants in a field of knowledge. This field is not only a way out of disciplinary knowledge but also a mechanism for students and teachers alike to critique and subvert disciplinarity. My understanding of knowledge production is based on the ontological and immanent capacity of students to learn and produce. In developing the idea of deterritorializing the classroom, I will draw from literature on decolonizing pedagogy and knowledge production as well as literatures that engage with digital pedagogies and activism.

Keywords
immanence, decolonizing pedagogy, knowledge production, discipline, deterritorialization, digital

Fields of Potential
A pedagogy that does not rely on disciplinary knowledge must employ a different approach to knowledge. A field of knowledge has multiple metaphoric and theoretical connotations that can operate alongside the disciplinary knowledge. I argue, then, for a field theory of knowledge, which could be described through a Deleuzian field or plane of immanence. The pedagogy I am suggesting in this article allows students to learn about the structure of a discipline, but not be disciplined by it. This pedagogy can teach students not only to participate in a field of knowledge but also to deterritorialize the structure of disciplinarity. This is not a replacement for disciplinarity, for I am not proposing a denial of the way the academy still functions. In what follows, I argue for a practice in teaching that facilitates a subversion of and resistance to the disciplining of academic knowledge production. This is a pedagogy with which to explore issues of disciplinarity, taking disciplinarity to mean practices of regimentation, militarization, and policing, and even colonization. In contrast to the way a discipline is necessarily taught, this field theory of knowledge sets the stage for an immanent pedagogy.

For Deleuze, the plane of immanence is a boundless space without structure, only consisting of relations, movement, and affects (Deleuze, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For Deleuze and Guattari, this field is deterritorialized; there is no need for a rigid disciplined structure or resistance to a structured territorialization. In this use of the concept, what would constitute an area of study and knowledge production is always already deterritorialized. This field of immanence is also not about individual subjects producing individual knowledge as individual authors. For Deleuze and Guattari, individuals are not central; process and relations are central. They state “there are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements . . . there are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 292-293). This immanent field is not about transcendence; in this Deleuzian field, we are not trying to get to something we don’t have, or to a place where we are not already; instead, we realize we are in a space of ontological potential. This ontological potential is bodily and surpasses the limitations of subjectivity. As Deleuze (1991) has said about philosophy we may consider to be about pedagogy: “Philosophy must constitute itself as a theory of what we are doing, not as a theory of what there is” (p. 133).

In many ways, this is similar to critical pedagogies that seek to decolonize the classroom. In Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy and Praxis, Diversi and Moreira (2009) challenge the traditional methods of knowledge production. Their understanding of decolonizing is similar to the field of immanence, however, with the explicit colonial critique: “Decolonizing is a term that, to us,
signifies action, movement, process, dialogue, and the space between colonial and postcolonial” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 207). Their performance autoethnography of street kids in Brazil is written in such a way as to disrupt the ideas of colonizer and colonized, researcher and subject. They occupy the space between these and many other dichotomies. The writing of the book itself functions to demonstrate this betweenner space. Part poetry, part story, part theory, part politics, part ethnography, part dialogue—the book challenges the disciplinary imposition of coherent narrative and distance between researcher and subject. This challenge is represented in their onto-epistemological stance:

We see the apparent dichotomies of mind and body, physical and metaphysical, object and subject, theory and method, as differentiation of one, all-encompassing, system: Being . . . The mind and its interpretations of reality and being are not separate from the flesh but part of it—one perceives the world before any reflection can take place. We align ourselves with Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1981) notion of humans as beings that cannot escape visceral, bodily knowledge of the world . . . We are claiming, however, that visceral knowledge has been kept at bay (when not completely denied) in the social sciences in the English-speaking world. We are claiming that the dominant discourse in academia is still colonized by the ontological dualism of logical-positivism (this, idealism versus materialism, mind versus body, fact versus fiction, science versus arts). (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, pp. 31-33)

Their challenge is to create a “narrative space in academia for visceral knowledge” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 207). I interpret their idea of visceral knowledge as being about immanence in that by refusing transcendence, bodies’ capacity and experience become understood as knowledge, and we recognize the bodies’ role, indeed its requirement, in the production of knowledge.

**Intellectuals and Pedagogy**

My understanding of knowledge production is also shaped by a very different dialogue between two intellectuals, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (1980) in which they discuss intellectuals and power. Drawing from their discussion of what theoretical work could and should be, Deleuze explains the relay between theory and practice:

. . . a system of relays within a larger sphere, within a multiplicity of parts that are both theoretical and practical. A theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience. Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts. All of us are “groupuscules.” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1980, pp. 206-207)

Our role as an intellectual is no longer to be the one who spoke the truth to the masses. Foucault argues,

The intellectual’s role is no longer to place himself [sic] “somewhat ahead and to the side” in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him [sic] into its object and instrument in the sphere of “knowledge,” “truth,” “consciousness,” and “discourse.” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1980, p. 207)

This struggle should take place in the classroom as well. Teachers and students together are “groupuscules”—we are not ahead and to the side of them. A site where we can struggle against bourgeois and disciplinary power turning our “object and instrument”—our immanent academic capacity—into “knowledge,” “truth,” “consciousness,” and “discourse,” is the classroom.

If this becomes a practice in our classroom, we can see how theory and pedagogy become the site for larger power struggles like disciplinarity. This is why Foucault states,

In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional . . . and not totalising. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. It is not to “awaken consciousness” that we struggle (the masses have been aware for some time that consciousness is a form of knowledge; and consciousness as the basis of subjectivity is a prerogative of the bourgeoisie), but to sap power, to take power; it is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance. (Foucault & Deleuze, 1980, pp. 207-208)

With an immanent pedagogy our goal is not to awaken consciousness within our students; our goal is to struggle with them for and against power.

I am trapped in a Foucaltian [sic] power system

That disciplines and punishes

Whose name is Higher Education . . .

And I am not denying the importance of theory. I just do not want this power over my head.

And I am trying to find ways to resist.

In the good moments, I believe I am going to find my own way/voice/body or theory/method.

I just do not know when. However, it is going to be written differently. (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 46)
When we struggle in this regard, we are not setting out to accomplish an explicit goal that can be easily achieved: It is a practice. Like the Body without Organs (BwO), it is a limit: “You can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 150). Knowledge, produced in, of, and for a field, like “a BwO[,] is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities. Only intensities pass and circulate . . .” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 153). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the BwO is the field of immanence, for intellectuals and teachers, we must also be the in and of the field of immanence. The pedagogical space, like

the field of immanence or plane of consistency must be constructed. This can take place in very different social formations through very different assemblages (pervasive, artistic, scientific, mystical, political) with different types of bodies without organs. It is constructed piece by piece, and the pieces, conditions, and techniques are irreducible to one another . . . The plane of consistency would be the totality of all BwO’s, a pure multiplicity of immanence . . . (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 157)

This immanent kind of knowledge “. . . arises, or becomes, in the conjugation, which determines the threshold of consciousness: unconscious-becoming-conscious and, in this very process of becoming, traversing the immanent-transcendent divide” (Semetsky, 2009, p. 450). What this means is that how we understand the acquisition and production of knowledge in a disciplinary model is not an adequate capture of our bodily capacities for knowledge production, and in fact reproduces a mind/body dualism. Outside of the confines of disciplinary knowledge, we can see the ontological capacity that allows for other forms knowledge to emerge.

This field theory of knowledge is not a model of interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity is not free from the problems of disciplinarity as has been highlighted by both Roderick Ferguson (2012) and Wendy Brown (1997). Inna Semetsky (2006) instead writes about the rhizome model of thought put out by Deleuze and Guattari as a way contrasting to the “tree”-like model of a traditional episteme “because the Rhizome’s life is underground its becoming is imperceptible” (p. 73). In this way, we can see the difference between interdisciplinarity and this field theory of knowledge. We do not seek to intertwine the branches of a tree as interdisciplinarity might do, but look to the rhizomatic structures underneath the grass. In this way, we do not accept disciplinarity by starting from it and working with what it has produced. Instead, we slip below the tree to the field or even below the field to the rhizomatic structures underneath the grass.

What I am suggesting is not that we look exclusively to a model outside discipline but that we actively work to deterritorialize disciplinarity. Students may be taught about academic disciplines, while encouraging them not to actually be disciplined. Disciplines, as in my field of sociology, are a historical and social fact with real consequences that cannot simply be refused or denied. To do so would elide an analysis of power and the significance of the way it flows. We might think of Deleuze and Guattari’s comment on the place of the organism and subjectivity with regard to the BwO as a comment about discipline as well:

You have to keep just enough discipline to know it is still there and to be able to respond to it, or deterritorialize it. This is specifically true in the way the traditional disciplinary canons function. I would not propose a refusal to teach texts that have become an important way of people making sense of the world. Neither would I propose that I should not teach my students to which ideas a discipline refers or why specific interpretations of texts matter within specific flows of power. A field theory of knowledge is not an alternative to a discipline; rather it is a subversion and deterritorialization of disciplinarity and its power dynamics.

Roderick Ferguson’s work highlights the ability of disciplinary power to function in multiple ways in the university. Drawing on Foucault he argues,

. . . power diversifies its techniques not for individual degradation but for personal edification and invigoration. Disciplinary power, in short produces new forms of agency through individuation and multiplication. As such, man [sic] and the individual’s discursive statuses as the products of and grounds for knowledge help to seal the contract between epistemology and power relations. (Ferguson, 2012, p. 31)

Disciplinarity, understood in this way, cannot simply be refused—it is the power through which we know what we know. Disciplinarity as a power must be addressed in that regard. But we can do this not at the site of disciplinarity but by slipping below that disciplinary tree to the ontology that allows for that tree to emerge from the soil. We must think of our capacity as intellectuals and teachers to address this power and rewire (or even reroot) it to flow differently—a rhizomatic flow.

The Canon as Disciplinary Site

In turning this idea of a field into pedagogical practice, we are no longer asking our students to get something they lack and acquire it through transcending their current material or
mental conditions, which would reproduce a mind/body dualism. Instead, we are asking them to produce on a plane of capacity to learn or produce—this is what makes the pedagogy immanent, not transcendent. Learning to understand something is not the same thing as being told you are receptacle for knowledge that the teacher deposits in them—the banking system that critical pedagogue Paulo Freire critiques. Diversi and Moreira (2009) explain,

as a result [of the banking system], the oppressed experience their lives with the oppressor’s mentality housed inside themselves. Thus, at the same time that they loathe the oppressors, the oppressed want to be like them, have what they have, experience what they experience. The oppressed, then, can see only the difference between being and nothingness, rather than the liberatory frontier between being and being more human. (p. 197)

Freire’s pedagogy provides a way out of this state of oppression, as does Diversi and Moreira’s decolonizing pedagogy. This is also the goal of the pedagogy I am proposing in this article, particularly in the rethinking of knowledge production. Paulo Freire (2001) makes his understanding of knowledge production clear when he says “knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry, human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). Reading Freire as a Deleuzian, I see the immanence in this claim. Inspired by Freire, I am proposing that alongside understanding the canonical texts, the students see the power dynamics that produce this and become active critics of these power dynamics.

Giroux and Giroux (2006) argue that pedagogy as a critical practice should provide the classroom conditions that provide the knowledge, skills, and culture of questioning necessary for students to engage in critical dialogue with the past, question authority (whether sacred or secular) and its effects, struggle with ongoing relations of power, and prepare themselves for what it means to be critical, active citizens in the interrelated local, national, and global public spheres. (p. 29)

Giroux and Giroux’s argument suggests it is still significant to read the texts that constitute the canonical foundations of disciplines to draw students into a critical engagement with these texts. Teaching classical sociological theory classes for the past 3 years has shown me that there is much significance to learning these materials. However, that significance comes from the way I see my students using these texts for their own understanding of the world.

In my ideal situation, the courses on the disciplinary canon would be explicitly called something like “The Canon and Discipline Formation.” In these classes, students would learn about the canonical works as well as the disciplinary formations and how to interrogate them. This is already what my course is like, but is no way an official practice and is not recognized in the title of the course. The concepts we see as part of sociology need not be practiced exclusively as an academic discipline; yet, in the teaching of sociology, it is most often presented as a disciplined set of theories and methodologies (Agger, 2000; Alexander, 1987; Connell, 1997; Steinmetz, 2005). One major way a field is disciplined is through the production of a canon. The canonization of the classical social theorists makes them appear as authorities, and esoteric ones at that. In sociology, the canonized theorists almost always include Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber (Connell, 1997), with W. E. B. Du Bois, Sigmund Freud, and various others sometimes included depending on the school or instructor: My classical theory syllabus always includes those five theorists. The biggest hurdle for students is often that they think they cannot understand the concepts or theorists because they have been instilled with such an authority; most courses do not engage directly with the canonical authority as a site of disciplinarity. As Diversi and Moreira (2009) describe it, “they were in not one but two foreign languages. English and disembodied theory” (p. 213). Within the field, we must have students engage critically with the unquestioned privilege given to canonized classical theoretical texts as well as the privileging of certain ways of reading them—the ways in which these texts are read, then, still shapes the field (Alexander, 1987).

Connell (1997) makes the argument that as the canonical texts represent what is sociological, “they influence what kind of discussion counts as sociological theory, what theoretical language sociologists are to speak in, and what problems are most worth speaking about” (p. 1512). Furthermore, she says, that “canon,” originally meaning a rule or edict of the Church, overemphasizes the importance of a few great men, at the same time as it excludes and discredits the non-canonical. In fact, Connell (1997) makes a similar argument to the one that I am making in stating that “sociology can be introduced to students not as a story of ‘great men’ but as a practice shaped by the social relations that made it possible” (p. 1547). Understanding theory as a practice makes it necessarily unable to be disciplined because practice is never fixed. The production of the canon, however, through its inclusions and exclusions, lays the ground for a discipline.

Connell (1997) argues that we must understand the importance of “not only which writers are included and excluded [from the canon] but also which problems” (p. 1545). For example, gender, sexuality, race, ableism, imperialism, and colonialism were not considered core issues in the sociological canon formation, but with an immanent pedagogy where knowledge emerges in response to disciplinarity, we can see how these issues are brought in;
students may interrogate the canonical material in ways not as freely accessible with other pedagogies. This is an example of not only deterritorializing disciplinarity, but also a form of decolonizing pedagogy and, in Diversi and Moreira’s (2009) words, this moves us toward the dream where people come to the academy to do the talking, not the answering; the invasion of the institutional space by the oppressed and marked body, not as object of research but as expert of their own struggle. (p. 208)

The work toward this dream starts in the actual embodied experience of teaching in a classroom.

**Deterritorializing the Classroom**

For Semetsky and Bogue (2010), “Genuine education is an informal, cultural and experiential practice” (p. 119). They argue that for Deleuze, learning is about the “accession to a new way of perceiving and understanding the world” (p. 119). Specific interventions and practices, purposefully implemented by educators, can serve to illuminate the disciplining of a field by making very clear the processes of knowledge and discourse production. These practices can subvert these issues by actively drawing attention to the processes of disciplining and canon formation. Once having done so, students will have the opportunity to experience knowledge as it is being produced, and even be agents in its production. In this sense, students become participants of the field, rather than learning solely about a predetermined discipline. In other words, they continually disrupt the idea of a determinate structure, which is a pedagogical as well as political goal. The students also are no longer responsible for simply understanding material. Rather, they turn the process of understanding from being about receiving information to thinking of understanding as a dynamic capacity of bodies, which is always productive. When understanding is not simply about reception but also about production, we resist the limitations of disciplined knowledge production and recognize students’ capacity as producers of knowledge.

In Diversi and Moreira’s (2009) response to critics of their performance autoethnography, we can see the significance not only for method but also for pedagogy: “What they call anecdotes, I call, as I learned from Haraway, people’s lives. To dismiss lived experience as ‘anecdote’ makes no sense to me. This shows not only ignorance but also intolerance and arrogance of the academic world” (p. 212). They argue that stories are themselves the analysis of struggles (Diversi & Moreira, 2009). Throughout their work, Diversi and Moreira maintain that both theory and experience are forms of knowledge. They explain, “When I am writing, I am trying to represent my body—not only my mind, ideas or thoughts, with all my feelings, emotions, lived experiences, beliefs, values (in that moment or shifting moments) in the paper” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 112).

Other scholars thinking about pedagogy also recognize the place of experience in knowledge production. In proposing a pedagogy of affect, Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2003) argue for a pedagogy that recognizes the “thisness” of the classroom as a space where life and experience take place. Their pedagogy is explicitly a deterritorialized one that seeks to open the space of learning and knowledge production to include not just theory but also (bodily) experience. Having recognized this, and allowing for this kind of space, their pedagogy creates space to move away from disciplinarity.

By not engaging in a dualistic struggle that mirrors those forces that set up hierarchies, inequalities, oppression, and repression in the first place, a pedagogy of affect works with different, molecular logic. Critique consists of the possibility to discern moments of escape from territorializations in a profoundly positive way, as desire is unleashed to generate new sensations, to create new lines of flight. (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2003, p. 211)

This escape from territorialization can be an escape from disciplinarity.

From that historical moment in a cultural space

I create analytic answers to how

The analytic is performative

Performatively, making visible, exposing the mechanism of oppression

The poetics creates and re-creates the moment

And then . . .

The space for critique

Through the apparatus of poetics I create

Activism and critique. (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 188)

**Digital Deterritorializations**

Struggles against disciplinarity can be located in the physical classroom space, in our students’ minds and bodies, and in our writing, as has been discussed, but this struggle is also increasingly taking place digitally. Critical Art Ensemble argues in *Electronic Civil Disobedience* that we must reconceptualize the spaces in which we resist and struggle against capitalism and other forms of oppression.
When the power of capital has shifted to the digital network, then older forms of protest become less relevant. For example, blocking the entrance to a building, or any other action in a physical space effects little change when capital is operating as flows of information. They argue, “these outdated methods of resistance must be refined, and new methods of disruption invented that attack power (non)centers on the electronic level” (Ensemble, 1996, p. 9). Critical Art Ensemble shows the inadequacies of resisting a determined center of power, and highlights the needs for interventions that might attack the (non)centers of information. This is because capital operates outside, in, and around human bodies through flows of information and power—through the digital as well as organic. The digital intervention that is suggested by Critical Art Ensemble specifically challenges some tenets of the classical sociological canon, particularly the dialectical structure that presents a clear oppressing class system. In sociology classes, where the content in some ways always engages with power and frequently with capitalism, an immanent pedagogy can help teach students how to struggle in new ways where conceptions of agency and power have been complicated by the importance of the digital world.

Terry Anderson (2008), in a discussion of online learning, has argued that effective learning does not happen in a content vacuum. He argues that each field contains its own worldview that provides its own way of talking about knowledge—students need to be given opportunities to participate in that discourse, not just be recipients of it. Stephanie Vie and Jennifer deWinter (2008) in a discussion of wikis, point out that certain pedagogical interventions challenge the thought that ideas are a unique product of individual labor and cannot thus “belong” to a single person. This makes students confront not only the text they are reading but also the texts that they are producing. In this example, using wikis in this way may draw the students to think critically about how academic work, authorship, and indeed thought itself manifest themselves as social productions. In a discipline, students are recipients of an authorial voice’s knowledge—they are removed from it and must acquire an outside knowledge. In a field, students are agents or participants, actively seeing how knowledge is not limited to one author’s idea but that knowledge and power flow through them and can be shaped by them and through them. This teaches students a new kind of resistance.

Vie and deWinter (2008) argue that by challenging the authority of the single authorial voice, wikis call into question traditional notions of intellectual property as a market commodity. Single authorship is not unilaterally bad and many other parts of my students’ work over the semester are done individually. But the idea that this is the only place where ideas come from is the problem. I still want my students to be able to write a paper on their own, but to understand that even a single authored text is produced through the author’s relations in the world. Disciplinarity, like capitalism, masks the social relations of production; our pedagogies have the potential to draw these relations and educators have a responsibility to implement mechanisms that will draw this out for students. This is one of the most impressive features of Diversi and Moreira’s (2009) collaborative and performative autoethnographic work—they produce a text that embodies these relations that are typically masked by disciplinarity. In an immanent pedagogy, there is a space for students to produce work like theirs.

However, drawing on Jennifer Marlow’s writing on collaborative digital pedagogies, we should not only not assume that there is a “natural desire” for students to be self-interested individualists (homo economicus) but we must also not assume that asked to collaborate, they will naturally take to the idea of the “collective good.” This is particularly important in sociology courses where students are taught not to take cultural constructions for granted or as natural states of being. Marlow suggests that it is the educator’s responsibility to bring these cultural tensions to the attention of the students through discussions around community, collective intelligence, and knowledge production—in other words, she suggests teaching them with a pedagogy that subverts individualism by actively engaging in discussions around knowledge production, rather than passively hoping for this to happen.

Marlow (2012) emphasizes that this is important because students have been educated in an environment where the authority of knowledge is given to the person who ostensibly generated that knowledge originally, and they have been (mis) led into believing that they themselves were the “original” generators of the knowledge and text that they posted. . .

Yet, this is not the students fault; the current economy relies on “knowledge as a product” (Marlow, 2012). These concerns further highlight the need for specific interventions into disciplinarity, a practice that would teach students how to participate and make interventions into the network where power flows.

**Deterritorializing as Pedagogical Practice**

We must ask ourselves in what ways we can prepare our students to be knowledgeable about the field, without forcing them into a discipline. Giroux and Giroux (2006) state that a critical pedagogy is an ethical referent and a call to action for educators, parents, students, and others to reclaim public education as a democratic public sphere, a place where teaching
is not reduced to learning how either to master tests or to acquire low level jobs skills, but a safe space where reason, understanding, dialogue, and critical engagement are available to all faculty and students. (p. 30)

The point is that, as teachers, we have an obligation to deterritorialize the disciplinarity we are paid to instill in our students and to participate in ongoing discussions on how to make that possible. “Students should be able to create problems, not pose solutions to the problems decided by the teacher. Thinking should not be confined in this way—learning is a becoming” (Semetsky, 2006, p. 82).

Decolonizing pedagogy also recognizes learning as a becoming. For example, Diversi and Moreira (2009) discuss decolonizing knowledge production, which is itself still a practice of knowledge production that makes visceral knowledge of oppressive ideologies of domination central to scholarly discourse, whereby theory becomes a more democratic tool of analysis and further discourse and not a barrier for those with “bad English,” and whereby the researcher refrains from unilateral analysis after the fact, alone in the office, in favor of a more egalitarian collaboration that produce knowledge that is inevitably opened, about possibilities of being more and more for people . . . and one where theoretical expertise is valued only as it works as an instrument to value the visceral expertise from the streets. (pp. 184-185)

An immanent pedagogy that can deterritorialize disciplinarity recognizes the capacity of students for visceral knowledge production in affirming ways while simultaneously and necessarily challenging the traditional disciplinarity model of knowledge. Intellectuals, in the sense Foucault puts forth, are brought into a struggle with disciplinary power. Diversi and Moreira (2009) state, “I do not look to theory to explain life. I look into life to intervene in theoretical writings” (p. 215). Transforming how we think of knowledge, and how we teach knowledge away from disciplinarity into a field theory will help us deterritorialize our practices of knowledge production and utilize the immanent capacity of our students to learn and produce.

The ideas from this article are grounded in my experiences teaching students at the City University of New York (CUNY), a large urban public university. I see my students’ capacities, and I see what amazing things they do in the classroom when they, like Diversi and Moreira, use their lives to intervene into the theories. But it is not just an intervention into or decolonization of theory—by doing this, they are intervening into disciplinarity and working to deterritorialize it. Deterritorialization is not an alternative to decolonizing or other critical pedagogies—the kind of knowledge production I am interested in is not about making a better theory than the last person—it is an addition to the discourse that can more explicitly engage with disciplinarity. Deterritorializing disciplinarity as a concept is what has emerged from my visceral experiences in the classroom teaching students first about the disciplinary foundations of sociology and then, in later theory courses, poststructuralism alongside postcolonialism. My students’ engagement with the material, our discussions, their insight, and (visceral) knowledge produced has pushed me to want to contribute something to the field of knowledge that engages discourses on disciplinarity and pedagogy. My students have taught me that the work we do in a classroom is not the property of a discipline but instead an engagement of immanent potential.

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