Ethnic Boundary Making

INSTITUTIONS, POWER, NETWORKS

ANDREAS WIMMER

1 | Introduction

1 Toward a comparative analytic of ethnic boundary making

Much of the past debate on ethnicity has been framed in dichotomous terms. "Primordialists" pointed out that membership in ethnic communities is acquired through birth and, thus, represents a given characteristic of the social world. According to "instrumentalists," on the other hand, individuals choose between different identities as they see fit. "Essentialists" maintained that ethnic cultures and identities provided stability across different social contexts, while "situationalists" showed how individuals identify with different ethnic categories depending on the changing logics of the situation. "Perennialists" insisted that ethnicity represented one of the most stable principles of social organization in human history and that many ethnic communities have survived for millennia. On the other side of the divide, "modernists" attributed the salience of ethnicity to the rise of the nation-state over the past two or three centuries. Scholars who saw ethnicity as a matter of "group identities" with deep psychological roots argued against those for whom ethnic distinctions were primarily driven by the changing "interests" of individual or collective actors.[1]

During the 1980s, some authors tried to reconcile these positions and arrive at a theoretical synthesis (McKay 1982; Bentley 1987; Keyes 1981; G. M. Scott

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[1] These binary oppositions appeared in various combinations. In the eyes of some, they aligned along a grand battle line separating constructivist-instrumentalist-circumstantialist-interest approaches from the essentialist-primordialist-perenialist-identity camp. However, some debates crossed this divide. For example, constructivists who emphasized individual choice and economic interests argued with other constructivists who conceived identity formation as a collective process.

1990; Nagata 1981). But by the end of the 1990s, constructivism had gained the upper hand over essentialism, instrumentalism over primordialism, and circumstantialism over perennialism. Contrary positions are still expressed today, and with more sophistication than ever (see Roosens 1994; Hirschfeld 1996; Gil-White 1999, 2001; Darden 2012), but they no longer dominate mainstream discourse. Routine references to the "constructed," "contested," and "contingent" character of ethnicity in today's literature testify to the hegemony of constructivism (see the most recent overview by Brubaker 2009), as does the equally routine beating of the dead primordial horse.

According to this constructivist consensus, researchers are called upon to study categories of cognition or discourses of difference rather than ethnic groups; instead of describing how an ethnic community travels down the road of history, we now outline how it came into being and how it later dissolves; instead of observing the everyday workings of an ethnic culture, the varying claims to cultural difference are studied. Few authors today dare to argue for the givenness, transsituational stability, and deep-rooted character of ethnic cultures and identities, although such notions are still widespread in the ethnic studies departments of American universities and among non-specialized researchers in economics or philosophy who happen to stumble across the ethnic phenomenon.

This book outlines the major elements of this constructivist consensus and systematizes its assumptions and achievements. At the same time, however, it attempts to move beyond this consensus by offering a more precise comparative analytic of how and why ethnicity matters in certain societies and contexts but not in others, and why it is sometimes associated with inequality and exclusion, with political salience and public debate, and with enduring loyalty and thick identities, while, in other cases, ethnicity, race, and nationhood do not structure the allocation of resources, invite little political passion, and represent only secondary aspects of individual identity. So far, constructivist scholarship has achieved little in comparatively explaining these varying roles played by ethnic distinctions.

The failure to develop a comparative analytic is perhaps due to constructivists' preoccupation with epistemological questions, with exorcising essentialism, reification, and objectification from the study of ethnicity. This struggle sometimes leads researchers to exaggerate the constructivist position and to overlook empirical variation in how ethnicity shapes the life of individuals. Fluidity and individual choice are emphasized even where social reality is marked by sharp boundaries and high degrees of social closure along ethnic lines—thus confirming "essentialist" or "identity" approaches. Radical constructivists draw attention to the contextual instability of ethnic claims even

in contexts where ethnicity has become a master principle of social organiza-
tion that structures individuals' life chances systematically. Malleability of
ethnic categories is read into histories that are characterized by intergen-
erational stability—as maintained by "perennialists." Constructivism as an
epistemological stance—the insight that we have to study how social forms
are made and remade through everyday social action—is sometimes con-
founded with an ontological statement about the nature of empirical reality:
that ethnicity is inherently ephemeral and unstable.

A comparative analytic of ethnic forms (Wacquant 1997) should be able to
address empirical variation more systematically and explain why ethnicity mat-
ters to different degrees and in different forms in different societies, situations,
and periods. More precise analytical tools are needed to handle the task: theo-
retical principles, core hypotheses, research designs, and modes of interpre-
tation and analysis that allow us to comparatively explain variations in ethnic
phenomena while avoiding the Scylla of hyperconstructivism as much as the
Charybdis of essentialism. This book reaches for such a comparative analytic.

It is marked by four characteristics. First, it builds on the boundary meta-
phor introduced by Fredrik Barth (1969b) almost half a century ago. Social
and symbolic boundaries emerge when actors distinguish between differ-
ent ethnic categories and when they treat members of such categories dif-
ferently. Each identification ("I am Swiss") obviously implies a categorical
boundary (the non-Swiss); each corresponding action (e.g. helping another
Swiss to find an apartment in Los Angeles) implies discriminating against
those on the other side of the divide (i.e. not helping someone from Sweden).
Focusing on social and categorical boundaries allows us to study the for-
mation and dissolution of ethnic groups with more precision than standard
sociological approaches that take the existence and continuity of such groups
and categories for granted.

Examples are the "race relations" approach (Pettigrew 1980; Banton 1983;
but see Banton 2012), in which racially defined communities are thought of
as a social givens whose variable relations with each other are then studied.
The ethnic studies tradition also assumes what needs to be explained: why
some actors structure their loyalty and their social networks along ethnic
divisions while in other circumstances ethnicity is a mere background attri-
bute with few consequences for the everyday conduct of life. Similarly, stud-
ies of "collective identity" or "inter-group relations" in social psychology (Le
Vine and Campbell 1972, pt. 3; Scheff 1994; Dovidio et al. 2005; Phinney
and Ong 2007) often take a society's division along ethnic lines as a starting
point, rather than attempting to explain how this came about and why people
identify with a specific category, rather than another.

The boundary metaphor also draws our attention to the struggle over power and prestige. It thus connects well with Max Weber's (1978:341–348) analysis of ethnic group formation as a process of social closure or with Charles Tilly's (2006) treatise on "opportunity hoarding." In this way, the boundary metaphor prevents seeing ethnicity as a mere matter of "imagined communities," to use Benedict Anderson's (1991) famed term, of cognitive classification and information processing, or of the discourses of belonging studied by postmodern authors.

Fredrik Barth was mostly concerned with the reproduction of ethnic boundaries: to explain why they remained stable although individuals "crossed the boundary" and although there might be much cultural assimilation and thus similarity between individuals on either side of the boundary. We need to dynamize this analysis: to show how such boundaries emerge in the first place and what the logic of their subsequent transformation might be—how and why they might be redrawn to include new groups of people or exclude hitherto accepted ones, how they might become blurred, fuzzy, and porous and perhaps eventually dissolve altogether, or, to the contrary, remain stable and persist over time. This is a research agenda that various authors have called for, from Barth himself at the end of his often cited essay (1969b:34) to Juteau (1979) and most recently Lamont and Molnár (2002:186f.), whose influential article has popularized the boundary metaphor among American sociologists.

Second, I infuse a good dose of Bourdieusian sociology into the study of ethnic boundaries to arrive at such a more dynamic analysis. As the opening epigraph suggests, this means focusing on how actors struggle over which social boundaries should be considered relevant and what the consequences of being an X versus being a Y should entail. A Bourdieusian perspective shifts our attention to the process of *making* (and unmaking) ethnic boundaries, a perspective already entailed in Lyman and Douglass's (1973) short treatise on the everyday management of ethnic stereotypes and subsequently elaborated in Gieryn's (1983) study of "boundary work." The struggle over the boundaries of belonging might be obvious, public, and political—as in cases of ethnic conflict—or it might be more subtle, implicit, and nested into the everyday web of interactions among individuals (Lyman and Douglass 1973): the subtle joke that tells the immigrant what her place in the social fabric should be, the quick glance indicating "I know what you mean" when someone evokes the bonds of shared ethnicity. The task set out for this book is to understand the logic of these strategic struggles over boundaries, to determine how they are influenced by the nature and structure of the social fields within which they unfold, and to analyze how such everyday interactions,

in turn, shape these larger structural forces and lead to a transformation or reproduction of ethnic divisions.

Emphasizing the strategic nature of practices of categorization and association—a hallmark of the Bourdieusian and Goffmanian traditions in sociology—does not imply an exclusive focus on economic gains or political advantage. The prizes in these struggles are diverse. They include the honor and prestige of belonging to a respected community recognized as a legitimate part of society (the "group honor" emphasized by Max Weber), the feeling of dignity that comes from seeing oneself at the apex of the moral history of mankind rather than in one of its shadowy valleys (the focus of Michèle Lamont's work), and the personal security and psychological stability granted by a sense of belonging to a community on whose support one can rely and where one feels culturally "at home" (emphasized by many social psychological approaches). Group honor, moral dignity, and personal identity combine with more mundane preoccupations, such as access to pastures, professions, public goods, or political power. It therefore makes little sense to debate whether ethnicity is mostly about "interests" or "identity," about "material" benefits or "ideals." While these dichotomies resonate well with Western traditions of binary thinking, ethnic boundary making mixes these various resources into an intertwined struggle over who legitimately should occupy which seat in the theater of society.

To be sure, not all such struggles touch upon questions of dignity, honor, identity, economic resources, or political power to the same degree. It is a foremost task of a comparative analytic to determine under which conditions individuals do develop "deep" emotional attachments and moral concerns about their place in the classificatory grid and under which conditions such concerns remain instrumental and superficial (Cornell 1996). In all these various contexts and configurations, however, individuals behave strategically—even if their goal is mainly to enhance the recognition of their group's honor or their moral dignity and emotional identity (see Goodwin et al. 2004). Trivially enough, I have never encountered, during my decades-long journey across the ethnographic literature from around the world, a single case in which individuals aim primarily at fostering someone else's honor, dignity, or identity.

Third, a major danger for a comparative theory of ethnic boundary making is to see ethnicity, race, or nationhood wherever one looks. While this represents a conceptual challenge with which students of other phenomena also struggle, the problem is especially acute since ethnic, racial, and national categories are often highly politicized. Researchers and lay members of society,

therefore, share certain assumptions about the nature of their society that can bias their perspective and prevent a more dissociated and adequate analysis. For example, many observable outcomes—low or high income, good or bad health, the composition of social networks—are patterned along ethnic or racial lines. Should we conclude that processes of ethnic boundary making are at work, as, for instance, in the literature on the "racialization" of ethnic minorities?

Obviously, we need to disentangle ethnic processes, such as the privileging of co-ethnics and discriminating against ethnic or racial outsiders, from other processes, such as the everyday working of labor market institutions or the privileging of family members, of individuals with similar educational backgrounds, and so forth. Under certain circumstances, these other, nonethnic processes may produce an ethnic pattern in the aggregate. This book advocates a more systematic disentangling of ethnic and nonethnic processes to avoid an all-encompassing "ethnic lens" of interpretation (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). It offers several analytic strategies to address this task and examples of the research designs most appropriate to accomplish it.

Fourth, a comparative analytic needs to take into account the full variation of ethnic phenomena from around the world. A broad and encompassing perspective, usually the hallmark of anthropological approaches, will help us to avoid taking the specificities of our own society's ethnoracial order for granted and to remain entangled in the position that we occupy in it. The wider we cast the comparative net, the more likely we will catch fishes of a variety of colors and shapes—with fins and without, with sharp teeth or a soft palate, flat flounders and slender eels—that allow us to understand what being a fish is all about. Research on one species alone will give us a rich understanding of the life of dolphins, for example, but will not help us understand the general mechanisms that evolution has designed to make life under water possible—or even lead to a serious misinterpretation of these mechanisms, as when we conclude from our study of dolphins that lungs are a necessary feature of being a fish. Similarly, assuming that race plays a role in other societies around the world similar to what we find in the United States—and then interpreting the lack of racial consciousness elsewhere as a case of malevolent denial or self-protective delusion—might in fact impede our understanding not only of race and ethnicity in these other contexts, but of its role in American society as well.

This book is inspired by how dragnet fishermen go about their business. While many chapters focus on immigrant ethnicity in the West or even more specifically on the racial and ethnic boundaries in the contemporary United States, Switzerland, or elsewhere in Europe, others review cases from far

away places and distant epochs, trying to tease out recurring themes and patterns that characterize the dynamics of ethnic boundary making across contexts. This search for recurring processual patterns contrasts with the case-study approach that dominates the field of ethnicity studies. It is also at odds with the hyper-contextualism of most qualitative research: the emphasis on the specificities of each case, the particular historical conjunctures that have generated it, and the unique insights that it offers to the observer. The boundary-making approach advocated here is nourished, in contrast, by the belief that recurring, general mechanisms combine with unique historical events and specific conjunctures of conditions to produce social reality, and that it is possible to isolate the recurring mechanisms from these contextual contingencies and thus arrive at some general insights into the workings of ethnic and racial boundaries. This belief roots this book in the tradition of an "analytic sociology" that has emerged over the past decade or so (Hedström and Bearman 2009).

2 An integrated view of ethnicity, race, and nationhood

True to its dragnet approach, this book advocates a broad, encompassing definition of ethnicity. Following Max Weber (1985:237), ethnicity is understood as a subjectively felt belonging to a group that is distinguished by a shared culture and by common ancestry. This belief in shared culture and ancestry rests on cultural practices perceived as "typical" for the community, or on myths of a common historical origin, or on phenotypical similarities indicating common descent (see Weber 1978:385–398; Schermerhorn 1970; Erikson 1993; Jenkins 1997; Cornell and Hartman 1998). In this broad understanding of ethnicity, "race" is treated as a subtype of ethnicity,[2] as is nationhood. If phenotypical features or genealogical descent[3] indicate group membership,

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[2] The list of authors who define race as a special case of ethnicity includes Gordon (1964), Wallman (1986:229), Sollors (1991, chap. 1), Anthias (1992), Loveman (1997), Patterson (1997:173), Nagel (2003, chap. 2), and Banton (2003).
[3] In contrast to tribes, however, ethnosomatic groups do not define membership through multigenerational genealogical charts and individuals do not know much about the structure of the entire genealogical tree. For example, the one-drop rule to define membership in racial categories in the United States operates according to a logic of purity/pollution, not genealogical descent from a common, specifically named ancestors as among tribal groups. More generally, the principle of ancestry is used in strict genealogical terms when defining tribal (and subtribal) membership and more vaguely and metaphorically when used to define ethnic group membership. Obviously, tribes can be nested into ethnic groups (as the various "Arab" tribes in Sudan or Chad). The same principle of nestedness may also apply to subtypes of ethnicity (as when "Christians" are divided into several ethnic groups in Nigeria).

we speak of ethnosomatic groups. If members of an ethnic community have developed national aspirations and demand (or already control) a state of their own, we describe such categories and groups as nations (Jenkins 1997, chap. 6; Weber 1978:921–926; Smith 1986). Further subtypes of ethnicity can be distinguished depending on the type of markers that are used to substantiate the belief in shared culture and ancestry, most importantly ethnoreligious, ethnoregional, and ethnolinguistic categories and groups.

Treating "race" as a special case of "ethnicity" runs against the folk use of these terms in the United States. "Race" is mostly associated with African Americans, while "ethnicity" commonly refers to the less consequential distinctions among the dominant white group based on different European countries of origin. From W. Lloyd Warner's *Yankee City* studies onward (Sollors 1986:21–23), mainstream American sociology treated race and ethnicity as phenomena of a different order (see van den Berghe 1991; Feagin and Feagin 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Bonilla-Silva 1999; Cornell and Hartman 1998), reflecting the different fate that the descendants of African slaves and European immigrants experienced over the past two centuries. While using a terminology that contradicts the common sense of one particular society is inconvenient for its students, adopting this common sense for comparative purposes would be even more problematic (see Loveman 1997; Kivisto 2003; Brubaker 2009), for at least three reasons.

First, treating race as fundamentally different from ethnicity overlooks the fact that one and the same group might be treated as a race at one point in history and as another type of ethnic category at another. In the 16th and 17th centuries, African slaves in the United States were primarily defined as pagans and their English masters as Christians. Only after about 1680 was this ethnoreligious distinction gradually replaced by the ethnosomatic categories "white" and "Negro" (Jordan 1968). Second, phenotypical differences are often evoked as one among *other* markers of ethnic distinction, as the racialization of ethnicity in Rwanda and Burundi and many other contexts with a history of ethnic violence shows. Third, distinguishing between race as fixed, imposed, and exclusionary, on the one hand, and ethnicity as fluid, self-ascribed, and voluntary, on the other hand, would not do justice to constellations where ethnic groups experience degrees of forced segregation, exclusion, and domination usually associated with race (examples are Serbs in contemporary Kosovo or Albanians in Serbia). In the end, there is no clear-cut line between ethnosomatic and other types of ethnicity that would justify establishing entirely separate objects of analysis to be addressed with different analytical language.

Perhaps it is useful to briefly discuss the political worries that seem to motivate opponents of an encompassing perspective in the United States. They argue that subsuming race as a particular form of ethnicity is part of a sinister neoconservative agenda (Omi and Winant 1994, chap. 1) meant to negate the role that racist ideologies have played in the colonization of the world and to deny that racial exclusion continues to be relevant in contemporary American society and beyond (Bonilla-Silva 1999:899; Winant 2000:179). However, an encompassing definition does not imply that race no longer matters in the United States. To the contrary, it allows us to see *how much* it matters by situating the American case in a comparative horizon. Within that horizon, we will find societies with phenotypical variation among the population but without racialized groups (Sanjek 1996:5–6; Horowitz 1971), societies without phenotypical variation but with racially defined groups in stark opposition to each other,[4] and nonracialized systems of ethnic differentiation that are as exclusionary as race is in the United States. An encompassing definition not only allows us to situate the American experience better, but also prevents us from misinterpreting the specific ethnosomatic order of this particular society as a universal form of social organization and then projecting this form onto other societies across the globe (see the *philippics* of Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999; Bonnett 2006).

Having defended an encompassing definition of ethnicity, I will briefly clarify the notion of boundary underlying this book. A boundary displays both a categorical and a social or behavioral dimension. The former refers to acts of social classification and collective representation, the latter to everyday networks of relationships that result from individual acts of connecting and distancing. On the individual level, the categorical and the behavioral aspects appear as two cognitive schemes. One divides the social world into social groups—into "us" and "them"—and the other offers scripts of action—how to relate to individuals classified as "us" and "them" under given circumstances. Only when the two schemes coincide, when ways of seeing the world correspond to ways of acting in the world, shall we speak of a social boundary.[5]

To be sure, the boundary concept does not imply that the world is composed of sharply bounded groups. As I show in subsequent chapters, ethnic

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[4] See the distinction between "red humans" and "white humans" among the Rendille described by Schlee (2006:82). The Barakumin in Japan might represent another case of "race" without phenotypical difference.

[5] The best discussion of the relationship between the two dimensions of ethnicity is still Mitchell (1974); with regard to the boundary concept see Lamont (1992, chap. 1). An example of a categorical division with few behavioral consequences is the sharp moral boundary most contemporary Americans draw against atheists (Edgell et al. 2006).

distinctions may be fuzzy and boundaries soft, with unclear demarcations and few social consequences, allowing individuals to maintain membership in several categories or switch identities situationally. The concept of boundary does not imply closure and clarity, which vary in degree from one society, social situation, or institutional context to another. It represents one of the foremost tasks of the comparative study of ethnicity to account for such varying degrees of boundedness.

3 The chapters

Chapter 2 opens with a discussion of conventional sociological approaches to ethnicity. Many of these are derived from the proto-romantic philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder, who has inspired Western thinking about ethnicity and nationhood since the late 18th century. The Herderian legacy can be traced in contemporary research on ethnicity in the United States—the model for much of the literature on Europe as well. Assimilation theory, multiculturalism, and ethnic studies all take it for granted that dividing society into ethnic groups is analytically and empirically meaningful. Each ethnic group is supposed to be characterized by a specific culture, dense networks of solidarity, and shared identity.

These three elements of the Herderian canon have been thoroughly revised over the past decades, mostly in anthropological research. First, many systems of ethnic classification are composed of hierarchically nested categories, not all of which are associated with dense social ties and corresponding social boundaries (a topic explored in chapter 6). This can make the identification of "ethnic communities" a difficult enterprise. Second, members of an ethnic category might display considerable cultural heterogeneity, which renders the identification of specific "ethnic cultures" impossible (a topic pursued in chapter 7). Finally, the ethnic boundary system can be characterized by conflict and contestation such that no basic consensus emerges over who is what and who should get what—undermining the idea that ethnic communities are held together by "shared identity" (see chapter 5).

The boundary-making perspective promises to overcome these difficulties because it allows us to analyze the emergence and transformation of ethnic groups without "hard-wiring" the existence of such communities into the observational and theoretical apparatus. After a synthetic summary of the major theoretical propositions of this emerging paradigm, I suggest ways to move beyond what has been achieved so far and to bring the boundary approach to fruition in future empirical research. First, three major

mechanisms and factors influencing the dynamics of ethnic boundary making are specified, previewing the more elaborated discussion of chapter 4. These are the distribution of power in a social field, the reach of established social networks, and the institutional setup that provides incentives to draw certain kind of boundaries rather than others. I show how this theory can be applied to the study of ethnic boundaries in labor markets and how ethnic closure in labor markets can be disentangled from other processes—including network hiring, educational sorting, and the like—that might produce a certain ethnodemographic pattern in the aggregate. The chapter concludes with a series of research designs, most based on nonethnic units of observation and analysis, that allow for a better understanding of how these three factors shape ethnic group formation processes and that make disentangling ethnic and nonethnic mechanisms easier. The last three chapters of this book will offer concrete examples of these research designs and the results that they can generate.

After this introductory overview over the main contours and promise of the boundary-making approach, the following two chapters introduce a more detailed theory. Chapter 3 outlines what possible strategies of boundary making actors can pursue and how they can try to enforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society, to paraphrase Bourdieu again. I distinguish five main types: those strategies that seek to redraw a boundary by either expanding or limiting the range of people included in one's own ethnic category; those that modify existing boundaries either by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories, or by changing one's own position within a boundary system, or by emphasizing other, nonethnic forms of belonging.

I then outline various means of boundary making: to discursively describe the social world using particular ethnic categories, from everyday talk to census forms; to symbolically mark group boundaries with cultural diacritics (such as a mode of speaking, a costume, a decorative scar) that allow the unequivocal identification of group members; to privilege members of one's own group and discriminate against outsiders; to organize politically and thus make a particular ethnic category salient; or to use violence and terror against members of specific ethnic categories. All these means help to transform a mere category into a bounded group, to make ethnic groups "in and for themselves," as Marx would have said.

This taxonomy accommodates a considerable number of historical and contemporary cases from both the developed and the developing world. It aims at overcoming the fragmentation of the literature along the lines of discipline and regional specialization, allowing me to show that there are a limited number of ways to draw boundaries and that similar strategies have

been used by actors situated in very different contexts, from "traditional" rural settings to the modern mega-city, and historical epochs—from the 18th century age of empires to the postmodern era of identity politics. This prepares the ground for the comparative theory of ethnic boundary making that the following chapter introduces.

Chapter 4 first outlines the most important dimensions of variation in the nature of ethnic boundaries that such a comparative approach needs to account for: differences in the degree of social closure, political salience, cultural differentiation, and historical stability. The literature in comparative race and ethnicity has focused mainly on definitional debates between primordialism and constructivism, as mentioned above. In the decade since Lamont and Molnar (2002) called for the study of how different boundary properties emerge, little progress has been made in explaining why some ethnic constellations correspond to a primordialist's view while others confirm the convictions of constructivists. Chapter 4 introduces a comparative framework to explain how these varying forms are generated and transformed.

The model assumes that ethnic boundaries result from the interactions between actors who pursue the different strategies and are equipped with the various means of boundary making outlined in chapter 3. Three characteristics of the social field—institutions, power hierarchies, and political networks—determine which of these strategic options actors will pursue. I then discuss the conditions under which these various strategies converge on a shared understanding of the location and meaning of boundaries. Finally, the nature of this consensus determines the degree of closure, salience, cultural differentiation, and historical stability that characterize particular ethnic boundaries. The following three chapters demonstrate how this theory of boundary making can be used in empirical research.

Chapter 5 studies the categorical and network boundaries that emerge in ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Switzerland. Using neighborhoods as units of observation rather than ethnic groups, we can observe patterns of everyday group formation without presuming ex-ante that these necessarily cluster along ethnic divides. The chapter first analyzes the social categories— whether ethnic or not—that neighborhood residents use to describe their social world. We find that racial or ethnonational divisions are secondary principles of classification only. Both Swiss and old, established immigrants from Italy and Turkey distinguish between insiders—those who respect local norms of decency, modesty, and order—and outsiders, mostly newly arrived immigrants and young Swiss from the alternative scene. Social networks largely correspond to this categorical boundary: While the large majority of ties are confined to co-ethnics, out-group ties are limited to established

residents of the neighborhood and almost never branch out to include more recent immigrants. Overall, categorical and network boundaries converge and produce marked forms of social closure against newcomers—the minimal consensus on which most old timers agree despite otherwise quite different views of the social world and different network composition.

The boundary-making approach is well suited to uncover the logic of this system of classification and closure. Had we observed the social world of these neighborhoods through a conventional ethnic lens, we would have missed the insider-outsider distinction and, instead, described how the Italian, Turkish, and Swiss "communities" are organized internally and how they are related to each other, thus overlooking the most important social boundary that separates all of these together from both Swiss and immigrant newcomers. The concluding section shows how this insider-outsider distinction provided a fertile ground for a xenophobic populist movement to rise to power in Switzerland over the past fifteen years. To highlight the distinct analytical advantages offered by the boundary-making approach, this interpretation of anti-immigrant sentiment and politics is contrasted with the theory of "racialization" that has recently been exported from American sociology to the Continent.

Chapter 6 focuses more closely on social networks and demonstrates how to disentangle ethnic from nonethnic processes that conjointly generate different levels of ethnic homogeneity in networks. It also illustrates how important it is to take the nested character of ethnic systems of classification into account and what it takes—theoretically and empirically—to specify on which of these levels of differentiation social closure actually occurs. This twofold agenda contrasts with the standard approach in network scholarship, where the high degree of racial homogeneity that study after study found in the networks of Americans is often uncritically attributed to the racial preferences of individuals.

The chapter takes advantage of a new data set based on the Facebook pages of a cohort of college students, with information on an unusually large number of background features of these students and on a range of tie formation mechanisms beyond same-race preference. Advanced statistical methods allow us to distinguish the effects of these various mechanisms and features empirically. We first show that racial homogeneity in the networks of these students results not only from racial closure proper, but also from preference for co-ethnics of the same racial background. This underlines the importance of a point raised in chapter 2: Without paying attention to the segmentally nested character of ethnoracial systems of classification, one risks misattributing the preference for co-ethnics to a strategy of racial boundary making. Furthermore, nonethnic tie-formation mechanisms amplify the effects of

racial preference: The tendency to reciprocate friendships or to befriend the friends of one's friends produces additional same-race friendships independent of the preference for same-race individuals.

In a second step, we put the importance of racial closure into further perspective by comparing the magnitude of its effects to that of other mechanisms of tie formation. Reciprocating a friendly relationship, befriending those who co-reside in the same dorm or who share an "elite" background or hail from a particular American state: all these mechanisms influence the tie-formation process more than racial homophily. Does this mean that the college students we studied represent the avant-garde of a future "color-blind" America? The point is a different one: Had we contented ourselves with a conventional analysis of the networks of these students, we would have confirmed the standard view of American society and once again shown that their networks display high levels of racial homogeneity. The boundary making approach advocated in this book challenges us to go beyond such taken-for-granted assumptions about the relevance of race in contemporary America and to study its effects in more precise ways that allow us to disentangle racial boundary making from other processes and mechanisms with which it is easily confounded.

Chapter 7 addresses the third pillar of the Herderian view on ethnicity: that it neatly maps onto, and represents an expression of, cultural difference. More specifically, each ethnic group is supposed to share specific values and norms, which should differ more from each other the further the cultural origins of two ethnic communities are removed from each other. The theory of boundary making offers an alternative perspective. It argues that value differences result from social closure along ethnic lines rather than from ethnic difference per se. Therefore, two ethnic groups should differ in worldviews and values only if the boundary between them is marked by high levels of exclusion and closure.

This chapter evaluates this proposition empirically, using data from the European Social Survey conducted in twenty-four countries. We added new coding for 380 ethnic groups, noting degrees of closure as well as cultural distance between minorities and majorities. Statistical analysis shows that ethnic group level differences account for only a small portion of variance in the values that individuals hold, thus challenging the Herderian idea that each ethnic community lives in its own distinct normative universe. Furthermore, these small group-level differences are explained by political exclusion—and not by cultural distance.

These findings undermine taken-for-granted assumptions about ethnicity and cultural difference that underlie important strands of mainstream social

science theory and research. The chapter thus leads to a third revision of common-sense notions of ethnicity. The first aimed at the association of ethnicity with community and showed that the boundaries of belonging might not necessarily be drawn along ethnic divisions, even in ethnically heterogeneous social fields. The second revision concerned the identification of ethnicity with a clear-cut category of identity by demonstrating that systems of classification are often multilayered and segmentally nested, which bears important consequences for our understanding of ethnic group formation processes. By reconceiving the relationship between ethnicity and cultural difference as a matter of social closure, the last chapter provides further impetus for moving toward an analytically more differentiated and theoretically sophisticated approach to the ethnic phenomenon.