What Counts as Transitional Justice Scholarship? Citational Recognition and Disciplinary Hierarchies in Theory and Practice

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Since its emergence as a field of scholarship and practice, transitional justice has coalesced around a set of mechanisms to deal with a legacy of violence. The "pull" toward mechanisms, institutions, and structures as a means of delivering justice has led to certain kinds of knowledge being recognized as "transitional justice research" in the mainstream. Drawing on the theory of epistemic positioning, we reveal how hierarchies of academic knowledge and the dominant "ways of knowing" in and of transitional justice are created. Through citation analysis, we reveal an emerging canon, a central body of valuable and seemingly "inevitable" knowledge of transitional justice consisting primarily of structure and outcome-oriented inquiries in the disciplines of politics, international relations, and law and consolidating a standardized model of how to "do" transitional justice. We argue that this canonization comes at the expenses of alternative approaches that challenge the core assumptions of the field. Inquiries that prioritize agency or process and reimagine what transitional justice *could be* remain bounded to their disciplines and subfields. We demonstrate how certain anxieties about the survival of the field result in policing of the boundaries of the field, creating hierarchies of "valuable" knowledge, and resisting the "decolonizing" impulse.

Desde que surgió como un campo de conocimiento académico y práctica, la justicia transicional se ha ido fusionando en torno a un conjunto de mecanismos con el fin de poder hacer frente a un legado de violencia. La «atracción» existente hacia mecanismos, instituciones y estructuras como un medio para impartir justicia ha provocado que ciertos tipos de conocimiento sean reconocidos, de manera general, como «investigación de justicia transicional». Partimos de la teoría del posicionamiento epistémico para revelar cómo se crean las jerarquías del conocimiento académico y las «formas de conocimiento» dominantes tanto en la justicia transicional como a partir de ella. Revelamos, mediante un análisis de citas, un canon emergente: un conjunto central de conocimiento valioso y aparentemente «inevitable» de la justicia transicional que está formado, principalmente, por investigaciones orientadas a la estructura y a los resultados dentro las disciplinas de la política, las relaciones internacionales y el derecho, así como a la consolidación de un modelo estandarizado sobre cómo «hacer» justicia transicional. Argumentamos que esta canonización se produce a expensas de otros enfoques alternativos que desafían las principales premisas de este campo. Las investigaciones que priorizan a la agencia o al proceso, y que reimaginan lo que podría ser la justicia transicional permanecen limitadas a sus disciplinas y subcampos. Demostramos cómo algunas de las ansiedades que existen con relación a la supervivencia del campo provocan una vigilancia de las fronteras de este campo, creando jerarquías de conocimiento «valioso» y resistiéndose al impulso «descolonizador».

Depuis son apparition comme domaine de recherche et pratique, la justice transitionnelle s'est unie autour d'un ensemble de mécanismes pour traiter de l'héritage de la violence. L'attirance pour les mécanismes, les institutions et les structures comme moyens de rendre la justice a mené à la reconnaissance de certains types de savoir comme « recherche sur la justice transitionnelle » dans l'opinion majoritaire. En nous fondant sur la théorie du positionnement épistémique, nous dévoilons le processus de création des connaissances académiques et des « moyens de connaissance » dominants de justice transitionnelle. À l'aide d'une analyse de citations, nous révélons un canon émergeant, un ensemble central de connaissances précieuses et apparemment « inévitables » de la justice transitionnelle, principalement constitué de recherches relatives à la structure et aux résultats dans les disciplines de la politique, des relations internationales et du droit, et qui consolide un modèle standardisé sur la façon de rendre la justice transitionnelle. Nous affirmons que cette canonisation s'effectue aux dépens d'autres approches qui remettent en question les hypothèses dominantes du domaine. Les recherches qui mettent l'accent sur le rôle ou le processus, et qui réinventent la justice transitionnelle, restent cantonnées à leur discipline et sous-champ. Nous démontrons que certaines inquiétudes concernant la survie d'une discipline peuvent aboutir sur une surveillance accrue des frontières du domaine, ce qui crée des hiérarchies de connaissances « précieuses » et va à l'encontre de l'élan de « décolonisation ».

Introduction

In a recent reflection on her 2009 piece on interdisciplinarity and the fieldhood of transitional justice, Bell writes that "we best make sense of the field by understanding transitional justice debates as attempts to examine the *political*

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and *legal* spaces in which societies can 'contend with the past'" (Bell 2022, 96; our emphasis). This statement draws our attention to the political and legal ways of "dealing" with the past, inclusive of policies, laws, norms, and the politics that surround them. As such, it is reflective on the state of the field, at least the most immediately visible one. Since it emerged more than 20 years ago, the most common way to conceptualize transitional justice has been through a set of mechanisms (trials, truth commissions, reparations, vetting, etc.) that states in different types of transition (i.e., from conflict to peace, from authoritarianism to democracy, or both) have embraced or been recommended to embrace to deal with their violent pasts and, it is argued, ensure non-repetition of mass human rights violations. The most visible knowledge inquiries in the field are structure-oriented, prioritizing the impacts of the tools and properties of the standardized global project of transitional justice on fulfilling social values (Nagy 2008; Gissel 2022).

In response to this limited conceptualization, critical voices have discussed "transitional justice" as a unit and not a sum of its mechanisms. A significant body of scholarship has been interested in what transitional justice is or is not, what it should be, and where it can or should be "found" or "seen" (Nagy 2008; Winter 2013; Balint, Evans, and McMillan 2014; Zunino 2019; Miller 2020). As a result, transitional justice scholarship has been rather introspective, preoccupied with its fieldhood status and the epistemological, ontological, and methodological boundaries of the field. Such introspection is a defining feature of the field. According to Zunino's genealogy, transitional justice has three main objects that define it, namely, "the situations it examines, the mechanisms applied to them," and transitional justice itself (2019, 22). Being self-referential means that the fieldhood of transitional justice is characterized by continuous reflections on where it stands and where it is going, with much of the empirical work in the field positioned in reference to its mechanisms and contexts. More recently, "transitional justice" has even been conceptualized as an agent of its own will. The questions being asked are reoriented, e.g., whether criminal trials can contribute to reconciliation and whether "transitional justice" can lead to (or perhaps hamper) this and other desired goals (Olsen, Payne, and Reiter 2009; Skaar 2012; Ang and Nalepa 2019). These questions, while broadening the scope of inquiry, remain directed toward the structure and its claimed actions.

In this article, we do not seek to reassess the fieldhood itself; our starting point is that transitional justice is an academic field. Rather, we are interested in the anxieties that arise from the introspective outlook and characterize the field (Krickel-Choi 2022).[1] These anxieties represent worries about the effectiveness, necessity, usefulness, and, ultimately, the status of transitional justice. While the field is being self-reflective and introspective, leaning into this attractive pull toward the structure, more existential questions and concerns remain. The dominant focus on structure and mechanisms leaves an impression that transitional justice is a thinly theorized field and that many of its core aspects remain undeveloped or underdeveloped (De Greiff 2013, 547; Buckley-Zistel et al. 2014, 1–2; Gready and Robins 2017, 956; Gready and Robins 2020, 280). In particular, anxieties about the coherence and effectiveness of transitional justice sustain an impression that much of the field remains contested as it lacks a single, coherent discourse. This, in turn, makes it more compelling to lean into the "pull" toward the political and legal aspects of transitional justice in response (Bell 2022).

We argue that this "pull" toward mechanisms, institutions, and structures leads to certain kinds of knowledge of and about transitional justice being recognized as "transitional justice research" in the mainstream, while other, less self-referential inquiries that prioritize agency and process and reimagine what transitional justice *could be* remain bounded to their disciplines and subfields. In such ordering of knowledge, we identify an emerging canonization of transitional justice scholarship, that is, the emergence of a central body of valuable, important, and seemingly "inevitable" knowledge. We establish this finding by examining citational practices of the field. This examination takes as its starting point the existence of a largely self-defined field of research and practice. While it emerged from the disciplines of political science and law, transitional justice now incorporates a broad and multidisciplinary corpus of academic work that has sought to intervene in debates about transitional justice and to influence thinking within that field. What is included in our examination is literature that is framed using both the language and the conceptual tools of transitional justice, irrespective of disciplinary origin. What is not included is literature in adjacent fields that grapple with similar conceptual questions, such as genocide studies or peace education, for example, but that do not explicitly engage the language of transitional justice.

What emerges from our examination is that highly cited knowledge is characterized by certain questions and methods privileged by the disciplines of law, political science, and international relations (IR) (hereinafter political science). The desire to keep the boundaries of the field rigid helps maintain the canon yet it paradoxically also enhances the uncertainties that surround the conceptual and existential aspects of the field. By continuing to pull back toward pillars, mechanisms, and underpinning legal regimes, legal and political scholarships are in fact policing the boundaries of the field and resisting the decolonizing impulse whereby other, non-canonical knowledge may be perceived as a "threat."

In this paper, we build on existing work on knowledge production in transitional justice (Baines 2015; Björkdahl and Selimović 2015; Palmer, Jones, and Viebach 2015; Ainley 2017; Jones 2021; Jones and Lühe 2021) to offer a complex picture of how dominant ways of knowing are created and sustained within the field. Rather than an inward-oriented investigation of most-cited transitional justice publications, we depart from existing research on citational practices in transitional justice (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015) by taking an outward-oriented approach. In particular, we seek to establish through citational analysis what *is not there,* the disciplinary—and thus methodological, epistemological, and ontological—approaches and contributions that engage with the language and conceptual tools of transitional justice but do not feature in highly cited lists. Our investigation is primarily one of *what* is being written and valued instead of *who* is writing and valuing. Nevertheless, the knowledge and the knower are not separate entities. Employing Jana Bacevic's theory of epistemic positioning, we comment on the interdependence of knowledge and identities and suggest that high citational recognition is largely contained within a relatively small group of people primarily working with the legal and political disciplines in Western and often non-transitional settings. Our outward-oriented engagement with the multidisciplinary landscape allows for

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[1] We use the term "anxiety" to refer to a state of unease and feelings of uncertainty and insecurity relating to one's self and existence in the world, which are experienced internally, as opposed to, for instance, "fear" that is projected externally.

an investigation of inclusivity through elimination of exclusions and a reimagination of what transitional justice *could be*. It invites a redirection of focus from uncertainty to *indeterminacy* as a defining feature and calls for new multidisciplinary canon-building as an opportunity to see the realities that the over-reliance on legal and political disciplines forecloses. Our research therefore holds importance for other multidisciplinary fields primarily influenced by or born out of politics and IR, such as peacebuilding or security studies.

The article begins with a review of the scholarship upon which our article builds. In the "Realities and Imaginings of Transitional Justice" section, we identify a split between what the field is and a competing vision for what the field could be, explaining why interrogating the dynamic of inclusions and exclusions is central to our understanding of the field's chronic anxieties. In the "Identifying Citational Practices" section, we elaborate on our methodology and how we conducted citation analysis to investigate the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in transitional justice scholarship. The findings of our citation analysis are presented in the "Creating and Sustaining 'The Canon': Epistemic Positioning in Transitional Justice" section. In this section, we confirm the legal and political disciplinary biases among the dominant, highly cited ways of knowing and enhance this finding by discussing the power and consequences of such citational practice. We employ Bacevic's theory of epistemic positioning to explain how the canonization of knowledge in transitional justice is sustained through different forms of epistemic reduction. Section "Of Anxiety and Indeterminacy" identifies the core anxieties of transitional justice scholarship and claims that they serve to police the boundaries of the field and secure what knowledge is considered "valuable." We conclude our discussion by returning to the "othered" ways of knowing in transitional justice that are not awarded high citational recognition to argue that imagining what transitional justice could require getting comfortable with indeterminacy.

Realities and Imaginings of Transitional Justice

Transitional justice scholarship is characterized by competing visions of what transitional justice is and what it is for.

Past scholarship examining the disciplinary influences on the field has tended to conclude in favor of the legal and political disciplines as most visible, and therefore foundational, for the field. In 2009, Bell examined the developing interdisciplinary landscape of transitional justice, concluding that it is indeed inseparable from the legal discipline (Bell 2009). She noted how "[t]he idea that transitional justice *mechanisms* constitute a field" developed solely because international legal norms were claimed relevant for peacemaking, confirming the dominance of law in the field (Bell 2009, 16). The boundaries of the field were set with reference to the mechanisms of transitional justice and underpinning legal norms. This concept of transitional justice, while widely shared, is a limited one. It is referential to praxis and the tools through which praxis is most frequently observed and measured. In 2022, Bell reflected on her 2009 piece, concluding again with a limited view of transitional justice as a political and legal space (Bell 2022, 96). For Bell, transitional justice mechanisms are "undoubtedly" not sufficient for either social justice or transformation; hence, she "cautions" that transitional justice should not be expected "to bear the entire load of conflict resolution" (Bell 2022, 96–7). Limiting transitional justice to political and legal spaces is, in Bell's view, a solution for "more modest and realistic approaches to what transitional justice can achieve" (Bell 2022, 97).

Research on citational practices in transitional justice confirms the bias toward law and political science. In 2015, Fletcher and Weinstein published a study that analyzed the disciplinary influences that had shaped the field. Surveying the most cited articles published between 2003 and 2008—the foundational years of the field—they found that transitional justice had cohered around an "intellectual project focused on pragmatic outcomes designed to conclude a period of conflict" (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 178). They identified a preponderance of work from three specific disciplines—law, political science, and sociology. Within work emanating from these disciplines, there were shared areas of interest, most notably themes of national response, theories of transitional justice, truth-seeking mechanisms, and international criminal justice (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 184). Furthermore, the most influential scholarship in this period offered lessons and models that could be applied across contexts and that also lent itself to both general application and policy prescription. Fletcher and Weinstein noted how the legal and political disciplines were particularly influential in the development of the field of transitional justice for their emphases on normative and universal frameworks. As they note, "[t]he most influential works were those that apply, test, evaluate, or theorize the accepted transitional justice paradigm" (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 188).

While we concur with Bell that transitional justice mechanisms are not key for social justice and transformation, her analysis demonstrates the conflation of transitional justice with its mechanisms. The mechanisms are not "the field," but merely a *model* for practicing transitional justice. Because it is institution- and outcome-oriented (Shefik 2018; Kochanski 2020), transitional justice literature has focused on the possibility of technical monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of such mechanisms (e.g., Olsen, Payne, and Reiter 2009; Dancy 2010, Payne and Reiter 2010). It has also created a strong epistemic community of scholars and practitioners recognized as experts in the requirements of the field. This model is by design exclusionary of certain knowledge, investigations, and disciplines that are not only interested in "implementing" and "achieving" transitional justice (and vice versa), but in transitional justice as a way or process of *living, creating, connecting*, and *understanding*. Limiting the field to its mechanisms invites further knowledge of laws and institutions, consolidating the boundaries of transitional justice around legal and political sciences. It excludes actor- and ethics-oriented research that would, for instance, focus on transitional justice and all its values as lived experiences and are more—but not exclusively—characteristic for disciplines such as anthropology, theology, or philosophy, leaving limited space for them to shape the field. Looking into the multidisciplinary landscape of transitional justice scholarship, we identify a split between the "field" *as it is*, self-referential and anxious about maintaining its integrity, and a more open, potentially limitless vision for what the field *could be*.

Imagining what transitional justice *could be* rather than what it *is* brings in new and multidisciplinary bodies of knowledge. Whereas the application of top-down frameworks was once accepted as the defining feature of the field, scholarship in recent years has expanded considerably to question this approach. There is now a much more diverse body of literature that calls into question the foundations of the field and advocates for a more inclusive approach not simply to the implementation of transitional justice, but to

its conceptualization (Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic 2015; Turner 2016). However, as Fletcher and Weinstein noted in their analysis, these critical perspectives have not managed to break into the mainstream transitional justice in a way that would influence or alter the human rights-based normative frameworks that emerged in the early years of the field (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 192). This may be because disciplines outside of law and political science tend not to prioritize normative prescriptions in their analyses. As the authors argue

> These disciplines offer knowledge and insights that may inform such judgements, but their orientation to policy prescription is not hardwired as it is in law, or readily accessible, as in political science and sociology. (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 190)

This close connection between scholarship and application in practice has itself been the subject of growing critique. Scholars have highlighted the growth of a professionalized field of transitional justice characterized by the application of "expert" technical knowledge to specific situations (Madlingozi 2010; Subotic 2012; Miller 2020). Jones, for instance, argues that the implications of this dynamic for the field are that there are certain "ways of knowing" in and of transitional justice that are supposedly objective and thus dominant (2021, 165). This knowledge results from research that is concerned with design, implementation, and evaluation (Dancy 2010). These dominant ways of knowing are created when transitional justice is applied in technical ways, as a set of policy responses that seek to "achieve a pre-determined end" of peace, truth, justice, or reconciliation (Zunino 2011).

As scholarship has expanded, new perspectives have emerged that destabilize the consensus identified by Fletcher and Weinstein on the nature and purpose of the field. What we find is a much more complex picture, one in which different approaches to transitional justice compete for influence. We are interested here in these other and "othered" ways of knowing in and of transitional justice and advance our analysis in conversation with this work. While Fletcher and Weinstein focused their analysis on what was included in the field, we investigate the included scholarship to reorient our gaze toward that which is excluded. What scholarship remains marginalized, and what impact does this have on the field itself? How do disciplinary hierarchies shape understandings of justice?

Identifying Citational Practices

To answer our central research questions, we first conducted a quantitative citation analysis of the existing publications in the field. This was then followed by a close qualitative reading and content analysis of the most-cited publications to ascertain the content orientation and core questions of the work. We propose that to be considered as contributing to the core of the field, one must undertake academic work and have such work recognized and interpreted as being relevant and worthy of being counted into the field (Bacevic 2021). Such recognition in academia results in citations, whereas lack of recognition results is citational absences (Mott and Cockayne 2017). Citations are telling of epistemic communities and networks within and across disciplines and which knowledge is awarded significance (and which is not).

Citation analysis has become increasingly popular. It is utilized to examine the structure, communication networks, and intellectual divides of IR as a discipline as well as its

globality (Kristensen 2018). For instance, Kristensen (2012) uses citation analysis to show that communication networks in IR are centered around American, general, and theoretical journals. Risse, Wemheuer-Vogelaar, and Havemann (2022) similarly identify primarily transatlantic clusters built around IR theory and quantitative approaches to security studies, showing that non-Western IR theories tend not to be highly cited even in leading non-Western IR journals. Furthermore, research has showed a vast gender citation gap in the discipline, suggesting a pattern of evaluating the work written by women as less valuable than that written by men (Malinak, Powers, and Walter 2013). This existing IR scholarship points to the usefulness of citation analysis as a tool for deducting broader conclusions about what makes a field or a discipline.

In our study, we draw on the work of social theorist Jana Bacevic to demonstrate the ways in which hierarchies of academic knowledge and the dominant "way of knowing" in and of transitional justice are created. We use Bacevic's theory of "epistemic positioning" to explore how scholarship polices the boundaries of the field, creating hierarchies, and giving rise to different forms of epistemic injustice. We apply Bacevic's framework not specifically to individual scholars, but to the dynamics of fieldhood whereby certain disciplinary forms of knowledge are more easily marginalized than others, with consequent impacts on the field itself. We do not evaluate the available knowledge in and of the field or a researcher's impact but uncover the epistemologically violent process by which knowledge (and often, the knower) is valued and evaluated.

We hypothesized that the citation practices will reflect certain disciplinary ordering of knowledge whereby certain disciplines and types of inquiry are disproportionately reflected among the highest cited work. Using Google Scholar as a popular and comprehensive publication search engine, we investigated which publications about "transitional justice" have the highest number of citations. We searched the Google Scholar platform for publications containing the words "transitional justice"—not necessarily in title but in text—between 2000 and 2020. The year 2000 was taken as a starting point to coincide with the publication of Teitel's *Transitional Justice* and the increasing popularity of the term. The year 2020 was taken as an end point, assuming that any publications published in 2021 or 2022 would not be highly cited on temporal basis. During this period, the number of transitional justice publications was on a steady rise, starting at 221 publications in 2000, as captured by Google Scholar, and peaking at 7,300 publications in 2019. Google Scholar allowed us to examine publications across a range of journals and publishers, including monographs, edited books, and book chapters, which were previously absent from Fletcher and Weinstein's analysis. Consistent with our outward-oriented approach, we also sought to analyze the extent to which so-called "critical" bodies of transitional justice scholarship achieved the same levels of citation. We therefore repeated the analysis using the descriptors of "feminist," "postcolonial," and "decolonial"[2] to indicate different critical approaches to transitional justice and investigate citational recognition in these scholarships.

Google Scholar does not sort publications based on the citation number, but it does generally include higher cited as well as most relevant titles first (Ortega 2014). From a

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[2]We understand "postcolonial" as approaches that uncover and problematize continuous impacts, effects, and productive powers of colonialism. By "decolonial," we understand those approaches that seek a delinking from colonial structures of knowledge and reconstitutions of dominant ways of living, thinking, and speaking.

total of 38,200 entries resulting from the "transitional justice" Google Scholar search, we limited our analysis to the first 1,000 entries. Among them, we were interested in which outputs have 100 or more citations so far, taking this number to represent a highly cited publication. All publications with 100 or more citations within our Google Scholar sample were isolated, and further information was sought about their authors and content. We then repeated the same steps with regard to feminist, postcolonial, or decolonial transitional justice literature on January 27, 2023, identifying all publications with 100 or more citations within a sample of 1,000 publications for each of the categories.

The disciplinary background of authors was established through a combination of self-identification, institutional profiles, and inquiring about their departmental/faculty membership. In a few rare cases, authors of the highest cited publications were working in interdisciplinary research centers and had interdisciplinary research titles (e.g., Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies) that could not be linked to any particular discipline. These cases are clearly highlighted in the presentation of our findings as outliers. Furthermore, authors' institutional affiliations, rather than their countries of origin, were used to categorize whether the scholar—and the scholarship—is from the Global South or not.

The final step included extracting the abstracts of all identified highly cited publications and doing a qualitative content analysis of these abstracts to investigate what ways of knowing the publication promoted. This was done by highlighting what the publication sets out to do and how "transitional justice" is defined and discussed. Where abstracts were absent, for example, for highly cited editorial notes by Teitel (2008) and Mani (2008), respectively, we read and analyzed entire introductions. For the publications identified as highly cited "feminist," "postcolonial," and "decolonial" scholarship, we read abstracts, introductions, and conclusions. In these qualitative readings, we were looking for explicit references to "feminist approaches/theories," "postcolonial approaches/theories," and "decolonial approaches/theories" as applied or discussed in reference to transitional justice issues, concepts, and/or mechanisms.

We have considered alternative explanations of our findings and possible concerns about the replicability. First, it is possible that our search results were algorithmically tailored toward legal and political science publications based on our own Google Scholar search histories as legal and political science scholars. To address this possibility, we asked scientists working at an interdisciplinary Institute of Advanced Study to conduct the same Google Scholar search for "transitional justice." We took a sample of the first thirty entries of the scientists' search results and the first thirty entries of ours to obtain a match of twenty-eight of the thirty entries. This demonstrates a 7 percent variation in results, which is not statistically insignificant, but does demonstrate a relatively high degree of convergence.

Second, as a limitation of our research design, we have only surveyed academic literature published in English. Therefore, we do not claim to present findings of universal—although they certainly could be of global—interest. Finally, the limitations of our study are intrinsically linked to the limitations of Google Scholar as a search engine (Ortega 2014). For example, it is possible that there are other highly cited publications beyond the first 1,000 results that would significantly change our findings. However, this is unlikely because Google Scholar implements the PageRank algorithm, which prioritizes publications that are frequently cited and/or authored by highly cited authors, showing them among the first results in a query (Ortega

Table 1. Fifteen highest cited "transitional justice" publications

Author	Date of publication	Number of citations on May 30, 2022
Teitel	2000	3,216
Hayner	2010	2,392
Teitel	2003	1,874
Elster	2004	1,506
Arthur	2009	900
Olsen, Payne, and Reiter	2010	657
Nagy	2008	534
McEvoy	2007	524
Bell	2009	485
Leebaw	2008	483
Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena	2006	476
Lundy and McGovern	2008	455
Gready and Robins	2014	418
Shaw, Waldorf, and Hazan	2010	392
Posner and Vermeule	2004	373

2014, 124). Furthermore, other search engines such as Scopus and Web of Science have limited integration of books, book chapters, and conference proceedings and are known to capture significantly fewer citations than Google Scholar (Levine-Clark and Gil 2021, 148). While there may be some inconsistencies between the reported number of citations on Google Scholar and the actual number of citations, the margin of error remains low (Ortega 2014, 123). For these reasons, Google Scholar remains a reliable citation search engine.

Creating and Sustaining "The Canon": Epistemic Positioning in Transitional Justice

Epistemic positioning is concerned with the way in which judgment or evaluation of an intellectual contribution to a field link, usually informally, the identity of the "knower" with the value of the knowledge they produce (Bacevic 2021, 1123). This can lead to the devaluation of some forms of knowledge relative to others. One of the key indicators of the way in which a particular intellectual contribution is valued or not is citation. Citation reflects different forms of capital. It is an indicator not simply of the existence of the intellectual contribution, but also of the fact that it is both recognized and interpreted as worthy of inclusion within the established field (Bacevic 2021, 1125). The quality of one's intellectual contribution therefore depends on both what is produced and the willingness of those to whom it is addressed to accept its value. Bacevic, building on the work of Miranda Fricker, describes how "who and what is recognized as a proper and equal creator of knowledge … is not separate from who can be recognized as an equal participant in the public realm" (Bacevic 2021, 1125). Therefore, it matters who is "positioned" as an expert in the field and who is not. This will determine the relative power available to shape ideas and to have new ways of thinking included.

Within our data sample, only ninety-nine publications, single- or co-authored by a total of ninety-five authors, had 100 or more citations.[3] Among the ninety-nine top cited titles, Teitel has six publications, with her book *Transitional Justice* being cited 3,216 times on the day of our data collection (see Table 1). This is by far the most highly cited

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[3]Data correct as of May 30, 2022.

"transitional justice" publication on Google Scholar, with the second highest, Hayner's *Unspeakable Truths* having almost 1,000 fewer citations with 2,392 in total. Teitel's *Genealogy* comes in third with 1,874 citations, followed by Elster's *Closing the Books*. All other titles among the ninety-nine highest cited ones have fewer than 1,000 citations, with the majority scoring between 100 and 300.

We checked the institutional and disciplinary affiliations of all ninety-five authors to connect the highly cited knowledge to a discipline. Our analysis shows that the vast majority of the ninety-nine highest cited titles come from law and political science, with a total of 87 percent of the highest cited publications out of the sample of 1,000 authored by scholars in these two disciplines, mostly in isolation, but occasionally in collaboration with scholars of other disciplines. A total of 40 percent (thirty-nine out of ninety-nine) of titles are written by legal scholars, with an additional 7 percent (seven out of ninety-nine) titles being co-authored by legal scholars working with at least one scholar from another discipline, such as political science or philosophy. A total of 36 percent (thirty-six out of ninety-nine) titles are written by political science scholars, with additional 4 percent (four out of ninety-nine) titles being co-authored between this and another discipline. Among the rest, we have found six (6 percent) titles in sociology, two in anthropology, one in linguistics, one in geography, one (an edited volume) in anthropology/sociology and geography, and two in broadly defined "peace and conflict" studies by scholars who have interdisciplinary backgrounds (Figure 1).

Finally, out of these ninety-nine highly cited titles, just under 10 percent (nine out of ninety-nine) are written by scholars based in the Global South, that is, scholars currently affiliated with institutions not located in Europe, the USA, Canada, or Australia. Within this small sample, we identify several publications from scholars affiliated with institutions in South Africa (e.g., Boraine 2006; Madlingozi 2010), but predict changes in this geographical breakdown moving forward, as new contexts in the Global South are exposed to transitional justice. Within what we labeled as the "Global North" majority, we see a dominance of UK- and US-based scholarship, followed by Australia, Canada, and several Western European countries (e.g., Germany, Switzerland). We note here that among Global North-affiliated scholars, we find influential thinkers from "transitional states" both in the Global South (e.g., Argentina, Chile) and the Global North (e.g., Northern Ireland). Interestingly, the gender gap previously identified in IR scholarship is in fact reversed in transitional justice scholarship (Malinak, Powers, and Walter 2013). Out of the total of ninety-five authors of the selected most-cited publications, fifty-four (57 percent) are women and forty-one (43 percent) are men.

Acknowledging that not all research in law and political science by default promotes the same structure-oriented knowledge, we also conducted a qualitative content analysis of what each of the highly cited publications sets out to do. Findings revealed that most of the highly cited publications did in fact respond to the pull toward the structure, its laws, and policies and presented the field as mechanism- and outcome-oriented. This helped to consolidate the link between discipline and approach. Out of the ninety-nine publications, we identified only ten publications that are expanding our imagining of what transitional justice could be if it were not a model for dealing with the past. These are explicitly actor- and/or process-oriented by, for example, examining the evolution of transitional justice-related advocacy in international non-governmental sector (Subotic

2012) or how transitional justice experts "produce" victims (Madlingozi 2010). We therefore note that exceptionally, as these two examples of IR and socio-legal research respectively show, highly cited work in law and political science can be actor-, ethics-, and/or process-oriented. Furthermore, a handful (six) publications can be understood as both structure- and actor-oriented by, for example, examining the gaps between international policy and local practices (e.g., Kent 2011). The rest are concerned with laws, mechanisms, and policies, with at least thirty-eight publications explicitly examining one or more tools of transitional justice such as criminal trials or truth commissions (e.g., Crocker 2000; Campbell 2007), while others have tended to conduct introspective approaches to transitional justice as a whole (e.g., Lambourne 2009; de Greiff 2012).

Although these structure-oriented publications can differ in research design, methodologies, and arguments, there are some overlaps in what they set out to do and how they conceptualize "transitional justice." Among these commonalities, we identify creation of knowledge based on assessment of the effectiveness and efficacy and impact of transitional justice as a whole and/or its individual mechanisms (e.g., Hazan 2006; Olsen, Payne, and Reiter 2010; Stan 2013). This interest perhaps reflects the influence of quantitative dataset studies in the US academy, particularly in political science. The resulting findings share their interest in recommending how to design a more effective transitional justice and offering new models and frameworks for practice (Aguilar 2008; Ramnji-Nogales 2010; Balint, Evans, and McMillan 2014).

These findings suggest that, in terms of what approaches are highly valued through citational recognition, not much has changed since Fletcher and Weinstein's study. Their analysis concluded that most of the highest cited articles addressed national responses to transitional justice, theories of transitional justice, or one of the specific mechanisms of transitional justice, namely, truth commissions and criminal tribunals (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 184). Our analysis nuances these findings, but in general, both studies demonstrate that the highest cited studies in transitional justice tend to be top-down and structure-oriented, proposing new frameworks for practice and arguing for application of a specific mechanism or critiquing it, all the while maintaining their faith in transitional justice as a global project (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 184; Miller 2020).

Yet, there is more to this story. We depart from Fletcher and Weinstein's analysis by taking a step further to examine the power of citational recognition and the adverse consequences of the identified biases toward legal and political disciplines. Evaluating one's work as "important" or worthy enough, "having intrinsic quality and value" (Addrell 2015, 33), is a decisive process in the creation of *the canon*, a central, inevitable, and crucial body of knowledge. As has traditionally been the case in Western art and literature, in transitional justice, too, such a canon tends to be reproduced, maintained, and controlled by a small group of individuals and/or institutions (Brown 2023). In this sense, our citational analysis lends support to the qualitative research on knowledge production that demonstrates the ways in which some forms of knowledge are prioritized over others.

Having confirmed and updated Fletcher and Weinstein's findings, we proceed to explain how such canon is built and why what we are dealing with is a case of epistemic injustice. For Bacevic, epistemic positioning can happen in four ways; through bounding, domaining, non-attribution, and appro-
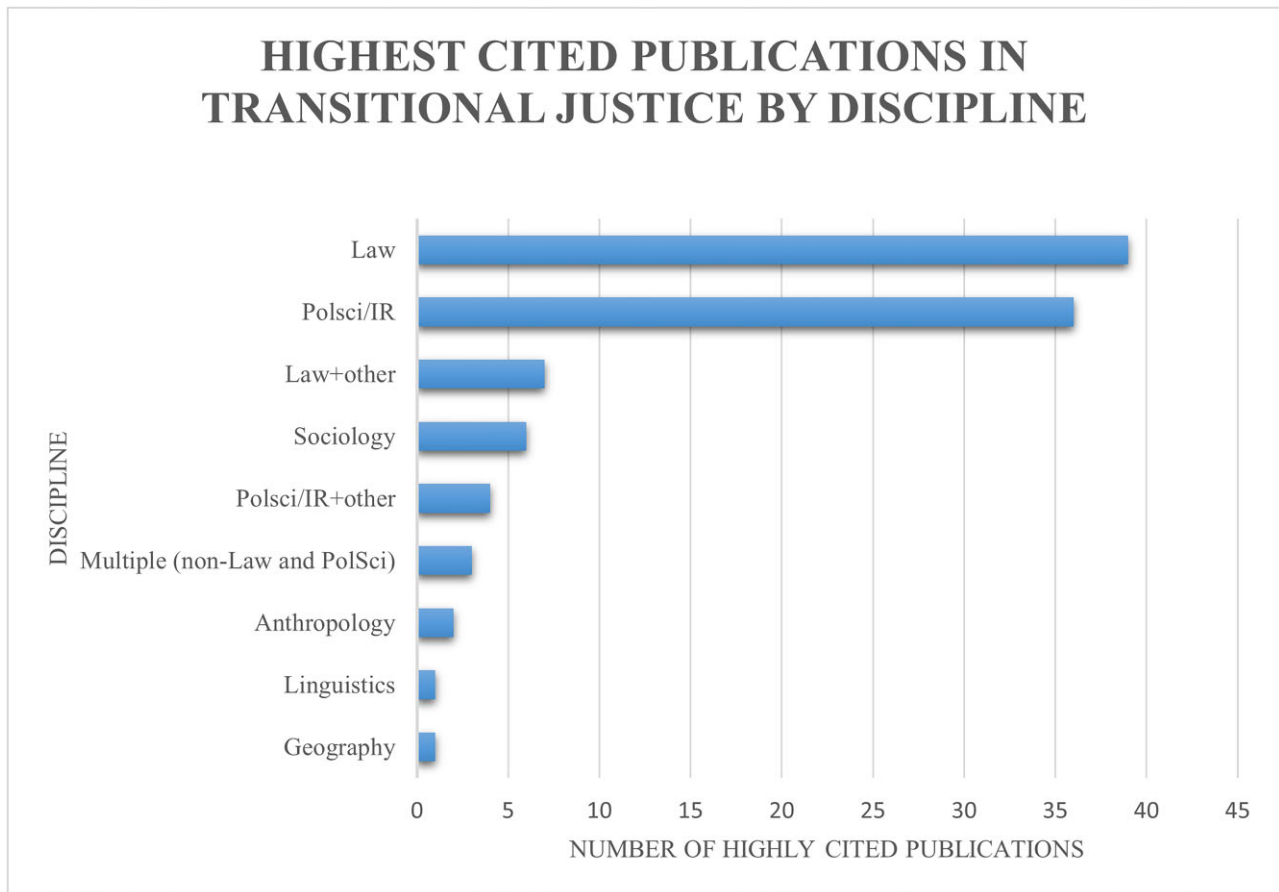
HIGHEST CITED PUBLICATIONS IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE BY DISCIPLINE

Figure 1. Highest cited publications in transitional justice, organized by discipline.

priation. Bounding and domaining represent what Bacevic terms "epistemic reduction" whereby the contribution made by some scholars is diminished by virtue of the way in which it is received by the field. Other forms of positioning are more acute, and result in the complete erasure of contributions from the field through the attribution of ideas to other authors and the refusal to acknowledge that certain contributions have been made (for example, by not citing existing works). While non-attribution refers to omitting to cite the author whose work is being used, appropriation consists of using someone else's work without citing them, and furthermore, attributing it as original work of someone else. This problem is particularly pronounced when it comes to hierarchical relationships between researchers from the Global North and researchers and research subjects from the Global South. As Jones notes, "anecdotal examples abound in the field of transitional justice research, of projects with 'local' partners relegated to mere data collectors while academics based in the Global North advance their careers by extracting such knowledge and translating it for consumption by the most powerful epistemic communities" (Jones 2021, 175). However, epistemic erasure tends to be anecdotal, difficult to prove, and is therefore methodologically and ethically outside the boundaries of our analysis in this paper. Nevertheless, it is worth paying attention to the ways in which ideas arrive in the popular canon through the published outputs of some authors and not others, even where these ideas have been previously developed in other contexts.

We illustrate the two forms of epistemic reduction with our findings.

Bounding

Epistemic positioning can take a form of "bounding" whereby one's knowledge claim is seen as "bounded" or constrained by that speaker's "perceived identity, social position, personal experience, or combination" thereof (Bacevic 2021, 1126). The knowledge claim is linked to the scholar's personal identity or experience. Bounding can manifest as discrediting or diminishing one's work as insufficiently "scientific" or ill-fitted for the dominant method of doing research within a particular field (Bacevic 2021).

The citational figures presented clearly demonstrate the existence of disciplinary hierarchies and an ongoing process of canonization in the field of transitional justice. The ninety-five most highly cited authors, it can be argued, represent "the canon" of transitional justice. Canonization is reflected in high numbers of citations of certain authors' bodies of work of varying volume, and further citations are gained from the expectation that any new work will engage with those included in "the canon" to be legitimized as *valuable* and seen as in conversation with the scholars of the canon (Brown 2023). This is demonstrated by the fact that most highly cited scholarship belongs to Ruti Teitel, who has not only written an early book on "transitional justice" but also claims to have coined the term (Teitel 2008, 1). Because of Teitel's contributions to the conceptualization of the term

after which the entire field was subsequently named, her body of work is seen as part and parcel of the "greatest hits" of transitional justice and therefore unavoidable for a novice. This is the case even though Teitel's 2000 book does not deal with today's most common context of transitional justice practice and research—that of transitions from conflict to peace—where a lot of the current work in transitional justice is situated. To illustrate, since the start of 2021, Teitel's genealogy has been cited 208 times according to Google Scholar. In contrast, according to the same search engine, Marcos Zunino's updated and *critical* deconstructionist genealogy has been cited only twenty-one times in the same period. Not even the most recent 2021 edited textbook cites Zunino's work in its claim to trace "the genealogy of transitional justice" (Yusuf 2021, 2). Instead, the genealogy features and aligns with Teitel's work, demonstrating how canonical texts influence not only citation but also the substantive direction of new scholarship at the expense of alternative approaches. At least some of the many citations to Teitel's *Transitional Justice* and other texts can be described as "ritual citing," that is, citing a text because the author citing it seems to be in that text's "intellectual territory" (Monk cited in Addrell 2015, 36) and thus feels obliged, by way of citation, to offer a "tribute" to the author of the text, whose perceived identity is one of a "founder."

Yet, much of theorizing on the existential questions about transitional justice takes place in other social sciences, arts, and humanities disciplines that sit on the margins of the canon and are typically represented by one or a few highly cited publications. In some cases, none of these contributions achieve high citation status, such as, for example, in art or education. Scholars working within these disciplines are occasionally admitted to the field but can only exceptionally be considered to be a part of the canon. Scholars from outside the elite community of practice find themselves "preemptively bounded" by their disciplinary or epistemological and methodological identities (Bacevic 2021, 1128). They are affected by citational injustices that limit which disciplinary knowledge is included and excluded from transitional justice "theories" for being "soft" as opposed law and political science, which can be considered "hard" among the social sciences (Päuler-Kuppinger and Jucks 2017; see also Nuzov 2016).[4] Bodies of work in disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, and education (and intersections thereof) provide more pertinent responses, solutions, and evidence to much of the field's questions and concerns than Teitel's *Transitional Justice* necessarily does, yet this body of scholarship is routinely bypassed in referencing, costing the said publication its relevance or value. Canonization is therefore void of neither power nor politics, but the ownership of this process is in the hands of certain approaches and disciplines while new voices are prevented from intellectually, methodologically and ontologically shaping the field.

Domaining

A second element of epistemic reduction is what Bacevic terms "domaining." This consists of limiting a person's claim to a particular domain of knowledge, which is usually coextensive with disciplines or fields (Bacevic 2021, 1128). As Bacevic notes, "fields are embedded in other fields; however, whether certain products can circulate between fields,

or capital accrued in one translated to another, depends on general- and not always explicit- forms of valuation" (Bacevic 2021, 1128). In the context of transitional justice, this arises where some forms of knowledge are deemed to create lessons of general application, while work that is more closely linked to context, for example, work arising in area studies, is seen as less relevant. This points to an assumption of a one-way direction of travel in which some forms of knowledge are assumed to be translatable, while others remain context specific.

Our findings show that the principle applies also to disciplinary origin and, as a corollary, methodological, ontological, and epistemological approaches. Intellectual contributions are framed from the outset by reference to the position of the sub-field relative to the "core" of the knowledge. For Bacevic, "this hierarchy is visible in the distinction between 'general' knowledge and specialized sub-fields" (Bacevic 2021, 1129). And while we argue that this applies specifically to disciplinary knowledge and techniques, it is also the case that such divisions are predicated on identity, explaining why "feminist," "postcolonial," or "decolonial" approaches to transitional justice remain largely separate spheres of knowledge. This allows such forms of knowledge to be easily marginalized from mainstream scholarship. There is no expectation that these works must be cited in the same way as the so-called "canonical" texts must be.

Unsurprisingly, then, according to our citation analysis, there is a wealth of feminist, postcolonial, and decolonial scholarship on transitional justice; however, highly cited feminist, postcolonial, and decolonial transitional justice texts are scarce. They are furthermore largely authored by scholars who are already a part of the canon. We found that only fifteen publications in the sample of 1,000 "feminist," and "transitional justice" publications had 100 or more citations,[5] the highest cited publication being authored by Bell and O'Rourke and with O'Rourke and Ni Aoláin having two publications each in that category (Bell and O'Rourke 2007; Ni Aoláin and Rooney 2007; Ní Aoláin 2009; O'Rourke 2015). When repeating the same search with the words "transitional justice" and "decolonial," we received a total of 783 results.[6] Out of those, only two highly cited publications fit the criteria in that they explicitly discuss decolonial approaches/theories and transitional justice. When it comes to highly cited publications that explicitly discuss postcolonial approaches/theories, we were able to identify that four out of 1,000 had 100 or more citations.[7] Among the six post/decolonial publications, four were written by non-white scholars otherwise not present in the transitional justice canon with other publications, only one of whom is based in the Global South. To put these findings in comparable figures, 9.9 percent of publications in the "transitional justice" sample can be classified as "highly cited," while only 1.5 percent of "feminist," 0.4 percent of "postcolonial," and 0.25 percent of "decolonial" transitional justice publications in the three respective samples can claim the same status.

These few feminist, decolonial, and postcolonial texts that entered the canon are, of course, critical of transitional justice discourse and practice. They critique the mechanisms and processes for being gendered (Ní Aoláin 2009), exclusive of women and women's experience (Bell and O'Rourke 2007) as well as structural harms and socioeconomic and indigenous justice claims (Nagy 2013; Balint, Evans, and McMillan 2014). Yet in doing so, these critiques largely do

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[4]Education literature distinguishes between soft and hard disciplines on the basis of "soft" disciplines (social sciences, arts, and humanities) teaching more relativistic epistemological beliefs than students of hard disciplines, whereas "hard" sciences, which could include law and quantitative approaches to political science, adopt a less relativistic and more "objective" approach to knowledge.

[5]Total population of such publications was 9,660 as of July 18, 2022.

[6]Data correct as of January 27, 2023.

[7]Total population of such publications was 6,110 as of January 27, 2023.

not resist the pull toward the structure and work with the global project of transitional justice rather than against or parallel to it. In that sense, most of the critical publications seek to improve or expand the structure and its mechanisms and not to disband it or to point to alternative ways of transitional justice, free from the standardized global model for practice. Nagy (2013, 72), for instance, does this by interrogating the "decolonizing potential" of a truth and reconciliation commission, while Balint, Evans, and McMillan (2014, 213) call for an "enhanced transitional justice model" that focuses on structural and historical harms but nevertheless maintains transitional justice's "strength as a program of legal processes enabling social and political change."

The rest are not admitted into the canon through high citational recognition and therefore remain separate spheres of knowledge characterized through their specific prefixes of "feminist, "postcolonial," or "decolonial." Scholars in these groups can establish bodies of knowledge that are considered to be alternatives to the canon—or alternative canons (Addrell 2015). Furthermore, alternative canons can also have their own hierarchies (Addrell 2015), particularly visible in feminist approaches to transitional justice where we have identified a prioritization (by way of citation) of the work of the white feminists from the Global North. This further demonstrates the interdependence of knowledge and identities. While our analysis has first and foremost concerned "what" is being written in highly cited transitional justice scholarship and not "who" is writing it, our findings on citational recognition point to the overwhelming whiteness in the highly visible scholarly circles in the field. Privileging certain types of and approaches to knowledge therefore comes at the expense of excluding not only other knowledge but also other knowers.

Of Anxiety and Indeterminacy

Based on our citation analysis, what is the picture of the field of transitional justice that emerges in 2023? Our findings show that, in terms of citational recognition of academic value, the field remains dominated by scholarship from the core disciplines of law and political science. The bulk of the knowledge that is awarded highest citational recognition is structure- and not actor- or process-oriented and further positions the structure—the global project of transitional justice—as an actor of its own that implements and achieves. Transitional justice is therefore frequently de-politicized and even more often de-contextualized and de-personalized (Jones 2021). Yet, in contrast to Fletcher and Weinstein's findings in 2015 suggesting that this was creating a coherent field, we find that the continued dominance of these disciplines is creating and sustaining anxieties for the field. Fletcher and Weinstein's "striking" finding that there are "no contributions from history, philosophy, and education" among the most-cited articles is misleading for it strips citational recognition of power (Fletcher and Weinstein 2015, 190). We offer an update to this thinking by suggesting that there are plentiful contributions from these disciplines, but they are excluded from citational recognition in ways that directly shape and sustain the field of transitional justice and its chronic anxiety.

On the margins of citational recognition, there now exist significant bodies of literature that challenge the core foundations of the field and demand a different way of thinking about what transitional justice could be. These include contributions from conflict-affected populations that shine a light on the limits, or even inherent violence, of

the current model. The multidisciplinary landscape of transitional justice, while not overly valued through citations, can in fact undermine the claims of the canon through its distinct methodological, epistemological, and ontological approaches. The response to these demands, we argue, has been introspective—to turn inwards in search of ways of defining the field. We identify three anxieties pertinent to the field: (1) that key concepts such as justice, truth, reconciliation, peace, and democracy need some degree of clarity and focus (e.g., Gready and Robins 2020, 281; Buckley-Zistel et al. 2014); (2) that the relationship(s) between these concepts and the field's means and ends need to be further theorized (e.g., de Greiff 2013, 552); and (3) the boundaries of the field remain elusive, negotiable, and undefined, and this "threatens" the fieldhood (e.g., Roht-Arriaza 2019; Bell 2022). What these three anxieties have in common is that they all require actions of defining, determining, limiting—and eliminating—and with that "securing" the valuable and valued knowledge in the field.

We observe that this desire to set boundaries and keep them relatively rigid is part and parcel of the formation of maintenance of "the canon." As identified in other fields of research such as English literature where canonization has been prominent, a field's "impetus to canon formation" could be a reaction to some kind of external, possibly existential "stress or duress" (Kramnick cited in Addrell 2015, 31). Bell identified in 2009 a "paradoxical moment of fieldhood" whereby the field cohered as a result of rising claims for inclusion, and what she saw as "pressure to reframe" the field to accommodate new agendas and issues (Bell 2009, 13). When, in 2022, the author asserted that expanding the boundaries of the field might liken transitional justice to other adjacent fields such as conflict resolution, the concern was that pushing the field too close to other fields would make it not only less unique but also less legitimate (Bell 2022, 97–8). Similar concerns were expressed by Roht-Arriaza, for example, who warned of "the risks of expanding the transitional justice agenda too far … that it becomes indistinguishable from a general demand for social change" (Roht-Arriaza 2019, 106). The concern is that by expanding its boundaries, we risk not being able to distinguish transitional justice from adjacent fields or demands and therefore threaten the existence of the field itself as a separate and legitimate set of practices and research.

This tendency to police the borders of the field is, perhaps unconsciously, colonial in character. As postcolonial and decolonial scholars show us, limiting transitional justice in this way may conceptually liken the field to a colonial project and its core idea of linear colonial progress (Moyo 2012; Park 2020, 277). This limiting exercise should be understood as an attempt to resist the decolonizing impulse that beats strongly on the margins of the field. Drawing the boundaries of the field around these narrow understandings of what it is and what it definitely is not, in Sesay's words, positions transitional justice as a project that seeks to "restore the integrity of the existing normative and social order" as fundamentally distinct from and incompatible with "decolonization" that necessitates the dismantling of the underlying system of structural injustices, in whole or in part (Sesay 2022, 254).

It is unsurprising then that there are barely any highly cited publications that could be characterized as "decolonial" in their approach, which would, among other things, not only *see* the structure of transitional justice, as a collection of "norms, practices, and conditions" as unjust, violent, and a central cause of continued grievances and alienation

of the population affected by it but also *denounce* it as wrong (Lu cited in Samset 2020, 597). The scholarship that seeks to decenter and delink both the subject and the knowledge from the structure-oriented paradigmatic shackles of the field—even if in the most unintentional ways—is constitutive of the construction of the "threat to fieldhood" that fuels the field's anxieties, and in turn speeds up canonization. This makes our study relevant for the ongoing discussions about globalizing IR. As Bilgin (2021, 14) puts it, the "periphery" is the "constitutive outside" of the Western "core" of IR knowledge, both in the sense that it is outside the dominant pools of knowledge through valuation and that it constitutes the "ideas, practices, and institutions" found in the "core" as much they (co-)constitute it.

Much of the response to these challenges has been to further stretch the limits of transitional justice by way of "adding" new problems and proposed solutions, most prominently in the burgeoning literature on transformative (transitional) justice (Daly 2002; Lambourne 2009). But even here, the same anxiety creeps in. Transitional justice is being reshaped, expanded, and therefore improved because such activities manage expectations about transitional justice and lead to a version that is "less fraught with conflict and disappointment" and inevitably more legitimate (Gready and Robins 2020, 299). To expand nevertheless still means to define and delimit without doubting the foundations of the canon. It requires believing that transitional justice, in whatever form, ought to have "objectives," which implies that "transitional justice" is an entity capable of action and that the "goals" of transitional justice, whatever they are, are achievable (Miller 2020). What we are seeing in these more expansion-oriented responses to the anxieties of transitional justice is an impetus to propose new models, frameworks, or parameters for successfully doing transitional justice research and practice and to search for alternative ways of evaluation or theories of change (Gready and Robins 2020). What remains is an overwhelming emphasis on *contribution* as a top value and a drive to see transitional justice make a positive impact. Both of these, deliberately or not, keep transitional justice cloaked in the neoliberal project, which is otherwise fixated on growth and oriented toward meeting "strategic ends" (Bowsher 2018, 86). As a result, the status quo is preserved. As Miller has convincingly argued, the critiques that seek to define and delimit transitional justice (and in doing so make it better at "work") paradoxically end up stabilizing the global project of transitional justice itself (Miller 2020, 2).

What happens if we imagine transitional justice that does not necessitate transition to political and economic liberalism, that does not *achieve*, but simply *is*? Here is where we return to the "othered" ways of knowing and look to the excluded knowledge that is not awarded high citational recognition. What is excluded, by way of epistemic reduction and, potentially even epistemic erasure, is disciplinary knowledge rooted in indeterminacy, open to flexibility in responding to new challenges. In particular, we see the systematic exclusion of work that is rooted in relationality and listening, as well as a collection of different ways of "being" (Turner 2016). The excluded knowledge points to a different understanding of what the field *could be*. Through outward-oriented inspection, we identify a body of work in social sciences, arts, and humanities that conceptualizes transitional justice as a process rather than an outcome, and that seeks to explore the meaning of the proposed end. These forms of knowledge are inherently oppositional to the idea of fixity in meaning and being, and directly challenge the dominant form of knowledge that is defined and categorized.

Instead, these forms of knowledge build on conceptual tension as their foundation and accept it as an inherent element of the social world. A possible new vision of the field is one where the anxieties of transitional justice are treated not with limitation but with inclusion. Further integration of these "othered" ways of knowing into the canon would have the dominant way of knowing transitional justice benefit from, for instance, sociology's interest in studying networks and relationships between actors, objects, and processes, philosophy's interest in meaning, as well as anthropology's methodological preference and training in slow, in-depth knowledge production based on observation of people and their behavior.

Redirecting our focus away from "transitional justice" as an end in and out of it itself to "transitional justice" as *being* also opens space for understanding how any process of "implementation" or evaluation of "achievement" tends to be stripped of human impact. For example, memory scholars show us that what communities remember as "truth," the narrative that binds a group together in a shared memory, is not a unitary outcome of a transitional justice process but is continuously negotiated in group's history. Yet, as our findings demonstrate, history as a discipline is almost entirely absent from citational recognition in transitional justice.

Here is where transitional justice could be more than an obsession with fixity, recognized, and valued as a multidisciplinary field comfortable with *indeterminacy*. Indeterminacy is a defining feature of decolonization and a marker of anti-colonial politics, as it sits uncomfortably with colonial linearity, futurity, and projectivity (Miller 2020; Park 2020; Nadasdy 2021). Keeping the field an indeterminate and contested space leads us to observe that competing, multiple understandings of justice, truth, reconciliation, and violence are not simply a matter of disciplinary differences and distinct constructions of these concepts but, jointly, are an "accurate representation" of justice, truth, reconciliation, and violence themselves (Nadasdy 2021, 357). As Bueno-Hansen's work shows, making more room for decolonial feminist approaches to transitional justice is an act of "conceptual opening," which would mean making space for "simultaneous and incongruitous readings of what constitutes violence and harm" (2017, 465). Dube proposes that playing "with ambiguity" through fictional narratives about the past can challenge us to "reinterpret the seemingly unthinkable" and "open up ourselves to all sides of transitional justice" (2011, 196). This does not mean that nothing is ever known. In fact, we would argue that indeterminacy enhances our knowledge of *what is*. In and out of themselves, objects such as justice, truth, and reconciliation are "indeterminate." For example, justice without a specification of how we identify/observe/measure justice is indeterminate (Nadasdy 2021, 362). Yet when reduced to a particular research approach, or "experimental apparatus," justice in transitional justice becomes retributive, transformative, or participatory; its properties become determinate (Nadasdy 2021, 362–63).

The tension we identify can be understood as a tension between different epistemic communities who are in a "struggle over how to define which qualifies as valid knowledge" (Bush and Duggan 2014, 233). For example, as Palmer and colleagues argue, there seems to be a "clash of knowledge" between legal and other ways of knowing violations of the past and establishing the truth, emerging between lawyers, scholars, and people with lived experience of a violation and how they "make sense" of both the harm and the response to it (Palmer, Jones, and Viebach 2015, 174). Different "ways of knowing" influence different "ways

of doing," as epistemic communities "do not communicate well enough across the divides" (Jones 2021, 172–73). Recently, scholars have reflected on the divides between sites of expertise and sites of experience in the context of the Arab Spring, suggesting that, rather than being co-opted by the global transitional justice industry, "local" communities have unpacked the proposed model of transitional justice and turned it into context-specific strategies of resistance (Aboueldahab 2022; Nassar 2022, 184).

Yet, this struggle is not only between "the experts" and "the people"; those who study violence and injustices and those who live them; a binary that many critical scholars have identified and written about (e.g., Shaw and Waldorf, with Hazan 2010). The tension we identify points to an exclusion of certain scholarly knowledge and identities from what is highly recognized as "valid" and worthy of citational recognition within "expert" communities. Looking inward, we see, as Ainley argues, that expert communities hold distinct understandings of the "nature and value of" justice or other aspiring "goals" in transitional justice, which impacts the production of scholarly knowledge in the field (2017, 421). What we see when we look outward, as opposed to inward, is a wealth of "othered" knowledge that challenges the usual, dominant ways of knowing. These are the different forms of scholarship, and by extension praxis, that have not been allowed to shape the canon. This highlights the nature of epistemic injustice faced by those generating knowledge from outside the policed boundaries of the field—where that knowledge can be devalued precisely because of where the author and their work are positioned relative to the core.

Conclusion

This article has served at least two purposes. Firstly, it is a love letter to the rich multidisciplinary scholarships that explore the legacies of past violence and injustice and dealings with them. We have argued that while citational recognition in transitional justice lies within certain ways of knowing, there exists a wealth of other (and othered) ways of knowing that complicate our world and make it more truthful for those of us who live transitional justice in post-conflict communities. Secondly, the article is a critique of the field's practices of exclusion. We are in conversation with the many critical voices of transitional justice that question the utility and sustainability of the enterprise. Our contribution to these existing critiques lies in our identification of the ongoing canonization of transitional justice and exploration of what sustains it. Our claim that the policing of the boundaries of transitional justice is, almost certainly incidentally, colonial in character is an uncomfortable one. The process of citational recognition, purposeful or not, renders research approaches outside the dominant structure-oriented political and legal inquires of transitional justice at best, irrelevant and, at worst, threatening. At first glance, if what we face is a choice between keeping the field closed and exclusionary and opening the field "to all people" at the cost of the demise of its fieldhood status, then perhaps the field should indeed die. At second, more hopeful glance, perhaps what we face is an opportunity to build a new canon, liberating the current one from its obsession with fixity, and join the very much present and vivid imaginings of transitional justice as simply being and belonging to those who live it rather than those who experience it in a more abstract and technical sense. This is a responsibility of all those who claim to be motivated by justice. We have proposed here that anxieties could be treated with inclusion and not limitation. But the onus of responsibility to do so lies on the scholars already included in the canon and on those who seek to position themselves relative to existing hierarchies of power and influence within the field. Exclusion will not be addressed unless scholars themselves are willing to be open and generous in their processes of citation, acknowledging where credit is due, and where new ideas could reshape how we think about the question of justice after conflict. In this article, we have started a discussion, and we now invite further reflection on the identified dynamic of inclusion and exclusion in transitional justice.

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