Social Boundary Mechanisms

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Social boundaries separate us from them. Explaining the formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of social boundaries presents knotty problems. It helps to distinguish two sets of mechanisms: (1) those that precipitate boundary change and (2) those that constitute boundary change. Properly speaking, only the constitutive mechanisms produce the effects of boundary change as such. Precipitants of boundary change include encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift. Constitutive mechanisms include inscription-erasure, activation-deactivation, site transfer, and relocation. Effects of boundary change include attack-defense sequences. These mechanisms operate over a wide range of social phenomena.

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In Buenos Aires, each October, Bolivian immigrants of the Charrúa barrio stage the Fiesta of Our Lady of Copacabana, which attracts many native Argentines to its displays of Bolivian dance, crafts, costume, and cuisine. The gala festival gives usually downtrodden *bolivianos* a vital, visually attractive setting in which to assert their distinctiveness and even their superiority. An announcement of the 1996 fiesta in the local paper included these words:

> We Bolivians are landholders, while you Argentines—especially you porteños—are not landholders, but emigrants who came to occupy a territory. You are all descendants of foreigners; your ethnic group and your ancestors were European. Instead we own our own land, the land called Bolivia, as descendants of Aymaras and Quechuas. It is therefore

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> important that we preserve our identity, since we own a specific territory, since our ancestors tilled that soil and the land is ours. People from Jujuy own their own land because the Incas formerly extended all the way to Tucumán. For these reasons it is important for us to maintain our identity because we are lords of that land, we are lords of all South America, we are the natives, we are not from Europe, we are not immigrants. (Grimson 1999, 71-72)

Once you know that *porteños* means residents of Buenos Aires (a seaport region), that Argentina's Jujuy province abuts the Argentine-Bolivian border, and that the city of Tucumán dominates an Argentine province almost 400 miles south of the border, you begin to detect an audacious claim of authenticity, difference, and collective rights. Bolivian immigrants to Buenos Aires vary in the extent to which they stress indigenous origins, Catholic purity, or Bolivian nationality as their distinctive property. But at least on festive occasions, they draw a clear boundary between themselves and their Argentine neighbors.

Few people think the Inca Empire will revive and restore indigenous Bolivians to their ancestors' political glory. Yet the claims of Buenos Aires' Bolivian publicists draw on a discourse that elsewhere has figured recurrently in conquest, civil war, ethnic cleansing, international diplomacy, and demands for autonomy: we form a coherent, distinctive people, we were here first, and therefore we have prior rights to the territory. Most such claims fail, but they sometimes prevail, especially when backed by substantial armed force. More surprisingly, many populations that could in principle make such claims do so only intermittently, or never. Furthermore, through much of the year Bolivians who at their fiesta insist on a separate national identity deploy multiple other identities: worker, barrio dweller, woman, customer, even (vis-à-vis nonmigrant relatives in Bolivia) porteño. Neither prevailing identities nor distinctions between categories remain constant. On the contrary, they remain incessantly in play.

One aspect of these familiar circumstances deserves close attention: formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of social boundaries. Together, these alterations present the problem of explaining social boundary change. To be sure, the experience of *porteños bolivianos* involves far more than boundary change; it includes within-boundary transactions such as mutual aid, sociability, and the sending of remittances to relatives in the Andes. It also involves cross-boundary transactions such as the exploitation and denigration suffered by immigrants who are characteristically small in stature, Indian in physiognomy, hesitant in their accented Spanish, and unfa-

miliar with big-city ways. We might think of everything about those within-boundary and cross-boundary transactions as peculiar to the recent history of Buenos Aires. Yet the boundary that separates *bolivianos* from *porteños argentinos* displays features readily recognizable across the world. People everywhere organize a significant part of their social interaction around the formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of social boundaries. It happens at the small scale of interpersonal dialogue, at the medium scale of rivalry within organizations, and at the large scale of genocide. Us-them boundaries matter.

Social boundary change sets a number of puzzling questions:

- Why and how do boundaries that at one point matter little or not at all for social life rapidly become salient bases of interaction, so much so that people who live peaceably with difference one month start killing across their boundary the next?
- Why and how does the opposite happen: that seemingly unbridgeable boundaries rapidly become irrelevant, or at least less salient?
- How do divisions between us and them change, such that yesterday's enemies become today's friends, at the same time as other previously less salient sets of people become enemies?
- Why does such a close relation exist between who "we" say we are and which others we identify as "not us"? How does that relation between their identity and ours work?
- How and why do such boundaries come to separate specific social sites from each other while usually remaining irrelevant to relations among a great many other social sites?

I will not try to answer these pressing questions individually but to show that a limited number of crucial causal mechanisms appear in adequate answers to all of them.

This article provides a preliminary inventory of robust mechanisms (1) causing boundary change, (2) consisting of boundary change, and (3) producing consequences of boundary change. The inventory remains quite preliminary; despite extensive analysis of identities, nationalism, cross-boundary conversation, and related phenomena, no one has systematically catalogued, much less verified, the crucial mechanisms of boundary change.[1] The brief exposi-

1. For relevant critiques, syntheses, and symposia as well as exemplary monographs, see Boris and Janssens (1999), Brubaker and Cooper (2000), Burguière and Grew (2001), Cerulo (1997), Epstein (1992), Fishman (1999), Friedman (1994), Gal (1989), Jenkins (1994), Joseph (1999), Karakasidou (1995), Kastoryano (2002), Kertzer and Arel

tion that follows illustrates each candidate mechanism but by no means provides exhaustive evidence of its uniformity across settings.

Social boundaries interrupt, divide, circumscribe, or segregate distributions of population or activity within social fields. Such fields certainly include spatial distributions of population or activity, but they also include temporal distributions and webs of interpersonal connections. We might therefore define a social boundary minimally as

> any contiguous zone of contrasting density, rapid transition, or separation between internally connected clusters of population and/or activity.

Thus, a thinly populated area between two relatively dense settlements, a regular temporal interruption in some sort of social interaction, or the sparse interpersonal ties between two cliques could all qualify in principle as social boundaries. To emphasize the "social," however, it helps to stipulate some organized human response to the zone in question. Let us concentrate on circumstances in which at least some actors on each side of such a boundary reify it by naming it, attempting to control it, attaching distinctive practices to it, or otherwise creating a shared representation. In this sense, as Lamont and Molnár (2002) argue, a symbolic boundary becomes a necessary component of a social boundary.

In the operation of a social boundary, we expect to find

1. distinctive relations between sites on one side;
2. distinctive relations between sites on the other side;
3. distinctive relations across the zone between those two; and
4. on each side, shared representations of the zone itself.

Thus, the boundary between porteños and bolivianos includes some minimum of relations among porteños, of relations among bolivianos, of relations between porteños and bolivianos, of representations concerning porteño-boliviano differences by porteños, and finally of representations concerning porteño-boliviano differences by bolivianos. For present purposes, the actual contents of the four

(2002), Kogut (1997), Lamont (2001), Landa (1994), Malkki (1995), Mamdani (1996, 2001a), Marx (1998), Monroe, Hankin, and Bukovchik Van Vechten (2000), Niezen (2003), Sahlins (1989), Sanders (2002), Thorne (1993), Wendt (1994), White (2002), Zelizer (1994), Zerubavel (1991).

elements do not matter. It makes no difference to my argument whether relations across the boundary are intense or intermittent, friendly or hostile, formal or informal. What matters is that the relevant social process exhibits all features simultaneously: distinctive relations on each side of a separating zone, distinctive relations across the zone, and shared representations of the zone.

Boundary change consists of formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of such four-part complexes. Boundary change figures importantly in a wide variety of phenomena, including the activation or deactivation of political identities, economic exploitation, categorical discrimination, democratization, and the alterations of uncertainty that promote or inhibit the outbreak of collective violence (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tilly 1998b, 2002, 2003). I argue that similar or identical causal mechanisms operate across a very wide range of boundary changes.

Consistent with Mario Bunge's (1997) program of mechanistic explanation, I also argue that identification of relevant causal mechanisms will produce superior explanations of boundary-involving social phenomena than could any likely invocation of general dispositions in humans or their social structures; of functions performed by boundaries within social systems; or of covering laws in the form "All boundaries _____." This article, however, makes no effort to prove that sweeping claim. It suffices here to show that the inventoried mechanisms promise to help explain a wide variety of boundary changes and their consequences.

To avoid confusion concerning the proposed line of explanation, we must distinguish carefully between two clusters of mechanisms: (1) those that cause boundary change and (2) those that constitute boundary change and produce its direct effects. Figure 1 schematizes the distinctions and the argument's flow. Mechanisms *causing* boundary change singly or in combination include encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift. Mechanisms *constituting* boundary change include inscription, erasure, activation, deactivation, site transfer, and relocation. The two classes of mechanisms jointly produce some effects that on careless inspection appear to result from boundary changes alone, for instance, the initiation of ethnic cleansing as a consequence of imposition and activation; even if it occurs more or less simultaneously, the authoritative imposition of a boundary (a cause of boundary change) remains causally prior to activation of that boundary (a constituent of that change), which plays a direct causal role in the initiation of ethnic cleansing.

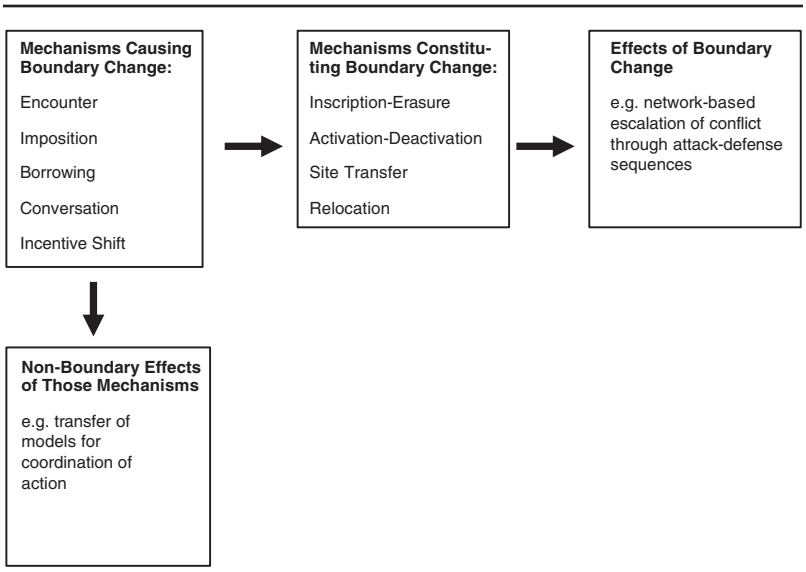

Figure 1: General Causal Relations in Social Boundary Mechanisms

Future research will have to examine the interplay of precipitating and constitutive mechanisms with care. I make no claim for the exhaustiveness of the two mechanism lists, but I do claim that varying sets of these mechanisms figure prominently in most or all social boundary changes. Obviously, any such claim calls for careful criticism and empirical verification. This article merely sets an agenda for further research and theory.

MECHANISMS THAT CAUSE BOUNDARY CHANGE

For all of its everyday employment in natural science, the term "mechanism" rarely appears in social-scientific explanations. Its rarity results, I think, partly from the term's unwanted suggestion that social processes operate like clockwork but mainly from its uneasy coexistence with predominant strategies of explanation in social science: proposal of covering laws for complex structures and processes, specification of necessary and sufficient conditions for concrete

instances of the same complex structures and processes, identification of individual or group dispositions just before the point of action as causes of that action. As a practical matter, however, social scientists often refer to mechanisms as they construct partial explanations of complex structures or processes and as they identify parallels within classes of complex structures or processes. In the study of contentious politics, for example, analysts frequently invoke the mechanisms of brokerage and coalition-formation as well as some of the other mechanisms this paper catalogs (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). If those mechanisms appear in essentially the same form with the same small-scale consequences across a wide range of circumstances, we can call them "robust."

How will we know them when we see them? We can recognize as robust social mechanisms those events that at a given level of observation

1. involve indistinguishably similar transfers of energy among stipulated social elements,
2. produce indistinguishably similar rearrangements of those social elements, and
3. do so across a wide range of circumstances.

The "elements" in question may be persons, but they also include aspects of persons (e.g., their jobs), recurrent actions of persons (e.g., their recreations), transactions among persons (e.g., Internet communications between colleagues), and configurations of interaction among persons (e.g., shifting networks of friendship). For economy's sake, I will call all of these "social sites." Social mechanisms divide roughly into cognitive, environmental, and relational events—those centering on individual or collective cognitions, those centering on interactions between social sites and their physical settings, those centering on connections among social sites. The mechanisms featured in this article generally combine cognitive and relational components.

Social mechanisms concatenate into processes displaying recognizable internal similarities but capable of producing variable overall outcomes depending on initial conditions, sequences, and combinations of mechanisms (Tilly 2001a). We are searching for robust mechanisms and processes that produce alterations in boundaries among social sites as well as other mechanisms and processes that produce the effects of boundary change. Let us begin with mechanisms that

cause boundary change: encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift.

Encounter. When members of two previously separate or only indirectly linked networks enter the same social space and begin interacting, they commonly form a social boundary at their point of contact. To existing distinctive relations within the networks on either side of that point, encounter adds distinctive relations across the zone and shared attribution of meaning from sites on each side. Thus, newcomers to a neighborhood whose social backgrounds resemble those of older residents nevertheless find themselves, at least temporarily, on the other side of an insider-outsider boundary (Elias and Scotson 1994). Since members of truly unconnected networks rarely interact, absolutely pure cases of boundary change through encounter hardly ever occur. In combination with other causal mechanisms, nevertheless, encounter plays a significant part in boundary change. As interaction intensifies between clusters of previously unlinked or indirectly linked social sites, boundaries between them become more salient (Olzak 1992, Olzak and Uhrig 2001). When interaction declines, conversely, on the average boundaries become less salient.

Imposition. Authorities draw lines where they did not previously exist, for example distinguishing citizens from noncitizens, landowners from other users of the land, or genuine Christians from insufficiently pious persons. Thus, the Soviet state assigns a single titular nationality to each republic and to each person, thereby ensuring that large proportions of the Soviet population belong to minorities within their republics of residence. Later, that opportunistic assignment of nationalities ensures that leaders of Soviet successor states organize their politics around claims to the titular nationality, with the consequence that ethnic Russians outside of post-Soviet Russia face uncomfortable choices among emigration, subordination, and assimilation (Garcelon 2001, 96; Kaiser 1994; Khazanov 1995; Laitin 1998; Martin 2001; Olcott 2002; Suny 1993; Tishkov 1997, 1999). Imposition frequently produces boundary change as authorities attempt to create new systems of top-down control (Caplan and Torpey 2001; Scott 1998; Scott, Tehranian, and Mathias 2002; Tilly 1999).

Imposition, however, also operates on much smaller scales and for shorter durations. A foreman temporarily divides construction laborers into two squads, one for digging, the other for hauling. A schoolteacher lines up a class in competing teams—A, B, and C—for the

day's spelling contest. A parent draws the line between those children who have cleaned their rooms properly (and will thus get their promised rewards) and those who have not (and will thus lose out this time). All these, and many more everyday routines, consist of imposing temporary boundaries. Those who impose such boundaries can, of course, rescind them, but I suspect that the mechanism is asymmetrical: once an imposed boundary falls into place, it leaves traces of its existence in the relevant social relations and representations even after it loses authoritative backing.

Borrowing. People creating a new organization emulate distinctions already visible in other organizations of the same general class, for example, by instituting a division between hourly wage workers and employees drawing monthly salaries. A great deal of inequality between members of different social categories results from borrowing, as those who create organizations such as schools, firms, and armies follow established models in recruiting categorically by gender, ethnicity, race, or religion to positions that differ significantly in the rewards they afford their occupants and the destinations to which they lead (Cohn 2000; Downs 1995; Levy 1997; McCall 2001; Reskin and Padavic 1994; Tilly 2001b). They are not *inventing* the boundary in question but installing a familiar sort of boundary in a new location. Borrowing repeatedly produces local boundary change as new forms of organization diffuse. In borrowing, organizers need not intend to produce categorical inequality for massive and durable inequality to result from their intervention.

Conversation. Conversation certainly includes ordinary talk, but it extends to a wider range of similar interactions among social sites, just as long as exchanges of signals modify relations among the parties (Tilly 1998a). In the course of routine interaction, participants incrementally alter relations between social sites by developing distinctive relations within at least two clusters, establishing distinctive relations across the zone between those clusters, and creating shared representations of that zone between them. When women first enter male-dominated occupations, the men commonly harass the women and exclude them from their networks, yet day by day women's effective work performance gives them standing—if hardly ever equality!—within the occupation (Eisenberg 1998; Rosenberg, Perlstadt, and Phillips 1993; Schroedel 1985). At the small scale or the large, conversation causes much of incremental boundary change.

Incentive shift. Participants in boundary processes receive rewards or penalties that affect their pursuit of within-boundary relations, cross-boundary relations, and representations of the boundary zone. They sometimes receive cooperation from others on the same side of a boundary, for instance, while receiving threats from those across the boundary. Changes in boundary-maintaining incentives regularly cause boundary changes. When people are cooperating in dangerous circumstances, for example, signals of fear or defection on the part of collaborators easily cascade into panic, flight, or self-protection.

In these circumstances, increases in guarantees that other parties will meet their commitments with regard to onerous or risky bargains such as cooperating in long-distance trade or performing military service augment incentives for participation with same-side partners (Bearman 1991; Besley 1995; Biggart 2001; Biggart and Castanias 2001; DiMaggio and Louch 1998; Greif 1994; Levi 1997). In other versions of incentive shift, guardians of boundaries alter their controls over cross-boundary transactions, making them more or less costly to sites on one or both sides. In East Berlin on November 9, 1989,

> At the end of a long and rambling press conference, Gunter Schabowski, spokesman for the recently defunct Politburo of the East German Social Unity Party (SED), announced in an offhand manner that provisional travel regulations would be in effect until a new law was passed; namely, East Germans could now travel to the West without the usual restrictions on visas. Apparently, neither Schabowski nor the remaining Krenz government had intended to open the Berlin Wall, but East Germans who saw the press conference on television decided to see for themselves. Arriving at the checkpoints, crowds of East Berliners found that the exits were still barred and guarded as they had been for 28 years. Instead of going home to clarify the meaning of Schabowski's strange press conference the next day, they stood their ground shouting, "Open the gate! Open the gate!" to badly outnumbered guards. With television cameras feeding graphic images back to GDR audiences via West German stations, the standoff continued for three hours while the size of the crowds continued to grow.
>
> As taunts and shoving broke out at points of contact, the guards still had no instructions. Finally, at 10:30 P.M., the ranking East German border guards at Bornholmer Strasse and three other crossing points in the center of the city took matters into their own hands and opened the gates. Thirty minutes later, the Interior Minister ratified their decision with an official order. By this time, one of the great celebrations of the century was underway at the Brandenburg Gate as tens of thousands poured through the checkpoints, and Berliners of East and West joined in toasting an historic moment. (Mueller 1999, 698)

The border guards increased incentives for breaching the wall by abandoning the lethal penalties they had previously applied to anyone who crossed without authorization. Any such alteration causes boundary change.

Of course, these mechanisms sometimes occur jointly. Encounter and borrowing work together, for example, when members of two previously separate networks enter the same social space, begin interacting, and immediately adopt templates for their interaction that are available from elsewhere. Encounter and conversation together sometimes produce a cycle: first creation of a sharp boundary, then blurring or redefinition of that boundary as relations across it intensify. What is more, all these mechanisms have more or less equal and opposite counterparts, for example, the segregation that reverses effects of encounters. Blood feuds and violent ethnic conflict often feature surges of encounter, imposition, and borrowing that render boundaries powerfully salient, only to be followed by either complete separation or more routine conversation (Boehm 1987; Gould 1999; Horowitz 2001; Mamdani 2001b; Petersen 2002; Varshney 2002).

Stepping up the level of magnification, we can always find more microscopic mechanisms within encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift. Looking closely at conversation, for instance, we will discover improvisation, turn-taking, meaningful hesitation, code switching, and much more (Burke 1993; Fitch 1998; Gal 1987; Gumperz 1982; Sawyer 2001). Identification of robust mechanisms necessarily remains relative to the current level of observation. At that level, robust mechanisms are indistinguishable in their operations and effects across a wide range of circumstances.

Here the relevant level of observation is observable interaction between human social sites rather than, say, individual consciousness or energy flows among continents. For an observer of multiple social sites, then, my argument amounts to saying that each of the crucial mechanisms—encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift—produces indistinguishably similar effects on boundaries over a wide range of circumstances. The claim stands, obviously, as a hypothesis for investigation rather than as a postulate or a proven fact.

MECHANISMS THAT CONSTITUTE BOUNDARY CHANGE

Encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift reliably cause social boundary change, but they do not *constitute* boundary change. Indeed, each of them produces similar effects across a wide range of nonboundary social processes. In other circumstances, for example, the combination of imposition with borrowing reproduces hierarchies or patterns of cooperation without significant activation of social boundaries; effective industrial leaders thus spread established forms of organization from one firm to the next (DiMaggio 2001). Figure 1 calls such consequences "non-boundary effects of those mechanisms." Other consequential mechanisms, however, actually occur as part of boundary change, and in combination produce the effects of boundary change. They include (1) inscription and its reversal, erasure; (2) activation and deactivation; (3) site transfer; and (4) relocation. We can review each in turn.

Inscription-erasure. Remember the elements of a social boundary: distinctive social relations on either side of an intermediate zone, distinctive relations *across* that zone, and, on each side, shared representations of that zone itself. Inscription heightens any and all of these elements; it differentiates social relations on either side more sharply from each other, differentiates relations across the zone more emphatically from those on either side, and/or increases the extensiveness of shared representations on either or both sides. Erasure reverses any or all of these changes.

In Western countries, spatial arrangements of assemblies ordinarily inscribe boundaries between privileged participants and spectators: performers from their audiences, teachers from their pupils, priests from their congregations, sporting teams and referees from the fans. I still remember my shock as Peter Brook's production of Peter Weiss's play *Marat-Sade* ended: after a wrenching performance, the players came out in a row; the audience reestablished its separation from the drama by starting to applaud; but instead of acknowledging their protective perimeter, the actors began to applaud grimly themselves, advanced past the stage, then exited clapping through a stunned audience. They had erased the boundary between performers and spectators.

All the causal mechanisms reviewed earlier—encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift—can produce

inscription or erasure singly and jointly. Imposition and borrowing combine, for example, to convert a patch of lawn into a simulated theater, with its spatial division between players and audience. In an American jury selection room, encounter conversation, and incentive shift combine to produce fragile but visible divisions into bounded cliques as prospective jurors code each other's ages, genders, educations, occupations, and ethnicities.

Activation-deactivation. All persons and social sites live in the presence of multiple social boundaries at varying levels of activation or deactivation. For the moment, writing these lines activates the boundary between philosophers of social science and other scholars as it deactivates boundaries involved in my being a teacher, a father, a consumer, and a critic of American foreign policy. Yet sometime today I will deactivate the philosopher-other boundary in favor of one or more other divisions. The same mechanism operates at a larger than personal scale. Activation of a boundary consists of its becoming more salient as an organizer of social relations on either side of it, of social relations across it, or of shared representations on either side. Deactivation consists of a decline in that boundary's salience.

In his splendid musicological account of jazz performance, Paul Berliner points out the difference that the absence, presence, or composition of an audience make to a group of improvisers. "With the increasing international appeal of jazz," Berliner remarks,

> serious fans abroad also have a special place in the hearts and memories of musicians. "One of the things that can be a pleasure about performing in Europe is that people do the research. They really know who you are, and they want you to play real jazz" (Lou Donaldson). George Duvivier's experience has been similarly gratifying: "In Europe and Japan, audiences are so conscious of what the artist is doing, their applause is always encouraging. They know your name and what you've recorded, and they acknowledge that when you're introduced. Backstage, you can sit for an hour after performances, just signing albums." (Berliner 1994, 457)

Different boundaries activate, however, when the listeners are other jazz musicians, noisy diners, or recording technicians (Berliner 1994, 452-484).

Inscription and activation sometimes operate simultaneously, as do erasure and deactivation. Inscription heightens the social relations and representations that comprise a particular boundary, while acti-

vation makes that same boundary more central to the organization of activity in its vicinity. Thus, religious zealots often create extensive webs of relations within their faith, guarded relations to nonmembers of the faith, and powerful representations of those nonmembers: *high inscription*. Most of the time, zealots continue to participate in professions, political parties, neighborhood associations, and investments of their capital that involve other us-them boundaries: *low to medium activation*. Yet if a threat to the religious community's survival arises, members begin organizing their activities around the religious boundary alone: *rising activation*. In combination, inscription and activation provide bases for sustained, costly collective action.

Site transfer. This mechanism maintains a boundary but shifts the exact locations of persons and social sites with respect to differentiated relations on either side of the boundary, cross-boundary relations, and/or representations of the boundary. Racial passing and religious conversion, for example, present two versions of site transfer in which individual persons or clusters of persons move from one side of a boundary to the other. Rites of passage similarly transfer people across boundaries without erasing those boundaries. Indeed, initiation ceremonies often reinforce the very boundaries across which they transfer individuals. Eric Wolf interpreted the Winter Ceremonials of (American) Northwest Coast peoples in just such a light:

> Among many North American Indian peoples, seekers after sacred power had visions in which they entered into contact with guardian spirits, who bestowed on them both supernaturally charged objects and instructions, and visionary encounters with spirits who endowed their clients with such powers were widespread on the Northwest Coast. The essential plot of the Winter Ceremonial conforms to this pattern in that a spirit kidnaps and consumes the initiand, and in so doing grants him supernatural powers; it then releases him back into normal life as a person transformed by that experience. Unlike the vision in much of North America, however, in the Kwakiutl ceremonial this visionary experience was neither open to all nor specific to the individual visionary. It was confined to sets of people who had acquired the prerogative to enter a sodality that impersonates the supernatural in question, and that prerogative was acted out in a highly standardized and impersonal form, within an organized framework of impersonating performances. (Wolf 1999, 105)

The ceremony in question clearly transferred persons across the boundary of a privileged sodality while dramatizing the importance

of that same boundary. It altered the relation of particular individuals to the boundary.

Not all site transfer, however, consists of individual movement across boundaries. Ethnic activists often strive for transfer of their entire category from one side to another of a racial or citizenship boundary, and sometimes succeed. In South Africa, leaders of mixed-race populations carried on a gingerly collaboration with Apartheid rulers that separated them from the increasingly unified black population and gave them distinctive political rights without rendering them white (Ashforth 1990; Jung 2000; Marks and Trapido 1987; Marx 1991). North American ethnic politics has long featured collective struggles and shifting governmental decisions concerning who qualifies as black, white, Latino, Anglo, Indian, Inuit, or otherwise (Cordero-Guzmán, Smith, and Grosfoguel 2001; Curtis 2001; Domínguez 1986; Omi and Winant 1994; Ong 1996; Pérez Firmat 1994; Peterson 1995).

Relocation. This mechanism combines two or more of the constitutive mechanisms: inscription, erasure, activation, deactivation, and/or site transfer. Within some set of social sites, it alters the major boundaries that are organizing action and interaction. In a simple and frequent scenario, one boundary deactivates while another activates: gender divisions fade while work divisions become more salient. In another, inscription and site transfer conjoin: Bosnian Serb leaders enforce a Serb-Muslim division in previously mixed populations, and families scramble to locate themselves on one side of the line or the other (Bax 2000; Malcolm 1996; Mazower 2000). At the extreme, one boundary replaces another as the organizer of social interaction. Short of that extreme, relocation may end up with interaction oriented to two boundaries or to none at all.

An unexpected but dramatic case in point comes from soccer violence. Unlike American football, soccer involves little outright violence on the field, most of it accidental and much of it punished as fouls. When soccer matches generate serious damage, spectators and supporters have usually started the trouble. More often than not, the violent performers consist of young male fans who have arrived in clusters; fortunately for the death rate, they rarely use weapons more lethal than clubs, broken bottles, and knives (Armstrong 1998; Bromberger 1998, chap. 3; Buford 1991). Deaths become frequent chiefly when police battle unruly fans (Giulianotti, Bonney, and Hepworth 1994).

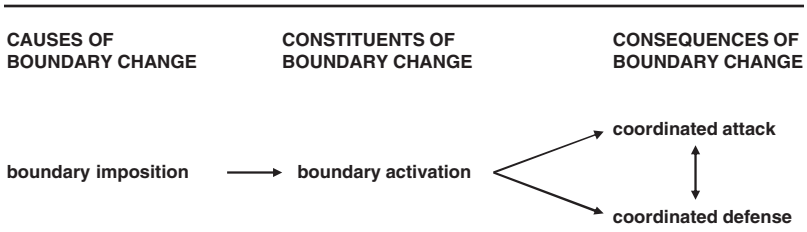

Figure 2: An Elementary Causal Sequence Involving Social Boundaries

Leaving aside the fights between rival groups of fans that recurrently take place outside of soccer stadiums, soccer violence on the field becomes serious when fans breach the boundary separating spectators from players and referees. That boundary gives way to another separating supporters of one team from supporters of another, easily distinguished by the colors and symbols they wear. Often, however, further relocation occurs as police struggle with all fans on the field regardless of their affiliation, and the previously hostile fans unite to fight back. On a small scale, soccer violence replays the sort of relocation that frequently occurs in the course of wars and revolutions.

CONSEQUENCES OF BOUNDARY CHANGE

As the evocation of wars and revolutions suggests, boundary change produces serious consequences across a wide range of social interaction. It facilitates or inhibits exploitation of one category by another. It likewise facilitates or inhibits mobilization in the forms of social movements or popular rebellions. It strongly affects the likelihood, intensity, scale, and form of collective violence (Tilly 2003). Instead of surveying the entire range of boundary change, however, let us trace some of the causal connections we have been examining through three quite different social processes: occupational sex-typing, ethnic cleansing, and immigrant adaptation. In each of them appears a causal sequence of the sort summarized in Figure 2.

In this elementary sequence,

- authorities draw lines among social sites where they did not previously exist;

- that boundary increases in salience as an organizer of social relations on either side, of social relations across it, and/or of shared representations;
- actors on at least one side respond to the boundary's activation by engaging in coordinated attacks on sites across the boundary; and
- actors on at least one side engage in coordinated defense against those attacks.

Figure 2 obviously proposes a barebones account of the causal connections within these complex processes. Imposition is not a necessary condition of what follows, since encounter, borrowing, conversation, and incentive shift sometimes initiate similar causal sequences. Nor is activation a sufficient condition for the attack-defense portion of the causal story; whether activation generates attacks depends both on initial conditions and on what else happens. I mean simply to identify partial causal parallels among very different social processes. Those parallels result from the operation of identical (or at least very similar) causal mechanisms in widely varying circumstances.

Occupational sex-typing. Job assignment by gender accounts for the bulk of male-female wage inequality in capitalist countries. A good deal of sex segregation results not from imposition but from borrowing, as managers set up new offices and firms on existing models, including the assignment of men to higher-paid job categories. But historically the gender composition of certain occupations has sometimes shifted rapidly, either from mixed to single gender or from one gender to the other. (As I suggested earlier, the transition from single-gender to mixed gender occupations usually occurs more gradually, as a result of conversation combined with incentive shifts.) Although managers initiate and control most such boundary changes, workers on one side or the other of the gender boundary often align themselves with managers in order to pursue their advantage, and sometimes engage in direct struggle across the boundary.

Looking at Great Britain from the 1870s to the 1930s, Samuel Cohn compares the (relatively early) move from male to female clerical workers in the post office with the (quite late) move from male to female clerical workers on the Great Western Railway. The post office originally justified hiring women as telegraph operators on the ground that women would quit to marry relatively young and therefore never climb the bureaucratic ladder into higher-paid positions. In fact, female post office telegraphers came to like their work, began to enjoy well-paid security, and stayed around to compete for advance-

ment. Women served, furthermore, in two different kinds of offices: within-city and intercity. As Cohn explains,

> Intercity transmission was much more difficult because long cables made connections tenuous; these difficult transmissions required workers to use sensitive and fragile equipment. Furthermore, because of the heavy volume of intercity communication, much of this work was done at night when the utilization rates of the lines were lower. In the original staffing of the telegraph service, men and women worked in within-city and intercity offices and were equally skilled at low-skill and high-skill transmission. Then one day by fiat all the women were moved out of the intercity offices and limited to simple within-city messages. Some men were allowed to stay in within-city galleries, but many were transferred to intercity lines. (Cohn 2000, 92)

In the short run, men protested more than women, since transfers to night shifts brought inconvenience but no increase in pay. Over the longer run, however, the post office began offering promotions selectively to the men of intercity offices on the ground that they were more skilled. Women who had been operating intercity equipment soon resisted their segregation in lesser-skilled, lower-paid segments of the post office, and many quit in despair or outrage. When even that anticipated response did not thin female ranks sufficiently, the post office imposed a marriage bar: a woman who married lost her job. The authorities also offered substantial dowries to those who left their jobs for marriage. They deliberately promoted turnover in lower-wage female jobs.

Up to this point, the attack-defense portion of our sequence occurred indirectly, with males and females acting chiefly against management. But with the introduction of telephone, telex, and teletype during the years around World War I, the post office moved rapidly toward replacement of male labor by lower-waged female labor, and men began complementing their coordinated appeals to the government and Parliament with verbal—not physical—attacks on women workers. In both the post office and the railways, the conflict exacerbated with the end of World War I. During the war, both industries took on many female clerical workers to replace men who went off to military service, only to generate a struggle over jobs at war's end (Cohn 1985, 152-59). Repeatedly, imposition preceded and helped cause activation, which in turn stimulated attack and defense.

Ethnic cleansing. Overt violence rarely occurs in occupational sex segregation. Open physical attack, in contrast, identifies ethnic cleansing for what it is. Norman Naimark has written a somber, well-informed account of major European episodes during the twentieth century: Armenians and Greeks of Anatolia around World War I; Nazi extermination of Jews; the Soviet Union's forced deportation of Chechen, Ingush, and Crimean Tatars in 1944; expulsion of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II; and Yugoslavia's successive episodes of the 1990s (Naimark 2001; see also Bax 2000, Petersen 2002, Rae 2002). Ethnic cleansing, for Naimark (2001, 3), involves a deliberate program "to remove a people and often all traces of them from a concrete territory." At one extreme of ethnic cleansing lies expulsion, at the other extermination. All of the 20th-century episodes Naimark examines combined some of each.

Imposition played its part in all of Naimark's (2001) episodes, for example, in the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws (July 1935) identifying everyone with at least 25 percent Jewish ancestry as a Jew, depriving Jews thus defined of German citizenship, and strictly forbidding marriage of Jews with non-Jews. The Nazis activated the Jewish/non-Jewish boundary in a thousand demeaning and costly ways. Between their arrival in power (1933) and the start of World War II (1939), they exerted strong pressure on Jews to emigrate, leaving their goods behind. Systematic killing of Jews by German forces, however, did not begin until 1941; further activation of the Jewish–non-Jewish boundary then reorganized life—and death—on both sides.

The Nazis' overwhelming military and organizational strength meant that Jews' coordinated defense consisted chiefly not of counterattacks but of mutual aid, mutual concealment, and facilitation of escape for a fortunate few. In the process, Nazi leaders redefined the relevant boundary as separating good Germans not only from Jews but also from Bolsheviks:

> The German attack on Russia was not like the attack on Britain or France, though the Jews were blamed for those conflicts as well. In the Nazi mind, the internationalism of the Bolsheviks blended with the Jewish world conspiracy in a dangerous potion that mortally threatened the German nation and its right to rule Europe. Barbarossa [the Nazi campaign against the Soviet Union] was a crusade to slay the Jewish-Bolshevik demons and remove them from the face of the earth. (Naimark 2001: 75)

Attacks on Jews and on Russians turned increasingly into campaigns of extermination. Although the ratio of expulsion to extermination varied from one 20th-century episode of ethnic cleansing to another, in all of them the sequence from imposition to activation to attack and (usually ineffectual) defense applied.

Immigrant adaptation. With respect to levels of violence, immigrant adaptation generally lies between occupational sex-typing and ethnic cleansing—sometimes generating fierce attacks and counterattacks, but mostly working through competition and conflict on a lesser scale. Yet here, too, one recurrent causal path leads from imposition to activation to attack and defense. A striking case of the imposition-activation-attack-defense causal sequence appears in the experience of African-ancestry West Indian immigrants to the United States. They certainly come from unequal worlds, but ones in which the stark black-white distinction that prevails in the United States dissolves into a much more complex set of boundaries organized around class and ethnicity. "Racism," one New York immigrant told interviewer Vilna Bashi Bobb,

> is not really a priority there [in the West Indies], you know. You don't look at a black and white situation. You more look at an economic situation, you know. It doesn't matter really whether you're black or white or whatever it is. If you don't have the money you don't have the position in society that I'm talking about. If you have the money you have the position. But when I came here I realized that not only is there economics you have to deal with, you have to deal with the color of your skin, so that was kind of a shock to me. (Bashi 2001, 215)

Caribbean immigrants to New York confront black-white boundaries long since imposed. But the activation of those boundaries varies significantly with their social situation. Migrants who move directly into New York's West Indian enclaves and work in West Indian establishments find themselves insulated from daily black-white distinctions and assimilation to the native-born African American population. Although those first-generation immigrants gradually become aware of American-style racism, Bashi argues, participation in the immigrant network shields them from its full activation:

> The network acts as a shield in three ways. One, it may limit interaction with whites who may behave in a racist manner. That is, although they are in the primary and secondary labor markets and not in ethnic enclaves, black West Indian immigrants work and live alongside other

> immigrants like them, because their social space is mainly limited to job and housing niches. Two, these niches bring to the West Indian immigrant population a degree of socioeconomic success relative to their native-born black counterparts, and thus socioeconomic separation from them. Three, the labor market success that members receive along with access to these labor- and housing-market niches belies the racist stereotypes about the inability of black people to succeed in the United States. (Bashi 2001, 235)

The network also provides a basis for collective resistance to discrimination.

The children of West Indian immigrants, however, lose some of their parents' shielding from the activation of black-white boundaries. They grow up with New York accents, go to New York schools, enter the New York labor market, and often leave whatever remains of the immigrant enclave. They thus become subject to the same sort of attack—mostly day-to-day discrimination, but sometimes assault from nonblack gangs—that African Americans have long experienced. They become African American and mount their defense against attack in common with other African Americans. The longstanding black-white boundary activates for them. Although each migration stream has its distinctive properties, the sequence of imposition, activation, attack, and defense repeats itself in many immigrant experiences.

The theme should be familiar from the example of Bolivian immigrants to Buenos Aires. Long before any of the Bolivians observed by Alejandro Grimson arrived in the city, authorities had established a boundary between Argentine citizens and foreigners, not to mention the more specific boundaries separating porteños from others, Argentines from Bolivians, and Creoles from Indians. In Buenos Aires, the arrival of migrants from the Andes activates these boundaries, which in turn leads to the multiple forms of attack that Grimson (1999) documents, and generates defensive maneuvers on the part of bolivianos. At least in local festivals where Bolivians gather, those maneuvers include broadcast claims to cultural and historical superiority.

The claims do not prevail, but at least they assert a shared identity and propose an attractive story about the boundary that separates bolivianos from porteños. Grimson sums up,

> Faced with growing social asymmetries and with representations of inequality, immigrants try to broaden their identification as a way of activating networks of mutual aid and solidarity. This does not mean that narrower identities disappear, or stop being used as bases of high-

> risk relations if not of organizational connections. It means that as the process of moving and settling proceeds in a country they still experience as foreign, migrants seek to generalize their identities and to use their own cultural histories as they do so. (Grimson 1999, 181)

Instead of members of small clusters from particular villages, porteños bolivianos become just that: members of categories well defined by their separation from and connection to the social life of Buenos Aires. They become Bolivians. Their experience involves much more than the single-circuit imposition-activation-attack-defense. In one way or another, it includes our full range of causal mechanisms: encounter, imposition, borrowing, conversation, incentive shift, inscription-erasure, activation-deactivation, site transfer, and relocation, not to mention further consequences of those mechanisms. But that particular experience illustrates the great generality of boundary change as a social process.

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