

# The Social Construction of Symbolic Boundaries

Prof. Richard Williams

(Week 1) 9/3

Introduction: Mental Boundaries / Physical Boundaries

Aims for the semester

Watching the process of boundary making (empirical studies) (How we create boundaries)

Watching the destruction (unmaking) of boundaries (empirical studies)

Watching how boundaries operate (empirical studies) (The social consequences of boundaries)

Theories of all of the above

Bringing boundary awareness into our work

Approaches to the conceptualization of boundaries and their origins, relying upon Lamont and Fournier (1992)

Symbolic/ Cognitive

Communicative/ Interactive

Political/ Structural

Boundary: A variety of terms/ Similar idea

(My favorites so far are)

Limits on roaming.

Outer reaches of our space.

Tearing off (process of )

Include/ Exclude.

Concordance/ Discordance

Drawing a line (around).

Points of view.

Sites of warfare, conflict, struggle (defensive positions)

(Week 2) 9/10

A step back before we begin in earnest. Boundaries (as thought as physical attributes) as a general issue in society.

Readings:

Carter, B. 1998. "Cable and Broadcast Networks Clinch Over Wrestling Ad Revenue," NY Times, Aug. 17. D1.

Barringer, F. 1998. "Furor over Globe columnist exposes fault lines in Boston," NY Times, Aug. 17. D1.

O'Conner, M. 1998. "Refugees in Kosovo are in Peril," NY Times, Aug. 17. A3

Wood, D. 1992. (Chapts. 1 & 3). The Power of Maps.

(Week 3) 9/17

More detailed overview of the three approaches. What are their distinctions and commonalties? Begin to focus on the Symbolic/ Cognitive approach.

Readings:

Lamont and Fournier, 1992. *Cultivating Differences* (Preface and Intro)

Durkheim and Mauss, "The Problem," and "Conclusions," in *Primitive Classification*

Blumer, H. 1986. "Society as Symbolic Interaction," (p.78-89) in *Symbolic Interactionism*.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. "Symbolic Struggles," (p.244-256) in *Distinction*

Douglas, M. 1995 [1966]. Chaps. 7 & 8 in *Purity and Danger*

(Week 4) 9/24

The Social Basis of Cognition. How do boundaries allow us to see?

Readings:

Cohen, A. 1985. (Chaps. 1 & 4). *The Symbolic Construction of Community*

Douglas, M. 1986. *How Institutions Think*.

(Week 5) 10/1

Building cultural boundaries.

Readings:

Part One: The Institutionalization of Cultural Categories in Lamont and Fournier, 1992.

(Week 6) 10/8

Boundaries of the self and of disciplines. Boundaries as only possible in the context of a prior and larger boundary.

Readings:

Clifford, J. 1986. "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning," in Heller, T.C. et. al. (eds.) *Reconstructing Individualism*. p. 140-162.

Hacking, I. 1986. "Making Up People," in Heller, T.C. et. al. (eds.) *Reconstructing Individualism*. p. 222-236.

Davis, N. Z. 1986. "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth Century France," in Heller, T.C. et. al. (eds.) *Reconstructing Individualism*. p. 53-63.

Camic, C. and Xie, Y. 1994. "The statistical turn in American social science: Columbia University, 1890 to 1915." *ASR*, v. 59, Oct. p.773-805.

(Week 7) 10/15

Mental boundaries at work.

Readings:

Zerubavel, E. 1991. *The Fine Line: Boundaries and Distinctions in Everyday Life*

(Week 8) 10/22

Inclusion/Exclusion as enacted by individuals in social contexts.

Readings:

Strauss, A. 1993. "Interacting and Symbolizing," Chapt. 6 in *Continual Permutations of Action*.

Blumer, H. 1986. "Society as Symbolic Interaction," (p.78-89) in *Symbolic Interactionism (AGAIN)*.

Becker, H. (Chapts. 1 & 2) in *Art Worlds* (Not in packet)

(Week 9) 10/29

Boundaries as forced identities. The structure of boundaries of thought. A micro approach.

Readings:

Goffman, E. Stigma

Goffman, E. Chaps. 1 & 2 in *Frames*. 1986 [1974],

(Week 10) 11/5

Making boundaries for group identity

Readings :

Part 3: Resources for Boundary Work. in Lamont and Fournier, *Cultivating Differences*.

Gamson, J. 1997. "Messages of Exclusion: gender, movements, and symbolic boundaries," *Gender and Society*. v. 11, April: p.178-99.

Whyte, J. H. 1986. "How is the boundary maintained between the two communities in Northern Ireland?" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. v. 9, April. p. 219-34.

(Week 11) 11/12

Power, Domination and Boundaries

Readings:

Weber, M. 1978. vol. 2. "The Nation," "The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party," and Chapt. X, "Domination and Legitimacy." (pp. 921-955)

Bourdieu, P. "Conclusion: Classes and Classifications" in *Distinctions*.

(Week 12) 11/19

Boundaries at work in everyday life.

Readings:

Part 2: High Culture and Exclusion

Part 4: Exclusion and Policy Lamont and Fournier, 1992.

Western, M. and Wright, E. O. 1994. "The permeability of class boundaries to intergenerational mobility among men in the U.S., Canada, Norway and Sweden," *ASR*, v. 59, Aug. 606-29.

(Week 13) 11/24

Powers of inclusion, powers of exclusion in the creation of Identity boundaries at the macro level.

Readings

Williams, R. 1990. (Chapters. 1-4) of *Hierarchical Structures and Social Value*

Dominguez, V. 1994. (Intro., Chapters. 2, Part 3 and Conclusion) of *White by Definition*

(Week 14) 12/3

The concern with boundaries is an issue which transcends Sociology.

Readings:

Feyerabend, P. 1993 [1975]. *Against Method*. (Intro.- Chapt. 3, and Chapt. 15).

Rabinow, P. 1984. "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology." in Clifford, J. and G. Marcus (eds.). Writing Culture.

Final paper due: Dec. 15th

## Grading

Study of a specific topic with a focus on boundaries.

Weekly Written Report on readings How do the readings pose questions for, answer questions for, move you to think about your project? These write-ups will become the basis of a final class paper. If they are done seriously the paper will evolve out of the work that you are doing for the class itself. These reports are not 'book reports'. They are intended to be an interaction between your boundary project and the readings. The readings should prompt you to think about your project in some way that is particular to you. This is different from putting stress on what the readings prompt you to think about the readings themselves. You will hand in these reports. They will also be the basis of short discussions during each class.

## Class participation

Discussions with me about your projects, progress on a regular basis

There will not be a midterm. I do not believe that there are specific 'facts' upon which you should realistically be examined. I do believe, however, that you should be engaged in a sustained dialogue with the readings as they relate to your project. It is for that reason that I put stress on the written reports, class interaction and individual discussions with me. I will give you a clear sense of how you are performing in the class by my comments on your write-ups and by comments and direction during the individual discussions.

Final paper: (approx. 20 pages)

## Texts

Books:

Douglas, M. 1986. How Institutions Think

Dominguez, V. 1994. White by Definition

Goffman, E. 1963. Stigma

Lamont, M. and Fournier, M. 1992. Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality

Zerubavel, E. 1991. The Fine Line

The other readings are part of the xerox packet