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The development of an organisational boundary analytical framework for the study of educational organisations

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The development of an organisational boundary analytical framework for the study of educational organisations

Introduction

Schools as organisations are complex networks of interdependent systems, the boundaries of which overlie each other and are continually being reinforced and transgressed. Applying the metaphor of boundaries to educational organising appears useful and appropriate. Moving beyond boundary as metaphor to the elaboration of 'boundary' as a theoretical concept is a difficult task, one complicated by our everyday assumptions about 'boundaries' that can easily overwhelm the conceptual constructs the term is meant to convey.

The notion of boundaries has been used increasingly and within a wide variety of theoretical traditions. In response to the concept's increased use, some organisational theorists have called for the development of the idea of boundary processes as an explanatory programme in its own right (Heracleous, 2004; Hernes, 2004a, 2004b; Paulsen & Hernes, 2003). Hernes, in particular, has elaborated a boundary analytic framework that merits wider discussion. Following Hernes (2004a), this paper puts forward an argument that the processes of boundary formation, deformation and transformation can be a powerful tool for explaining in fruitful ways the 'emergent phenomenon' of organising and organisational change (p. 13).

Emergentist explanations entail careful scrutiny to test the links in the logic they espouse. The logic depends crucially on the consistency of the explanation with social ontology, on the one hand, and social theory, on the other. That is, the elaboration of an emergentist perspective of boundaries and boundary processes in the service of explaining the changing nature of organizing depends crucially on understandings about social reality - ontological premises - as well as the identification of what constitutes knowledge of social reality - epistemological implications for social theorizing (Archer, 1995). As for any object of inquiry, a working explanatory programme using boundaries requires consistency among all three parts - the description of reality, how to explain that reality, and the nature of knowledge in that explanation.

This paper addresses the following three questions in relation to the articulation of a boundary analytic framework for organizing in education.

1. What are the premises about social reality assumed in current perspectives on boundaries as dynamic, multidimensional and pluralistic?
2. What do these premises imply for the development of theory about processes of organisation and organising?
3. Given the premises and implications for theory development above, what are the prospects for the development of a boundary analytic framework as a means of explaining processes of organizing and organisation, with particular reference to education?

The first question about social reality relates to the ontological premises of current conceptions of organisation that have given rise to increased attention to boundaries. The second question

concerns the epistemological implications of such a view, or the ways that warrants about such a social reality are justified. Our premise is that clarity about the perspective on social reality and on warranted knowledge of that reality will provide the means to evaluate the advantages and limits of adopting the notion of boundaries as a way of representing that reality, what we term, following Archer (1995), an explanatory methodology.

The paper responds to Hernes' (2004a) call for the use of a wider range of social theories in organisational studies, particularly those theories that aim to bridge longstanding debates in sociology about system and action, and structure and agency. Theories that bridge this divide have become increasingly relevant to studies of organisation because of the complexity of the dynamics of organizing and organisational change in the current era. Such a view of social reality as dynamic and polymorphous entails a *process* ontology (Sawyer, 2002), in that these theories focus on the processes through which structure and agency are mutually constitutive. In our analysis of such approaches and the consequence they hold for the use of boundaries in social theorizing, we take a relational emergentist perspective (Archer, 1995; Elder-Vass, 2007a; Layder, 1981). We use this perspective as a means of evaluating the prospects for the development of an explanatory programme based on 'boundaries'. To do so, we examine the boundary analytic framework of Hernes (2004a, 2004b), one of the most comprehensive to be put forward. Following our critique, we propose an alternative framework and conclude with a discussion of the prospects and limitations of a boundary analytic framework.

Boundaries: from Metaphor to Explanatory Methodology

That 'boundary' as a term so richly and easily evokes social reality makes the task of analysing the work the term accomplishes especially difficult. Boundaries are in the first instance a metaphor. Describing social systems as bounded and social processes as bounding is to equate multidimensional social reality with two- or three-dimensional physical place. To take an obvious example, when we use the term 'school-community boundary', we can easily conjure any number of elements that might contribute to this particular distinction, from formal governing bodies to myriad informal interactions. Simply delineating 'school-community boundary' begins to bring into focus 'school' as part of a larger social system. Through articulating what is in, what is out and what lies between, the metaphor of boundary deftly scribes our experience of social structure; we 'get it' without much elaboration. Nonetheless, most of the work done by metaphors, especially the ones that correspond directly with our everyday language, takes place backstage by removing from view all that is not represented. As Morgan (2007) highlights in the introduction to 'Images of Organisation', *"The use of metaphor implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervades how we understand our world generally"* (p. 4). To recast the implications in terms that we elaborate below, invoking boundaries has fundamental epistemological ('a way of thinking') and ontological ('a way of seeing') ramifications.

The work of imagery is integral to understanding social reality. Paying attention to underlying imagery gives insight into what can be seen and what can be known. Morgan's analysis of images of organisation highlights the importance of unearthing underlying imagery for pragmatic purposes, to improve management practice. Becker (1998) generalizes

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the importance of imagery to all forms of systematic inquiry. Becker quotes his teacher, Herbert Blumer (1969), to elaborate the point:

> "One can see the empirical world only through some scheme or image of it. *The entire act* of scientific study is oriented and shaped by the underlying picture of the empirical world that is used. This picture sets the selection and formulation of problems, the determination of what are data, the means to be used in getting the data, the kinds of relations sought between data, and the forms in which propositions are cast" (pp. 24-25, as quoted in Becker, 1998, p. 10).

This paper aims to get at the 'underlying picture' of boundaries and test the capabilities of that picture for sustaining theorizing about organisation and organizing. Use of the term 'boundaries' is burgeoning in organisational theory. Organisational boundaries are points of dissimilarity, distinction and interruption (Heracleous, 2004). They are variable, unclear and, to differing degrees, permeable (Weick, 1995) and are thus problematic and difficult to characterise (Paulsen & Hernes, 2003). Nonetheless, boundary maintenance is considered to be critical to organisational success (Czander, 1993). Organisational boundaries are likely to be affectively charged (Douglas, 2005; Hernes, 2004b). Thus 'organisational boundary issues' give rise to conflicts that may escalate into major organisational events, which is why boundaries may be under- or over-protected (Czander 1993), and why boundary transgressions may be powerfully experienced. Analysing boundary transgressions is significant in understanding organisational development (Long, 2001) and inter-organisational exchange (Kerosuo, 2006).

However, a catalogue of boundary properties is insufficient. We do not know anything from it about the various explanatory programs out of which these distinctions derive. Such an explanatory methodology is essential to theory building. Without such a methodology, we have no means of developing the 'explanatory usefulness' of the notion of boundaries (Layder, 1998, p. 128).

The Boundary Analytic 'Problem Space'

Hernes (2004b) begins his own elaboration of an explanatory framework by critiquing the notion of the 'boundaryless organisation' (p. 11). He asserts that quite the opposite holds; it is the notion of 'organisation' as a discrete entity that is dissolving, not that of 'boundary'. New forms of organisational life and increasing pressures for change have led to the proliferation of boundaries and their intensification through diffuse networks that are far more complex than traditional hierarchies. The polymorphous nature of modern schooling necessitates just such a move from a static to a dynamic view of social reality. Schools have been viewed as among the most stable of institutional forms and were the object of social theorizing because of the durability of that form (Bidwell, 2001). Contemporary views of social life in schools and of the place of schooling in the wider society have revealed how what has been taken as static are composed of multidimensional, dynamic processes that are constantly unfolding (Lima, 2010; Penuel, et al., 2010). These dynamics are evident in relations inside classroom (e.g., the reconfiguration of teacher-student roles); the reconstitution of teacher-manager

relations (e.g., distributed leadership); the dissolution of the autonomous administrative structure of schools (e.g., management across chains of schools); and the evolving relationship between what was traditionally 'school' and what was held to be 'outside of school', such as the local community, other providers of children's services, and businesses.

A dynamic perspective entails replacing the imagery of 'organisations' as static entities with one of organisation in continual formation, deformation and transformation, that is, 'organisation' as an emergentist phenomenon (Hernes, 2004a, p. 10). The core theme to which we return throughout this paper concerns the notion that reproduction is contingent; the status quo, in organisational terms, requires just as much explanation as does change and development. The form of organisation and the processes of organizing that go into maintaining or changing that form are the open questions, not the answers.

Ontological Premises

The project of developing a perspective on boundaries that respects the emergent rather than fixed features of organizing and organisation entails certain assumptions about social reality. To move the notion of 'boundary' beyond metaphor, we have to make a fundamental choice. Are we to treat our application of this imagery as an analytic construct, imposed by the analyst to examine the formation of organisation, or are we claiming the construct as an aspect of social reality, as having distinct features and qualities and entailing causal effect? The consequences for our 'emergentist' boundary perspective are stark. A perspective that treats boundaries as constructs created by the analyst deprives boundaries of any essential relation to 'organisation'. As such, the nature of the boundary would vary according to the interests of the analyst (Elder-Vass, 2007b, p. 419). Such an analytic approach would deploy 'boundaries' as a term to substitute for the effects of factors contributing to the formation of organisation in accord with the perspective taken. The other approach is to treat boundaries as integral to organisation. Boundaries then are taken as an aspect of social reality. This perspective of boundaries as entities appears necessary for a perspective that aims to develop an explanatory methodology based on boundaries.

If we are to take boundaries as entities that are capable of explaining the dynamics of organising described earlier, several foundational assumptions, or ontological premises, follow. In shorthand, these are realist, pluralist and processual: realist in that boundaries and their formation are objective phenomena and central to organizing; pluralist in that the reality is non-reducible either to deterministic (objectivist) structure on the one hand or indeterminate (phenomenological) interaction on the other (Layder, 1981); and processual in the focus on the inseparability of social action and social system.

Such a process ontology embraces the inseparability of social action and social system. Systemic factors depend upon human activities, continually reproduced, to guarantee their continuity in space and time. On the other hand, inter-subjective experience and social activity is powerfully influenced and configured by the same systemic qualities that action replicates through the social routines and interaction in which these occur (Layder, 1998).

Epistemological Implications

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If we adhere to the perspective that boundaries are entities with causal properties, then the emergentist paradox arises. How can the apparent causal significance of entities be accounted for without succumbing to either eliminative reductionism (the notion that only the parts of the entity have the causal influence); or explanatory dualism (the view that causal influence of items cannot be explained in terms of the effects of and interrelationships between their parts (Elder-Vass, 2007b, p. 214). These contrasting epistemological positions are indicative of explanatory methodologies that foreground individualism, in terms of eliminative reductionism, or collectivism, in terms of explanatory dualism. An emergentist perspective on boundaries must have some means of navigating this terrain.

Our starting point is Archer's (1995) characterization of 'conflationary' tendencies in social theorizing. Archer labels methodological individualism as 'upwards conflation' and methodological collectivism as 'downwards conflation'. According to Archer, upwards and downwards 'conflationists':

> *"always advance some device which reduces one [strata] to the other, thus depriving the two of independent properties, capable of exerting autonomous influences"* (p. 6).

Archer argues that conflation generates an epiphenomenological explanation in that reduction emphasizes theorizing in one direction - structure, system and form in the case of collectivism and agency and action in the case of individualism - while discounting its opposite.

Archer (1995) distinguishes a third form of conflation, 'central conflation', a way of seeking to transcend the dual character of structure and agency by positing that the two are inextricably linked and mutually constitutive in such a way that, "*agents cannot act without drawing upon structural properties whose own existence depends upon their instantiation by agents*" (p. 13). Layder (1981, p. 73) describes central conflation as 'the simultaneity model', which requires an acceptance that objective structures are both outside and determinative of interaction, and simultaneously the product of such interactions.

Social theory that tackles emergent properties, according to Archer, must go beyond the simultaneity model, which holds structure and agency to be mutually constitutive, to trace both the interrelationship and autonomous properties of subjective and objective strata. Archer (1995) argues for *"theories of interdependence and interplay between different kinds of social properties"* (p. 8) transcending traditional debates that deny two-way causality as well as more recent contributions that do not distinguish the autonomous properties of different strata. Analysis of the interplay and interconnection of these properties and powers requires a recognition that the two have to be related rather than conflated. Most important, in order to explain that relationship, the integrity of each needs to be analyzed separately, which Sawyer (2002) refers to as analytic separability. For Archer (1995) *"Conditions and actions have to be examinable separately in order to talk about conditioned action"* (p. 141).

Archer (1995) articulates three principles for an emergentist social science that escapes conflation through its adherence to two-way causality and allegiance to analytic separability.

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Precedence. Properties and powers of some strata precede those of others because the latter emerge from the former over time. Emergence takes time because it stems from interaction and its consequences which occur over time.

Independence of power and properties. Once emergence has taken place the powers and properties that define and distinguish strata are relatively independent of one another.

Autonomous causal influence. The autonomous properties of strata retain causal influence independently and in their own right. The identification of these causal powers authenticates their existence, for they may not be apparent through observation. (p. 14)

These principles provide the ontological premises and epistemological implications for an explanatory methodology that identifies boundaries as entities with emergent properties.

Is a Boundary Analytic Framework Tenable?

Hernes (2004a, 2004b) offers a boundary analytic framework as a means of resolving the emergentist paradox outlined above. Broadly, the framework aims to provide an explanatory methodology rooted on the one hand in ontological premises from Lefebvre's (2004) notions of space and, on the other hand, in the epistemological projects of 'third pole' social theorists, such as Luhmann (1995), Latour (1999) and Giddens (1979). The 'third pole' refers to Hernes's (2004a, pp. 30-31) own characterization of social theories that seek to 'circumvent dichotomies' in the debates considered above between collectivism (Taylorist functionalism) and individualism (interpretivist approaches) .

Hernes (2004a) argues strongly for an emergentist boundary analytic stance, but the line he advocates is open to critique on two levels. First, in using 'space' as a starting position for a 'third pole' resolution, the approach inadvertently falls into the central conflationist trap of the simultaneity model (Layder, 1981). Second, despite an allegiance to boundaries as integral (that is, real) in their causal effects on organisational processes, the categories of boundaries he delineates (i.e., 'mental', 'social', and 'physical') arise from analytic distinction, not ontological necessity. As such, they cannot be considered as integral to 'boundary' as an entity and can only describe, but not explain, causal effect. Nonetheless, Hernes's framing of the issues and his articulation of the qualities of boundaries in terms of *distinction* (the extent to which the boundary demarcates between systems) and *threshold* (the degree to which the boundary regulates movement between systems) offer the impetus to move thinking forward.

Hernes (2004a) puts forward his argument for supplanting the entity of 'the organisation' with the notion of *space* as the ontological premise of his approach. He writes:

> *"If we let go of the bounded view of organisation, we may visualise organisation as consisting of fields of spaces that form and interact. Spaces in fields may take on widely different characteristics, ranging from formal organisations to groups and professions"* (p. 84).

Hernes argues for a view of space that is produced incessantly, while at the same time forming the foundation for its own construction. He quotes Lefebvre (1991) in his articulation of this self-referential argument, *"itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others"* (p. 74, as quoted in Hernes, 2004a, p. 68). Hernes equates the self-referential notions encapsulated above with similar notions of circularity in Latour (1999) and recursivity in Luhmann (1995) and Giddens (1979).

Layder's critique of central conflation is relevant here (1994, p. 148). Although Layder accepts that action and structure are mutually implicated in central conflation arguments such as those of Giddens, he contends that the important question is not *that* action and structure are interrelated; it is *how* the two are related. The emergentist critique of central conflation is that such approaches herald the inseparability of system and action but do not provide either the analytic means for understanding the distinctive properties of each or how the properties of different strata interrelate. The spatial argument advanced by Hernes falls into just such a trap. Such an approach lacks a language of description for understanding the relations among elements that would allow us to see how the strata of action conditions and is conditioned by the system strata of 'space'.

Hernes (2004a, p. 79) advocates for the study of space using boundaries as a lens, akin to an analytic construct to bring the object of study into sharper focus. However, he rejects the view that boundaries are drawn analytically and emphasises that boundaries are *"intrinsic and not incidental to organisation"* (p. 79). This contradiction becomes especially apparent when he further elaborates his view of separability by articulating space with mental, physical and social 'boundaries'. Hernes notes the legacy of these concepts from Lefebvre (1991) and finds resonance in their articulation from Parsons to more recent social theorists. However, none of these categories is self-explanatory. Each requires conceptual elaboration within a specific theoretical frame. 'Mental', 'social', and 'physical' constitute very different things in different theoretical traditions. The terms do not have a necessary relationship to 'boundary' as entity. Their delineation varies with the analyst's intentions. Elder-Vass (2007) portrays what this means with reference to Luhmann's use of similar constructs:

> *"for [Luhmann] systems are not entities but may be described instead as the set of interacting factors that produce the particular phenomenon of interest. In this tradition, systems have no necessary relation to the boundaries of particular entities; their basis is not ontological but rather analytical: as the range of factors affecting some phenomenon of interest varies, so does the boundary of the functionalist's system"* (p. 418)

We are left with two untenable outcomes. If we accept that the boundary processes Hernes seeks to characterize are indeed entities with causal effects, then the boundaries he circumscribes as 'mental', 'physical', and 'social' are examples of downwards conflation in that they treat structure as providing the conditions for action. However, if we treat these as analytic constructs only, then what are we to make of Hernes's (2004a, p. 79) claim that *"boundaries are not by-products of organisation"*? As Sawyer (2002) makes clear, the crux

of the matter here lies in explaining the two-way causal mechanism that links action and system. Hernes' characterization of boundary elements can be considered emergentist only in a descriptive sense, as they describe the '*range of factors*' involved from a particular analytic perspective. However, they do not explain the interrelationship of those factors nor do they constitute factors themselves. Without the help of some other theoretical underpinning, the framework is not capable of explaining emergent properties.

The development of an organisational boundary analytical framework

In the forgoing sections we have argued that an emergentist perspective of organisational boundaries depends fundamentally on being rooted at both ends, in ontological premises and in the epistemological implications for social theorizing. An organisational boundary analytical framework requires consistency among the description of reality, how that reality is explained and the nature of knowledge in that explanation. We have argued for an approach that treats boundaries as an aspect of social reality and as integral to organisation, characteristics which we claim are essential for a perspective that aims to develop an explanatory methodology. In addition, the attribution of *emergent* properties to entities at different strata depends upon identifying interrelationship between strata and the autonomous causal effect of the strata.

We now put forward our candidate for an emergentist framework that attempts to move 'boundary' from metaphor to explanatory methodology. We aim to sketch a 'generic' boundary analytic framework, one which is necessarily incomplete because it requires specific elaboration within a particular theoretical perspective. Thus our interest here is in drafting general theoretical requirements for the development of an emergentist boundary perspective.

Our first step in this direction is to put forward the notion of *animating force*, which is the organisational phenomenon that provides an underlying rationale for boundary formation. The properties of animating force depend on the social theory of which it is a part. Drawing on Blumer (1969), the animating force is the central feature of the underlying picture of the empirical world that is used. The animating force may not be immediately apparent and may need to be identified through its causal effects, but we argue that it is central to discerning boundary elements that are not analytically constructed yet essential to 'boundary' as an entity. For example, a perspective primarily concerned with organisational role would adopt 'role' as the animating force, and the notion of the role boundary would be of interest. In some organisational analytical frameworks, such as systems psychodynamics, the organisational task serves as the animating force. The animating force provides the motive for boundary emergence, continuity and change.

In relation to the main animating force, the system processes, and therefore the process elements of boundaries, are also significant. Many of the elements in the frameworks listed in the literature on organisational boundaries—see for example those elaborated by Miller & Rice (1975), Hanna (1997) and Scott (1998)—are process-related such as behavioural, sentient, or functional. The notion of process again can be considered from different theoretical

perspectives. Process differences will represent points of dissimilarity and distinction in organisations and should feature in an analytical framework.

Physical boundaries are included in a number of boundary classifications; see for example, Hernes (2004b). Hanna (1997) also distinguishes between physical and temporal boundaries but we argue that both physical and temporal boundaries differentiate spaces using different notions of materiality. A more thorough distinction would be between temporal and material dimensions.

In the analytical framework we propose, the animating force, process, physical and temporal are the main elements. We would argue that the animating force is the boundary element of primary significance and that the process, physical and temporal elements are subsidiary to the animating force. Each of these elements can have varying organisational effects which Hernes (2004b) refers to as dimensions. They provide an important additional perspective on boundary phenomena. .

Boundary Dimensions

Hernes (2004b) categorises the organisational effects of boundaries and identifies three dimensions: ordering - the extent to which boundaries regulate organisational functioning; distinction - the degree to which the boundary demarcates the organisational discontinuity; and threshold, which refers to the permeability of the boundary. Hernes's notion of ordering operates at an analytical level different from distinction and threshold. Ordering is an outcome of organisational boundaries, whereas distinction and threshold describe qualities that result from boundary interaction. Further, Hernes's notion of boundary threshold does not consider directional differences in movement.

An organisational boundary analytical framework

We have developed an analytical framework for the study of boundaries in educational organisations (see Figure 1) which is the outcome of the above critique. In the framework, animator elements distinguish the underlying rationale that defines the system and its motive; process elements demarcate processes; temporal elements articulate time-related boundary distinctions; and material elements demarcate physical constraints and the way affordances of the lived world are taken up or not. The dimensions characterise distinction - the extent to which boundaries demarcate one system from another - and threshold - the degree to which the boundary regulates movement between systems and asymmetries in that regulation.

Discussion

In this paper we have: sought to analyse the premises about social reality assumed in current perspectives on boundaries and the implications of these premises for theory development; considered the prospects for the development of a boundary analytic framework as a means of explaining processes of organizing and organisation, with particular reference to education; and developed such a framework. The validity of the framework we have set out can be evaluated by reference to Archer's (1995) three principles for an emergentist social science. The principles Archer advances—precedence; independence of power and

properties; and autonomous causal influence—invoke the interplay of strata through two-way causality while maintaining a commitment to analytic separability as necessary for identifying independent causal effect. The framework accepts that the properties and powers of some entities precede those of others and that there is a temporal dimension to the emergence of boundary phenomena. Moreover, once emergence has occurred, the powers and properties that define and distinguish are relatively independent of one another and causally influence independently and in their own right. The framework does not privilege an understanding of boundaries from one particular 'direction' and avoids conflation. Moreover in seeking to identify the causal powers – the animating force – and authenticate its existence, which may not be readily apparent, we have adhered to the principles that provide the ontological premises and epistemological implications for an explanatory methodology that identifies boundaries as entities with emergent properties.

Figure 1 An organisational boundary analytical framework for the study of educational organisations.

	Elements of composite boundaries			
Boundary dimensions	**Animator elements** Differences in the animators of systems that distinguish between systems in an organisation.	**Process elements** Differences in the animator-related system processes that distinguish between systems in an organisation.	**Temporal elements** Differences in the animator-related temporal elements that distinguish between systems in an organisation.	**Material elements** Differences in the animator-related material elements that distinguish between systems in an organisation.
Distinction The extent to which the boundary demarcates between systems	To what extent do the animators of systems distinguish between systems?	To what extent do the animator-related system processes distinguish between systems?	To what extent do animator-related temporal elements distinguish between different systems?	To what extent do animator-related material elements distinguish between different systems?
Threshold The extent to which the boundary regulates movement between systems	To what extent do the animators of systems regulate movement between systems? What are the asymmetries in this regulation?	To what extent do the animator-related system processes regulate movement between systems? What are the asymmetries in this regulation?	To what extent do the animator-related temporal elements of the boundary regulate movement between systems? What are the asymmetries in this regulation?	To what extent do the animator-related material elements of the boundary regulate movement between systems? What are the asymmetries in this regulation?
	Outcome **Organisational structure**			

Conclusion

Exploring boundaries and 'boundary processes' as an explanatory programme opens up new possibilities for theory elaboration around organising and organisational processes, as Hernes (2004a, 2004b) and colleagues have so cogently argued (Paulsen & Hernes, 2003). However, for such a programme to achieve its potential demands close attention to methodological rigour. In the preceding sections, we have made an argument for a relational emergentist perspective on boundaries and laid out related principles for what this perspective might entail. The schematic we have proposed accounts for causal effect and offers a framework for elaborating the emergent properties of boundaries. Hernes has provided us with a cogent argument for the necessity of new perspectives, but the one he puts forward does not appear capable of meeting the test. Fundamentally, 'generic' boundary processes of the sort Hernes proposes through the distinctions of 'mental', 'physical', and 'social' are necessarily analytic constructs and thus can neither exert causal effect nor explain emergent properties. Archer (1995) notes the difficulty of attempting to provide a pragmatic synthesis without conceptual clarity.

> *"...some have been tempted to uncouple practical social theory from its underpinnings, to survey the array of perspectives, and suggest an eclectic pragmatism in order to have the best of all worlds. Such 'perspectivism' simultaneously denies that there are serious underlying reasons for theoretical variety and slides via instrumentalism into a marriage of inconsistent premises."* (p. 5)

The analysis in this paper attempts to identify 'inconsistent premises' in ways that reveal novel understandings for the elaboration of an explanatory programme that involves boundaries and acknowledges organisation and organizing as multidimensional and polymorphous. The development of an emergentist boundary approach is particularly relevant given technological changes affecting schools; organisational change driven by reform agendas; and the increasingly complex responsibilities of schools. Such an approach helps broaden the scope of organisational analysis of schools in times of rapid change.

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