THE STUDY OF BOUNDARIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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■ **Abstract**   In recent years, the concept of boundaries has been at the center of influential research agendas in anthropology, history, political science, social psychology, and sociology. This article surveys some of these developments while describing the value added provided by the concept, particularly concerning the study of relational processes. It discusses literatures on (*a*) social and collective identity; (*b*) class, ethnic/racial, and gender/sex inequality; (*c*) professions, knowledge, and science; and (*d*) communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries. It points to similar processes at work across a range of institutions and social locations. It also suggests paths for further developments, focusing on the relationship between social and symbolic boundaries, cultural mechanisms for the production of boundaries, difference and hybridity, and cultural membership and group classifications.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the idea of "boundaries" has come to play a key role in important new lines of scholarship across the social sciences. It has been associated with research on cognition, social and collective identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, racial and ethnic group positioning, hegemonic masculinity, professional jurisdictions, scientific controversies, group rights, immigration, and contentious politics, to mention only some of the most visible examples. Moreover, boundaries and its twin concept, "borders," have been the object of a number of special issues in scholarly journals, edited volumes, and conferences (e.g., for a list in anthropology, see Alvarez 1995; for sociology, see the activities of the Symbolic Boundaries Network of the American Sociological Association at http://www.people.virginia.edu/~bb3v/symbound).

This renewed interest builds on a well-established tradition since boundaries are part of the classical conceptual tool-kit of social scientists. Already in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim (1965) defined the realm of the sacred in contrast to that of the profane. While Marx often depicted the proletariat as the negation of the capitalist class, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (Marx 1963) is

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still read for its account of the dynamics between several class boundaries. As for Weber, his analysis of ethnic and status groups continues to stand out as one of the most influential sections in *Economy and Society* (1978) (on the history of the concept, see Lamont 2001a and Schwartz 1981).

Unsurprisingly, the multifarious recent developments around the concept of boundaries have yet to lead to synthetic efforts. Greater integration is desirable because it could facilitate the identification of theoretically illuminating similarities and differences in how boundaries are drawn across contexts and types of groups, and at the social psychological, cultural, and structural levels. Whereas empirical research almost always concerns a particular dependent variable or a subarea of sociology, focusing on boundaries themselves may generate new theoretical insights about a whole range of general social processes present across a wide variety of apparently unrelated phenomena—processes such as boundary-work, boundary crossing, boundaries shifting, and the territorialization, politicization, relocation, and institutionalization of boundaries. We do not pretend to provide such a grand synthesis in the limited space we have at our disposal: Given the current stage of the literature, such a summing-up is impossible, at least in a review article format. Instead, we endeavor to begin clearing the terrain by sketching some of the most interesting and promising developments across a number of disciplines. We also highlight the value added brought by the concept of boundaries to specific substantive topics, and we point to a few areas of possible theory building. These tasks are particularly important because citation patterns suggest that researchers who draw on the concept of boundaries are largely unaware of the use to which it is put beyond their own specialties and across the social sciences.

One general theme that runs through this literature across the disciplines is the search for understanding the role of symbolic resources (e.g., conceptual distinctions, interpretive strategies, cultural traditions) in creating, maintaining, contesting, or even dissolving institutionalized social differences (e.g., class, gender, race, territorial inequality). In order to capture this process better, we think it is useful to introduce a distinction between symbolic and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. Examining them allows us to capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications. Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232). They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources.

Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and

pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993, Stinchcombe 1995, Logan et al. 1996). But symbolic and social boundaries should be viewed as equally real: The former exist at the intersubjective level whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. At the causal level, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont 1992, Ch. 7).

While the relationship of symbolic and social boundaries is at the heart of the literature under review here, it most often remains implicit. Whereas the earlier literature tended to focus on social boundaries and monopolization processes — in a neo-Weberian fashion — the more recent work points to the articulation between symbolic and social boundaries. In the conclusion, we highlight how a focus on this relationship can help deepen theoretical progress. We also formulate alternative strategies through which this literature could, and should, be pushed toward greater integration in the study of cultural mechanisms for the production of boundaries, of difference and hybridity, and of cultural membership and group classifications.

If the notion of boundaries has become one of our most fertile thinking tools, it is in part because it captures a fundamental social process, that of relationality (Somers 1994, Emirbayer 1997). This notion points to fundamental relational processes at work across a wide range of social phenomena, institutions, and locations. Our discussion focuses on the following substantive areas, moving from micro to macro levels of analysis: (*a*) social and collective identity; (*b*) class, ethnic/racial and gender/sexual inequality; (*c*) professions, science and knowledge; and (*d*) communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries. Together, these topics encompass a sizable portion of the boundary-related research conducted in anthropology, history, political science, social psychology, and sociology. Because we are covering a vast intellectual terrain, our goal is not to provide an exhaustive overview but to inform the reader about various trends across a range of fields. Due to space limitations, we focus on how boundaries work in social relations, and we do not discuss important developments in the growing literature on cognition and on spatial, visual, and temporal cognitive distinctions in particular, since these have been discussed recently in Howard (1995), DiMaggio (1997), and Zerubavel (1997). Also, given our multi-disciplinary focus, we cover only part of the important sociological literature on changes in boundaries — this topic receives attention elsewhere (e.g., Tilly 2001).

SOCIAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Over the last twenty years, British and American social psychologists working on group categorization and identification have been studying the segmentation between "us" and "them." In particular, focusing implicitly on symbolic boundaries, social identity theory suggests that "Pressures to evaluate ones' own group

positively through in-group/out-group comparison lead social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other" (Tajfel & Turner 1985, pp. 16–17). This process of differentiation aims "to maintain and achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimension" (Tajfel & Turner 1985, pp. 16–17; also Hogg & Abrams 1988). Hence, in-group favoritism is common, especially among high status groups (Brewer & Brown 1998; for reviews, see Sidanius & Pratto 1999 and Prentice & Miller 1999).

Social identity theory has been particularly concerned with the permeability of what we call symbolic and social boundaries and its effect on individual and collective mobility strategy. It has been argued that perceiving group boundaries as impermeable makes social change more likely for low-status groups: They then engage in social competition as opposed to individual mobility (Ellemers 1993).

Moreover, social psychologists show that people adapt to their environment through cognitive categorization and stereotyping. Also concerned with symbolic boundaries, Fiske (1998) in particular argues that in-groups and out-groups result from this automatic process, which generates categorization by race and gender. It also affects how we account for people's success and failures—external/environmental, as opposed to internal/individual and self-blaming explanations are more readily used for males than for females (Crocker et al. 1998).

Among sociologists, Jenkins' (1996, Ch. 4) work on collective identity complements that of social psychologists. He describes collective identity as constituted by a dialectic interplay of processes of internal and external definition. On the one hand, individuals must be able to differentiate themselves from others by drawing on criteria of community and a sense of shared belonging within their subgroup. On the other hand, this internal identification process must be recognized by outsiders for an objectified collective identity to emerge (for similar arguments, see Cornell & Hartman 1997, Ch. 4; Brubaker & Cooper 2000, pp. 14–21).

Group boundaries also figure prominently in the work on the role played by collective identity in social movements (e.g., Taylor & Whittier 1992). Melluci (1996) emphasizes the centrality of social networks in generating shared definitions of "us/them" and in collective mobilization. Similarly, W. Gamson (1992) shows that the impact of collective identity and group boundaries on the framing of political issues varies with the composition of the group. For their part, using an ecological approach akin to Abbott (1995), McAdam et al. (2001, Ch. 5) study the constitution of social actors through boundaries, which they view as a central process in contentious politics. Drawing on a large number of historical case studies, they show how the formation of categories of social actors (what they call "category formation") results from the invention and borrowing of boundaries, as well as from encounters between previously distinct and competing networks. Their work complements Tilly's (1998) on the production of inequality, which also concerned mechanisms of social boundary formation.

More work is needed to integrate the psychological, cultural, and social mechanisms involved in this process of boundary construction. Sociologists working on discrimination, such as Reskin (2000), are linking systematic patterns of

discrimination to nonconscious cognitive processes that bias evaluation based on status group membership (also Hollander & Howard 2000, DiTomaso 2000). These authors analyze mechanisms of exclusion at the micro level that translate into broader patterns of inequality. In their cognitive focus, they are less concerned with how available cultural schemas and structures (Sewell 1992) frame cognition. Comparative research could play a key role in bringing such cultural schemas to the fore, to the extent that it aims to highlight patterns of contrast and similarity (Ragin 1987).

Along the same lines, psychologists generally understand social categorization and identification as universal social processes. A number of cultural sociologists and anthropologists have been more concerned with the accomplishment of boundary-work, that is with what kinds of typification systems, or inferences concerning similarities and differences, groups mobilize to define who they are. In other words, they are more concerned with the *content* and *interpretative dimensions* of boundary-work than with intra-individual processes. For instance, Newman (1999) analyzes how fast-food workers in Harlem contrast themselves to the unemployed poor. For her part, Kefelas (2002) analyzes how white working class people in Chicago define and defend themselves (largely against blacks) in what they perceive to be an imperiled world, through the care with which they keep their homes clean, cultivate their gardens, maintain their property, defend the neighborhoods, and celebrate the nation. Cultural sociologists center their attention on how boundaries are shaped by context, and particularly by the cultural repertoires, traditions, and narratives that individuals have access to (Lamont 2000, Somers 1994, Swidler 2001). They focus on meaningful patterns of boundary drawing within and across societies and view them as embedded in the environment, as opposed to created by atomized individuals. Their work suggests that we need to address how conceptions of self-worth and group boundaries are shaped by institutionalized definitions of cultural membership—a topic rarely visited by social psychologists working on the self and identity (as for instance reviewed in Gecas & Burke 1995; but see Markus & Kitayama 1991 on the self and Reicher & Hopkins 2001 on the historical character of social categorization). This requires considering how (self-) worth is formed for low and high status groups, and more generally how it is tied differently to the meanings associated with various group identities (Rosenfield 1998 is moving in this direction). The latter topic is the object of the literature on class, race, and gender boundaries.

CLASS, ETHNIC/RACIAL, AND GENDER/SEXUAL INEQUALITY

Building on Weber (1978), the voluminous scholarship on class, race, and gender inequality analyzes closure between social groups (e.g., Parkin 1974). While the earlier work centered on closure and social boundaries, symbolic boundaries have become more central to this literature in the last twenty years. From the

research on class boundaries, we center our attention on cultural consumption, class markers, and class reproduction and on how the self is shaped by class inequality because these two topics have generated a particularly large literature (only partially covered here). The section on ethnic and racial inequality discusses the institutionalization of classification systems, threats to group positioning, and ethnic and racial identity. The section on gender and sexual inequality focuses on how gender and sexual categories shape expectations and work life. These three sections describe the same fundamental social process at work, that of the relational definition of identity and social position, and stress the need for a more cumulative research agenda (see also Tilly 1998).

Class Inequality

Particularly germinal in the study of class boundaries has been the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his collaborators, and especially Bourdieu & Passeron (1972, transl. 1977) who proposed that the lower academic performance of working class children is accounted for not by lower ability but by institutional biases against them. They suggested that schools evaluate all children on the basis of their cultural capital—their familiarity with the culture of the dominant class—and thus penalize lower-class students. Having an extensive vocabulary, wide-ranging cultural references, and command of high culture are valued by the school system; students from higher social backgrounds acquire these class resources in their home environment. Hence, lower class children are more strenuously selected by the educational system. They are not aware of it, as they remain under the spell of the culture of the dominant class. They blame themselves for their failure, which leads them to drop out or to sort themselves into lower prestige educational tracks. Hence, direct exclusion, overselection, self-exclusion, and lower level tracking are key mechanisms in the reproduction of inequality and social boundaries. They are generated by symbolic class markers—symbolic boundaries—valued by the French educational system and are central in the creation of social class boundaries.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984, transl. 1984) broadened this analysis to the world of tastes and cultural practices at large. He showed how the logic of class struggle extends to the realm of taste and lifestyle and that symbolic classification is key to the reproduction of class privileges: Dominant groups generally succeed in legitimizing their own culture and ways as superior to those of lower classes, through oppositions such as distinguished/vulgar, aesthetic/practical, and pure/impure (p. 245). They thereby exercise "symbolic violence," i.e., impose a specific meaning as legitimate while concealing the power relations that are the basis of its force (Bourdieu & Passeron 1972, transl. 1977, p. 4). They use their legitimate culture to mark cultural distance and proximity, to monopolize privileges, and to exclude and recruit new occupants to high status positions (p. 31)—translating symbolic distinction into closure. Hence, through the incorporation of *habitus* or cultural dispositions, cultural practices have inescapable and unconscious classificatory effects that shape social positions by defining (social) class boundaries.

"Classification struggles" to impose the superiority of one's worldview are equally central to Bourdieu's conception of "fields," defined as networks of social relations structured around competition over various stakes, such as academic, artistic, and literary prestige (e.g. Bourdieu 1984).

A large American literature applying, extending, and assessing the contributions of Bourdieu and his collaborators appeared in the wake of their translation into English. One important branch focused on cultural consumption and social reproduction, analyzing how levels of cultural capital and other factors influence educational and occupational attainment (i.e., social class boundaries) in the United States and elsewhere. Another branch concerned the process of institutionalization of artistic genres and high culture categories and its relationship with the organizational and social structural environment (e.g., DiMaggio 1987). A third one, in a more critical vein, provided systematic empirical evaluation of Bourdieu's work. For instance, Lamont (1992) extended the concept of boundary-work (Gieryn 1983) to identity (p. 233, note 5) to demonstrate the importance of moral boundaries in the culture of the French and the American upper-middle classes.

In contrast to Bourdieu's more exclusive focus on cultural capital and social position, Lamont argued in favor of an inductive, interview-based approach to the study of symbolic class boundaries to assess the permeability and relative importance of different sorts of boundaries (socioeconomic, moral, cultural) across national and group contexts. Halle's (1993) study of group variations in home decoration in the New York area suggested that art consumption does not necessarily generate social boundaries and that cultural consumption is less differentiated than cultural capital theory suggests—with landscape art being appreciated by all social groups for instance. He concludes that "the link between involvement in high culture and access to dominant class circles . . . is undemonstrated" (p. 198). In a theoretical piece, Hall (1992) emphasized the existence of heterogeneous markets and of multiple kinds of cultural capital. In a critique of an overarching market of cultural capital, he proposed a cultural structuralism that addresses the multiplicity of status situations (also Lamont & Lareau 1988).

On the topic of the permeability of cultural boundaries, Bryson (1996), Erickson (1996), and Peterson & Kern (1996) also suggested that cultural breadth is a highly valued resource in the upper and upper-middle classes. Hence they contradict Bourdieu's view of the dominant class as essentially exclusive and intolerant of other class cultures. Bryson (1996) finds that in the United States, musical exclusiveness decreases with education. She proposes that cultural tolerance for a range of musical genres ("anything but heavy metal") constitutes a multicultural capital more strongly concentrated in the middle and upper classes than in the lower classes. Erickson (1996) suggests that although familiarity with high-status culture correlates with class, it is not used in the management of class relations in the workplace. She writes that in the Toronto security industry, as is the case for familiarity with sport, the "culture useful for coordination is uncorrelated . . . with class, popular in every class" (p. 248) and that "the most useful overall cultural resource is variety plus a well-honed understanding of which [culture] genre to use

in which setting" (p. 249). Peterson & Kern (1996) document a shift in high-status persons from snobbish exclusion to "omnivorous appropriation" in their musical taste. In the United States, these studies all call for a more multidimensional understanding of cultural capital (a type of symbolic boundary) as a basis for drawing social boundaries, and they counter Bourdieu's postulate that the value of tastes is defined relationally through a binary or oppositional logic.

A number of sociologists are now engaged in analyzing how the self is shaped by class and is produced through boundaries and differences. For instance, drawing on extensive fieldwork with poor, working class, and middle class families, Lareau (2000) shows important differences in childhood socialization across social classes, with black and white upper-middle class parents explicitly favoring "concerted cultivation" and the pursuit of self-actualization, as opposed to the "natural growth" advocated by working class people. The anthropologist John Jackson (2001) dissects how African-Americans living in Harlem understand and perform symbolic class boundaries in the context of intra-racial relationship. Alford Young, Jr. (2001) provides a rich analysis of the identity of poor young black men and of how they account for their distinctive social position in relation to that of others. These studies point to the role of relationality in the definition of identity. As with the more recent literature on the fluidity of cultural boundaries, it would be useful to explore the extent to which this process follows a binary logic as opposed to a multiplex one. In other words, we need to explore whether identities are defined in opposition to a privileged "Other," or in juxtaposition to a number of possible "others": Symbolic boundaries may be more likely to generate social boundaries when they are drawn in opposition to one group as opposed to multiple, often competing out-groups.

Ethnic/Racial Inequality

The concept of boundary has been central to the study of ethnic and racial inequality as an alternative to more static cultural or even biological theories of ethnic and racial differences. Particularly germinal here was Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth (1969) who rejected a view of ethnicity that stressed shared culture in favor of a more relational approach emphasizing that feelings of communality are defined in opposition to the perceived identity of other racial and ethnic groups (also Hechter 1975, Horowitz 1985). Among the several recent contributions inspired by this work, Verdery (1994) analyzed how a nation state acts as a producer of differences and as an internal homogenizer of populations (also Starr 1992). Following Davis (1991) and others, the study of the production of racial and ethnic classification by the state (at the level of census categories) has become a growth industry in the United States, and it is a particularly fruitful terrain for studying shifts in the definition of social boundaries. Until recently, these categories forced people to chose only one racial category, as it assumed that racial groups were mutually exclusive (Lee 1993). In the last few years, Shanahan & Olzak (1999) and Gans (1999) have analyzed the factors that are leading to a growing

polarization between whites and nonwhites: Immigrants are led to identify with the white population in the defense of their privileged market position or status, which leads to violence against nonwhites. While intergroup boundaries have attracted most scholarly attention [see also Lieberson's highly original study (2000) of patterns in choice of first names throughout the century], recently Espiritu (2000) has focused on how moral discourse is used to draw symbolic boundaries within and between groups. This suggests an intensified dialogue between cultural sociologists and immigration specialists (also Waters 1999, Levitt 2001, Morawska 2001; in anthropology, Ong 1996).

Among students of American racism, Bobo & Hutchings (1996) adopt a relational logic akin to Barth's to explain racism as resulting from threats to group positioning. However, they follow Blumer (1958) who advocates "shift[ing] study and analysis from a preoccupation with feelings as lodged in individuals to a concern with the relationships of racial groups . . . [and with] the collective process by which a racial group comes to define and redefine another racial group" (p. 3) This and other contributions (Rieder 1987) point to self-interest as the source of ethnic conflict and to how such conflicts are tied with closure—with the protection of acquired privileges. Such dynamics have shaped working class formation in the United States (Roediger 1991). They are also the object of a growing number of studies concerned with the study of "whiteness" as a nonsalient, taken-for-granted, hegemonic racial category.

This relational perspective resonates with more recent work on racial and ethnic identity construction that considers how these identities are the result of a process of self-definition and the construction of symbolic boundaries and assignment of collective identities by others (Cornell & Hartmann 1997, Ch. 4; also Portes & Rumbaut 2001). For instance, Waters (1999) examined the repertoires of cultures and identity that West Indian immigrants bring to the United States as well as their strategies of self-presentation and the boundaries they draw in relation to African-Americans (p. 12). DiTomaso (2000) also sheds new light on white opposition to affirmative action by looking at how middle class and working class whites construct their experiences in the labor market compared to those of blacks, and particularly whether they and their children receive more help than blacks. Lamont (2000) analyzes how the broad moral worldviews of workers lead them to draw racial boundaries—white workers associate blacks with the poor and lack of work ethic, while black workers associate whites with middle class egotism. Here again, the literature is in need of greater systematization, particularly when it comes to specifying boundary processes, ranging from symbolic boundary-work to how social boundaries are transported by immigrants from one national context to another.

Gender and Sexual Inequality

The literature on gender includes a rich treatment of boundaries defined as "the complex structures—physical, social, ideological, and psychological—which establish the differences and commonalities between women and men, among women,

and among men, shaping and constraining the behavior and attitudes of each gender group" (Gerson & Peiss 1985, p. 318).

At the social psychological level, Ridgeway (1997) explains gender inequality in terms of interactional processes and the construction of boundaries. She argues that we "automatically and unconsciously gender-categorize any specific other to whom we must relate" and that when "occupational roles are activated in the process of perceiving a specific person, they become nested within the prior, automatic categorization of that person as male or female, and take on a slightly different meaning as a result" (1997, p. 220). Hence, male workers are believed to be more competent than female workers. Those who violate gender boundaries, concerning appropriate norms for time management for instance, often experience punishment and stigmatization in the workplace, or even at home (Epstein 2000, 1988)—symbolic boundaries translated into social boundaries. Similarly, in her study of body management on college campuses, Martin (2001) shows how sorority girls and feminist and athlete students are confronted with boundary patrolling practices concerning hegemonic femininity (a concept she derives from Connell 1987). Earlier studies on the accomplishment of gender are also primarily concerned with the creation of gender boundaries, although they may not explicitly use this term (West & Zimmerman 1987).

Sociologists have also analyzed the creation of gender-based social boundaries in organizations and professions (Reskin & Hartmann 1986), focusing on the glass ceiling (Epstein 1981, Kay & Hagan 1999) and strategies developed to break it (e.g., Lorber 1984). Boundary maintenance is analyzed through the rules that apply to men and women working in strongly gendered occupations. For instance, Williams (1995) shows that in occupations such as nursing, men are given more leeway than women and move faster up the professional ladder. At a more general level, Tilly (1998) argues that dichotomous categories such as male and female (but also white and black) are used by dominant groups to marginalize other groups and block their access to resources. He extends the Weberian scheme by pointing to various mechanisms by which this is accomplished, such as exploitation and opportunity hoarding. He asserts that durable inequality most often results from cumulative, individual, and often unnoticed organizational processes.

Sociologists have also written on sexual boundaries. For instance, Stein (1997) analyzes how feminists collectively contested the dominant meaning of lesbianism and how the symbolic boundaries around the lesbian category changed over the course of the movement's influence: They "reframed the meaning [of homosexuality], suggesting that the boundaries separating heterosexuality and homosexuality were in fact permeable" (p. 25) instead of essentialized. Also focusing on symbolic boundaries, J. Gamson (1998) analyzes how the portrayal of gay people on entertainment television validates middle class professionals and gays who maintain a distinction between the public and the private, but that it also delegitimizes working class gay people. Brekhus (1996) describes social marking and mental coloring as two basic processes by which "deviant" sexual identity is defined against a neutral standard.

Gender and sexual boundaries are a fertile terrain for the study of boundary crossing and boundary shifting as well as the institutionalization and diffusion of boundaries—precisely because they have become highly contested and because a rich literature on gender socialization and reproduction is available. As for the study of class and racial/ethnic boundaries, there is a need for greater systematization and theorization concerning these topics. Researchers should also pay particular attention to the roles played respectively by symbolic and social boundaries in the making of gender/sexual inequality. While Ridgeway (1997) and Tilly (1998) make important strides in specifying the cognitive and social mechanisms involved in gender boundary-work, similar analyses are needed concerning cultural narratives that play a crucial role in the reproduction of gender boundaries [along the lines developed by Blair-Loy (2001) concerning the "family devotion" and "work devotion" schemas used by women finance executives, or by Hays (1996) à propos of the concept of "intensive mothering"].

PROFESSIONS, SCIENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE

The literature on professions, science, and social knowledge illustrates exceptionally well the usefulness of the concept of boundaries as it is used to understand how professions came to be distinguished from one another—experts from laymen, science from nonscience, disciplines between themselves, and more generally how systems of classification emerge to bring order in our lives. Focus on these social boundaries prompts researchers to develop a relational and systemic (often ecological) perspective on knowledge production sensitive to historical processes and symbolic strategies in defining the content and institutional contours of professional and scientific activity. The notion of boundaries is also an essential tool to map how models of knowledge are diffused across countries and impact local institutions and identities. Some (Bowker & Star 1999, Star & Griesemer 1989) approach boundaries as means of communication, as opposed to division, and show that they are essential to the circulation of knowledge and information across social worlds.

Professions and Work

Research on professions and work includes some of the most influential—and by now, canonized—research on boundaries produced over the last thirty years. Indeed, the notion of "professions" originally emerged as a demarcation problem—i.e., a problem of boundaries—between "special" and ordinary occupations. The issue was whether professions should be defined by their particular knowledge base, as a particular phase in the development of occupations, or as a particular type of institutional organization giving practitioners control over access, training, credentialing, and evaluation of performance. The latter view emphasized monopolistic closure (or social boundary drawing) as the defining element of modern professions (Parkin 1974). This approach argued that the strategies professionals

used to define and institutionalize the boundaries of the profession against outsiders constitute the essence of the "professionalization project" (Sarfatti-Larson 1979). This conflict-oriented theory incorporated an understanding of professionalization as a normative framework of "social and ideological control" (p. 238).

In a similar vein, critical analyses of education examined the credentialing system as a mechanism through which monopolistic closure in the professions is achieved. Collins (1979) found a surprisingly weak correlation between the requirements of educational credentials and the skill/knowledge requirements of jobs. On the basis of this empirical observation he argued that education serves to socialize prospective professionals into status cultures by drawing a line between insiders and outsiders (also Manza 1992, p. 279). Closure models of the professions show great affinity with, and are in fact integrated into, a more general theory of the production of inequality through social closure and networks (e.g., Collins 2001).

Abbott (1988) shifted the analytical focus from the organizational forms to the contents of professional life, and from the struggles of professionals against outsiders to the struggles of professionals among themselves. In contrast to the closure model that described professions as a closed system (where a profession is a clearly bounded natural analytical unit emerging from functional specialization), Abbott argued that professions constitute an open, ecological system in which individual professions exist in interdependence. They compete with one another for jurisdictional monopolies, for the legitimacy of their claimed expertise, thereby constituting a constantly changing system of professions. This competition usually assumes the form of disputes over jurisdictional boundaries, i.e., it is waged to redraw the social boundaries between professions.

The literature on professions has paid less attention to how boundaries between experts and laymen (e.g., professionals and manual laborers) are enacted in work situations. Vallas (2001) aims to expand existing research in this direction by looking at distinctions between engineers and skilled manual workers in six paper mills at a time of technological change. He sees professional boundaries as resulting not only from interprofessional competition à la Abbott, but also from disputes with subordinates at the workplace, as there is often considerable overlap between the tasks they are expected to perform. He traces how cultural boundaries in the form of scientific and technical knowledge (the mark of the trained engineer) provide a salient mechanism for the production of social boundaries. At the same time he notes that the deployment of symbolic boundaries is a contested process, the outcome of which is largely context dependent. His work underscores the importance of considering the interface between dominant and dominated groups in the production of symbolic and social boundaries.

Science, Disciplines, and Knowledge

Like professionals, scientists have also wanted to distinguish themselves from amateurs and charlatans by erecting the boundaries of "real" science. Gieryn (1983) coined the term "boundary-work" to describe the discursive practices by which

scientists attempt to attribute selected qualities to scientists, scientific methods, and scientific claims in order to draw a "rhetorical boundary between science and some less authoritative, residual non-science" (Gieryn 1999, pp. 4–5; 1983, p. 781; 1995). He argues that boundary-work is an important resource that translates into "strategic practical action" (1999, p. 23) for the purpose of establishing epistemic authority. The drawing and redrawing of the boundaries of science amount to credibility contests that employ three genres of boundary-work: expulsion, expansion, and protection of autonomy. Expulsion characterizes contests between rival authorities when each claims to be scientific. In this context "boundary-work becomes a means of social control" (p. 16), sanctioning the transgression of the (symbolic) boundaries of legitimacy. Expansion is used when rival epistemic authorities try to monopolize jurisdictional control over a disputed ontological domain. Finally, boundary-work is mobilized in the service of protecting professional autonomy against outside powers (legislators, corporate managers) that endeavor to encroach upon or exploit scientists' epistemic authority for their own purposes (pp. 5–17).

While Abbott emphasized the objective character of the tasks that create competition to transform professional jurisdictions, Gieryn (1999, p. 16, ftnt 21) stresses the power (flexibility and often arbitrariness) of interpretative strategies in constructing a space for "science" in pursuit of epistemic authority. In this instance, he takes inspiration from the work of historian Robert Darnton (1984) who follows Enlightenment philosophers in their ambitious endeavor to redraw the boundaries of the world of knowledge in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. He shows how Diderot and d'Alembert chose selectively among elements of earlier topographies of knowledge in charting a new line between the known and the unknowable and how the "diagrammatic impulse—a tendency to map, outline, spatialize segments of knowledge" has been simultaneously an "exercise in power" (pp. 193–94). Darnton (1984) with Davis (1975) are two of the most illustrious representatives of a large literature in cultural history on symbolic distinctions (from the perspective of historical sociology, see also Zelizer 1985) on the construction of children as objects of affection and sources of labor).

That boundary-work is an immensely useful concept to illuminate the social organization of scientific knowledge is also demonstrated by its successful applications in a wide range of case studies. Indeed, it also imprints the formation and institutionalization of disciplines, specialties, and theoretical orientations within science. Gieryn traces the shifting boundaries of the "cartographically ambiguous place of 'social' science" (1999, p. 31) through the debates of the late 1940s that charted the future legislative terrain of the National Science Foundation. Moore (1996) examines the contentious boundary between science and politics, showing how activist scientists sometimes successfully play both sides of the fence. Gaziano (1996) reviews academic debates about the association of biology and sociology in the wake of the new field of human ecology. Small (1999) compares the practice of boundary-work in emerging disciplines in a case study of the legitimation of African-American studies at Temple University and Harvard

University that helps us understand why Henry Louis Gates goes to such length to oppose afrocentricity. Gal & Irvine (1995) describe the field of sociolinguistics as institutionalizing differences among languages and dialects and as producing linguistic ideologies that are an intrinsic part of disciplinary boundaries. Fuller (1991) surveys the canonical historiography of five social science disciplines. He contends that "disciplinary boundaries provide the structure for a variety of functions, ranging from the allocation of cognitive authority and material resources to the establishment of reliable access to some extra-social reality" (p. 302). These studies point to the presence of relational (and often political) processes operating across institutions and contexts.

The analytical focus on boundaries also highlights the countless parallels and interconnections between the development of the professions and disciplines. The historian Thomas Bender (1984) argues that the creation of specialized and certified communities of discourse, a segmented structure of "professional disciplines," was partly triggered by profound historical changes in the spatial organization of the nineteenth century American city (the locus of intellectuals) that increasingly emphasized exclusion over inclusion, segregation over diversity. Recent works on the historical trajectories of social science disciplines in the United States and Europe document a remarkable variation in national profiles rooted in the different relationships of the sciences to various parts of society such as the state, professionals, and markets (Wagner et al. 1991a,b, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol 1996, Fourcade-Gourinchas 2000).

In contrast to studies that so far treated boundaries as markers of difference, Susan Leigh Star and her collaborators conceptualize boundaries as interfaces facilitating knowledge production. They use this understanding of conceptual boundaries to explore how interrelated sets of categories, i.e., systems of classification, come to be delineated. They agree with Foucault that the creation of classification schemes by setting the boundaries of categories "valorizes some point of view and silences another" (Bowker & Star 1999, p. 5), reflecting ethical and political choices and institutionalizing differences. But they point out that these boundaries also act as important interfaces enabling communication across communities (by virtue of standardization, for instance). They coin the term "boundary object" to describe these interfaces that are key to developing and maintaining coherence across social worlds (Star & Griesemer 1989, p. 393). Boundary objects can be material objects, organizational forms, conceptual spaces or procedures. In the spirit of the influential "material turn" in science studies, they argue that objects of scientific inquiry inhabit multiple intersecting social worlds just as classifications are also powerful technologies that may link thousands of communities. In their most recent study, Bowker & Star (1999) apply this analytical tool to understand how such classification systems as the International Classification of Diseases, race classification under apartheid in South Africa, the Nursing Intervention Classification, and the classification of viruses make the coordination of social action possible (on this point, see also Thénevot 1984, Boltanski & Thévenot 1991). They view classifications as simultaneously material and symbolic, and as ecological

systems where categories are constructed and often naturalized. The concept of the boundary object allows them to expand earlier work on the emergence and the working of classification systems in modern societies (Foucault 1970, Hacking 1992, Desrosières 1993). This concept is particularly important because it underlines that boundaries are conditions not only for separation and exclusion, but also for communication, exchange, bridging, and inclusion, echoing the theme of "omnivorousness" encountered in the literature on class and cultural consumption (e.g., Bryson 1996, Peterson & Kern 1996).

COMMUNITIES, NATIONAL IDENTITIES, AND SPATIAL BOUNDARIES

Boundaries have always been a central concern of studies of urban and national communities. Indeed, following Durkheim (1965), communities have been defined by their internal segmentation as much as by their external perimeter. Accordingly, the literatures on symbolic and network-driven communities have focused on these very dimensions, again pointing to relational processes at work. Similarly, the recent literatures on national identity and state building have looked at boundaries and borders to show that place, nation, and culture are not necessarily isomorphic. They also pinpoint the extent to which national identity, like nation building, is defined relationally and emerges from dynamic processes of interaction and negotiation between local and national forces.

Communities

Research on boundary-work and community can be grouped in four categories. First, there is a long tradition of research, directly inspired by the Chicago School of community studies, that concerns the internal symbolic boundaries of communities and largely emphasizes labeling and categorization (e.g. Erikson 1966, Suttles 1968). Anderson (1999), on the poor black neighborhoods of Philadelphia, points to the internal segmentation of the world he studies, based on the distinctions that are made by respondents themselves—for instance, between "street" and "decent" people (also Pattillo-McCoy 1999). Among recent studies, several scholars have focused on the symbolic boundaries found within specific institutional spheres, such as religious communities. For instance, Becker (1999) studies how religious communities build boundaries between themselves and "the public" by analyzing the discourse of larger religious traditions and how local congregations reconfigure the public-private divide. Lichterman (2001) explores how members of conservative and liberal Christian congregations define their bonds of solidarity with various groups, exploring the limits of what he calls their definitions of "social membership."

Second, a number of sociologists tie communities, networks, and meaning systems together (Gould 1995, White 1992, Tilly 1998). For instance, Gould (1995)

explains changes in the salience of class in collective mobilization in the 1848 French revolution and the 1871 Paris Commune by the emergence of strongly residential neighborhoods, which made the local community more central in mobilizing individuals by 1871 (p. 28). Hence, while the first revolution activated the boundary between workers and the bourgeoisie, the second opposed city dwellers and the state. Gould shows that the appeals of different networks involved in the production of collective mobilization were responsible for the relative salience of these identities as bases for recruitment. His model posits that "meaningful group boundaries are predicated on the presence (and perception) of common patterns of durable ties" (p. 19).

Third, there is a growing literature on communities that do not involve face-to-face contacts. According to Calhoun (1991), these indirect relationships include those mediated by information technology, technocratic organizations, and impersonal markets. They consist of a world of imagined personal connections through some medium such as television, visual or printed representation, or tradition (Cerulo 1997, Swidler 2001). They can also be large-scale collectivities where members are "linked primarily by common identities but minimally by networks of directly interpersonal relationships—nation, races, classes, genders, Republicans, Muslims and 'civilized' people" (Anderson 1983, p. 96). Individuals within such categorical communities have at their disposal common categorization systems to differentiate between insiders and outsiders and common vocabularies and symbols through which they create a shared identity. People who share such categories can be considered to be members of the same symbolic community even if their living conditions vary in important ways (Hunter 1974, Wuthnow 1989, Lamont 1992, also Calhoun 1991, p. 108).

In American sociology, one finds a large number of influential studies that deal with symbolic and social boundaries within such communities. For instance, Gusfield (1963) interprets the nineteenth century American temperance movement as a creation of small-town Protestants aiming to bolster their social position against that of urban Catholic immigrants. Along similar lines, Luker (1984) shows that American anti-abortion and pro-choice activists have incompatible beliefs about women's careers, family, sexuality, and reproduction, and that they talk past one another and largely define themselves in opposition to one another. Alexander (1992) provides a semiotic analysis of the symbolic codes of civic society that suggests that the democratic code involves clear distinctions between the pure and the impure in defining the appropriate citizen.

These three lines of work on communities are complemented by more philosophical debates emerging from political theory circles concerning community boundaries. Over the past fifteen years, communitarians and liberals have time and again engaged one another over the importance of individual and group rights, pluralism, self-determination, and nationalism (Taylor 1992, Spinner 1994, Kymlicka 1995). A normative discourse about the possibility of liberal nationalism and progressive cosmopolitanism attracted much attention in the context of the heightened visibility of identity politics (Ignatieff 1993, Tamir 1993, Held 1996). Although

these debates rarely engage empirical social science research, they are very important to the issue at hand because they address social boundary problems in terms of political inclusion and exclusion, and they focus on the responsibilities that human beings have in relation to groups of various "others."

A more cumulative research agenda should involve comparing symbolic and social boundaries within symbolic communities and network-driven communities. It would be particularly important to determine whether these two types of communities operate similarly; to what extent widely available schemas shape the drawing of boundaries within face-to-face communities (e.g., Ikegami 2000, p. 1007); and how boundary-work generated by the media (e.g., Gilens 1999) feeds into the social boundaries that structure the environment in which individuals live and work.

National Identity, Spatial Boundaries, Nation Building, and Deterritorialization

The main object of a growing historical and anthropological literature on national identity and borders is to break down the long-held assumption about the isomorphism of places, nation, and culture (Rosaldo 1989, Gupta & Ferguson 1992). Scholars in this vein focus "on the place and space of visible and literal borders between states, and the symbolic boundaries of identity and culture which make nations and states two very different entities" (Wilson & Donnan 1998, p. 2). They move forward the research agenda launched by Benedict Anderson (1983), which did not at first explore the specific ways in which individuals and communities symbolically construct links to the nation.

Borders provide most individuals with a concrete, local, and powerful experience of the state, for this is the site where citizenship is strongly enforced (through passport checks, for instance). The social experience of borders encompasses formal and informal ties between local communities and larger polities, and hence constitutes a privileged site for analyzing micro and macro dimensions of national identity (Lightfoot & Martinez 1995, Wilson & Donnan 1998). This is exemplified by Sahlins (1989) who, in his account of how ethnic Catalans were made into Frenchmen and Spaniards in the Pyrénées, demonstrates that the formation of the territorial boundary line and national identities did not merely emanate from the center but unfolded as a two-way process: States did not simply impose the boundary and the nation on the local community. Village communities and their inhabitants also made use of the nation and its boundaries in pursuit of local interests. Along the same lines, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1996) compares formal, state-sponsored discourse and local, "intimate" discourse about Greek national identity in order to show that the relatively fixed territorial boundaries of states and shifting symbolic boundaries of nations as moral communities are likely to be incongruous.

The relational construction of national similarities and differences is particularly apparent in border regions between nation states. For Borneman, borders convey

a sense of inherent duality and promote a "process of mirror imaging" (1992a, p. 17) where the construction of otherness constantly takes place on both sides of the border (also Berdahl 1999). Through a sketch of the historical evolution of the Swedish-Danish border, Löfgren (1999) shows how borders grew increasingly nationalized by the introduction of passports, for instance. The relational approach used in these studies helps to highlight that national identity overlaps with other forms of politicized difference such as race, gender or sexuality. It links the study of national identity to the creation of modern subjects and systems of social classification (Rosaldo 1989, Verdery 1994, Ong 1996).

Researchers who concentrate on borders (i.e., territorial boundaries) as instrumental in the construction of difference usually examine processes of nation building. For instance, Borneman reconstructs the master narratives of nation building in East and West Germany after 1945, underscoring that the "production of different nations was a precondition for their claim to legitimate statehood" (1992b, p. 45). While the West German state has successfully constructed a narrative of prosperity as a basis for a positive national identity, the East German state largely failed to provide its citizens with a similarly coherent competing narrative. The process of unification exacerbated problems of national identification as it called into question a notion that personal identity, home, culture, and nation were discrete, territorially distinct wholes (p. 58). Glaeser (2000) similarly documents the unification of the Berlin police to show how the disappearance of the territorial boundary left almost intact the deep divide between former East and West Germans as differences continue to be reproduced through a myriad of symbolic boundaries (temporal, sensual, moral, public/private). Drawing on the field of rhetoric, he also points to basic mechanisms of symbolic boundary-work by which East and West Germans differentiate themselves from one another, focusing on "projects of identifications of selves" based on metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches (p. 49).

Other studies treat borders as interstitial zones and are largely concerned with how processes of decolonization, globalization, and transnationalization have increasingly deterritorialized, hybridized, and creolized national identities (for reviews, see Gupta & Ferguson 1992, Alvarez 1995, Kearney 1995). Anthropologists, joined lately by historians, have mostly concentrated their attention on the border area between the United States and Mexico as a paradigmatic research site. They treat the border as a cultural interface between these societies that has produced a range of multiplex and transnational identities such as "Chicano," "Latino," and "Hispanic," moving beyond the more monolithic categories of "Mexicans" and "Americans" (Anzaldua 1987, Kearney 1991, Alvarez 1995, Gutiérrez 1999). According to historian David Thelen (1999, p. 441), "In this new perspective borders became not sites for the division of people into separate spheres and opposing identities and groups, but sites for interaction between individuals from many backgrounds, hybridization, creolization, and negotiation" (also Rosaldo 1989).

Challenges to clearly defined and neatly bounded national identities come in the form of flows of capital, technologies, goods, and people across national

borders. The majority of the literature that probes these processes focuses on flows of people, i.e., immigration and more sporadically on refugees (e.g., Malkki 1995). Bauböck (1998) is concerned with the ways in which immigrants introduce new forms of cultural diversity and a new source of anxiety in several societies. He examines changes in the language of integration and multiculturalism across a range of settings and argues that international migrants blur three kinds of boundaries: territorial borders of states, political boundaries of citizenship, and cultural (symbolic) boundaries of national communities (p. 8). Brubaker (1992) focuses on how citizenship is defined differently in French and German immigration policy. He looks at citizenship as a conceptual place where relationship to the "other" (i.e., Poles, Jews, Slavs in Germany, North Africans in France) is articulated by the state. Similarly Zolberg & Long (1999) turn to the incorporation of immigrants in the United States and France. They analyze how in Europe, religion and, in the United States, language are used extensively to construct symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them." They suggest that boundary crossing, blurring, and shifting are central to negotiations between newcomers and hosts. Also concerned with classification, Soysal (1994) and Kastoryano (1996) study world- and state-level classifications to examine how minority/migrant groups are incorporated, often against institutionalized schemes about personhood that are promoted by international organizations. Finally, research on transnational communities and diasporas also problematizes the relationship between nation, state, and territory. As immigrants, migrants (including members of transnational and professional elites), refugees, displaced and stateless persons continue to make up an increasing portion of the world population (Kearney 1995, p. 559, Hannerz 1992). The stranger, "the man who comes today and stays tomorrow" (Simmel 1971, p. 143) becomes instrumental in redrawing the boundaries of national identities.

In a somewhat different direction, another line of research analyzes cross-national boundary-making strategies, i.e., how countries define themselves in opposition to one another. For instance, contrasting France and the United States, Lamont & Thévenot (2000) analyze the criteria of evaluation mobilized across a range of comparative cases (environmentalism, critiques of contemporary art, racism, etc.) in France and the United States. They show that various criteria, such as market principles, human solidarity, and aesthetics, are present within cultural repertoires of each nation and region, but in varying proportions. These differences often come to constitute the basis of diverging national identities [e.g., in the case of the simultaneous anti-materialism and anti-Americanism expressed by French professionals and managers (Lamont 1992)]. This relational logic also affects policy. For instance, France's sexual harassment policy is explicitly defined against what is viewed as American excesses in the realm of political correctness (Saguy 2001). In contrast to anthropologists who stress the decline of the national via hybridization for instance, these sociological studies suggest the persisting salience of national boundaries at least in the structuration of available cultural repertoires (also Lamont 2000).

CONCLUSION: STRENGHTENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF BOUNDARIES

The reviewed literature suggests various typical configurations of symbolic and social boundaries. An integrative effort is needed in order to find similarities, or typical configurations, across cases. From this, we will be able to move toward more general statements about the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries, including those about the conditions under which certain types of incongruities between symbolic and social boundaries emerge.

Some of the emerging configurations can be summarily described as follows: (*a*) Symbolic boundaries are often used to enforce, maintain, normalize, or rationalize social boundaries as exemplified by the use of cultural markers in class distinctions (Bourdieu & Passeron 1972, transl. 1977, Bourdieu 1984, Vallas 2001), or cognitive stereotyping in gender inequalities (Epstein 2000, 1988). (*b*) Symbolic boundaries, however, are also employed to contest and reframe the meaning of social boundaries. Fast food workers in Harlem or working class people in Chicago use symbolic boundaries to combat downward social mobility (Newman 1999, Kefalas 2002). (*c*) There are also cross-cultural differences in how symbolic boundaries are linked to social boundaries. The same social boundary can be coupled with different symbolic boundaries as class distinctions in Europe are tied to the symbolic boundary between high culture and popular culture (Bourdieu 1984), whereas in the United States they are linked to the symbolic boundary between omnivores and univores (Bryson 1996, Erickson 1996, Lamont 1992, Peterson & Kern 1996). Immigrants are also likely to transport symbolic boundaries from one cultural context to another (Waters 1999, Ong 1996, Morawska 2001). (*d*) In some cases symbolic boundaries may become so salient that they take the place of social boundaries. This is exemplified by the case of Germany where the disappearance of social boundaries between East and West Germans was not followed by the disappearance of symbolic boundaries but rather by intensification of the latter (Berdahl 1999, Glaeser 2000, Borneman 1992b). Imagined symbolic communities, maintained by new information technologies, are also organized exclusively by symbolic boundaries as opposed to social network based communities (Cerulo 1997, Swidler 2001).

The study of the interplay of symbolic and social boundaries is just one possible strategy that can be used to highlight the similar analytical concerns of a vast body of research. Here we briefly sketch three alternative strategies, which can also be followed in order to systematize and integrate the existing literature. The first approach could center on the study of the *properties* of boundaries such as permeability, salience, durability, and visibility and could investigate the conditions under which boundaries assume certain characteristics. In the literature on professions and science, as well as in the work of Bourdieu (1984), it is often posited that identification generally proceeds through exclusion and that boundaries are salient and mostly have to do with demarcation. Instead Lamont (1992), Bryson (1996),

Erickson (1996), and Peterson & Kern (1996) have framed this as an empirical issue by exploring levels of tolerance, exclusion, and cultural "omnivorousness." Along the same lines, the recent anthropological literature has stressed the permeability of social boundaries and hybridization processes. Territorial borders have come to be conceived as interstitial zones that produce liminality and creolization. Much more needs to be done in terms of exploring the conditions under which boundaries generate differentiation or dissolve to produce hybridity or new forms of categorization. Moreover, the porousness of boundaries should be studied systematically across class, race/ethnic and gender/sexual lines.

The second approach could undertake the systematic cataloguing of the key *mechanisms* associated with the activation, maintenance, transposition or the dispute, bridging, crossing and dissolution of boundaries. The reviewed literature suggests several mechanisms central to the production of boundaries. On the cognitive/social psychological side, for instance, Ridgeway (1997) and Jenkins (1996) describe processes of stereotyping, self-identification, and categorization. At the level of discourse, Glaeser (2000) draws on rhetoric to point to mechanisms of identification of the self such as metonymy, metaphor, and synecdoche, and Gieryn describes the "credibility contests" in science that take the form of expulsion, expansion and protection of autonomy. Bowker & Star (1999) and Thévenot (1984), for their part, focus not only on the exclusive aspects of boundaries, but also on their role in connecting social groups and making coordination possible.[1] Just as Tilly (1998) systematized the mechanisms involved in the production of social boundaries, there is a need for a more exhaustive grasp of its cultural mechanisms, as well as of their articulation with social mechanisms and cognitive mechanisms (on this last point, see also McAdams et al. 2001). Focusing on such abstract mechanisms will help us move beyond an accumulation of disconnected case studies all too frequent in the research on class, race, and gender. Developing a better grasp of the difference made by the *content* of symbolic boundaries in the construction of cognitive and social boundaries could also be a real contribution from cultural sociology to other, more strictly social structural, areas of sociological analysis. It could also add a new dimension to recent attempts to rethink class analysis (Grusky & Sorensen 1998, Portes 2001).

A third approach could integrate the existing literature by focusing on the theme of cultural membership. The notion of boundaries is crucial for analyzing how social actors construct groups as similar and different and how it shapes their understanding of their responsibilities toward such groups (Lamont 2000). In line with recent studies of commensuration processes that analyze how different entities compare based on various metrics (Espeland & Stevens 1998), we advocate

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[1]Symbolic boundaries in the social sciences and humanities disciplines (particularly concerning the content of shared notion of "top-notch" and "less stellar" work) is an area of coordination that has been neglected to date, and that may deeply enrich our understanding of differences and similarities between the more interpretive and empirically based (as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary) academic fields (Lamont & Guetzkow 2001).

a more elaborate phenomenology of group classification, i.e., of how individuals think of themselves as equivalent and similar to, or compatible with, others (Lamont 2001b, Lamont et al. 2001); and of how they "perform" their differences and similarities (Jackson 2001). We need to focus especially on hidden assumptions concerning the measuring sticks used by higher and lower status groups, a topic largely neglected to date. For instance, we may examine closely how blacks consider themselves as similar to or different from other racial groups, how they go about rebutting racist stereotypes, and when they do so (Lamont & Molnár 2001). We should also consider the extent to which groups believe that it is necessary for them to "take care of their own kind" or adopt a more universalistic stance—based on various metrics of compatibility and commonness. This would move the study of symbolic boundaries toward a simultaneous concern for inclusion and exclusion, toward a sociology of "everyday cosmopolitanism"—to borrow from the vocabulary of political theorists, and toward a sociological understanding of the distribution of various conceptions and practices of universalisms and particularisms (along the lines developed by Heimer 1992). It would also provide useful complement to the voluminous literature on the egalitarian rhetoric produced by anti-classist, anti-racist, and anti-sexist social movements in the United States and elsewhere.

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