Social Boundaries and Family Upbringing

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Social groups, life spaces, exchange places as well as segregation places are separated by more or less visible social boundaries; those boundaries cross everyday family life. How could we grasp these boundaries? It's education both given and received in families, its continuities and its discontinuities that allows us to trace them; permanently reinvented, education contributes now less to replicate boundaries and more to create new ones. In a world where social advancement promised by the education system is hypothetical, people try hard to achieve education outside the system and accommodate with the boundaries; the boundaries are sometimes respected, sometimes retraced and sometimes looked for. How are these boundary games played in different contexts? The comparison between France, Romania, Sweden and Brazil highlights for each country the dynamic processes affecting the middle classes.

Keywords: social boundaries, family education, middle classes, collective identities.

The concept of the social boundary generally enables one to grasp social space with its divisions, segmentations and hierarchisations.[1] It also helps highlight the investment, often involving considerable energy, made by families for maintaining or abolishing these divisions. In a radically transforming world, the heterogeneity of individual trajectories and instability are rising, and differences within the same group are increasing, which affects certain markers of identity. Families have to face these changes in the context of this intergenerational transmission. They teach their children to master and be familiar with a social space that they know is not homogeneous and is often criss-crossed by new boundaries. The efforts that families invest in upbringing thus have as goal, among others, learning of possible social mobility, collective adhesion, constraints and opportunities offered by a sound mastery of the dynamics of social space.[2]

It must be specified, to begin with, that social boundaries help constitute social order: they separate and organise contacts between categories, groups or classes. At the same time, they are mechanisms participating in the construction of the identity of these groups or classes as they objectify and "naturalise" their distinctive properties, engraved in the symbolical order. Located between the "upper" and the "lower", between the members of a group and the excluded, boundaries

fix hierarchies, differentiate between the "best" and the "not-so-good".

It must be kept in mind that social boundaries are not "transmitted" through the intermediary of a kind of cultural unconscious. At stake in struggles, they are constructed and are subject to social conflicts. Movements of transgression or protection of borders are frequent, and may question the existence of groups and/or social belonging of the transgressing individual.

Social boundaries play a twofold role. On the one hand, they constitute means of domination, discipline, segregation, and distancing. Thus, various behaviours are forbidden in certain places, the barriers made insurmountable. Some youths from working-class neighbourhoods, for instance, are forced to exercise control on their body in numerous institutions, such as schools and libraries. This discipline, imposed at the very moment one crosses a threshold ("Please remove your cap and earphones here"), can turn out to be against certain forms of identity or collective belonging (like a group of friends) and have "desocialising" effects. On the other hand, these boundaries represent ways of social protection, guarding a territory, maintaining of a common identity. Teachers and librarians must maintain some degree of order in institutions where they work for simply being able to do their job and protect their identity and their social position, too. Most institutions and social groups chalk out boundaries likely to organise legitimate behaviours and practices in space and time. Thus, although social boundaries are often "already there", they are subject to much antagonism and even give lead to conferring a form on social conflicts. The role of social boundaries lies in both the maintenance of order and the articulation of conflicts.

The notion of boundary thus becomes essential for understanding social groups and decoding social space. On the one hand, the boundaries define the contours of various groups (some, like "suburban youth", are identified with their place of residence) and establish the separation from the others. On the other hand, the boundaries open spaces for discussion and meeting so that the groups may communicate amongst themselves. Boundaries establish conditions under which "those from here" are ready to discuss and communicate with "those from there". Fredrik Barth had emphasised that boundaries separate and make discussions possible between two units that mutually recognise each other as being different (Barth 1969). Thus regarded, the idea of the boundary constitutes a particularly pertinent tool for deliberating on the forms and modalities of social relations between groups belonging to societies affected by more or less strong processes of change and social recomposition.

The place of social boundaries in a society in deep transformation raises several questions to which this research tries to respond. How do boundaries themselves participate in these processes of transformation? To what extent do they contribute to the unequal distribution of the effects of these changes? Do they help in settling the actors in an established position, an assured trajectory, or do they, on the contrary, create mobility, destabilisation, marginalisation and lead to a more risky path?

What this article sets out to understand, more than a mere description of the

reality, form and functions of social boundaries, is the process of how they are shaped and updated. How do social separations and segregations come about? And how do these separations organise communication between individuals belonging to different social groups? It is also pertinent to understand how various boundaries are edified within different groups and families through the double work of bringing children up and the attempt to control their insertion in the social space.

Without aiming to retrace the complete genealogy of the concept of boundary in this article – although it is necessary - and without pretending to elaborate on the vast body of research conducted in this area,[3] it would succinctly present the works that guided it most directly in this research, during which it was decided that the effects of the experience of family upbringing on the construction and redefinition of boundaries between social groups would be studied in different contexts.

Boundaries within contemporary societies

Fredrik Barth was the first to change the approach to ethnic groups by making the process of categorial attribution and interaction that enable these groups to maintain their boundaries, the focal point of his research. Boundaries must not be confused with borders (limits) as the representation of the communication between two parties in a divided space is central to it: boundaries are not watertight, are never occlusive, but are more or less fluid, mobile and porous (Barth 1969). Barth concluded that the line of demarcation separating the members from non-members of a group ("us" and "them") is defining for their identity as it regulates their interactions through a series of "dos" and "donts". These prescriptions help define belonging to a group and its contours. The boundary is thus, first and foremost, a means of discriminating, which makes inclusion and exclusion from the group possible. But it also determines the modalities for communication between social groups. The latter never appear in isolation but always in relation to each other and are formed mutually in relations of both communication and exclusion. This is an essential point as exchanges between groups within the same society are also conducted in the form of conflicts. While being unevenly stable, boundaries have the ability to be long-lasting, irrespective of the changes that may occur within each group. If the individuals are in a position to cross or "play" with these boundaries, it does not challenge their social pertinence.

The extremely general character of the concept of the boundary has rendered it applicable to all kinds of collective identities whenever one must delineate a limit between two entities or between two territories. It draws its force from the fact that it enables one to better understand the functioning of social groups, classes or categories. This concept helps, for example, to approach social mobility in its twofold aspect: spatial or geographical, and temporal or historic. The "mobile" transgress or "open up" boundaries, and close others behind them. This mobility is also inter-generational and raises the question of passing down the cultural representations or categories between generations, the functioning of one "mental card"

and the production or reproduction of these boundaries between "them" and "us".

If, to begin with, the concept of the boundary helps understand both the separation and the communication between distinct ethnic entities (with the effects of the boundary on the constitution of each ethnic group), this research sets out to explore the multiple lines of demarcation that separates the groups and the social categories belonging to the same society. This research chooses to focus on the study of often symbolical, internal boundaries, without, of course, omitting the existence of external, often physical, borders, which constitute the limits of a national territory, or more often, a supranational territory (as in the case of the European Union, for instance)[4]. In this research, the external borders are particularly felt in the case of immigrant families often from humble backgrounds, whereas their effects are less perceptible in the case of expatriate families. Nonetheless, currently, the concept is frequently used to understand the internal divisions within contemporary societies.

Thus, for Charles Tilly, boundaries are social mechanisms[5] capable of explaining mobility and change, first and foremost (Tilly 2005; Tilly 2004). Social boundaries separate us from them and "interrupt, divide, circumscribe, or segregate distributions of population or activity within social fields." We can 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" (Tilly 2004: 214). Boundaries help identify the characteristics that define those who are on either side of the separating line. However, social boundaries are often difficult to locate, being mobile, fluctuating and subject to major conflicts on tracing them.

Thought of as a social mechanism, the definitions of boundaries are linked to issues of change. Tilly thus pursues Barth's reflection, while giving the greatest attention to mobility and change of political identities subsequent to economic exploitation, categorial discrimination or democratisation. "Boundary change figures importantly in a wide variety of phenomena, including the activation or deactivation of political identities, economic exploitation, categorial discrimination, democratisation" (Tilly 2004: 215). Two sets of mechanisms influence the process specific to the forming of boundaries: "1) those that cause boundary change and 2) those that constitute boundary change and produce its direct effects." (Tilly 2004: 215). Tilly also distinguishes between the transactions that take place within boundaries from those that take place beyond them: the former concern assistance and sociability, the latter, exploitation and discredit – often tolerated by immigrants.

Michèle Lamont draws on this concept in her empirical and comparative works on social classes (worker and middle classes) in North America and France by constructing a class-wise and country-wise typology of boundaries (Lamont 1994; Lamont 2002). For her, boundaries appear, above all, to be moral markers produced from the "mental maps" of the members of different social classes, depending on their "evaluation codes" for other classes or groups. Ethnic minorities and the ethnic aspect of social boundaries are given an important place. By recon-

structing the internal coherence of the conception of the world of workers and taking into consideration the cultural and material contexts in which they live, Lamont concludes that in North America, as in France, "morality constitutes the fundamental principle based on which workers […] assess the others", which contrasts with "socio-economic status, the criterion to which the middle classes give greater importance" (Lamont 2002). The working class is more concerned than the executives by the maintenance of moral order (especially the need to protect and provide) as the environment in which they live exposes them more to danger and offers them less security and economic stability. The moral qualities that are greatly valued by workers are those of the "protection of the family" and "being a provider"; the family is considered to be an immediate source of pleasure. This contrasts with the morals of the executives, who would dissociate self-achievement much more from family life. When the latter consider the family, they valorise "assistance for children's personal development and financing their higher education" (Lamont 2002).

If till now, French sociology and ethnology have made little effort to use the concept of social boundary explicitly in their analyses, it is still possible to trace it in various researches focusing on social classes, professional relations, and reproduction or reconversion strategies. This is borne out in the case of Pierre Bourdieu's works. Thus, by analysing the morphological transformations of social classes and their effects on the institution of the school during 1954-1975, Bourdieu observed the passage of a system characterised by "strongly etched boundaries", "sharp divides", which separate students of lower primary and upper primary school from those of secondary school to a "system of vague and confused classification", in which the exclusion of working class children is denied, but is often prevalent. This system is characterised by the jumbling of hierarchies and boundaries between the elect and the excluded, the real and fake degrees (Bourdieu 1979; Bourdieu 1984). The transformations of the relations between the different social classes and the education system are behind the intensification of the rat race for academic certificates, the fight against a fall in social standing and the invention of new professions, in which cultural capital may be valued higher than degrees. If Bourdieu mostly examines the border that separates the dominating and the dominated, he also pays considerable attention to the divisions specific to the spheres of power: dominating-dominating and dominating-dominated.

"Ethnologist of the present", Gérard Althabe has explored the mechanisms that divide the world of the working class, microsocial mechanisms through which boundaries separating the middle class from the working class are produced, the latter from the fraction closest to situations of social exclusion. In a substantial study conducted in a group of working class neighbourhoods of the Nantes region, Althabe has formulated a precise description of the boundaries that define, at the level of the city, an economy of symbolic exchanges between the different categories that make up the working classes (Althabe 1993). On the one hand, there is the effort of upbringing within the family; on the other hand, families wage intense battles, in their exchanges, aimed at showing that their conduct matches the

norm of the group, defending themselves from attacks that could lead to loss of social standing, and, finally, finding a chink in the armour of others' behaviour that could lower them in or relegate them to the margins of the social space. The space of the working classes is often found marked with a series of boundaries that separate the "respectable" part from stigmatised or disqualified categories of the working class world. These boundaries lead to subjecting each other to "reciprocal trials" between individuals and between families, wherein everyone attempts to push his/her rival to the "negative" side of the boundary.

These reciprocal processes are probably not a monopoly of the working classes; nevertheless, the forms and modalities of these singular processes vary from group to group. Thus, among the bourgeoisie, irrevocable classifications and condemnations are legion. One lapse or one mistake in expression, presentation, dress are quickly noticed and stigmatised by the members of the bourgeoisie, guardians of the old order, swift to accuse new arrivals. Those who have long been comfortably ensconced in their established position may, in turn, be condemned or accused by the more upwardly mobile new bourgeois. The new managers – consultants, engineers and commercial directors, who work in the sectors of new technologies and the new economy – in particular, often scoff at the "elitist" and even "selfish" values and behaviours of the traditional bourgeoisie (Gombert 2008).

Social boundaries are sometimes physical in nature (such as when a street separates an area of low-rise council housing estate), and are sometimes instituted (as in the case of differing rights, incomes, ranks and abilities indicated by a status or a degree). They can sometimes be distorted when they reveal differences in abilities or performance, differences that stem, in fact, from social or cultural causes. All of these are often the result of practices, ways of behaving or speaking that individuals adopt when they are aware of being within a specific social space. Most of the time, groups produce boundaries by training individuals to master the differences of behaviour and practices (Wimmer 2008)[6].

Fields of the study: "Disaster seekers" and delineation of boundaries
Attempting to grasp the processes of building boundaries and the effects of family upbringing on these processes, the study in France was conducted in various places, more or less far geographically, but sharing common properties: that of urban spaces marked by major mobility of people, as well as visible divisions between "old" and "new" cities, "fashionable districts" (Pinçon, Pinçon-Charlot 1989) and "suburbs", prestigious places and disreputable places, often stigmatised (Lepoutre, 1997, Sennett, 2002). The study was conducted in Paris and various localities of the Parisian region (Noisy-le-Grand, Gennevilliers, Sarcelles) and provincial France (Le Havre, Strasbourg). The "old" districts, generally inhabited by established people of the middle class, are different from the new districts, often called "new cities", which have a more or less considerable immigrant population of diverse origin; these are places of exclusion but also fields for social action to fight this exclusion.

An intense study was carried out for almost three years, from 2005 to 2007.

Using mediators between families and researchers helped establish relationships of trust and conduct lengthy, partially guided and deep interviews with families, single parents, or couples when possible; a child was also interviewed in each family[7]. Three main criteria guided the choice of families: social class, stability or instability of the position held, and the presence of at least one child in the age group of 12 and 21 years in the family. Family upbringing and daily experiences were the main themes of these interviews that aimed at reconstructing the family's social history through the educational and professional experiences of the interviewees, both parents and children. It was thus that the study revealed biographical elements that helped understand the conditions of "stability or "instability" that each family had faced. From this angle, continuities or breaks in schooling trajectories from one generation to the next as well as for socio-professional mobility were noticed. Similarly, success and failure models, the schooling strategies of families, the choice of academic and non-academic institutions contributing or having contributed to the education of the different family members, as well as the family plans (implicit or explicit) were identified.

The study was received very differently, depending on the place and the group. The parents who welcomed the researchers at their residence, without any problem, were those willing to let their interior be observed; for them, the interview was no different from other forms of "natural" sociability. Such was the case with the bourgeois families in transit in Strasbourg, or in several middle-class and working-class families, who easily consented to an interview; the request for interview would often be made via the recommendation of a known person. The conformity of their living conditions to social norms, to the extent of the opportunity of highlighting a certain form of individual or collective distinction, brushes aside all suspicion of intrusion or surveillance.

This was, however, not uniformly the case everywhere. The researchers were often regarded with a suspicious eye in working-class milieus where people sometimes find it difficult to open the door to their privacy and daily life. This was what happened in "Pavé Neuf", a rather stigmatised neighbourhood of the town of Noisy-le-Grand, in the suburbs of Paris. The reservations with regard to this study were due to the negative portrayal of this type of neighbourhood by journalists or researchers who worked on "the suburbs". While the residents make considerable efforts to counter the bad reputation of their neighbourhood, journalists and researchers dwell on misery, delinquency, drug trafficking, violence, and so on. Thus, at Pavé Neuf, researchers and journalists are called "disaster seekers" or "disaster tourists" as they gather data and take photographs presenting a miserabilist image of the area. Photographing people is perceived as an open aggression. The researchers are considered to be a "voyeur" and his/her intentions associated with symbolic violence. In the past as in recent times, several Pavé Neuf residents have been photographed without their consent and the photos shown at art exhibitions or posted on the Internet. "They [researchers and journalists] come here on safaris. They photograph us as though we were animals."

In Gennevilliers, too – another "working-class" district in a Parisian suburb – a

member of the research team had to face similar reluctance. She was suspected of "investigating" the academic failure of children. Many of her requests for interview were refused. Revealing faltering education could push the parents and the entire family to the other side of a boundary where they would be associated with those suspected to be "bad parents". Much is at stake for those who try to prove their exemplary behaviour through the education they provide to their children: they thus show that their "working-class" condition is solely due to being victims of economic destiny. It is thus that the boundary separating those who are subject to poverty and those who "deserve" it, is collectively produced and identified, as they bear the stamp of being "working class". Their poverty then becomes the result of their bad behaviour. The latter experience reveals the kind of dynamics that working-class families attempt to avoid at all costs: a lawsuit filed against them (Althabe 1993).

A sociological investigation can thus be, for some, an opportunity to show their ability to distinguish themselves socially, dissociating their family history from that of the group. For others, on the other hand, this constitutes the risk of being discredited. With the sociologist's presence in the observation field, it was possible for the authors to see how they could themselves be instrumentalised by their own studies in the strategy of their positioning with reference to social boundaries. Individuals and families often control the effects of the publication of a survey on their world more often than what we could assume, though unequally, depending on groups or classes. Sociologists are precisely positioned as most of the time they have had to cross social boundaries for reaching their field.

Social hierarchies and the instability of positions

After having noted, through interviews and observations, the social trajectories and common experiences – which crystallised into a number of "objective" boundaries between classes and groups – and by being attentive to debates on the pertinence of the concept of social class in the analysis of French society, the authors decided to divide the families they met during the study into four broad groups: immigrant families, working classes, middle classes, bourgeoisies. This classification is not solely inspired by sociological hypotheses. Sometimes, the actors themselves use these terms to define their milieu, the groups they contrast themselves with, the hopes of consolidation or upward social mobility that they nurture for their children. What is typical of social boundaries is that they represent recognised (and therefore "objective") lines of demarcation. When each subject constitutes the map representing his/her world or that of others, they can mobilise these boundaries.

Boundaries thus separate classes but can also work within each of them according to national, political or religious differences, or even according to whether one belongs to "respectable" or "disreputable" groups, "established" and "settled" groups or those that are "mobile" and "unstable"[8]. The divisions between the classes themselves, especially between more *established* or *settled* groups and more *mobile* or *unstable* groups have hence become central to this study. However, the-

se differences are probably less pronounced between stable and unstable individuals than between different degrees and different types of instability. This study therefore gives greater importance to a "processual" approach of shifting boundaries, which has revealed the statutory instability of many of the families surveyed, whether linked to geographic mobility or not. Mobility and instability, which have very different significance in different social groups, are often determined by a certain discrepancy between the resources possessed by an individual (or a family) and the social standing enjoyed or to which he/she lays claim. The scarcity or resources can, in turn, be linked to the precariousness of the position occupied or its recentness, and the low recognition that it implies.

Due to their borderline situation, many families, particularly between the working and middle classes, could not be easily classified in a typical context of working or middle classes, and therefore constitute intermediate categories. It was not easy either to distinguish between stable and unstable within the different classes the researchers worked on. Many of the interviewees had, in fact, traversed alternately stable and unstable phases. The unstable-stables – as the authors called them – refer to such persons who could be in the course of "stabilization", or who could be living in quite relative stability. Such, for instance, is the case of working-class immigrant families of North African origin, living in France for the past twenty-odd years, who have been granted French nationality and own housing of extremely modest proportions. The various borderline situations, whether in the case of intermediate categories or unstable-stables, led the researchers to conduct an analysis that helped free the study of an individual's social status from often very rigid categories.

If the rise of uncertainty is widely observed, the consequences of the process of growing insecurity and destabilization affecting the entire social structure are not uniform and are not experienced in the same way by all the groups and all the actors (Castel 2009). If some have the necessary resources for "playing" with the uncertain and making an asset of it (especially among the transiting bourgeoisie), for others, instability stands for nothing but constraints (particularly for the working class).

Mobility and strategies with boundaries
Each boundary crossed leaves its mark on family histories, in a positive direction (promotion) for some, in a negative direction (drop in social standing) for others. The boundaries represent lines that the members of each family have crossed, together or individually, in their journey through social space. They also indicate the lines that should not be crossed and condemn them to remain on this side of the barrier.

This game of voluntary or induced movements in social space helps better understand certain collective strategies. Thus, the boundary sometimes stands for a trench to leap over in the quest for an egress, a social ascension or salvation – as is often the case with the middle class as well as immigrant families. However, social boundary sometimes looms up like a rampart providing protecting from risks,

as in the case of the old and established bourgeoisie; this is also frequent in other groups as when one distinguishes between the space for men and that for women, the place of children from that of adults, or that of the rights of citizens of a country from those who do not have them. A code of conduct helps distinguish between families whose "kids loiter in the streets" from those who "keep their children under control". Sometimes, these are almost walls that surround and imprison. This is particularly so among the working class, for whom these social boundaries acquire a singular force, such as when it is mandatory to have perfect mastery over the written language for gaining entry into certain "grandes écoles". In the working class world, families often attempt to strengthen educational investment in order to overcome territorial or ethnic boundaries that immure them in the neighbourhood by processes of disqualification and, sometimes, even stigmatisation.

Spatial and social mobility of individuals and families help observe social boundaries. In fact, it is when they narrate their life stories that individuals describe social space, the boundaries they were compelled to respect and those that they surmounted or tried to surmount. A complex play was then observed: the individuals, depending on the resources that they possess, often try to bypass the social boundaries lived under or protect themselves from possible loss of social standing by confirming the boundaries that help maintain it. The boundaries can be questioned, moved and, sometimes, transgressed and reconstructed. This often happens in periods of crisis and great uncertainty, unless they emerge strengthened from this situation.

Boundaries as the subject and vector of conflicts: Violence and protection
Whether the oppositions and conflicts are longstanding and latent, or recent and active, they are constantly linked to the rupture that boundaries produce in a continuous space. The theme of violence is recurrent in the works of Charles Tilly and Michèle Lamont, discussed earlier.

The fieldwork for this paper also revealed an important link between social boundaries and violence. Family violence and social violence meet in the educational experiences and life stories of the families met in the course of this research. Direct testimonies are rare from the well-heeled classes, whose members often enjoy a greater degree of both family and social cohesion, along with resources for protection, particularly economic ones, which often help avoid terrible and traumatising experiences. This is also, possibly, the effect of having control over mise en scène mechanisms for individual and collective representations of the self. As for the middle class, it is the lesson of personal success, triumphing over adversities, which shape the discourse on family histories: violence is mostly mentioned when "the worst" has been averted, and the "bad times" are mostly a thing of the past. These families must use greater means than others to defend the inferior boundaries of their social standing – through the choice of their place of residence, their children's schools or the company they keep. Several interviews record authoritarian schooling experiences, liberating breaks in their youth, and

anxiety over the rise of urban violence and security policies gone astray. These testimonies often echo not only political discourse but also sociological ones on the "decline" of the middle class (Chauvel 2006; Lojkine 2005).

For the working class, violence can also be a taboo insofar as it is seen as a stigma, an expression of what is considered to be a "culture of violence" or an "environment" specific to "sensitive" zones that mark persons socially identified with their place of residence (Merklen 2008). Hence, it is remarkable that the passage of the figure of the *worker* to that of *inhabitant* as the centre of representations of the working class has drastically modified the boundaries with which the contours of the working class were defined[9]. The divides and the separators between social groups have become territorialised, which confers greater analytical force on the concept of social boundary.

Violence is often objectivised by the action of public authorities, including social services, which aim at separating the "authors" of violence from their "victims", naturalising the separation between what is legal (considered as legitimate) and what is not and is thus disqualified. These actions or interventions can be disputed and be condemned, in turn, as being "violent": "institutional violence", "judiciarisation" of protection and aid measures, and "victimisation" of deprived classes. This game of qualifying and disqualifying behaviour according to what is "violent" constitutes a good indicator of boundaries between social classes and strategies of distinction within the same class. Due to this, it is often difficult to gather accounts on experiences of violence. This is partly due to the defence strategies of those who are most exposed to the discourse of denunciation. On the other hand, boundaries that should not be crossed, behavioural modes that one should not have developed are explicitly presented as forms of "protection" given the risk of disqualification and loss of social standing. Exposed daily to violence, the working class is extremely attentive to the use of symbols of violence. They always run the risk of having a case slapped on them on accusations of being "violent".

During an ongoing survey on the violence perpetrated in local libraries, the researchers found that the act of burning books (in France, local libraries are often targeted during urban riots) remains incomprehensible to librarians and social workers. The boundary that separates "them" (*the neighbourhood youths*, taken to be authors of these attacks and various forms of violence perpetrated against schools or libraries) from "us" (the social workers, librarians and teachers) is thus reinforced by incomprehension and rejection of the former's behaviour by the latter. Such protests, thus described as "senseless", contribute to the re-emergence of the old boundary (in a new form) that separated the working classes from the written culture and a political culture identified with the written word (Merklen and Murard 2008).

Boundaries traced out in space

Drawing up social boundaries has often been studied in urban sociology, beginning with the works of the Chicago school, particularly through the concept of

"moral province" advanced by Robert Park or Roderick McKenzie (McKenzie 1921) for describing city zones as spheres of differentiated social representation, or through the concept of the "ghetto" developed by Louis Wirth (Wirth 1928) as a symbolic boundary that encloses a social group within a circumscribed territory of the city, a concept that was later used to describe the situation of black people in the great cities of the United States. In France, the idea of the spatial confinement of a fraction of the working classes, composed of people descended from immigrants of former colonies, in State-built districts (or "cité") is gaining ground (Lapeyronnie 2008).

Today's big city is often fragmented into isolated residential areas, those of the poor as also those of the rich. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced on the American continents – from the "gated communities" of Los Angeles to the "condominios fechados" of Rio de Janeiro, and the "torres con servicios" of Buenos Aires – but, increasingly, it also seems to concern major European cities in which there is a growing interest in the issue of "divisions of the city" (Topalov 2005; Oberti, Preteceille 2004). The focus on such divisions has helped understand that things are not exactly as they are sometimes portrayed. As others, these spatial boundaries separate – in their case, often brutally – and at the same time organise communication and to-and-fro movements.

If observed on a small scale, one notices that mobility is often the ruling norm in working class spaces as well as that of the middle- and the well-heeled classes. The residents are found to live in "ghettos" following a residential trajectory that is often neglected as a study (and which could lead them elsewhere) and continue to circulate in the urban space, sometimes intensely. In fact, the gates of urban "ghettos" are not firmly closed and those within its confines often get out. Further, a large number of people work in the premises of the wealthy, come and go during the day or at night, and establish a kind of link between the most closed residences of the big city, including the poorest neighbourhoods, even if they are not in a position to bring the boundaries or walls tumbling down. It would be pertinent to study and describe the formation, porosity, and shifting of urban boundaries with a fresh approach that would involve making a major change in scale.

Today, many agree that in both mobility and local rooting that there is a growing "territorialisation" of social divisions in France. The communities, classes and groups occupy their own spaces in cities, neighbourhoods, contiguous spaces with variable degrees of density or homogeneity, with sometimes precise and sometimes less tangible demarcations. It is necessary to understand how spatial boundaries develop, are superposed or compete with other forms of dividing social space. The divisions of the city are composed of elements that are as much material (from a heterogeneous distribution of provision of goods and services over space) as moral (since moral codes often require territories to "work") and social (from the differential rooting of different groups and activities in space). But these urban boundaries need to be studied simultaneously with other forms of social division. And this intertwining of city divisions with other social boundaries is carried out practically in the discourse and practices of individuals and families.

The analysis that Jean-Charles Depaule and Christian Topalov have made of the relation existing between space and words referring to this space is worthy of being recalled (Depaule, Topalov 1996). Urban space is indirectly described by the way one speaks in the city, and directly by words naming it at the various scales on which one apprehends it through analysis or daily use. The boundaries that sanction the division of urban space help distinguish between and set different types of behaviour. Individuals "know" that their behaviour must be adjusted to the place they are in, and each person is capable of infallibly locating the exact point at which the code of conduct changes.

The distance separating the "fashionable districts" and the "cités" of Parisian suburbs is not solely given by the difference of facades or marks of urban planning, the prestigiousness of the place, the social status of the families, the academic qualifications or professions of its members. The place that these different locations occupy in people's trajectories also marks distances. The same boundaries can sometimes take different directions, depending on the role they would have played or are playing in individual trajectories. Sometimes, greater importance is given to stability, whereas in other cases, individuals highlight their ability of having surmounted barriers.

The comparison between the trajectories of two working class families is extremely significant. Pascale and André's family value stability and rooting in a locality, whereas Joëlle's family is marked by spatial mobility signifying social progress for her. Pascale and André continue to live today in their childhood neighbourhood in Le Havre, with their three children, in the building opposite the one in which lives Pascale's mother. Territorial position and stability are one of the major symbolic sources of their social standing. However, Joëlle, born in a Parisian suburb and having led an extremely unstable life, regards the crossing of the ring road and possession of housing in Paris – where she now lives with her three children – as a passage to her present life from her instability of the past.

The families met during the survey have undergone various experiences by way of geographic mobility. Few still live in their place of birth, but some still reside close to where they hail from. Others have traversed long distances and the ties with the place of birth have slackened, if not been completely cut off. The crossing of geographic boundaries – which are also political and social ones – boundaries between States and boundaries between social classes, takes place over rather long periods of time that define the trajectory of these persons. However, daily trajectories relating to professional or domestic activities, usually observed in terms of living conditions, modes of transport and commute time involved ("wasted") edify the fact that the family as a group works within the same class (or community) and "cross-border" contacts, maintained outside of their own positions.

Temporal boundaries and trajectories
German sociologists working on mobility term the division of the stages of a biography as "the stations of life", which can be identified by spotting the events

that separate them ("scansions", as other sociologists specialising in life histories and narratives[10]). There are classifications by age, temporal units linked to studies (schoolings), professional activities, life as a couple, children, or moving house. This research has attempted to analyse what contributes to the similarities and the differences of various trajectories within a class; distinguish those who have followed the most intermittent ones from those who have been more constant over a long period of time, and who may have some amount of control over their future.

This presupposes the vision of a trajectory that has already been narrated (as the result of a sociological interview) and therefore a certain reflexivity through which the individual refers to his/her own biography by including social boundaries in his/her narrative. Instability and stability are not merely sociological categories imposed upon individuals – based on job insecurity statistics, for instance – but are incorporated in biographical narratives. This perspective in which the individual himself/herself identifies the social boundaries that he/she inserts in the course of his/her life is all the more important as in our days, individuals are increasingly subjected to a "de-standardisation of life" (Bessin 1993). The institutions contributing with growing difficulty to producing standardised thresholds of age (at what age does one stop being young? At what age does one become a senior citizen?), social boundaries can serve as landmarks for locating oneself in time ("I became an adult once I left provincial France"). However, a social boundary that one may wish to cross sometimes obliges one to remain at a particular biographical status: "I can't have children until I finish my studies".

The introduction of social boundaries in biographical paths also reveals the way in which the story of the interviewee mingles with that of his/her family: placing oneself with reference to successive generations (grandparents, parents, siblings) and judging the significance of family ties. Those who locate themselves in a social, cultural or symbolical continuity, in reproducing family heritage, at a point where the boundaries crossed appear to be faintly traced or are completely erased, stand out from those who have experienced a break in the trajectory of their own family, sometimes even with regard to their own siblings. Thereafter, the boundaries separating the generations have been analysed by distinguishing between "education received" and "education given", continuity and discontinuity, and different types of relation to education.

The identification of temporal scansions also helps understand the meaning of constructing boundaries as these are built over time and with time; they, too, have a history, they create history, and, above all, they enable individuals and families to consider life as a story that is both common and distinct from that of others, to make a narrative of it[11].

A historical and biographical approach to boundaries helps present them in movement. It has been possible, during biographical interviews, to compare the trajectories of individuals or family groups, "ascending" or "descending" trajectories, gain perspectives on future trajectories – that of children and youths. Temporal boundaries separating the significant stages of these trajectories have also been identified. In terms of relations to boundaries, what appears to be particularly

significant is the distance covered from the departure point, the boundaries crossed (class, group, etc.), regressions, ties maintained or not with those who have remained in their old positions (in the family, among friends, colleagues, neighbours); the assets acquired due to this mobility, the benefits of mobility and the effects of eventual stabilisation of the current position have also been taken into consideration.

The experience of frontiers within a trajectory, seen in retrospect, also includes the symbolic tagging of the course followed: "upstart", "déclassé", "success", etc. This is especially true for those who have been particularly mobile and, above all, the "middle class".

Another effect of the biographical experience of boundaries appears in interviews under terms of "open" or "close", which characterises a family or an individual with regard to others. Thus, those characterised as bearing an "open mind", "available", "communicative", differ from those who are "shut", "isolated", do not cooperate or are "marginals", etc. A double discourse can be used for the leisured class: an open mind, geographic opening or being "open to others" does not exclude the bourgeoisie from remaining relatively shut socially.

Three types of biographical events, behind the change of boundaries, were observed during this survey: socio-professional mobility, residential mobility and migration proper (which also often implies socio-professional changes). It was also observed that the educational experience of families formed part of these mechanisms capable of defining change, either directly, as in the cases of the family over-investing in upbringing, or indirectly, in cases in which the task of rearing was delegated to qualified educationists or associations, which Is the underlying reason for generation gap and discontinuity.

The degree of activation of a boundary

Boundaries have several "states" of development and functioning. According to Charles Tilly, the spectrum can range from what is related to problems of life and death (as during a war) to what appears to be ignored or forgotten. The extent to which a boundary is active constitutes the main distinction for identifying the degree of its elaboration or "solidity", which is structural in nature and amounts to being cyclical, "old" and "recent", and helps deliberate on the connection that may exist between different types of boundaries. The boundaries crossed by someone who has experienced a meteoric social rise or a rapid decline open and dissolve behind him/her, while others close or become rigid.

A "well-established" boundary is one associated with a sacred value, a strong belief that may not be transgressed without questioning moral or social order. Questioning a well-established boundary is usually regarded as an acute crisis, generating conflict.

A boundary "under construction" is one that aims at protecting an acquired position and (social) benefits, fulfils the function of protection, legitimisation, separation between what is permitted and what is prohibited; it presupposes an ongoing battle, a fight engaged in, whether avant-garde or rearguard; building a

boundary may mostly very simply mean moving it, getting recognition for a new, shared social space.

The "abolished" boundary is one which one can transgress without having to pay (entrance or exit) for it, one that retains a symbolic value or that of memory; it can thus have a strong presence during an interview – for instance, those who present change of social category as being the achievement of their life, having passed, for instance, from the working class to the middle class, without, however, erecting a boundary between them and the original category; this boundary exists but is regularly crossed.

The "hidden" boundaries" are concealed by contradictions between public policy and practice of discrimination and, at the individual level, in interviews, by Freudian slips, feelings of shame; they are felt as a stigma, especially when there is a perceptible gap between the often-unstable position currently occupied and skills or values.

Parenting and activation of boundaries
The role of parenting is central to the ceaseless effort of producing social boundaries. Education may produce, activate or fight many boundaries. This is why this study gives prime importance to what it implies in daily family life as well as associations (cultural, coaching classes). Education, as it is imparted and received in the family, outside the school system, is undoubtedly the major vector for learning. It constitutes the connecting thread through which it has been possible to follow the tracing of social boundaries, understand how a child learns to recognise them, how the sense of possible and forbidden boundary shifts is acquired. It is through family upbringing that one learns the social codes with which individuals deal with social relations imposed on him/her. This training helps to be integrated not only in a global society (as an individual) but also in a particular group and the differentiation with other groups. By learning about social boundaries, individuals are prepared for participation in the social game, competition and cooperation, as also in conflicts between the members of different groups. Each identifies his/her viewpoint as a shared one and learns to position himself/ herself in the social space.

Education cannot be reduced to schooling or the process of socialisation. It is the result of collective construction efforts wherein the reflexivity of the actors comprises a key element. The family environment is at the heart of the educational experience as it is within it that the relation to oneself and others is felt, along with the flexibility or the rigidity of social boundaries. The unity of action is never a given. Social experience is not simply "lived through" or "felt"; it demands activity on the part of individuals. It is the construction of one's experience, which necessitates the ability to be critical and maintain a distance with regard to oneself[12]. Individual and collective practices cannot be reduced to merely stepping into pre-established roles, or to the pursuit of strategic interests; individuals have to piece together the meaning of their practices. The notion of educational experience places interactions around upbringing and the horizon of meaning that results

from these, at the centre of this research, while simultaneously taking into account the conditions and constraints within which they have taken place. This also helps understand the confrontation between institutional realities and the experiences of parents, children, peer groups, teachers, and all actors involved in education[13].

Educational experience and makeshift arrangements

Educational experiences undergo transformations linked to larger social "metamorphoses", particularly the disintegration of the wage society, the erosion of social protection and the increasing vulnerability of social status (Castel 1995). Although they undoubtedly present a great social risk for the greatest number, these changes can sometimes be considered to be positive when they lead to the creation of new leeway for singularisation and individual liberty. Also, these experiences do impact the construction and redefinition of boundaries between individuals and social groups.

This is particularly true for the current situation, which is often uncertain, in which families find it difficult to develop parenting strategies for their children. Without actually giving up on planning, they take often recourse to makeshift arrangements and regulated improvisations, which have, anyway, always existed but were less obvious.

These makeshift arrangements, requiring each to seize opportunity by the forelock and dispose the "residue of events" (Lévi-Strauss 1962), are taken by a considerable number of families when they are daily faced with the implementation of rules for controlling their children's use of the television and the internet, the people they frequent or their outings. In an uncertain world, in which the upward social mobility promised by the education system is highly doubtful, families and individuals "cobble" up the upbringing they give, based on the upbringing they themselves received and probably also on that given by close relatives, what they read in books and magazines, what they watch on television or the internet, what they hear on the radio and in conversations. They have to invent or reinvent a different upbringing for each child, based not only on the relationship built with him/her and how they perceive him/her, but also on the idea that they have of the society to which they belong (potentials and obstacles). This form of makeshift can encourage open parenting strategies oriented towards the future. The upbringing given and constantly reinvented, contributes to producing boundaries.

Another role of family upbringing is thus discovered: helping individuals to discern the bollards that mark social space. It is, in fact, within the family that they develop their strategies and position themselves in the face of boundaries. And upbringing plays a role in "constructing" (in the sense that psychoanalysis says that we "construct" a loss or mourning) life experiences resulting from the imposition of social boundaries. For example, if a student fails in school, he/she knows that a social boundary will loom over this path, which would be closed. He/she would then need to use the cognitive tools that his family would have given him/her for ascribing a reason for his failure. He/She might perhaps tell himself/herself, "Studies aren't for me", but might also say, "School's not for people

like us."

Conclusion

The concept of the "social boundary" was coined in the ethnological works on the role that this demarcation line played both in the separation and the communication between distinct social groups. These works highlighted the way in which the relation to the boundary contributes to the internal organisation of each group. Since, the concept of the social boundary has migrated towards sociology and, generally, studies of contemporary societies. It is therefore necessary to observe mainly the internal boundaries and the role they play in the divisions criss-crossing the same society. Social boundaries fulfil several roles: they serve the purposes of distinction and communication between social groups and classes, and from this perspective, are a constituent of social order. Yet, they are equally constituents of social conflict, which means that the boundaries are not a "given" but can generate conflicts.

From the individual, and not societal angle, it has been observed how individuals use and play with social boundaries to position themselves in social space and perceive, conceive and make their movements visible, whether these assume the form of social progress, decline or loss of standing. From the individual's standpoint, social boundaries are thus powerful cognitive tools that help, for instance, compose biographical narratives. This study has also endeavoured to show that boundaries serve as a landmark for individuals, enabling them to identify themselves with a social category, even as they distinguish themselves from categories considered to be more or less undesirable.

A major contribution of the work that served as the basis of this article comes from the link that has been highlighted between "upbringing" and "social boundaries". By examining family upbringing and not formal schooling, the researchers were able to observe how parents use social boundaries daily for "bringing up" their children, that is to say, giving them tools for orientating themselves in social space. The boundaries constitute, for some, a perimeter not to be crossed, and for others, a goal to be attained. Thus regarded, the concept of the social boundary has been a precious tool for the authors to understand better the forms assumed by parenting in contemporary societies. It became evident that, while bringing up their children as "individuals", and by assigning greater value to their autonomy, parents teach them to conceive their strategies and tactics in the context of a social space that is often uncertain, but divided and structured, where the clearly observed demarcations enable some, at least, to locate themselves on the "right" side.

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Notes

1   A first version of this text was published in University of Delhi, Working Paper Series, 2011/IV, www.europeanstudiesgroupdu.org

2   This article is based on the analyses and results of a collective research conducted over three years in France by several researchers and students of the Centre d'étude des mouvements sociaux (EHESS-CNRS) in Paris: Barbara Bauchat, Mihaï Dinu Gheorghiu, Pascale Gruson, Mariana Heredia, Lucette Labache, Denis Merklen, Daniella Rocha, Monique de Saint Martin, and Judit Vari. Conducted from a comparative angle, the research was also carried on in Campinas, Brazil, where it was coordinated by Ana Maria Almeida (Focus/UNICAMP), in Romania, where it was supervised by Mihaï Dinu Gheorghiu (University of Iasi) and in Sweden, where it was conducted by Élisabeth Hultqvist (University of Stockholm). The collective results of this study led to a final report in 2007, several articles in Brazil and Romania, a book (Gheorghiu, Saint Martin Eds., 2010). Although the slant of the research was comparative, this article will focus on the research conducted in France.

3   An early summary of the works on boundaries can be found in Lamont and Molnar 2002.

4   On the distinction between internal boundaries and external borders and as they are reflected in French society, cf. the recent work edited by Didier Fassin (Fassin 2010: 5-24).

5   Charles Tilly adopts the epistemological perspective formulated by Mario Bunge (Tilly 2005).

6   Andreas Wimmer thus observes the twofold aspect of the concept of boundary: categorial and behaviourial. The former includes the acts of social classification and collective representation; the second concerns the daily network of relations, which is the result of individual acts of contact and detachment. At the individual level, the categorial and behaviourial aspects appear as two cognitive patterns. The former divides the social sphere between social groups, between "us" and "them", whereas the latter suggests action plans: how to relate to individuals classified as "us" and "them" in certain given circumstances. According to Wimmer, social boundaries are established only when the two patterns coincide, when the ways of apprehending the world matches with the modes of action in the world (Wimmer 2008).

7   Twenty-eight families agreed to be interviewed, sometimes twice or three times: thirty-eight parents and thirty children were interviewed. The study was conducted with the aim of crossing the data obtained through interviews with the observations and the statistical survey conducted in 2003 by Insee on "Education and Family".

8   Cf. the analyses of Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson 1965.

9   The reorientation of public policies for the working classes was also observed throughout France (Madec 2002).

10   Battagliola, Bertaux-Viame, Ferrand, Imbert 1993, for instance.

[11] There is the issue of heritage, transmission, reproduction. The more stable boundaries – those most distant temporally – attached to an objective, measurable duration, differ from the more unstable, closer or recent ones, and our relation with these is more ambivalent, of a subjective duration, which can be minimised, denied.

[12] "Experience can be considered to be the way in which the actors constitute themselves, conceive a game of identities, practices and meanings." (Dubet 2008: 36).

[13] This is how, for instance, the role of the media in producing social boundaries by creating a reservoir of more or less fleeting arguments, which are then snapped up in families for interpreting various social events and ordeals, became visible.

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