*B*oundaries, *I*nequalities, and *L*egitimacies (*B.I.L.*) – A Conceptual Framework for Borders Studies Collaboration

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ABSTRACT
This contribution reflects the ongoing discussions of a group of participants at a GLAA border studies workshop in the summer of 2017. It seeks to develop an integrated conceptual framework and a basis for research cooperation among scholars, programs, and institutions studying borders. The framework itself is designed to allow for the contribution of diverse disciplines, approaches, and methodologies, to a shared research agenda focused on three intertwined dimensions of borders, namely 1) boundaries, 2) inequalities and 3) legitimacies.

Dimension one centers on the notion that boundary drawing constitutively links insides and outsides and is irreducibly tied to the construction of social (id)entities. Boundaries in practice not only signal conceptual relation(s); they have complex and multifaceted political, social, cultural, emotional, and environmental implications as well. As any boundary drawing practice produces difference, the project's second dimension focuses on how differences are translated into inequality in practice. Thirdly, boundaries can and should also be assessed normatively. The third conceptual dimension therefore links to questions of the legitimacy of boundary drawing practices, resulting differences, and inequalities. It also allows studying the construction of legitimacies.

Together these dimensions open a conceptual space which diverse approaches can occupy (addressing one or more of these dimensions) in order to add to a growing web of knowledge on boundaries and borders. To allow for a cumulative process, this paper envisions a shared digital platform that bundles conceptual resources, and provides a home for contributions that draw on this framework. Over time, it may generate a web of studies (from multiple member institutions, both faculty and students, and focused on both teaching and research) that allow for increased knowledge generation and cooperation across member institutions.

KEY WORDS
Boundaries/Borders, Difference/Inequality, Legitimacy, Collaborative Research, Conceptual Frameworks

INTRODUCTION

Boundaries and borders are omnipresent.[1] At times we become aware of them actively, as in cases of traveling to conferences or workshops in foreign countries (on national borders see Shelley 2013, pp.1-13). These same borders might not function as meaningful filters when we communicate by video call halfway around the globe. But in doing so, we might at times notice that we have unintentionally overstepped this or that cultural or social boundary.

One can study boundary and border drawing practices (on practice theory see Schatzki 2001, Bueger and Gadinger 2018) at a very abstract and theoretical level (see Abbott 2001). Other types of boundaries and borders, like school districts or voting eligibility rights, are more central to conscious everyday experiences. Some boundaries like mountain ranges are highly visible. Other boundaries like 'glass ceilings' and 'sticky floors' (see Chodorow 2002), limited access of working class children to higher education (see Pugsley 2018), or restrictions to communication flows (see Mueller 2017), are more difficult to identify. Some boundaries seem unalterably fixed (like the borders of Campione d'Italia) and natural (like the Rocky Mountains). Other boundaries seem fluid or blurred (e.g. the boundary between communication technologies and human bodies, see Sugiyama and Vincent 2013).

But whether we are dealing with abstract or very specific boundaries and whether we become aware of them or not are key to societal organization. Conceptually, boundaries (as the broader, more abstract concept) are irreducibly tied to processes of individuation (of social entities like people, businesses, states, or international organizations) and consequently, to social interactions. As Butler has convincingly argued, "the boundary is a function of the relation, a brokering of difference, a negotiation in which I am bound to you in my separateness" (Butler 2009, p.44).

As such, boundaries simultaneously establish separateness and relate that which is individuated. Focusing on boundary drawing processes consequently allows us to move beyond a focus on a social entity in the singular, and take plurality in the construction of differences as a basic starting-point of inquiry. At a basic level, studying boundary and border constructions is about understanding how differences are established and re-negotiated. This points us towards boundaries and borders as processes (rather than stable and natural things) that constitute and relate 'things' as functions of their performance: "Social entities […] come into existence when social actors tie social boundaries together in certain ways. Boundaries come first, then entities" (Abbott 2001, p. 263). Taking a border studies perspective makes it possible to link insides and outsides (see Walker 1992) conceptually, while simultaneously underscoring the developmental or processual character of these relations. Border studies, in this sense, encourages us to focus on the constitutive dimension of boundary drawing processes, and to make the relational and processual character of social entities visible (on boundary drawing and community building see Anderson 2016).

Such a broad perspective on boundaries not only makes studying boundaries central to understanding social arrangements (see Onuf 1998), it also highlights that studying boundaries is highly complex and cannot be claimed by any single discipline. Border studies can be seen as an integrative perspective which synthesizes insights from fields such as philosophy, mathematics, biology, physics, sociology, law, topology, geography, history, political science, film studies, literature, and history. The complexities of studying boundaries and borders consequently call for ways of integrating, systematizing, and coordinating insights provided by these diverse disciplines (see Newman 2006).

[1] While the concepts of boundaries and borders are often used synonymously in everyday language, I will refer to boundaries in the broader sense of signaling difference and reserve the concept of borders to signal the territorial demarcation between states (see Popescu 2010).

At the same time, all of these disciplines share the challenges of addressing the ontological, political and normative dimensions of boundary drawing processes. As such, it is possible to structure border studies (in its disciplinary diversity) around these shared dimensions of inquiry.[2] Doing so can lead to a broad framework that not only makes studying boundaries and borders more manageable, but can add to creating a web of knowledge that integrates multiple and diverse disciplines and approaches.

The first (ontological) dimension of studying boundaries concerns the practices and mechanics of establishing difference and sameness. This dimension can be addressed both at a theoretical and an empirical level, but primarily focuses on the complex and multifaceted ways in which boundaries and borders are drawn, and how this constitutes not only difference but thingness as well. This first (ontological) dimension (which will be expanded upon below) at base addresses the creation of insides and outsides, but it does so in a way that suggests moving from border studies (in the singular) to borders studies (in the plural).

The second (political) dimension of inquiry concerns how boundary drawing practices relate to differences and inequalities.[3] While differences (e.g. among people and groups) are closely linked to observable inequalities, differences and inequalities are conceptually distinct. While boundaries and borders are central to social inequalities, not all boundaries effectively constitute politically or socially relevant markers of inequality. Depending on historically situated settings, some differences will play a significant role, while others will not. Age will play a role in determining voting eligibility, whereas gender and social positioning, nowadays no longer do in many places.[4] Gender at the same time is still a marker of inequalities when it, for example, comes to wages (see Auspurg et al. 2017). As there is no obvious or necessary link between specific differences and social inequalities, it is central to understand how differences are translated into inequalities. In political terms, *some* differences are central to the uneven distribution of advantages. As such, the second dimension of inquiry focuses on how differences (or heterogeneities) are translated into inequalities.

Just like differences cannot immediately be equated with inequalities, inequalities are not immediately normatively problematic or valued. Some inequalities, like the distinction between civilians and soldiers in warfare (see Foote and Williams 2017) are broadly considered to be normative achievements, while others, like inequalities stemming from racial discrimination are predominantly considered to be problematic (Strmic-Pawl et al. 2017). But if this is the case, inquiries focusing on the construction of inequalities cannot, without further consideration, move to a normative assessment of the processes under investigation. Not only do boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate actions change over time; how inequalities are perceived or discursively situated is also central to understanding how boundaries become relevant to individuals and societies. Additionally, normative justifications are central to stabilizing differences and inequalities, while normative challenges can destabilize, fracture, and develop social orders. As such, this framework suggests integrating the study of how boundaries and their associated effects are legitimized as the third dimension of this research framework.

From the perspective taken here, border studies are then very much about understanding how boundary drawing processes, the production of inequalities, and the construction of (il)legitimacy are related in practices. To the degree that a shared framework facilitates contributions from different disciplines using diverse research methods, it can help to 'triangulate' the knowledge we generate about boundaries and borders, and integrate them into a web of

[2] To be clear, I do not seek to suggest that the boundaries between these concepts are clear cut or obvious. If anything, they are fuzzy (on fuzzy logic see Davis 2005). I maintain the distinction for heuristic purposes.

[3] Drawing on the classical work of David Easton (1979), political in this context refers to the 'allocation of advantages' and purposefully remains very broad. The idea is to integrate economic, social and cultural aspects under a broad concept of politics.

[4] These later factors may still be relevant for voting behavior.

knowledge. Once a starting point is made, it could also serve as a reference point for studies conducted within (but not limited to) different member institutions of the Global Liberal Arts Alliance (GLAA).

In an important sense, studying borders has the potential to make the contingencies of specific borders and their multifaceted implications (also economic, social, or aesthetical) visible.[5] While border studies are not necessarily linked to a critical stance or political activism, their basic focus engages the processes informing boundaries and in doing so makes their contingencies tangible. This, in turn, opens space in which to imagine how the world might be different. As such, this allows for studying boundary drawing processes in not only a demanding undertaking, but one that can gain from a systematic and structured framework of inquiry. Providing a set of guidelines on studying these processes can enable collaboration across institutions and disciplines in a way that invites scholars at all stages of their careers (from students to emeritus) to contribute. Doing so promises to facilitate an increasing web of knowledge, but it also promises to contribute to democratic deliberation.

In the following, I will elaborate on each of the three dimensions introduced above (***B***oundaries, ***I***nequalities, ***L***egitimacies) before outlining how such a framework could be implemented as a research process. In doing so, I do not aim to provide a fixed or static framework or a comprehensive tool-box. Proposing a specific framework is in itself a boundary drawing process. But it is intended to start a debate, not arrest discussions on studying boundaries and borders. As such, I set out here to draw only a thin line on a sandy beach, soon to be washed over by the waves.

BOUNDARIES AND BORDERS

As mentioned above, studying borders can center on the construction of boundaries themselves. While boundary construction processes can be studied in multiple ways methodologically (e.g. discourse analysis, process tracing), I contend that border studies has much to gain from taking a processual-relational (ontological) starting-point (see Bucher 2011, 2017; Jackson and Nexon 1999; Rescher 1996, 2000).[6] While I cannot elaborate on the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the approach in detail here, a few basic comments are in order to situate the discussion.

Processual-relational thinking focuses on 'related becoming over time'. It especially lends itself to studying boundaries and borders as it reverses the well-established "ontological commitment to an already constituted and permanent reality" (Albert et al. 2001), inhabited by static things with fixed boundaries. It generally prioritizes activity over substance, process over product, change over persistence, and novelty over continuity (Rescher 1996, p.31). Where dominant Western philosophy sees discrete individuality, separateness, classificatory stability, and passivity (being acted upon); processual (relationalism) sees interactive relatedness, wholeness (totality), fluidity and activity (agency) (see Rescher 1996, p.35).

This means that 'things' are not understood as static, but as "complex bundles of coordinated processes" (Rescher 2000, p.9) which exhibit varying degrees of stability. Social entities "come into existence when social actors tie social boundaries together in certain ways" (Abbott 2001, p.263) through what one can call yoking processes. Yoking processes necessarily involve the destruction of a "previous dimension of difference" (Abbott 2001, p.272) and the establishment of new connections between dimensions of difference which were separate beforehand. The emergence of the state, for instance, "must be seen as involving the persistent drawing and redrawing of boundaries, establishing and re-establishing those demarcations that

[5] These later factors may still be relevant for voting behavior.

[6] I do not consider processual-relational thinking to the only perspective compatible with the framework outlined here. As mentioned above, the framework is intended to be inclusive and I explicitly welcome contributions that take a different point of departure.

make it possible to speak of the state" (Jackson and Nexon 1999, p.315).[7] In a radical way, this implies that boundaries are prior to entities. Taking a processual-relational perspective, one can then focus on how boundaries are drawn in the process of creating social entities (in the plural). Boundaries then take center stage not only in terms of focusing our inquiries, but also at the level of ontology and epistemology.[8] It also points us to multiplicity and complexity in boundary drawing or yoking processes. Methodologically, processual-relational thinking suggests inquiries into 'verbing' (see Albert et al. 2001, p.5), and the analysis of language practices (especially acts of reification).

Processual-relational thinking also nicely lends itself to empirically highlighting complexity in studying boundaries. While a boundary in the singular is conceptually intelligible (e.g. the line of a circle separating the space encompassed by the circle and the outside), empirically observable and socially relevant boundaries are more complex and arguably not reducible to a singular decisive act of boundary drawing.

First, any boundary drawing process can in itself be disaggregated into multiple underlying processes. For example, upholding 'a border' between states is a multi-faceted ongoing process that involves not only the work of border patrol agents or immigration officers, but also, for example, legislation which itself is based on the observance of the boundary between legislative and executive branches of government. The technologies and supplies needed to reproduce a border depends on a specific division of labor. Borders are also reproduced in the perception of actors, which for example, involves aesthetic dimensions (see Wolfe 2014). In other words, boundaries and borders are seldom simple. Rather they are the continuous and temporary outcome of multiple interdependent practices which themselves are characterized by boundary drawing practices at different levels. Studying a specific border therefore necessarily encompasses the analysis of diverse boundary drawing practices and how these constrain and enable the stabilization of a specific border.

Second, and closely related, specific practices may have implications for a number of different boundary drawing practices simultaneously. For example, agreement to some new set of WTO rules would have implications for a whole range of national borders, but also for some of the underlying boundary drawing processes mentioned above. Additionally, the notion that actions are relevant for different actors at different levels at the same time, is wonderfully captured by Putnam's two level game (see Putnam 1988). Figurational sociological approaches also underscore that actions always speak to different (potentially unknown) sets of actors, and it therefore becomes difficult to predict or bring about intended outcomes in complex social systems (see Elias 1978). This disconnect between intended and actual outcomes can then be understood as a maker of complex social systems more generally. At base, boundary drawing processes constitutive of national borders generate a multitude of intended and unintended outcomes at different levels and for different groups. The regional effects of globalization processes illustrate the point. As such, focusing on borders not only suggests looking at plurality and relation, but also at multiplicity and complexity. It is therefore useful to think about borders in the plural rather than only in the singular and move from (in a sense) *border studies to borders studies*.

This of course does not preclude studying a specific boundary or a specific type of border, say the stabilization of residential segregation (see Ellis et al. 2018). But doing so requires inquiries into multiple related practices. Boundaries, while central to any type of individuation, are institutions in continuous need of stabilization.[9] If the practices upholding specific boundaries are discontinued, the associated borders would give way to some other boundary or border regimes. These practices need to be understood in their complexity. Returning to the example above, upholding national borders involves a number of dimensions encompassing legislation, border

[7] On the construction of sovereignty see Biersteker and Weber 1996, Bartelson 2006.

[8] For this and related discussions see Bucher 2011.

[9] Some material boundaries like mountain ranges, water divides or the Karman line may not be social or institutional facts in the narrow sense. On brute and institutional facts see Searle 1995.

patrol (training), economic relations, identity politics, nationalism, technology development, or environmental aspects, etc. Focusing on these processes reveals the continuously constructed and shifting character of borders. Changes in legislation, standard operating procedures, technological developments (e.g. in detecting illegal border crossing attempts), or the political willingness to enforce standards may all shape how borders play a role in the lives of diverse actors and groups. As such, focusing on a specific border implies studying how micro processes or micro practices are linked to the continuous stabilization of a social institution.[10] Clearly these practices are based on and linked to (the production of) power asymmetries and inequalities, which will be discussed in the section below. It will therefore not be surprising if studies focusing on the complex (de)stabilization of boundaries will also address the different implications which these have for different groups.

DIFFERENCES AND INEQUALITIES

As established above, any boundary drawing process produces difference. At the same time, not every difference constitutes inequality. Some differences (among people) do not generate systematic or structural effects (e.g. freckles and dimples) whereas other differences like gender, nationality, or race often become socially relevant markers of inequality. It is therefore key to (also) study how differences (or heterogeneities) are translated into socially relevant inequalities between groups (and potentially homogenize opportunities among members of an in group).[11]

This is not to suggest that heterogeneities or differences themselves are somehow obvious, unambiguous, or natural phenomena. As discussed above, they are the continuously re-negotiated temporal outcomes of social boundary drawing processes. At a minimum, the observation of differences is theory-laden and involves culturally and historically situated ascriptions of meanings: "Heterogeneities are always perceived and appraised, there is always a historical backdrop of cultural representation and practices for dealing with them, and they are always invoked or engendered by actors in the generation of inequality" (Diewald and Faist 2011, p.13).

Having addressed the construction of differences above, the process to be discussed in the following concerns the ways in which some observable differences come to establish inequalities (among individuals, groups, states, etc.).[12] It is central in this regard to note the context dependence of such processes. Gender, race, ethnicity, etc. are relevant in many settings as a marker of inequalities, but not (equally so) in all settings (even if these markers are constitutive of individual life experiences). It is empirically not possible, (nor is it to be expected) to identify automatic links between difference and inequality. But one can study which differences are translated into inequalities in specific discursive settings and in relation to the social positions of actors. "The significance of a certain ethnicity, gender, age or religion derives from the respective social and

[10] This calls for using different quantitative and qualitative research methods drawn from different disciplines. For a broad methodological overview and triangulation specifically see Wellington and Szczerbinski 2007. On post-structuralist analysis, especially for naming and framing analysis see Hansen 2006. Studying acts of identification from a grounded theory perspective (see Bucher and Jasper 2017), and sociological inquiries focusing on shifting personal pronouns and we-they relations (see Elias 1978), are also likely complementary approaches. But borders studies can for example also draw on insights generated by historians focusing on how the boundaries of concepts shift over time and place (see Brunner et al. 1984-1992).

[11] While the notion of differentiating between heterogeneities and inequalities presented here heavily draws on the work by Diewald and Faist, I do not suggest incorporating their research agenda into this framework. Not only is their project too encompassing to simply include as one dimension of a research framework, it is also demanding in terms of specific concepts, procedures, mechanisms and methods. As such, I draw on their basic underlying notions, without claiming to integrate the complexity of their approach here.

[12] Diewald and Faist, following Wimmer 2008 refer to this process as "boundary making."

cultural context and varies accordingly in different social contexts" (Diewald and Faist 2011, p.13).[13]

The second dimension of this framework is then very much about identifying which categories are deemed relevant in terms of producing inequalities and how these shift over time, and across cases and places. Analysis of this kind can aim to identify the social mechanisms (see Diewald and Faist 2011, p.8) informing these processes. Following Zolberg and Woon (1999), Lamont and Molnar (2002) suggest that such mechanisms include "processes of boundary crossing, blurring, and shifting" (Lamont and Molnár 2002, p.185),[14]as well as "the activation, maintenance, transposition or the dispute, bridging, crossing and dissolution of boundaries" (Lamont and Molnár 2002, p.187).

The range of possible studies focusing on this second dimension is endless, although conceptually not boundless. To draw some examples from the field of education, one could for example, study how gender, ethnicity, and/or social class of students shapes the educational opportunities open to them across time and space. This could include studying how family histories shape aspirations among adolescence, or how access to (pre) schools influences later educational choices. One could, for example, compare how different welfare state models distribute opportunities across groups (on the relation between social and educational policy see Allmendinger and Leibfried 2003). Alternatively, one could look at the eligibility criteria for affirmative action programs (see Darity Jr. et al. 2011), trace their development over time, or compare across institutions or states. Like Helbig and Schneider (2014), one might, for example, study the interaction and relevance of religious affiliation, diaspora experiences, gender, ethical dispositions, socio-economic status, and the regional availability of educational facilities in regard to educational opportunities across countries and over time. It then becomes possible to trace changes in terms of which of these differences are relevant to producing inequalities of opportunities and outcomes.[15] In all these cases, specific and observable differences (rather than other possible differences) are translated into socially relevant inequalities through complex social processes.

The literature on studying the mechanisms translating differences into inequalities is abundant (e.g. see Hedström and Ylikoski 2010; Demeulenaere 2011), and can provide guidance on how to proceed methodologically. It must suffice here to point to the multidimensionality of studying these processes, and the key role of different disciplines and approaches contributing to their analysis. As the notion of social mechanisms above takes a causal focus, it is important to also stress that discourse analytic (Hansen 2006), or grounded theory approaches (Wilson 2012; Glaser and Strauss 2017) are equally relevant in regard to studying how differences become inequalities. There is nothing in this framework that suggests privileging causal over constitutive inquiries. While methodologically pluralistic in outlook, the framework does suggest that the multidimensional nature of inequality construction is not easily compatible with reducing inequality to one primary perspective or determinant. In this sense, "inequalities […] can […] only be adequately appraised if examined in the plural" (Diewald and Faist 2011, p.6), although a specific research project might decide to focus on one specific inequality for practical reasons.

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[13] On fractal distinction see Abbott 2001, pp. 10–15.

[14] Boundary crossing refers to members of minority groups being accepted into majority groups. Boundary blurring refers to increasing permeability of boundaries and boundary shifting refers to the incorporation of former minority groups into the dominant group (see Diewald and Faist 2011, p. 15). Norbert Elias's figurational perspective on shifting personal pronouns could be one way of studying such developments (see Elias 1978).

[15] On the continued relevance of social segregation (ethnic, economic, etc.) in regard to education see Helbig 2010.

NORMATIVITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LEGITIMACIES

While not all differences constitute inequalities, the mere observation of inequalities does not yet imply a specific valuation of these inequalities. How we normatively assess inequalities cannot be directly inferred from the observation of these inequalities, but is linked to some underlying notion of justice, fairness, or legitimacy.

For example, some might consider the unequal rights of citizens and non-citizens to be justified, while others might think they violate basic notions of shared humanity. Similarly, one can think of government resource redistribution to disadvantaged groups in terms of a moral obligation, a basic right, or illegitimate state oppression (on redistribution see Smits 2016, pp.21-42). While all are likely to agree on there being factual inequalities in terms of resources and opportunities available to individuals or groups, they might at the same time fundamentally disagree on whether these are legitimate and whether these give rise to practical redistribution measures or not (see Swift 2014).

On close inspection, establishing the legitimacy or illegitimacy of inequalities is not as straight-forward. Take, for example, the civilian-soldier divide or the distinction between conventional and chemical weapons. The processes determining these distinctions have both constraining and enabling dimensions. While we usually praise the protection of civilians, the dichotomy itself demarcates a space in which killing becomes legal and is marked as legitimate (see Kennedy 2012). While chemical weapons use might be effectively prohibited, this boundary drawing practice also makes it possible to argue the case of using conventional weapons in a way that potentially overlooks broader issues at stake (see Bentley 2015). It might also open space to justify military action on selective claims, thereby making 'humanitarian intervention' possible where it might not be justifiable otherwise. The boundary between legitimate and illegitimate (or even legal and illegal) uses of force is not clear at all (on lawfare see Kennedy 2012). Rather it needs to be continuously navigated and reproduced – it needs to be performed in practice. How we normatively assess boundary drawing processes or their political implications, is then an additional dimension to consider.

For other types of boundaries such normative assessments do not appear to be central or relevant. For example, it is not obvious why barrier zones in the oceans (see Emelyanov 2005), or the tricky question of identifying the atmosphere / space boundary should be studied from a normative perspective. But this is not to say that 'natural' boundaries do not have political or normative implications. How, for example, continental shelves are defined, has immense consequences that are not reducible to 'natural facts'. As Simmel argued, the "boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially" (quoted in Frisby and Featherstone 1997, p.143).

As such, borders studies are challenged to actively and transparently argue the (il)legitimacy of boundaries, not just their existence. In doing so, the normative assumptions of researchers can be made explicit (on methodological considerations following the interpretive turn, see Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Focusing on questions of legitimacy can help to broaden the debates on borders to include not only political, economic, cultural or environmental aspects, but to address the normative desirability of specific boundaries and inequalities. This broadens the frameworks and links it to questions of democratic legitimacy, human rights, and (global) justice. The 'legitimacies dimension' of this framework has an additional aspect worth discussing. The framework does clearly not intend to present a substantive moral doctrine to interpret the (il)legitimacy of boundaries. Alongside inquiring into the (il)legitimacy of boundaries or resulting inequalities, borders studies can also empirically focus on the discursive construction of legitimacy claims themselves. Successful claims to legitimacy can serve to stabilize and reproduce distributive patterns. Challenges to normative justifications and claims to legitimacy can conversely have destabilizing effects. Studying legitimacy is therefore functionally linked to the most basic boundary drawing processes and the inequalities to which these give rise. At a very basic level then,

studying boundaries entails multiple interrelated dimensions. Any border will have ontological-constitutive, political and normative aspects that can be studied in interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse ways. This framework has disaggregated these interrelated dimensions in order to help make borders studies more manageable and integrative. Clearly not all inquiries will have to address all of the dimensions discussed, or themselves be interdisciplinary (although such studies are always highly welcome). Rather, the framework seeks to provide a structure that integrates diverse research into a web of knowledge. As such, this framework not only aims to provide some guidelines for individual borders studies projects, but seeks to provide an integrative space for scholars at all levels (be they students, interested faculty or borders studies experts) and a wide range of disciplines to collaborate.

CONCLUSION – B.I.L. AS A RESEARCH PROCESS

Taken together, the conceptual focus on the stabilization of boundaries, the production of inequalities, and the contested normativity of these practices opens a multi-dimensional space in which to situate diverse but interrelated research projects. Given that this framework was developed in the context of a GLAA workshop on border studies, I will focus the following outline on how the general framework presented above could be fruitfully used by students and faculty of GLAA member institutions. The framework outlined here is conceptualized with primarily borders studies research in mind. But I do not thereby wish to separate research and teaching. Quite to the contrary and in line with the 'Humboldtian model', research and teaching should go hand in hand.
Rather than divide, this framework seeks to integrate borders studies in a number of ways:

- It seeks to facilitate faculty research within and across GLAA member institutions and to provide a point of contact for those looking for a borders studies community. As such, it can help to make visible who is involved in borders studies (both in terms of research and teaching). This can help finding relevant collaboration partners, speakers, experts, and simply good advice. To make this possible, it will be key to establish a web-based home (or homes) to collect projects and data in a way that is accessible to all member institutions and scholars more broadly.
- Increased contact amongst faculty members promises to lead not only to co-authored research projects. It will also help to connect courses, make shared teaching formats possible, and facilitate creating course materials which can be employed across courses and member institutions.
- The broad nature of the framework seeks to integrate both faculty and student research. Student research can take place within courses or as B.A. thesis projects. It could also complement specific faculty research projects. The framework, as well as a possible future database, could provide a valuable resource to students interested in borders studies as well and give them an easy point of entry into the field. For students to successfully engage in these projects, they will need methodological guidance. As such, it would be very desirable to add a collection of methodological reflections or a 'how to' sections to this framework, and we welcome any suggestions on how to structure and design methodological guidelines.

As mentioned above, this framework (and its future forms) will have to be amended by a web-based home suited to systematically collect the research and teaching materials produced by faculty and students and to make it broadly available. Whether or not this will be possible, will depend on the engagement of interested members of GLAA institutions. As such, I view this initial

framework as a call for critique, suggestions and engagement. Possibly creating a home (or homes) for B.I.L. will lead to an increasingly dense web of contributions representing multiple perspectives on boundaries and borders. This could not only provide a valuable resource to future borders studies students, but also allow for the identification of research gaps, and provide us with the opportunity to make comparisons about borders studies over time.

As such, B.I.L is intended to grow as an open platform that serves as a web-based point of contact, a developing conceptual and methodological framework and as a dynamic web of knowledge. It therefore aims to connect faculty and students across borders, to move beyond contemporary disciplinary and methodological confines, and to push the boundaries still separating our institutions.

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