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The purpose of my article (Jones, 2009a) was to initiate a discussion of boundaries and categorization and I am pleased that it has generated this critical engagement. Unfortunately, Schaffter *et al*. (2009) appear to miss the point of the article by focusing only on the meanings of the particular categories – rather than the categorization process – when they distinguish between concepts, types, and classes in suggesting that geographers should limit their research only to categories that have an 'intrinsic spatial nature' or have been spatialized. In response to their critique, I will reiterate my three original central claims: (1) categories rely on the spatial metaphor of the container regardless of whether the meaning of the category is 'intrinsically' spatial, spatialized, or non-spatial; (2) the categories used to understand the world are not essential, fixed, or biologically determined, but are inchoate, imprecise, and based on embodied spatial experiences with the world; (3) research in boundary studies should be less concerned with what categories should be created and more with the important but paradoxical role boundaries play in the categorization process.

After reading the paper from Schaffter *et al*. (2009), several metaphors came to mind. I was feeling *a bit down* about their response because it *struck me* that they *miss the mark* in their assessment and they fail *to grasp* my argument. While these metaphors describe the ways that I felt about their critique of my argument, the spatiality of each of these metaphors also is the argument. These are all examples of primary metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Whether you approach this cognitively or not, it is clear that all of these are also spatial metaphors. Just to use the first as the example, by saying I was feeling *a bit down*, you as the reader understood that I was unhappy. But why? I did not say that, but the spatial metaphor conveyed it. Down stands in for bad, up is good, big is important, small is not. Although feeling unhappy is not necessarily a spatial experience, the metaphor is. Scholars who argue for the embodied mind in cognitive science point out that these primary metaphors are based on embodied experiences, most of which are spatial but can also be olfactory, tactile, or visual. Lakoff and Johnson (1999), together with other research in cognitive science (Grady, 1997; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002), suggest that these metaphors emerge from human beings' embodied experiences in the world. They argue that as we use our bodies these spatial, tactile, and olfactory experiences shape our understanding of the world. The crucial idea with primary metaphors is that they

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can be transposed onto new and unknown experiences while maintaining the schema. The notion of the embodied mind fits well with the critique of objective knowledge in the social sciences, in which knowledge is described as particular, situated, and based on an individual's experiences and position in the world (Haraway, 1991). I am far from being the first geographer to draw on Lakoff and Johnson's work or to emphasize the spatiality of metaphors (Smith and Katz, 1993; Aase, 1994; Cresswell, 1997; Moore, 2008).

In the article, I focused on just one of these primary metaphors, 'categories are containers'. When the 'categories are containers' metaphor is transposed onto new experiences, the spatial form of the container, with a definite inside, outside and boundary is maintained (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Whether you partition the world into 'concepts, types, and classes' or 'Sirens, fabulous ones, and stray dogs', as Borges' *Chinese encyclopedia* does, you are imposing arbitrary boundaries onto a diverse and complex world to bring order to things. As I argue, although the various concepts, types, and classes refer to vastly different bits of information, they all also rely on the understanding of a boundary between those bits of information. The compartmentalization of each of these different processes, while useful to glean very particular information, also flattens out any differences that may exist in the new categories. Through the categorization process, concepts, types, and classes emerge as containers with definite boundaries into which information can be placed. As Schaffter *et al*. (2009: 257) point out, their own scheme 'should not be understood as a rigid and normative system able to decide where a geographical notion should be put or classified'. This is why I argue that research into categorization should be less concerned with the stuff inside the categories and emphasize instead boundaries and the boundary-making process that delimit the categories shaping understanding (Barth, 1969; Abbott, 1995). Categorization schemes organize information into containers with boundaries between them, even though we know that these boundaries are arbitrary, fluid, and imposed. I suggest that understanding boundaries as always inchoate helps address this paradox.

Schaffter *et al*.'s argument hinges on the need for boundary studies to stick to materiality. They imply that I am trying radically to despatialize or dematerialize boundary studies. My intention was the exact opposite: by emphasizing the embodied spatial experiences on which primary metaphors rely, I am arguing that everyday experiences with the world are imbued with prior spatial understandings. Smith and Katz (1993: 69) also recognize the problematic nature of spatial metaphors when they argue that 'it is precisely this apparent familiarity of space, the givenness of space, its fixity and inertness, that make a spatial grammar so fertile for metaphoric appropriation'. Recognizing the spatiality of the 'categories are containers' metaphor opens up new ways to contest the notion that categories are fixed and bounded containers of social life.

Schaffter *et al*. suggest, however, that 'intrinsically non-spatial' concepts should be left to other disciplines. This is a flawed proposition for two reasons. First, by looking only at the stuff inside a category rather than the boundary-making process, they fall directly into the trap Barth (1969), Abbott (1995), and Newman (2003) warn against. They are focusing on things and are missing the process that produced those understandings. Second, their argument flies in the face of some of the most important contributions geographers have made over the last few decades by requiring scholars in other disciplines to recognize that many concepts that they treat as non-spatial givens are always imbued with spatial meanings and practices (Agnew, 1994; Lee, 2002).

For example, Schaffter *et al*. (2009: 257) argue that '"Economy" is a non-spatial concept'. It is unclear to me how economic activities could actually be practiced non-spatially. What benefit, then, is there in maintaining

the distinction that the concept itself is non-spatial? Leaving that aside, what I want to emphasize is how the concept is defined. How do we understand whether a thing or process is *part of* the economy? We can take a concept like 'monetary policy' and say that it fits *within* the economy while another concept, for example 'sleep', would not go *in* the category economy. The ability to say it is 'in', 'out', or 'part of' the category demonstrates how the metaphor of 'categories are containers' is transposed onto the category. Even when talking about a supposedly non-spatial category, it relies on a spatial schema. There is a boundary between the categories 'economy' and 'not-economy' that allows us metaphorically to put things into the container or not. To put it another way, the categories that shape our understanding of the world rely on the spatial metaphor of boundaries, inclusion, and exclusion regardless of whether the concept itself is supposedly 'intrinsically' spatial, spatialized, or non-spatial.

Now, we can perhaps disagree, I think, on whether the arguments of the previous paragraphs should be *in* the field of geography or cognitive science. Either way, the consequences of how we use categories to understand the world does matter for the field of geography, and the social sciences more generally. Fortunately, there seems to be common ground between my article and Schaffter *et al*.'s (2009: 259) critique for thinking about how the boundary-making process operates. They describe an interwoven process of reification ('how objects are bounded and constructed, before being elevated to being "real" things'), naturalization ('studying the very mechanisms that lead to their spatial definition'), and fetishization ('how these become quasi-sacred objects, venerated as true'). This formulation seems to fit well with what I identify in my article as the inchoate process of bounding. The inchoate process of bounding is the process of linking together notions of difference, narrating and practicing those notions to bring the idea into being, and then institutionalizing the boundaries of the newly imagined category through territoriality and bordering practices. The contribution my article makes is to point to the 'categories are containers' metaphor as a way of understanding why the boundaries of categories are so easily reified, naturalized, and fetishized as fixed and finalized despite the overwhelming evidence that they are partial and incomplete.

The boundary-making process that creates group identity categories serves as a useful example that demonstrates the commonality of our approaches, and also the utility of incorporating the 'categories are containers' metaphor and emphasizing the inchoateness of boundaries. The durability and persistence of group identity categories like ethnicity, race, and nation is confounding for constructivist or poststructural critiques. These categories are widely understood in scholarly work as modern social constructions, imagined communities, or perspectives-on-the-world not things-in-the-world (Anderson, 1991; Brubaker, 2002; Brubaker *et al*., 2004). Nevertheless, in practice, they continue to operate as if they are real things and they shape many people's everyday lives and experiences. Even in academic work, these categories are used in ways that reproduce and institutionalize them. As Brubaker (2002) suggests, even while recognizing the historical contingency of a category like 'Bangladeshi' (Jones, 2008), when we use the category 'the Bangladeshis' it operates as if it refers to a homogenous group with common practices and objectives. This is problematic because group connotations obscure who is narrating and practicing the category and for what aims. This is not to say that identity categories are invented out of thin air; they are not. They are based on a multitude of historical events, narratives, and practices. Difference exists in the world. What is unfixed is the precise ways in which the current sets of categories are organized, as Abbott (1995) would say, how the locations of difference were linked together through

boundaries. The categories we use to understand the world are not intrinsic or essential; they are all the result of boundary-making narratives and practices that reify, naturalize, and fetishize the category as a thing-in-the-world.

By recognizing the metaphor of 'categories are containers', we can gain further insight into why identity categories operate based on notions of inclusion and exclusion and why they are effectively territorialized. In the metaphor, the category has a definite inside, outside, and boundary that is homogenous within and sharply differentiated from other categories around it. Just as an object could go inside one container or another, individuals are either 'in' the category or not. The metaphor takes the fixity and certainty of a container and imposes it onto a fluid and uncertain experience. In this sense, categorization is useful because it organizes information so it can be understood, but it simultaneously erases the differences within the category and solidifies the arbitrary position of the boundary. Territoriality fixes the inchoate boundaries of the category on the ground by creating the container that was already imagined cognitively. Similarly, as Thongchai Winichakul (1994) has demonstrated, a map of a territory with borders creates the cognitive container that becomes the idea of a nation of people. My insistence that categories do not have an intrinsic meaning and that their boundaries are always inchoate is an attempt to disrupt the apparent fixity of the categories ordering the world.

This leaves open the question of where to locate the boundaries of boundary studies. While I see some utility in thinking about the bounding process more generally because of the spatiality of the metaphor, Schaffter *et al*. (2009) would prefer to focus only on when this process has a spatial referent. This seems unnecessarily arbitrary, particularly when these categories rely on the spatial metaphor of the container and their meanings are almost always spatialized in practice. To be clear, I am not suggesting that geographers should not consider how categories are inscribed into the landscape through borders and barriers; my own empirical research is in this area specifically (Jones, 2009b; 2009c). On the contrary, I am suggesting that we should not limit boundary studies only to these acts of on-the-ground bordering. Therefore, I again argue that boundaries and bounding processes should not be interpreted too narrowly, particularly as categorization and boundaries have been receiving increased attention by scholars across the social sciences (Wimmer, 2008). Indeed, the most troubling aspect of many recent engagements in other disciplines with boundary-making practices is that they completely overlook the long history of boundary studies in geography. As Lamont and Molnár (2002: 167) pointedly put it, 'In recent years, the concept of boundaries has been at the center of influential research agendas in anthropology, history, political science, social psychology, and sociology'. Where is geography? While Schaffter *et al*. (2009: 260, my emphasis) counsel against 'making *boundary studies* into a field of scholarship that takes an interest in anything called a *boundary*', I argue that geographers should be emphasizing the spatiality of the boundary-making process and demonstrating that we have something meaningful to say about the various boundaries that metaphorically and physically shape the ways in which we understand the world around us.

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