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Boundary processes: Recent theoretical developments and new contributions

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Abstract

This paper takes stock of the most recent scholarship on symbolic boundaries and how these interact with social boundaries—more durable and institutionalized social differences. Our primary goal is to raise awareness of a growing body of empirical work, and to highlight key mechanisms which they address, among them: the strategic management of collective identities, cultural classification, the construction of authenticity, moral boundary maintenance, and genre-crossing. We introduce the articles included in this issue and discuss how ethno-racial boundaries intersect with class, immigration, and nationhood. We also describe new work on aesthetic boundaries, as well as recent efforts pertaining to gender, sexuality, the workplace, and religion. We close with a discussion of promising research on health, risk, and policy. We hope to demonstrate some of the intellectual rewards of interdisciplinary engagement, and encourage others to more systematically contribute to analyzing fundamental boundary processes.

1. Introduction

This introduction takes stock of the most recent scholarship on the conceptual distinctions individuals make in the course of their everyday lives, and how these distinctions can – and do – influence more durable and institutionalized social differences. We do not fully engage in a systematic theoretical integration, although this task has become even more urgent as the literature on boundary work continues to proliferate in multiple directions, and across a wide

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range of topics and fields.[1] This need has been particularly evident after the 2006 meetings of the American Sociological Association, which had boundaries as a theme and which saw the multiplication of boundary-related sessions that demonstrate the usefulness of this focus for a very wide range of topics. We aim to build upon an established theoretical literature on boundary-work to highlight connections between this literature, more recent research, and scholarship afield of the boundary-work tradition.

Put simply, the literature on boundary-work considers the dynamics of symbolic and social boundaries. While some scholars explicitly include themselves within this research tradition, others study boundary processes without doing so. We have included their work in our review because closer alignment between literatures can inform a better integrated theoretical understanding of fundamental processes and mechanisms associated with symbolic and social boundaries—whether these apply to religion, cultural classification, gender and sexuality, immigration, or ethnicity and race. We follow Lamont and Molnar (2002) by giving attention to boundary properties (i.e. permeability, salience, durability, and visibility) as well as mechanisms ''associated with the activation, maintenance, transposition or the dispute, bridging, crossing and dissolution of boundaries'' (p. 187). We focus our attention on research published since the publication of this article.

The idea for this issue of *Poetics* was prompted by an interdisciplinary graduate student conference held at Harvard University in 2005. This national conference, ''Culture Lines: Emerging Research on Ethno-Racial Boundaries'' brought together a new generation of scholars in the social sciences and the humanities who research ethnic, racial, and cultural boundaries. The stated goal was ''to shift attention toward the dynamics of boundaries: how they are created, imposed, defended, bridged, subverted, and transformed.'' The papers presented in this venue concerned a wide range of topics: how racial boundaries in a New Orleans neighborhood were shaped by physical geography and the built environment; how black upper-middle class art consumers use the work of African-American artists art to construct specific dimensions of their class, racial, and personal identity; neighborhood transition and social exclusion in Los Angeles; citizenship law and ethno-religious identities amongst recent immigrants at the turn of the 20th century; the development of ethnic boundaries among pizza-makers in the Bronx; how Sub-Saharan immigrants to France understand French republicanism and locate themselves in the French ethno-racial landscape, and many more.[2] Taken as a whole, the three pieces that were selected for this volume strengthen our understanding of interactions between ethno-racial, educational, and public boundary-work. We briefly introduce them here, and move on to discuss the broader recent scholarship to which they contribute, and which is located at the crossroads of several active and promising subfields in the social sciences.

The first piece concerns the management of collective identities. Avi Shoshana provides insight into the construction of new categories for identification as they relate to identity formation among members of ethno-religious minority groups attending an elite boarding school in Israel. In exploring the phenomenological consequences of the Israeli state classifying a group of Mizrahim (Oriental Jew) students as ''the gifted disadvantaged'', Shoshana gives attention to how institutional categories become the material for individual boundary-work. He also analyzes

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[1] Elements of such a synthesis are emerging (e.g., Abbott, 1995; Collins, 2004; Espeland and Stevens, 1998; Stinchcombe, 1995; Tilly, 1997; Wimmer and Lamont, 2006). Of relevance to broader approaches to social mechanisms, Abbott (2007) has recently explored the similarities and differences in mechanistic and relational approaches to regression-based sociological explanations, while Gross (2007) considers the role of culture in social mechanisms.

[2] Abstracts and authors can be found at http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/boundaries/.

the boundary work that individuals perform in relation to their own past and present selves, as well as ''reverse boundary work''.

For their part, Crystal Fleming and Lorraine Roses are documenting the efforts of The League of Women in Community Service (LWCS), a black civic organization in Boston at the dawn of the 1920s. Aiming to give a richer understanding of an understudied dimension of a period of fertile artistic development, these authors explore how members of this organization worked as 'black cultural capitalists'' to promote black art to white audiences. They argue that LWCS was a consequential group of boundary-spanners who mediated aesthetic and ethno-racial boundaries.

Finally, in contrast to much research on ethno-racial boundaries, Natasha Warikoo's study of second-generation London and New York high school students tackles the role of multiethnic contexts for the construction of ethno-racial boundaries. She examines how second-generation South Asians in London and New York understand racial authenticity in multiethnic schools. She shows how youths cling to both original versions and ethnic remixes of hip-hop music to affirm their racial and social identities while making claims for authenticity within their peer group. Moreover, Warikoo highlights how ethno-racial boundaries are influenced by transnational processes. She also performs the important task of connecting the scholarship on boundaries that is emerging from migration studies to recent development in cultural sociology.

In what follows, we give attention to new work on boundary mechanisms and discuss how this work complements and enriches the work by our contributors. First, we discuss ethno-racial and aesthetic boundaries, and highlight the maintenance of moral boundaries, the legitimation of authenticity claims, and mechanisms involved in genre-crossing, to name a few. We then discuss recent efforts pertaining to gender, sexuality, the workplace, and religion to show how highly personal matters laden with great symbolic importance affect patterns of inequality. We close with attention to promising research on health, risk, and policy.

2. Recent scholarship on boundaries

In the contemporary literature on boundaries, both the neo-Weberian and neo-Durkheimian heritage remain strong. There is a fairly well-acknowledged intellectual lineage in this area (e.g., Alexander, 1992; Barth, 1969; Becker, 1963; Bourdieu, 1984; Collins, 2004; Darnton, 1984; Davis, 1975; DiMaggio, 1987; Douglas, 1966; Elias, 1982; Erikson, 1965; Lamont, 1992; Suttles, 1968; Tilly, 2005; Zerubavel, 1991). The question of how boundaries intersect with the production of inequality has attracted great interest in recent years, particularly following the publication of Pierre Bourdieu's impressive corpus, perhaps most notably with his [1979] 1984 *Distinction*. Research on knowledge production, especially in the history of science (Gieryn, 1995, 1999) also contributes richly to this literature. Building upon this frame, Lamont and Molnar (2002) synthesize disparate strains of social science research across a range of areas of research by analyzing the interaction between symbolic and social boundaries and discussing the many benefits of focusing on fundamental processes of boundary work across these areas.

2.1. Research on collective identity

Understanding how individuals construct collective identities has been at the center of much research on ethno-racial boundaries. Several scholars recently have attempted to provide general conceptual frameworks for better understanding collective identity. Their work highlights the need for extending research that links the cognitive, cultural, and social processes underlying ethno-racial boundary-making, and the need to better isolate the mechanisms that activate

boundary processes. For example, social psychologists Ashmore et al. (2004) contribute by clarifying the multiple dimensions of collective identity, such as self-categorization, social embeddedness, and meaning. By specifying how dimensions combine with each other, they make an important contribution in systematizing collective identity research. Also particularly notable, Todd (2005) proposes a typology for explaining identity change that links individual transformation to the transformation of publicly available categories. Drawing on the recent literature on social mechanisms and process tracing, her writings on the content or meaning of boundaries, boundary change, and the shifting salience and dynamics among national, ethnic, religious, class and colonial identity, put her at the forefront of the field of ethnic relations. This work is particularly notable for deepening our understanding of the social embeddedness of identity categories and meanings and of the conditions under which ethno-racial boundaries are maintained, bridged, or dissolved. Brubaker et al. (2004, 2006) make a signal contribution by outlining the cognitive bases of identity group formation. These authors document the interaction among racial, ethnic, and national identities as cases of group boundary-making. Wimmer (in press) contributes very significantly to theoretical advancement by detailing the general mechanisms that lead to ethnic boundary formation. He is particularly concerned with their social closure, political salience, cultural differentiation, and political stability. Finally, also concerned with collective identity, Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) consider ''group style'' to propose that symbolic boundaries are a critical dimension – along with social bonds and norms – in explaining how shared understandings and collective representations interact to produce cultural change. Drawing upon two case studies, one of an environmental activist group advocating for community rights against incursions by a large corporation, and the other a fraternal order enmeshed in community life, they demonstrate the emergence, maintenance, and contestation of levels of nested group styles (and thus boundaries) within a given interactional setting.[3]

2.2. Ethno-racial boundaries and stratification

Many recent works have engaged the intersection of class boundaries and ethno-racial boundaries. Several of these efforts have helped to sharpen our understanding how meaning-making, frames, and strategies of action contribute to the reproduction of inequality and poverty. For example, Carter (2005) examines how low-income black and Latino students negotiate racial boundaries in relation to their schooling. Contra Fordham and Ogbu (1986), her fieldwork suggests that students use the term ''acting white'' to refer not to doing well academically, but to white styles of dress and talk. She finds that the most successful students of color are those who are able to learn and use the cultural tools of both dominant and non-dominant groups. Young (2006) examines how poor black men make sense of their own identity and of their opportunities for social mobility. He finds that the more isolated low-income men are less aware of racial boundaries than men who are better integrated in the formal economy, in part because they rarely come in contact with whites. They more strongly believe in the American dream, due to their

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[3] Although preceding the period covered in this introduction, it is worth mentioning Glaeser (1999) who specifies mechanisms of identity formation, focusing on synecdoches, metonymies and metaphors. His fieldwork documents identification processes at work among former police officers of West Germany and the former East Germany. The theoretical contribution is to show how these processes of boundary work are grounded in space, time, organizations, and group relations. Thus the study adds specificity to the phenomenological tradition by describing how the self is produced through inter-subjective processes. In a different register, when studying ''when you gotta go,'' Duneier (2002) addresses boundary changes at the individual level. He describes how the use of public bathrooms is a context around which ''unhoused'' used book vendors come to be defined as ''them.''

relative limited experience in mainstream labor markets. These studies point to the heterogeneity of cultural frameworks among the poor, particularly in how they make sense of ethno-racial boundaries (see also Harding, 2007; Small, 2004). As suggested by William Julius Wilson in a provocative paper (2007), at the present juncture it is particularly important to develop more detailed understanding of the mechanisms through which meaning-making contributes to the reproduction of poverty (see also Fosse, 2007; Lamont and Small, in press; Sampson and Bean, 2006) and of racial inequality (for a parallel argument, see Skrentny, 2008).

Scholars have also considered racial boundaries within classes. For instance, Gerteis (2007) studied the configuration and changes in class and racial boundaries present in the working class. Focusing on two important working-class organizations of the late-19th-century American South, the Knights of Labor and the Populist movement, he provides a meticulous empirical analysis of how these boundaries were constructed in the two movements. He demonstrates the impact of the local conditions within which class and racial boundaries and alliances were weakened and fostered by comparing cities such as Richmond and Atlanta, where the racial alliance between white and black workers developed in opposite directions.

Recent research has also focused on how the black middle class navigates ethno-racial and class boundaries. Lareau (2003) explores how symbolic class boundaries are reproduced through the ways parents socialize their children. She finds that black and white middle class parents emphasize 'concerted cultivation' of their children's growth as opposed to working class parents who are less concerned with orchestrating their children's socialization and growth. These parenting differences in turn make middle class children more likely to develop the skills they need to navigate middle class institutions and eventually, middle class workplaces. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) studies the identification process of minority and majority students as members of an elite community, drawing on an ethnographic study of one of the most elite and traditional preparatory schools in the United States. He analyzes how all students engage in a ''culture of distinction,'' and concludes that it isn't the ''culture of the poor'' or the ''culture of black students'' that keeps students of color, for instance, from being fully integrated into the elite space. Instead, elite discursive practices constrain how non-elite students make claims to legitimacy within the school. Complementary ethnographic work by Jackson (2003) considers how blacks in Harlem, NY negotiate race and class boundaries through everyday interactions. In particular he discusses the case ''bicultural'' black middle class individuals – for instance a man who bridges cultural world by celebrating his birthday parties successively with his 'peeps,' the low-income people in his neighborhood, and with his 'peers,' the middle class people from his job who live outside of Harlem.

More recent comparative work has aimed to understand variation in the strategies black middle class people use to do boundary-work. Lacy (2004, 2007) examines how neighborhood context matters for how black middle class people negotiate racial boundaries in the suburbs of Washington, DC. She considers how race can be attenuated or acerbated by class. Black middle class people in a predominantly white suburb are more likely than those in a mostly black suburb to seek out black social organizations like Jack and Jill so that their children can interact with other blacks. Their relationship to whites and blacks is shaped by the racialized character of their environment. Similarly, Pattillo (2007) tackles interclass relationships among black Chicagoans by focusing on spatial relationships and the role of lifestyles in grounding group boundaries. In their analysis of the rhetorical strategies black elites use to bridge racial boundaries, Lamont and Fleming (2005) show that religion and competence are key cultural tools for how black elites establish equivalency with whites.

Recent studies also consider ethno-racial boundary-work among whites. Perry (2002) compares how white students in a predominantly white school and those in a multiracial school

make sense of what it means to be white: proximity to students of other backgrounds and school structure influences the meanings given to racial identities. In an analysis of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, Beisel and Kay (2004) examine how ethno-racial boundaries were significant in the abortion debate among whites in the 19th century. Physicians and abortion activists drew boundaries between middle class Anglo-Saxon American women and 'barbaric' others as they made a case against abortion. Using evidence from the 1720s to 1920s, Wray (2006) analyzes how labels such as 'white trash' and 'cracker' have been used to define poor whites. His discussion of boundary-work highlights change over time in the symbolic distinctions that facilitate the social exclusion of poor whites. Furthermore, McDermott (2006) examines the construction of white working class identity by studying everyday interactions between blacks and whites in convenience stores located in Atlanta and in Boston. She shows that the extent to which white working class neighborhoods are structured around ethnic identities influences how whites negotiate racial boundaries.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, much of the recent research on social stratification pays close attention to ethno-racial boundary-making. Scholars are examining how individuals are located or deploy simultaneously multiple boundaries, how ethno-racial boundaries are bridged, and the historical formation of ethno-racial boundaries. To build theory, future research should aim to continue identifying the conditions under which certain types of boundary processes occur. As we argue below, research that explores ethno-racial boundary-work by and within institutions provides insight into some of these mechanisms.

2.3. Ethno-racial boundaries and institutions

Recent research has examined how boundary work occurs within institutions and how institutions influence the construction of ethno-racial identities. This is particularly useful to understand variation in ethno-racial boundary processes. The work of Binder (2002) on how Afrocentrists and Creationists engaged with local school systems to influence their curricula stands out. She examines how the two groups defined themselves as groups who were being discriminated against. The cultural resources and organizational opportunity structures available to the two groups differed, which influenced how they framed their grievances in light of patterns of historical discrimination and comparative advantage, and the outcomes of their challenges in terms of school curricula. For her part, Bryson (2005) considers how four populations of English professors teaching in elite universities and community colleges make sense of the word ''multiculturalism'' in their daily work as the term became contested in higher education. She shows how the institutional structure of the departments influences how multiculturalism is defined and enacted, with less elite schools giving academics much less freedom in determining how to incorporate multiculturalist considerations into their teaching. Moral boundary-work is also salient in the recent work on ethno-racial boundary-work by and within institutions. For example, Molina (2006) provides an historical account of how the public health department in Los Angeles, CA played an important role in constructing racial boundaries for Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants between 1869 and 1939. She highlights the role of moral boundaries as health officials drew ethno-racial distinctions in relation to their efforts to address diseases. Moral boundaries are also important in Gerteis' (2002, 2007) analysis of ethno-racial narratives in the working class in the late 19th century. He shows how understandings of class and of the concept of 'civic virtue' were used simultaneously for the inclusion of blacks and exclusion of Chinese and Southern European immigrants. In her analysis of how the lay public and academics conceive of race, Morning (2009) argues that within the academy, moral boundary-

work is important for understanding how biologists and anthropologists understand racial differences and teach about race. This line of research shows how institutions contextualize ethno-racial boundary-work, explain variation in how ethno-racial boundaries, and constrain the use of specific standards of worth. Future research should systematically compare boundary-work across a range of institutions (schools, universities, churches, the military, etc.) and move toward synthesizing findings about the mechanisms by which certain types of boundary processes occur.

2.4. Ethno-racial boundaries and immigration

Explicitly calling for more exchange between cultural sociologists and migration scholars, Levitt (2005) has recently argued that a framework of nationhood is insufficient to account for the ways that immigrants construct meaning in their lives. According to Levitt, ''When individuals self-identify with a particular way of belonging, they may link up with like-minded individuals and create a social field. When a transnational social field is both created and named, it becomes a transnational social space. These connections, near and far, mean that daily practices, as well as ideas may be shaped by forces not confined to the nation-state. Therefore, some forms of ways of being and ways of belonging are transnational'' (p. 53). Levitt's approach encourages scholars to rethink how immigrants construct ethno-racial and national identities (see also Smith, 2005 on Mexican New York; Espiritu (1997) on morality and Philippino identity). Along similar lines, Roth (2006) analyzes how migration influences the identities of Puerto Rican and Dominican migrants to the United States. Rather than focus solely on the receiving context her transnational approach shows how identities are shaped in the sending context as well. Roth's study also goes further to examine how immigrant identity formation influences the assimilation process and social networks formed after entering the U.S.—thus stressing the local context. In an analysis of the perceptions of immigrants to Los Angeles and New York City during the 1990s, Keogan (2002) explains how spatial location contributes to cultural understandings. While LA immigrants are perceived as a threat, NYC immigrants were perceived as victims.

A notable development in the immigration literature concerned with boundaries is the attempt by scholars to account for the complexity of multiple, interacting boundaries. One example of this is Lan (2003) who studies how boundaries of domesticity and privacy intersect. With a focus on domestic workers in Taiwan, Lan relies upon interview data to elaborate a typology of both workers' and employers' strategies in coming to terms with their day-to-day interactions. As Lan puts it, ''The domestic politics of food and space – eating meals, distributing food, utilizing home space, and delimiting privacy – involves daily rituals and practices through which both employers and workers negotiate class and ethnic distinctions and organize the public and private spaces in the fabric of family life'' (p. 525). Lan's work brings an explicit focus on boundary-work to bear upon an established tradition of research on domestic work (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Rollins, 1986).

A more recent example with a more macro-level scope is research on European attitudes towards immigrants. Bail (2008) uses fuzzy cluster analysis (FCA) to identify varying bases of exclusion of immigrants salient across a large number of European countries. His inductive method reveals three strongly contrasted patterns, and thus highlights the peculiarities of France, Britain, and Germany, which are often thought of as ideal-typical. Baker (2004) looks at how immigrant women challenge traditional gender boundaries, which also inform the choices they make and their notions of womanhood, motherhood, and wifehood. Relying upon interviews with a population of Mexican women in three cities in Iowa, Baker argues that these women

develop survival strategies that transgresses traditional gender behavior while maintaining traditional gender ideologies: ''Transgressive behavior allows the women to do what they want to do—be with their husbands, help their children, and support their extended families. Maintaining their traditional dominant ideology allows the women to continue to feel comfortable even though they are bending the gender rules and pushing and pulling at gender boundaries'' (p. 405). Putting the study of boundaries at the center of the field of migration, one of the leaders in this area, Alba (2005), shows how the properties of boundaries influence the type of assimilation process immigrants undertake. Using the cases of second-generation Turks in Germany, North Africans in France, and Mexicans in the United States he shows how differences between boundaries such as race, citizenship, religion and language in each country lead to variation in immigrants' assimilation patterns. Many of the questions central to the study of immigration— assimilation, incorporation, and the like (e.g., Gans, 2007) could be revisited through the prism of boundary work, which could facilitate a theoretical debalkanization of this field, where many scholars have been concerned with boundary patterns (e.g., Marrow, 2005; Mooney, 2009 Sue and Telles, 2007; Waldinger, 1999).

2.5. Ethno-racial boundaries and nationalism

The boundary-work approach is also important for enriching our understanding of nationalism and the nation-state. Recent efforts along these lines highlight the ways ethno-racial inclusion and exclusion can occur simultaneously. Using the case of the Populist movement in the late nineteenth century, Gerteis and Goolsby (2005) analyze discourse on the category 'American'. They show that race was significant in defining the boundaries of American national identity. Focusing on the case of post-Balkan war Croatia, Rivera (2007) shows how a tarnished national identity was reframed by the tourism industry to remove traces of stigma and define Croatia by its natural assets, instead of its socio-political history. Using the cases of Iraq, Mexico, and Switzerland, Wimmer (2002) argues that ethnic inclusion and exclusion constitute state formation. In his prize-winning book, Telles (2006) sheds light on how the ideology of racial democracy disseminated by the Brazilian government compares to social boundaries manifested in residential segregation, income inequality and intermarriage. He shows how ideologies that appear to be inclusionary on the surface can also be exclusionary. Other research has aimed to link the macro-level and micro-level construction of ethnic and national identities. For example, Brubaker et al. (2006) conduct ethnographic work in the Transylvanian city of Cluj, where tensions between Hungarians and Romanians are not acute. The authors contrast the ways ordinary Hungarians and Romanians construct ethnic and national identities, with the more explicit nationalist rhetorics used by members of the political elite. The rich variety of approaches used by these scholars – ethnography, archival research, discourse analysis, and statistical analysis – shows the complementary strengths of multiple methods for guiding future theoretical development in this field.

2.6. Aesthetic boundaries

Aesthetic considerations occupy a central place in the literature on boundaries. Research on this topic owes a great debt to Bourdieu and his approach to classification struggles, fields, and fields of cultural production in particular (Bourdieu, 1993). This strand of research has generally investigated the categorization of genres, consecration, and classification struggles and how claims of legitimacy and authenticity are fought over and adjudicated. Within cultural fields, aesthetic appreciation in the context of institutional constraints has been given a great deal of

recent attention (e.g., Baumann, 2007). This research provides fresh perspectives for the study of art world, and particularly for considering boundary-spanners, crossers, and hybridity. For example, Velthuis (2005) shows how legitimacy is constructed in the interaction between artists and gallery-owners in his rich ethnography and economic analysis of art worlds in Amsterdam and New York. His work points to the notion that classification systems influence assessments of economic value, which is itself socially constructed, according to often-implicit guidelines of an internally coherent meaning system. Banks (2006) shows how black middle class people use art to construct alternatively personal, racial, and class identities. For his part, in studying early American music, William Roy describes how social, racial, and aesthetic boundaries interact in the production of folk music (Roy, 2002) and race records (Roy, 2004) – with folk music being considered alternatively as a ''white'' and a ''black'' musical genre. Grazian (2003) explores how authenticity in blues music is defined and how those meanings are constrained by racial boundaries and shape the actions of club owners and musicians. Lena (2004, 2006) shows how rap artists use samples – snippets of previously recorded songs, speeches, and other audio material – in their music to express identity, to construct collective memory, and to guide their audience toward classifying them samples into subgenres. She also studies how artists react to their environments and genre boundaries as they contest notions of authenticity. The content of their cultural products, as well as their identities, are constrained by this dynamic.

In this context, it also seems worth noting that as a high-low framework of cultural production and consumption has given way to theories of cultural omnivorousness (DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Lamont, 1992; Lizardo, 2006a, 2006b; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Warde, 2007), artistic forms which do not easily accommodate classification are beginning to be given more critical attention with explicit consideration of how individuals engage in boundary-work. To wit, jazz music is somewhat unique among American art forms in that during the course of the twentieth century, it has been both low and high art, while not being exclusive to either one. Recent work by Lopes (2005) suggests an appreciation of how musicians have historically engaged in boundary work in showing how the 20th-century media helped to sustain popular perceptions of jazz musicians as deviant and morally transgressive. As Lopes explains, ''[D]uring the heyday of the jazz trope, jazz came to represent the boundaries between normativity and deviance, conformity and alienation, commercial capitulation and artistic authenticity, White and Black, and the boundaries between middle America and urban America'' (pp. 1478–1479). In his discussion of jazz as an embodied art form at the nexus of symbolic physical and social boundaries, Appelrouth (2005) suggests that popular media in the 1920s helped to construct ideas of morality around bodily discourse. He finds that in a large percentage of music reportage, the media heavily skewed towards discursively associating jazz music with physiological and psychological changes.

A notable cluster of work has taken the culinary arts as its theme in order to explore boundaries between genres of culinary experience. Taken together, these authors show how both cultural content (cuisine) and influential actors (chefs, critics) interact to influence consumers' understandings of food, and how these understandings change over time. Ferguson (1998, 2004) develops the idea of the landscape of 19th-century French cuisine as a field of action in which boundaries associated with authenticity and legitimacy are negotiated and continually evolving. Using the French wine industry as a case, Zhao (2005) reviews recent work on aesthetic classification, and shows how formal evaluative schemes contribute to the shaping of taste boundaries, as well as how genre classifications of wine influence audience perceptions of how to respond to a given cultural object. Rao et al. (2005) study mechanisms of boundary erosion and hybridity of classical and nouvelle cuisine in France. Theoretically drawing from cultural

sociology and organizational studies, the authors show how borrowing-based crossover between categories influences the strength of boundaries and notions of authenticity. Using the allocation of stars by the Guide Michelin, they follow the movement of cuisine, chefs, and critical attention to help explain the types of action that serve to reshape boundaries, and empirically uncover an actor-driven model in which influential chefs have great agency to redraw categorical boundaries, to which critics then respond. Johnston and Baumann (2007) complement Rao's focus on French cuisine by examining discursive strategies in American food writing. In exploring the links between omnivorous behavior and status, the authors examine the interaction of boundaries of authenticity and exoticism; and within these boundaries, they address notions of purity vs. impurity, and more fundamentally worthy vs. unworthy food.

Using an approach usually reserved for the arts, case studies in the cultural field of sport also illustrate the robustness of tying a boundary framework to cultural classification and meaning-making. Fuller (2003) studies how a cultural innovation – hammering bolts into rock faces – in the practice of rock-climbing shaped the direction of climbing during the 1980s. By analyzing confrontational discourse between two subcultures within the sport, her work illustrates the mechanism of boundary-enforcement as both sides – the ''traditional'' climbers and the ''tricksters''– challenged the boundary between orthodoxy and heresy. Allen and Parsons (2006) explore the conditions for consecration in the cultural context of major league baseball, and use the events of Major League Baseball hall-of-fame induction to explore the changing meanings of excellence. Their research is notable for its scope; the authors probe the distinctions between legitimacy and illegitimacy in a way that takes account of not only players' performances within their ''genre'', but also takes into account how media discourse, social context, and prior recognition influence the consecration process.

More intentional incorporation of boundary theory into production and reception frameworks pushes us towards a greater appreciation for individual meaning-making processes. In a recent theoretical restatement of the ''production of culture'' perspective in sociology, Peterson and Anand (2004) suggest closer ties with boundary theories in discussing the fabrication of authenticity. However, while they propose to widen the production perspective to macro-societal theorizing (i.e. how cultural production influences – and is influenced by – such durable notions as capitalism and ideologies of democracy over time), theoretical ties should be drawn at far more micro levels of analysis as well.

2.7. Gender, sexuality, and workplace boundaries

As the pieces by Fleming and Roses, and Warikoo demonstrate, gender and sexual boundaries are also coming under more intense scrutiny. Tilly (1997) and many others have argued 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. Tilly extends the Weberian theoretical framework by highlighting various mechanisms by which this is accomplished, such as exploitation and opportunity hoarding, asserting that durable inequality most often results from cumulative, individual, and often unnoticed organizational processes. For her part, Epstein (1992, 2007) points out that dichotomous categories play an important part in the definition of women as ''other'' and explains that much is at stake in the labeling of behaviors and attitudes as feminine or masculine (also Gerson and Peiss, 1985). For instance, commerce is at stake in Almeling's (2007) study of egg donation centers and sperm banks. As the donation centers and sperm banks differentially define an ideal donor, Almeling shows the mechanisms by which gender norms are inscribed on reproductive cells and bodies, in ways that take account of

the scarcity of eggs relative to sperm in the cultural construction of donations as inventory samples (men) or altruistic gifts (women). Further, she shows how these symbolic meanings intertwine with the economic market for the cells and the organizational structure of the donation centers and banks to "sell gender."

Those who violate gender boundaries in illegitimate ways often experience punishment in the workplace. For instance, Dellinger and Williams (2002) illustrate understandings of propriety and impropriety in the workplace by using ethnographic methods to compare two sexualized work environments—one a feminist magazine, the other a pornographic magazine. The authors explore how actors in these environments interpret meanings of sexual behaviors (with a focus on sexual harassment) and negotiate what counts as "crossing the line". For her part, Saguy (2000) studies the construction of sexual harassment in France and the United States and shows that different frames are mobilized to condemn it—frames evoking the professionalism of the workplace or the violence inherent to sexual harassment. She shows that the boundary separating "acceptable" from "not acceptable" acts is constructed in interaction with the cultural repertoires available in national contexts (also Benson and Saguy, 2005).

In a tradition of community research, Stein (2001) discusses the "politics of empathy" and gives ethnographic voice to how individuals negotiate boundaries when faced with a civic dispute involving gay rights, illustrating how people draw from their range of experiences with family situations and other meaningful boundaries (such as race, ethnicity) in order to understand new terrain that they face. As Stein reminds us, "a community's boundaries remain a meaningful point of reference for its members only as long as they are repeatedly tested by people who are on the fringes of the group and repeatedly defended by those within it" (p. 8). Like Stein, Yodanis (2002) ethnographically explores meaning-making practices at the local level by examining ideas about class strata among women. As she explains, "[b]y emphasizing various approaches to work, individuals can display values, beliefs, and tastes that symbolize a particular class and, by doing so, create a class representation" (p. 326). Her research documents the ways in which women in a range of class strata symbolically construct and reinforce their social positions.

A useful counterpoint to Yodanis is ethnographic research by Sherman (2007), who examines how workers and guests situated in the luxury hotel industry construct, reproduce, and transgress class boundaries through their interaction. She illuminates the malleability of workers' symbolic locations. To wit, "Workers articulated shifting opinions of guests rather than a single standard of *the* desirable guest, for workers' criteria changed according to which hierarchy benefited them. . . [they] could not simply automatically apply a predetermined boundary to determine who was in and who was out; rather they had to *work* to locate themselves above others. They had to take into consideration (albeit implicitly) the circumstances and behaviors around them in order to mobilize appropriate judgments. Like the luxury service product itself, these boundaries were thus formed within organizations and interactions" (p. 182, author's emphasis; on boundaries in the workplace, see also Vallas, 2001). Blair-Loy (2003) focuses on businesswomen to show how the management of family life with business life are integrated by cultural scripts she terms "schemas of devotion". These schemas "need continuing public reaffirmation to remain convincing and legitimate. Members of the family-committed group are surrounded by old friends and former colleagues who have maintained demanding business careers after having children. Members sustain their conviction by forming friendships with other former businesswomen, who share their commitment to involved mothering. They collect and retell stories of the harm that full-time employed mothers inflict on their families. These shared stories are a way of drawing symbolic boundaries that distinguish these women from full-time employees, whom they deem to be inferior mothers" (p. 63).

2.8. Religious boundaries

Moral boundaries and the classification of different ways of understanding and experiencing religion are at the heart of boundary literature on religion. Several recent pieces highlight these ideas. Dillon and Wink (2007) study the boundary between church-centered religiousness and non-church-centered spiritual seeking in order to understand meanings of religion and how they change over time. Using longitudinal Institute of Human Development (IHD) data sampled at several time points during the 20th century, the authors seek ''to identify similarities and differences between church-centered religiousness and a more individually negotiated spiritual seeking'' (p. 18). The authors find benefit to American life at both the individual and societal level in the robust mix of these two types of experience. Moon (2004) uses ethnographic methods to study the deliberations of two Methodist congregations concerning the meaning of homosexuality and the place of homosexuals in their midst. She contrasts debates within an urban, liberal, and diverse church and an evangelical, more homogeneous, and less urban church to compare patterns of the meaning of sin, sexuality, marriage, and politics in the two communities. Together, these patterns of meaning explain how one congregation is more accepting of sexual diversity than the other. Schmalzbauer (2003) studies how religious social scientists and public intellectuals maintain the boundary between the public and the private, while Verter (2003) wrestles with what constitutes spiritual capital and how this affects religious conversion, devotional eclecticism, religious fads, and social mobility within religious institutions. For his part, Lichterman (2005) looks at how involvement in the community matters to religious people. Taking church-based volunteer groups as his unit of analysis, he uncovers the dynamics surrounding the boundary between politics and charity as groups interact with the community around them. He also introduces the mechanism of ''social spirals'' as an alternative to the mechanism of bridging in order to describe how meaning is shared and transmitted among members of a group. To wit, ''when individuals join a civic group, the meanings they develop by talking to one another encourage them to spiral outward, so that they create enduring relationships not only with other group members, but with individuals and groups outside the group'' (p. 10). Finally, Edgell et al. (2006) study how Americans perceive atheists and establish that the moral boundary between acceptance and censure of atheists in public life has been fairly durably built. The authors draw from survey data to gauge opinions on atheists, concluding that internal categorical distinctions between denominations are less important than external boundaries between religious and nonreligious when it comes to drawing moral as well as political boundaries. Taken together, the study of religious boundaries helps to illuminate the connections between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries in terms of resource inequalities. For instance, in Lichterman's study, resources can only go where the boundary has been drawn in a legitimate manner, while for Edgell and colleagues collective identity and citizenship are at the center of the religious vs. non-religious distinction.[4]

3. Emerging directions

3.1. Boundary processes and health

Medical and public health experts have begun to incorporate concerns with boundary work into research on medicalization, patient experience, and physician socialization. Explicitly

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[4] We are grateful to Penny Edgell for this insight.

acknowledging the utility of a boundary-theoretic perspective, Mizrachi and Shuval (2005) describe the kinds of boundary maintenance performed by medical professionals on a daily basis. Relying upon interviews with doctors in a Tel Aviv hospital and several months of participant observation, the authors explore boundaries between traditional biomedical physicians and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners, who are trained in traditional biomedical practices, but they practice complementary techniques such as homeopathy, reflexology, yoga, and aromatherapy. They consider how these two groups adjudicate the appropriateness of competing treatment regimens. While the latter group is informally recognized by their biomedical colleagues, at the formal level, biomedical physicians rigidly adhere to evidence-based medicine in treating disease and maintain a clear distinction between "science" from "non-science." Related research by Shuval (2006) highlights how (CAM) nurses span various types of boundaries in the work place – territorial knowledge-based and social boundaries, as well as boundaries pertaining to the distribution of authority.

Recent research on medicalization also point to boundary processes to help understand how health conditions that were formerly not considered to require medical care, are considered so at present. Barker (2002) demonstrates the interactive character of multiple boundaries in showing how Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) sufferers assess whether an illness is real and whether a syndrome exist. In doing so, they confront their own experience of illness with medical expertise. Medicalization is also associated with how we bound and define illness states. Pollack et al. (2005) discuss how the term "cancer survivor" has gone through a process of almost continual modification since the 1970s as group identity has been renegotiated amongst patients, physicians, researchers, and public discourse. Lovell et al. (2007) write about experiential boundaries and responses to medical screening, as well as scripts of cultural appropriateness among women. They look at how New Zealand women in various age groups define propriety and necessity of pap screening, as well as how women relate to public discourse and the advice they receive from health professionals. This research analyzes how patients come to define as open to medical evaluation parts of the body that were previously considered socially and sexually private. Saguy and colleagues (Saguy and Almeling, 2008; Saguy and Riley, 2005;) have investigated how the media reframe claims concerning obesity as a social problem produced by the scientific community.

Much of this line of research concerns the boundary between expert and ordinary knowledge. Caron-Flinterman et al. (2005) describe experiential knowledge as "the often implicit, lived experiences of individual patients with their bodies and their illnesses as well as with care and cure" (p. 2576). They advocate for the inclusion of patients' perspectives in biomedical research and point out that patients turn to non-scientific sources of knowledge to understand their condition. Boundary theory also may have useful insights to offer social science research on end-of-life care, which often intimately speaks to the physician and patient relationship. For instance, Christakis (1999) examines how deeply ingrained systemic factors influence the propensity for physicians to avoid prognostication of illness, and how this affects how patients and their families can construct meaningful closure in their last days. Further, Steinhauser et al. (2000) show that important differences in how surrogates and physicians interpret perceived wishes of patients may markedly influence patients' end-of-life scenarios. What patients would find to be meaningful in their last hours is often different than what family members, surrogates, or physicians would choose for them.

3.2. Risk and policy

While distinctions between public and private realms are central to a number of empirical studies concerned with boundary work, only recently has the literature on boundaries been

explicitly used within a "public sociology" framework, centered around themes of risk and its policy implications. Cerulo (2006) articulates traditionally elusive links between culture and cognition by uncovering evaluative biases in how publics conceptualize risk. More specifically, she details the mechanisms responsible for the general American difficulty with imagining worst-case scenarios ("positive asymmetry") by linking cultural context to the construction of meaning. Diane Vaughan's (2006a) stream of research on NASA's Challenger and Columbia shuttle disasters shows our propensities to normalize anomalous signals when they increase in frequency and fall within taken-for-granted ranges. In both shuttle disasters, post-event commissions acknowledged how social context interacted with organizational culture to mask signs of trouble in the related events. In comparing these shuttle disasters with 9/11. Vaughan (2006b) explains the failure of a variety of regulatory processes designed to ensure safety, drawing attention to evidence that in all three disasters, "early warning signs were normalized by the characteristics of the information and its context" (p. 299). Many of these recurring patterns can be seen in the root and proximate causes of the Katrina disaster, Vaughan reminds us. A new effort by the Social Science Research Council to aggregate scholarship on Hurricane Katrina (SSRC, 2007), together with this cluster of research on risk, suggests that there would be much to learn about boundary mechanisms tying symbolic meanings to inequalities in present-day New Orleans. Boundary theorizing need not be limited to disastrous public circumstances, but as these scholars show, distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable risk provide opportunities for us to learn about how meaning-making and social context interact.

Concerns with boundaries are also permeating a growing literature on how meaning-making affects policy. Steensland (2006) investigates cultural influences on welfare policy during the 1960s and 1970s, arguing for recognition that "systems of social provision are embedded in moral and symbolic orders that shape their development" (p. 1314). Guetzkow (2006) analyses changes in the cultural understanding of welfare and criminal justice policies, focusing on Congressional discourse on the causes of poverty and crime and the target population between 1961–1967 and 1981–1996. In the first period, policy makers conceived the poor and criminals in psychological terms, as unmotivated and hopeless while in the latter period they are viewed as rational and moral actors lacking family values. Moreover, while in the first period, policy makers believe poverty is caused by the breakdown of the community due to lack of opportunity while in the second period, they understand it as caused by the breakdown of the family due to out-of-wedlock births. Another recent example of research in this area is Sato (2007) who studies the meaning of and policy toward genetically modified foods (GMF) in France, Japan, and the United States. She shows that the reasons for which GMF are constructed as polluting, and the extent to which they are viewed negatively, varied considerably across national contexts.

4. Discussion

In reviewing the most recent work, several key ideas have emerged that may be useful in guiding future research on boundary processes. These include the multidimensionality in collective identity formation; conceptualizing multiple, interacting boundaries; how the diversity and topology of social networks reciprocally influence boundary processes; how different types of cultural capital contribute to the production of ethno-racial boundaries; how organizational and institutional structures influences boundary processes. These themes are useful for making connections across the various subfields that address boundary-work. While it remains an

omnipresent goal both to document and to explain variation in individuals' boundary-work strategies, more complex challenges remain, in taking account and systematizing answers to these questions. However, we see that there can be great rewards in exploring these combinations.

For instance, in taking on the challenge of multidimensionality in collective identity formation and multiple, interacting boundaries, Shoshana pushes us to understand with more precision how the construction of personal identities are fed by the transformation of the categories within which group identities are framed. Read in the context of Bryson's research on multiculturalism in higher education, his methodological approach would be very appropriate to study how students may make sense of policies to promote diversity in academia, and how in turn these influence the ways they construct their personal identities by drawing on widely available ethno-social categories. Fleming and Roses highlight the importance of historical research for studying boundary-making processes, and push us to consider how cultural capital and cultural repertoires intersect with organizational structure, class, and ethno-racial boundaries. Their emphasis on strategies used by African Americans in the nineteenth century to counter racism provides an important lens through which to understand contemporary research on how African Americans respond to racism. Warikoo's emphasis on the experiential side of artistic reception shows the promise of cross-national comparative research on ethno-racial boundaries, and helps us to better understand the role of globalization and other transnational processes in the ethno-racial boundary-making process. Read as a counterpoint to Lena's work on the production of authenticity and genre formation in hip-hop, Warikoo's exploration of racial authenticity highlights the mechanisms by which individuals internalize aesthetic objects as a key part of their identities.

By necessity, this panorama of recent scholarship has given short shrift to several important lines of research on boundary work—in the sociology of knowledge and science, the cross-national study of cultural consumption and classification, and the comparative study of the bridging of group boundaries, to mention only a few. Our hope is that this review will inspire others to take the baton and think more systematically about how to move forward in synthesizing structural and cultural approaches to inequality. We know that social distance matters, whether one considers residential segregation, interracial marriage, or other forms of association (e.g., Charles, 2006). Much work remains to be done to fully understand how these patterns connect to representations about ''us'' and ''them'' that exist at the level of the taken-for-granted, as well as how these representations are captured in public opinion surveys (e.g., Bobo and Charles, 2007). In addition, social distance, symbolic distance, and spatial distance interact in unpredictable ways. There is a small but very promising literature that suggests the ways in which physical space feeds into our experiences with symbolic and social boundaries (Coulton et al., 2001; Klinenberg, 2002; Sampson et al., 2002). Further, while the relationship between spatial boundaries and national identity is fairly straightforward, the boundary literature could also better inform the growing literature on neighborhood effects and other spatial determinants. Finally, while demographers and sociologists devote considerable energies documenting patterns of inequality, more time could be spent doing the conceptual work of considering how these inequalities relate to symbolic boundary patterns. For instance, one could complement recent studies of the differential success of second-generation children of immigrants from various ethnic groups (Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001) by analyzing how their respective attitudes toward education and achievement are fed by broader conceptions of how their collective identities fit in (i.e. are reinforced by or conflict with) predominant models of cultural and social citizenship (Jenson, 2003). Considering how such models can be broadened – by citizens, politicians, key institutions, and the media – to accommodate a larger range of

cultural and social differences is certainly one of the yardsticks by which we should assess whether our society lives up to its ideals. And insuring that stigmatized groups participate in these changes remains a formidable task ahead.

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