

*Center for European Studies Working Paper Series #154 (2007)*

**Bridging Boundaries:  
The Equalization Strategies of  
Stigmatized Ethno-racial Groups Compared\***

by

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Abstract

This article offers a framework for analyzing variations in how members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups establish equivalence with dominant groups through the comparative study of “equalization strategies.” Whereas extant scholarship on anti-racism has focused on the struggle of social movements against institutional and political exclusion and social justice, we are concerned with the “everyday” anti-racist strategies deployed by members of stigmatized groups. We seek to compare how these strategies vary according to the permeability of inter-group boundaries. The first section defines our research problem and the second section locates our agenda within the current literature. The third section sketches an empirical context for the comparative analysis of equalization strategies across four cases: Palestinian citizens of Israel, Catholics in Northern Ireland, blacks in Brazil, and Québécois in Canada. Whereas the first two cases are examples of ethnic conflict where group boundaries are tightly policed, the second cases exemplify more permeable boundaries. We conclude by offering tentative hypotheses about the relationship between the permeability of inter-group boundaries and the salience and range of equalization strategies used by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups to establish equivalence with their counterparts in dominant majority groups.

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## 1. Introduction

By and large, social scientists who study racism and ethnic discrimination have been more concerned with *denouncing injustice* than uncovering the cultural frameworks through which minority groups *understand* exclusion and cope with it. Exactly how members of stigmatized groups deal with perceived or expected stigmatization remains a largely understudied, yet highly significant, sociological question (Steele & Crocker 1998). Indeed, our understanding of the ways in which folk classification systems shape anti-racist repertoires and strategies, conceptions of equality and cultural citizenship—and ultimately, inequality itself—remains in its infancy. In this article, we define a terrain of inquiry for the study of the “equalization strategies” used by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups to establish equivalence with their counterparts in dominant majority groups.<sup>1</sup> We are particularly concerned with the “everyday” level of equalization strategies,<sup>2</sup> that is, the ways in which members of stigmatized groups routinely 1) challenge stereotypes about their group; 2) transform the meanings associated with their collective identity; and 3) create, enact or demand new forms of personal interaction on a day-to-day basis. We focus on the relationship between individual equalization strategies and the strength of group boundaries.

For the most part, scholarship on anti-racism has ignored this level of analysis. Instead, those who work in this field have become preoccupied with the political rhetoric of universalism and republicanism (e.g., Taguieff 1991) or on anti-racist social movements. In this article, we develop a framework with which to explore the ways in which members of in-groups and out-groups construct similarity and difference between themselves and others. For example, we ask: what do members of stigmatized groups identify as common denominators across races? What principles do they invoke in order to demonstrate the similarity, commonality or compatibility of racial groups? Not unlike Latour’s (1987) analysis of the “evidence” scientists mobilize to make facts “resistant,” we seek to explore the “proofs” stigmatized groups use to establish the “fact” of their equality. In this sense, we are proposing a more ambitious sociology of equality through empirical analysis of group boundaries (Lamont & Molnar 2002), commensuration (Espeland & Stevens 1998) and the “logics of worth” (Boltanski & Thévenot 1992).

Our concern is exemplified by Frederick’s (2003) study of the “everyday struggles of faith” of black women in American religious communities, which are often ignored by social scientists even though they have had considerable relevance in the survi-

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<sup>1</sup>We use the term “ethno-racial” to refer to groups that are discriminated against due to their phenotypical or ethnic/religious/linguistic identity.

<sup>2</sup>“Everyday equalization strategies” are here defined as the rhetoric and strategic resources deployed by individual members of stigmatized groups to rebut the notion of their inferiority in the course of their daily life. This notion is inspired by Essed’s (1991) notion of “everyday racism.” It also expands on Aptheker’s (1992) definition of anti-racism as rhetoric aimed at disproving racial inferiority. For other studies of everyday equalization strategies, see Herzog (2004), Lamont, Morning and Mooney (2002), Lamont and Molnar (2002a), and Lamont and Fleming (forthcoming).

val strategies of Black communities at large. Similarly, Higginbotham (1993) describes the micro-level foundations of African-American struggles for civil rights in the early twentieth century as a “prosaic and constant struggle... for survival and empowerment” (18). She argues that the progressive strategies of African Americans at this time were less manifest in overt political action than through “righteous discontent,” or resistance to the day-to-day obstacles encountered by blacks in the midst of institutional racism. Likewise, Mansbridge and Flaster (forthcoming) analyze “everyday feminism” by showing how women contested masculine hegemony through use of terms such as “male chauvinist pig” (see also Mansbridge 1999). Each of these works demonstrates that the study of everyday equalization strategies is essential to understanding how people deal with discrimination on a quotidian basis.<sup>3</sup> In particular, this growing literature documents the sundry ways individuals *bridge* group boundaries—the frequently neglected counterpoint to the oft-studied topic of social exclusion.

We contribute to the burgeoning field of everyday anti-racism by proposing a comparative study of the everyday equalization strategies deployed by members of stigmatized groups. More specifically, we present a framework to explore variations in the *range* and *salience* of evidence (or criteria such as race, class, status or moral character) used by stigmatized groups in different contexts to establish equality with dominant majority groups.<sup>4</sup> By *range*, we mean the number and diversity of such criteria. By *salience*, we mean the extent to which individuals are concerned with differentiation when comparing groups.<sup>5</sup> When considering the salience of criteria, we are particularly concerned with whether or not the latter are “universalistic” or “particularistic” criteria of comparison. We define universalistic criteria as those that can be met by all, independent of class, creed, or race (e.g. “shared humanity” or biological similarity). Particularistic criteria are those that can only be achieved by specific populations: ethnicity, nationality, religion, education, occupation and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Other examples of the significance of this analytical strategy include Anderson (1999), Lacy (2004) and O’Brien and Howard (1998).

<sup>4</sup>Other variations beyond the presence of universalistic and particularistic arguments could be considered. For instance, we could compare the “thickness” with which out-groups perceive members of in-groups, i.e., whether they provide a simple or more complex understanding of the cultural world inhabited by “them” (Geertz 1973). However, such concerns are beyond the scope of the present paper.

<sup>5</sup>It is likely that there exist important variations in the extent to which members of stigmatized groups are concerned with establishing their equality with majority groups; such variations are beyond our concern. For instance, previous work suggests that younger members of minority groups are more likely to be involved in oppositional cultures than older people, in the case of African American or Brazilian youth in particular (Carter 2005; Kitwana 2002; Rose 1994; Sansone 1999). Smith and Leach (2004) have shown that in general members of minority groups do make inter-group comparisons more frequently than those in majority groups. However, given that their study is limited to less than sixty university students, further research is required on this subject before definitive conclusions can be drawn.

<sup>6</sup>These definitions draw on Parsons, who used the term “universalism” to refer to the “role expectation that, in qualifications for memberships and decisions for differential treatment, priority will be given to standards defined in completely generalized terms, independent of the particular relationship of the actor’s own statuses (qualities or performances, classificatory or relational),” and particularism refers to the “assert[ion] of the primacy of the values attached to objects by

Previous work suggests that there is variation in both the range of equalization strategies as well as the salience of universalistic and particularistic evidence used by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups in establishing their equality with dominant majority groups. To illustrate, Lamont (2000) has shown that Black working-class American men are more likely to cite their earning ability to demonstrate their equality with majority group members than North African immigrants in France. For its part, the latter group is more likely to evoke the universality of human needs to demonstrate equality among all human beings. We consider earning ability to be a more particularistic evidence of equality than human needs, to the extent that it is tied to education and is not equally available across classes. Similarly, Lamont (2000) has shown that white American workers also point to a narrower range of evidence to demonstrate racial equality than African-American workers (the latter pointing to the fact that “we are all children of God,” “of the same species,” or “all have red blood,” whereas the former referred to a more limited range of evidence such as work ethic and education).

Along these same lines, we want to explore variations in the range and salience of arguments used by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups. In this article we explore how the range and salience of universalistic and particularistic criteria vary according to the strength of ethno-racial boundaries across different settings. Strong group boundaries are boundaries that are vigorously policed and can only be crossed at a social or symbolic cost. Thus, both social and symbolic boundaries constitute the strength of group boundaries (Lamont 1992, chapter 7). Strong social boundaries between groups manifest themselves through very unequal patterns of access to jobs, housing, political resources and so forth. They also manifest themselves in less frequent—and more conflictual—inter-group relationships. Strong symbolic boundaries are manifest at the level of both individual and collective identity, so that across groups “individuals know at all times which side of the boundary they are on” (Alba 2005, p 22) and whether their cultural membership and dignity are acknowledged by out-group members.

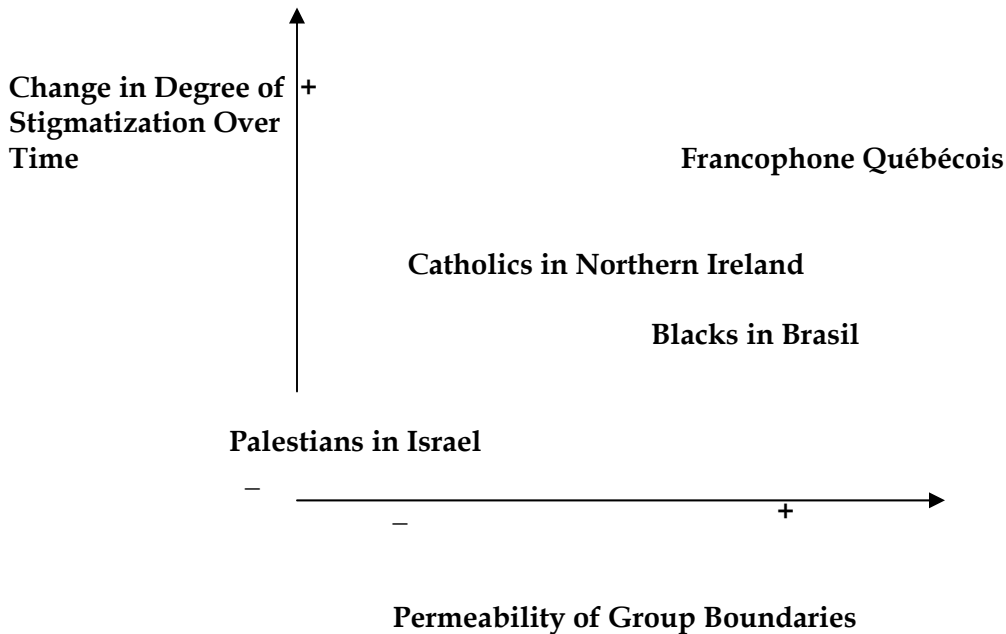
We have identified four cases of stigmatized groups who face boundaries with varied permeability.<sup>7</sup> As Figure 1 indicates, the cases of the Palestinian citizens of Israel and Catholics in Northern Ireland are examples of groups that face strong social and symbolic boundaries, whereas the cases of blacks in Brazil and Québécois in Canada exemplify groups that face more permeable symbolic, and to a lesser extent, social boundaries. While ethnicity and religion are the primary bases for exclusion in Israel and Northern Ireland, phenotype is most salient in Brazil, and ethnicity and language are the basis of division in Québec. Of the four cases Palestinians face the strongest and most permanent boundaries, followed by the Catholics of Northern Ireland, Brazilian blacks, and francophones Québécois.

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their particular relations to the actor’s properties as over against their general universally applicable class properties” (Parsons 2001: p. 82). See also Gouldner (1957).

<sup>7</sup>On the permeability of boundaries, see DiMaggio (1988) and Lamont (1989). For a review of the sociological literature on cognition, classification, and “boundary work” see Lamont & Molnar (2002), DiMaggio (1997) and Zerubavel (1991). On the permeability (or brightness) of racial and ethnic boundaries, see also Alba (2004), Barth (1969), Baubock (1994), Wimmer (2002) and (2004) and Zolberg and Long (1999).

**Figure 1**  
**Permeability of Group Boundaries**  
**and Change in Degree of Stigmatization over Time across Cases**



Although the Palestinian citizens of Israel currently enjoy civil rights in official terms, they have been systematically excluded from Israeli politics and businesses since the birth of the Jewish state. Israel’s violent conflict over the West Bank with Palestinians outside its borders has made its relations with this “trapped minority” especially tense (Rabinowitz 1997). By all accounts, rigid social and symbolic boundaries between these two groups translate into one of the most acute of all contemporary ethnic conflicts at the present time. In recent years, these tensions have only grown, fueled by wider concern over the conflict between Islam and the West. In this context, the de-stigmatization of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in recent decades has been less than any of our other cases. For these reasons, we place this case in the lower left quadrant of Figure 1.

Ethnic conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland over the last one hundred years has also been particularly acute. Although the economic integration of Catholics has improved in recent years (Breen 2000), interpersonal interactions between Catholics and Protestants remain tense against the backdrop of the apparent failure of the 1998 Good Friday agreement. While attempts at political reconciliation have made small steps throughout the past ten years, skepticism remains pervasive. The Catholic and Protestant elites are not eager to promote social and political integration within hybrid governmental institutions, choosing to use their own religious and political institutions to assert the cultural and political autonomy instead. International attention to the Catholics’ cause has given them more political power and diminished their marginalization within Northern Ireland. Thus, we place this case above and to the right

of the Palestinian case in Figure 1, to reflect a slight improvement in the situation of Catholics in Northern Ireland in recent years.

Interracial group boundaries in Brazil are less rigid than ethnic boundaries in Israel and Northern Ireland. Until recently, the Brazilian government vigorously promoted itself as a “racial democracy,” since the majority of Brazilians identify themselves as mixed-race. At a rhetorical level, this suggests more porous group boundaries. Moreover, interracial sociability is more frequent and less tense in Brazil than in other societies where the Black/White distinction is prominent, and Brazilian popular culture is largely defined by Afro-Brazilian culture. However, the 12 percent of the population with the darkest skin tones remain victims of discrimination in many different contexts (Telles 2004).<sup>8</sup> Thus, we place the Brazilian case to the right of the Northern Irish case to reflect the greater relative permeability of symbolic (but not social) boundaries in Brazilian society.

The case of the Québécois in Canada represents an example of more permeable group boundaries. The economic inequality between Francophones (native French speakers), Anglophones (English-speakers) and allophones (members of “cultural minorities” or immigrant groups whose native language is neither French nor English) has lessened considerably in Québec over the last forty years. The francophone Québécois have been largely successful in de-stigmatizing their collective identity in the eyes of the English majority in Canada by asserting the social and cultural distinctiveness of their society (Juteau 1999; Fournier 2001). Thus, we place the Québécois above all the other cases and to the extreme right of Figure 1.

Group boundaries across our four cases have never been systematically compared.<sup>9</sup> Independently, however, each of our cases has been analyzed by specialists of ethnic conflict, discrimination, political incorporation, and political mobilization and negotiation. While specific studies speak to the dynamics of collective identity and ethno-racial boundaries, there is no synthetic statement on the character of inter-group boundaries for each of these cases. Below we briefly review the literature on boundaries in each case to establish a framework for comparing them. We also provide preliminary hypotheses concerning how the strength of social and symbolic boundaries in each case is likely to affect the equalization strategies used by members of stigmatized groups. Our conclusion brings these tentative hypotheses together. This analysis will guide an interview-based study of everyday equalization strategies used by such individuals, to be conducted at a later time. Before approaching these empirical questions, however, we first discuss the theoretical literature relevant to our inquiry to elaborate our research question and define the terrain of our inquiry.

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<sup>8</sup>The racial composition of Brazil is a topic of heated debate. According to Telles (2004), 99 percent of the population can be considered to be of “mixed race” (p. 83). Here we focus on those individuals who identify themselves as “pardo” (brown) and “preto” (black). This issue receives more attention below.

<sup>9</sup>There are, however, numerous comparisons between several (but not all) of our cases such as Lustick (1993) and Smootha (2001). Moreover, there are numerous theoretical contributions and findings from the vast literature on ethnic conflicts would undoubtedly prove relevant for our four-way comparison (e.g. Wimmer 2002, Horowitz 2001, Williams 1994, Brubaker & Laitin 1998).

## 2. Recognition and Commensuration

Controversy surrounding the philosophical principles of universalism and multiculturalism *qua* cultural relativism have become central to theoretical scholarship on the politics of distribution and recognition (Ben-Habib 1996, Fraser 2003, Taylor 1994) and communitarianism (Sen 1998, Walzer 1997). Although these literatures are concerned with group boundaries and broad ideas of equality, they have not tackled the topic of everyday anti-racism, or, in our terms, “equalization strategies.” Given their philosophical focus, it is hardly surprising that they have neither considered how individuals from stigmatized groups cope with the challenge of creating equality, nor the place of universalism and multiculturalism (or particularism) in this process. Moreover, scholars in this tradition do not consider how individuals are mobilized towards such ends. Social scientists working on social movements, such as the American civil rights movement (McAdam 1982, McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001, McPherson 1975) or worldwide nationalist movements and anti-racist NGOs (Omi 1993, Tarrow 1999) are still working on exactly *how* and *why* individuals join social movements. We are only beginning to understand how the “frames” promoted by social movements come to take roots among those who are not politically inclined (Snow 2004). Like the more philosophical line of work, however, this literature does not fully explore the role of emotions, group boundaries, and collective identity in facilitating mobilization at the individual level.<sup>10</sup> Addressing these empirical lacunae require systematic analysis at the “everyday” level.

Early work on anti-racism was mostly concerned with the ideological underpinnings of anti-racism (Taguieff 1991). However, there is an emerging consensus that less attention should be paid to philosophical issues, and more attention should be given to anti-racist practices and everyday equalization strategies. For instance, recent scholarship has established that there are wide variations in how states create “culturally responsive policies” toward minority groups (Kymlicka 2004; see also Lentin 2004 and Modood 1997). We contribute to this new line of work by exploring how the internal and external dynamics of collective identity and group boundaries affect the equalization strategies of members of stigmatized groups.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Notable exceptions include Polletta and Jasper (2001) and Polletta (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup>As Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have argued, “identity” has become an increasingly vague concept. Careless dissemination of the term across the social sciences has led to both overzealous essentialism and excessive constructivism. We believe that the same is also true of the term “collective identity.” Early pluralist perspectives on social movements argued that coherent collective identity will emerge among members of stigmatized groups merely because of their shared inability to affect the predominant political structure (Smelser 1962). Likewise, the identity politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s has been widely criticized for reifying the importance of identity upon those without political inclinations (Gitlin 1995). At the other end of the spectrum, rational choice theorists analyze ethnic conflicts without considering the impact of collective identity, stressing instead the benefits of cooperation within a game theory framework (Fearon & Laitin 1996). In sum, collective identity either “tends to mean too much (when understood in the strong sense), too little (when understood in the weak sense) or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)” (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 1). Although we do not accept Brubaker and Cooper’s suggestion that the word “identity” should be abandoned altogether, we acknowledge their criticism of the high levels of ambiguity associated with the term. However, we believe that the vagueness of the term is not the product of over-usage, but rather of the fact that, like the term “culture,” it

Following Jenkins (1996), we use the term “social identity” to refer to a twin process of group identification and social categorization: on the one hand, individuals must be able to differentiate themselves from others by drawing on criteria of commonality and a sense of shared belonging within their subgroup;<sup>12</sup> on the other hand, this internal identification process must be recognized by outsiders for an objectified collective identity to emerge. Jenkins’s framework captures these internal and external moments of the collective identification process. He draws an analytical distinction between groups and categories, i.e., “a collectivity which identifies and defines itself (a group for itself) and a collectivity which is identified and defined by others (a category in itself)” (1996; 23). Thus, he contends that the internal-external dialectic of collective identity can be mapped through analysis of the interplay of group identification and social categorization.<sup>13</sup> Our inquiry proceeds from the same point: *our interest in the equalization work that stigmatized groups produce to affect the meaning given to their group by others (i.e., to their “social categorization”) requires exploring both their group identification – what it means for African Americans to belong to their group (what defines their distinctiveness, their authenticity) – and how it is influenced by social categorization, or the predominant stereotypes that members of the majority group hold toward them.*

External definitions of collective identity are central to the recognition literature organized around the influential writings of Charles Taylor (1994). For Taylor, the level of recognition afforded to minority groups is an important predictor of their self-determination and political success. Although Taylor is primarily interested in the external legitimation of nationalist movements, his contemporaries have questioned the external-internal dialectic of recognition as well (e.g., Fraser 2003). This literature remains highly normative, however, and has yet to be subject to systematic empirical analysis. Nevertheless, recent work has set the stage for empirical analysis of recognition by analyzing various social movements as recognition struggles that involve “boundary-making activities” (e.g., Hobson [2003] on the case of the women’s movement in Sweden; Herzog [1999] on the role of female Palestinian citizens of Israel involved in peace organizations in challenging the Israeli/Palestinian polarized collective identities; or Merry [1998] on the use of a global equalization rhetoric by local women’s human rights movements in different societies). We would add that such struggles can also be understood as boundary *bridging* activities. Like these authors, we seek to analyze recognition struggles more broadly than political theorists have. However, we also look at equalization struggles beyond the confines of social movements. Many other forms of micro-

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is used to designate a family of concepts. For a review of the different connotations given to the term collective identity across different disciplines and competing schools of social psychology, see Ashmore et al. (2004).

<sup>12</sup>For instance, Melluci (1996, p. 8) defines collective identity as “hidden codes that make individuals and groups predictable and dependable social actors.”

<sup>13</sup>A group is rooted in process of internal definitions, while a “category” is externally defined. Jenkins defines “category” as follows: “A class whose nature and composition is decided by the person who defines the category; for example, persons earning wages in a certain range may be counted as a category for income tax purposes. A category is therefore to be contrasted with a group, defined by the nature of the relations between the members.” (Mann 1985, p. 83). See also Cornell and Hartman (1998).



level recognition struggles have to be considered to fully understand social change and the production of social inclusion.

For Nancy Fraser (2003), “misrecognition” is even more crucial than “recognition.” Misrecognition, she argues, can occur at all levels of life through the dissemination of cultural values via institutions. “Misrecognition consists in the depreciation of... identity by the dominant culture and the consequent damage to [minority] group members’ sense of self” (p. 23). Thus, for Fraser, recognition is not only a question of political incorporation, but also social status. Her “status model” avoids reifying identities by focusing on the “patterns which constitute actors as peers, capable of participating with one another in social life” (27). In this sense, collective identity is tied to individual status not only through macro-political discourse, but also the daily interaction of individual members of minority groups seeking recognition from a larger society. Thus, in Fraser’s conception, status is developed at an individual level but mediated by institutionalized patterns of intercultural interaction.

The range of arguments members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups use to gain recognition are a highly significant—yet understudied—component of recognition struggles at large. They are especially important considering that cultural differences are a popular explanation for the persistence of ethnic conflicts. For example, the fear that middle-class Americans have of ghetto “culture” is often cited as a source of their anti-black prejudices. Likewise, “cultural differences” in gender relations between Muslims and non-Muslims make the latter skeptical of the formers’ ability to accept other human rights. Individuals draw on different repertoires according to the setting within they engage in inter-group comparisons (Lamont 2000; Swidler 1986). Yet, the link between available available cultural templates and social exclusion (or inclusion) remains poorly understood and highly under-theorized (Lamont 1989).<sup>14</sup> Much more needs to be done in terms of understanding the connection between symbolic and social boundaries and, more specifically, how the former operate as necessary but insufficient conditions for the latter (as they manifest themselves in patterns of residential segregation and exogamy, for instance), and what other factors mediate their relationships (Lamont 1992, Lamont and Molnar 2002b). While these questions will deserve separate examination, we are now focusing specifically on the changing symbolic boundaries between in-groups and out-groups and the strategies of equalization of out-group members, as we understand these transformations to be crucial to an improved understanding of processes of social exclusion and inclusion.

Sociologists have only recently begun to put such challenges to students of collective identity. Instead of focusing on responses to discrimination or racism *per se*, our project begins with a general sociology of classification and folk understandings about equality. This requires exploration of folk classification about what constitutes heterogeneity and similarity within and between groups, and more specifically, how individuals use cognitive templates to make people commensurate, i.e., how they can be brought together into a common matrix for the purpose of comparison (Espeland and Stevens 1999). Our larger research agenda takes inspiration from Goffman (1963), who shows

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<sup>14</sup>Tilly’s recent (2004) work is a notable exception, however, his focus is decidedly historical and does not provide a framework for *everyday* anti-racist strategies.

how individuals with discredited or “spoiled” identities take on the responsibility of managing interaction to prevent discomfort in others.<sup>15</sup> This notion also resonates with Boltanski and Thévenot’s (1991, 1999) analysis of the ways individuals establish equivalence in different social contexts. Building on Walzer’s (1983) *Spheres of Justice*, their work highlights how individuals order one another on different matrixes while developing justifications for specific conceptions of the normative order. They approach commensuration by focusing on normative—as opposed to positive—evaluations, as they are primarily concerned with how individuals work to demonstrate how the particular (interest) is universal. In contrast to their approach, we do not privilege the normative nor posit a need for justification through universality. Instead, we are concerned with the plurality of evidence that is used to define worth and demonstrate equality regardless of their political significance.

### 3. The Permeability of Group Boundaries

This section discusses the relative salience of various types of social boundaries (economic, political, residential, etc.) across each of our four empirical cases. It also describes whether and how social boundaries combine with symbolic boundaries (as expressed in representations of collective identities and popular culture) to solidify or loosen group boundaries across different contexts. Finally, it advances preliminary hypotheses concerning how the strength of boundaries are likely to affect the equalization strategy of stigmatized groups across our four cases.

**Figure 2: Relative Salience of Various Group Boundaries across Cases**

	←—————→			
	Weak		Strong	
Types of Boundaries	Israel	N. Ireland	Brazil	Québec
<b>Religious</b>	Very Strong	Very Strong	Weak	Weak
<b>Linguistic</b>	Very Strong	Weak/Moderate	Weak	Strong
<b>Racial</b>	Strong	N/A	Strong	N/A
<b>Residential</b>	Very Strong	Very Strong	Moderate	Weak
<b>Socio-economic</b>	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak

<sup>15</sup>It also draws from work on stigma management among the handicapped and gay people. It complements the social psychological literature that focuses on “stigma consciousness” (Pinel 1999) and on how minority groups cope psychologically with the “perceived stressor” of racism and prejudice (Clark et al. 1999). Finally, it also complements the work of social psychologists who have proposed the concept of group identity to refer to the extent to which people perceive themselves as being similar and linked in some ways to their group members (Gurin & Townsend 1986) but have yet to put flesh on what defines group identity.

Figure 2 summarizes our review of the literature concerning boundary patterns in Israel, Northern Ireland, Brazil and Québec. This figure is similar to Figure 1 in that it shows that boundaries are generally stronger in Israel and Northern Ireland than they are in Brazil and Québec. However, it also shows that social and symbolic boundaries are based on various dimensions across cases. For instance, while group boundaries based on shared religious identity are very salient in Israel and Northern Ireland, this is not the case in Québec and Brazil. Similarly, residential segregation by ethnicity is found in each of our cases, but in varying degree.

### *The Palestinian Citizens of Israel*

Israel is publicly defined as a Jewish nation, despite the fact that approximately 18 percent of its current population is of Muslim descent (Ghanem 2001).<sup>16</sup> Although the Israeli government has repeatedly described itself as a “liberal democracy,” the exclusive character of Israeli Republicanism and the systemic discrimination of the Palestinian citizens of Israel have been widely documented (Lustick 1994, Peled 1992). Following the violent partition of Palestine in 1948, many villages were disbanded (Ghanem 2001). Those who left their villages and remained within the boundaries of the state lost their lands and resettled in neighboring Arab villages or in unrecognized settlements (Al Haj 1988). Until 1966 all Palestinians living in Israel were subject to military rule. Their movements and activities were monitored closely, and their continued stigmatization became a powerful source of control and social exclusion by the Israeli government. Throughout this period, the Palestinian middle and upper classes were all but destroyed (Ghanem 2001). Once land-owning farmers, the vast majority of Israeli-Palestinians became proletarians (Rosenfeld 1964), and they continue consistently to occupy the lowest strata of Israeli society (Lewin-Epstein 1993).

While the civil rights of the Palestinian citizens of Israel have improved in recent decades, there remains an entrenched sense of suspicion and mistrust between Jews and Arabs, and among Arabs themselves. Since the establishment of the Israeli State, the Palestinian citizens of Israel have been mobilized as voters, yet simultaneously excluded from the main national political organizations as well as from Israel’s core political culture. Throughout the last three decades there has been a growing politicization of Palestinians in Israel that has been accompanied by a strong national awakening. They have sought active participation by penetrating national political institutions. Despite these efforts, they have remained politically marginalized, never considered as legitimate partners in the government coalition (Ghanem 2001).

At the local level the Palestinian citizens of Israel do occupy most administrative positions in Arab villages and towns. However, the individuals who occupy these positions depend on and are controlled by governmental agencies (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1988). Although political reconciliation with West Bank Palestinians is supported by two fledgling “peace parties,” Palestinians living in Israel have little to no recourse for collec-

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<sup>16</sup>This figure describes only those Palestinians who are *citizens* of Israel. In addition to this group there are roughly 3.8 million Palestinians who live under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza strip. See <http://www.pcbs.org/default.aspx>

tive political action on their own (Herzog 1995: 89-94). This has led some to consider abandoning the public sphere entirely as a sign of protest.

For years, Israel's Palestinian citizens were referred to as Israeli Arabs. In the mid-1960s and early 1970s numerous Israeli social scientists understood the collective identity of Israel's Palestinian citizens within an Orientalist framework that denied their national identity and focused on the underdevelopment of Arab villages and towns (Kimmerling 1992). These analyses highlighted the ways in which the culture of the majority Jewish population was influencing the collective identity of Arabs living in the nascent Israeli state. Thus, early studies of the Palestinian citizens of Israel followed the Zionist position that they were not a coherent group but rather a "collection of minorities" of various religious affiliations. As Sa'di (2004) argues, these early studies failed to recognize the impact of Pan-Arabism and Regional Arabism on the collective identity of Arabs living in Israel as well as the Jewish state at large. The exclusion of Palestinian citizens of Israel from the economic and political structure of the state has intensified their search for expressing their own identity. Though the terminology of Israeli-Arabs is still widely used in official and public discourse, new terms such as "the Palestinian citizens of Israel," "Palestinian Arabs" and "Palestinian Israelis" reflect their Palestinian heritage.

More recent research has focused on the "Palestinization" of Arabs living in Israel in the face of the simultaneous pressure of "Israelization" (Rouhana 1997, Ghanem 2001). As Rouhana (1989) argues, "The Arabs in Israel have grown to the point where they can no longer be ignored by either Israelis or Palestinians" (55). Factor analysis of survey data suggests that the notion of "homeland" and a "Palestinian people" are becoming two of the most important aspects of Palestinian collective identity in Israel (Rouhana 1997: 132). Other scholars have highlighted the regional (Rabinowitz 1997, Yiftachel 1998), historical (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003), literary (Qanaze' 1985), Islamist (Sa'di 2004) and archaeological (Bowersock 1988) bases of collective identity for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Together these studies suggest that Palestinian collective identities are not generally invented as a reaction to Zionism, even if they have become more defined in opposition to Jewish collective identity since the creation of the Israeli State and partition of the West Bank. Moreover, recent scholarship suggests that there are multiple ways of being a "Palestinian living in Israel," and that these cannot be captured by a simple Jew/Arab dichotomy; internal segmentation of the population develops on a number of dimensions, including religion, region (e.g. cities, farms/villages and Bedouin), class, gender and political association (Kanaaneh 2003, Herzog 1999, Bligh 2003).

Although this review suggests that Palestinian citizens of Israel develop a collective identity along various criteria, more of them define their collective identity based on particularistic criteria having to do with Islam and the Palestinian cause rather than with universalistic criteria that would be inclusive to Jews, such as a common Israeli national identity. This leads us to expect that the everyday equalization strategies of Palestinian citizens of Israel would be more particularist than universalist; more oriented toward celebrating their distinctiveness than their similarities with Israelis. Given the extraordinary strength of the social and symbolic boundaries they face, however, we would also expect them to mobilize a relatively wide range of anti-racist arguments in order to challenge their social identity (or "group categorization," to use Jenkins' terms). This is be-

cause we expect stigmatized groups who face stronger ethno-racial boundaries to be more inventive and creative in their equalization strategies, if only out of necessity.

### *Catholics in Northern Ireland*

Although Catholics make up a majority of the Republic of Ireland, they constitute only 44 percent of the population of Northern Ireland.<sup>17</sup> The historic conflict between Catholics and Protestants remains one of the most notorious examples of ethnic conflict in the world today. Although the economic exclusion of Catholics has declined in recent years (Breen 2000), their historic marginalization from the Northern Irish economy led them to develop their own markets and political structures, which has translated in particularly strong social boundaries.

The existence of such strong social boundaries between Catholics and Protestants is also confirmed by high levels of residential segregation which has prevented the development of an inter-ethnic class consciousness and reinforced fierce job competition among the two groups to this day (Burgess 2002). Working-class antagonisms continue today in the context of high unemployment rates and high welfare dependency.<sup>18</sup> Recent research suggests that high levels of neighborhood identification among Catholics are a byproduct of individuals' fears of entering predominately Protestant neighborhoods (Buckley and Kenney 1995). Such fear is not only caused by the prospects of out-group punishment, but also in-group punishment for violations of neighborhood solidarity. For example, Shirlow (2003) has shown that Catholics who shop at Protestant grocery stores fear retaliation from other Catholics in their neighborhoods when they return.

Although Protestants initially controlled the political structure of the Northern Irish state, international pressure for political reconciliation has led to the political empowerment of the Catholic minority. Despite the emergence of hybrid governmental and civic agencies as a result of the Good Friday Peace Agreement, political institutions and civil society remain highly segregated, as neither Catholics nor Protestants have expressed enthusiasm for the new political structures.<sup>19</sup> Survey research and focus groups indicate that this is due to exceptionally strong in-group identification and solidarity with the Republic of Ireland (Niens and Cairns 2002, Davis 2003). Party preferences remain closely link to religious affiliation (MacAllister and O'Connel 1984) and religious leaders play a crucial political role for Catholics and Protestants alike (Mitchell 2004).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>2001 Northern Ireland Census. Available at:

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/Census2001Output/ThemeTables/theme\\_tables1.html/tables.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/Census2001Output/ThemeTables/theme_tables1.html/tables.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>As Howe (1998) has shown, Protestants and Catholics have developed unique conceptions of the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, which reflect both their limited class consciousness and strong in-group identification.

<sup>19</sup>For example, only 2 percent of Northern Irish schoolchildren attend non-denominational schools (Frazer and Morgan 1999).

<sup>20</sup>Church attendance is higher in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom (Lambkin 1996). However, it is unclear whether religious institutions are the strongest source of collective identification among Catholics, or if they simply reproduce other pre-existing social boundaries (Mitchell 2004).

Expressions of collective identity among Catholics in Northern Ireland draw upon the historical legacy of the Celts and Southern Irish nationalism (Nic Craith 2003). When the Northern Irish state was first institutionalized in the early twentieth century, Catholic nationalists immediately responded by creating their own civil society and cultural traditions in the face of British hegemony (Hutchinson 1987). Today, Catholic Irish distinctiveness is celebrated through music (McCann 1995), literature (Deane 1994), language (O'Reilly 1999), television (Watson 1996) and sports (Cronin 1999). The realm of expressive culture is one where equalization strategies are extremely salient and one that is particularly invested as a tool for claiming recognition, if not cultural membership.

Displays of Irish culture are especially prominent during "marching season" each summer, when Protestants and Catholics organize parades throughout Northern Ireland's largest cities. These parades invoke distinctly Irish aspects of the Catholic community, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, in order to combat the ritual displays of power of Protestant "Orangemen" (Jarman 2003). Again, "either/or" conceptions of Irishness do not reflect the many levels of Republicanism in Irish society (Todd 2004).<sup>21</sup> However, recent research suggests that middle- and upper-class Catholics are more approving of political reconciliation than their lower-class counterparts.

Given the combination of strong social and symbolic boundaries in this case, one would expect that the equalization strategies of Catholics in Northern Ireland would be quite similar to those of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. That is, strong labor-market and residential segregation combined with the exclusive nature of the collective identity of Catholics would lead them to adopt a wide range of equalization strategies in response to their stigmatization. However, there is evidence that the equalization strategies of Catholics in Northern Ireland may be more universalistic than the strategies deployed by their Palestinian counterparts, as the intensity of the conflict has lessened considerably in recent years. Violent confrontation between the two groups is less frequent than it was before the Good Friday Agreement, but political reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in the Northern Irish government has been slow in the making. Despite infighting between political elites, some have suggested that ethnic tensions among the middle class have become much less strong; even if working class antagonisms continue unabated (Breen 2000). Meanwhile, the resurgence of Irish culture in Northern Ireland suggests that the de-stigmatization of Catholics may be more actively pursued in the symbolic realm.

The combination of these factors suggests that equalization struggles are affected by variations in the openness of economic class competition and feelings of cultural entitlement across classes. The literature on oppositional African-American youth suggests that this group is less likely to want to equalize and gain cultural membership than older adults. Similarly, working-class members may be more concerned with maintaining group boundaries to maintain economic advantage on an unskilled labor market than middle-class people, who may be more preoccupied by the politics of recognition as a collective good in and of itself.

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<sup>21</sup>There is also evidence that the recent influx of non-European immigrants in Northern Ireland will also influence the character of republicanism and unionism (Feldman 2003).

## *Blacks in Brazil*

Black Africans were first brought to Brazil in the early sixteenth century to work on plantations as slaves. When slavery was abolished in 1888, blacks comprised about 15 percent of the Brazilian population. Today, The darkest-skinned segment of the Brazilian population represents roughly 45 percent of the total population (Reichmann 1999).<sup>22</sup>

Like Palestinians in Israel and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Blacks in Brazil suffer from economic discrimination. Telles (2004) provides extensive data on patterns of distribution of income, wealth and education across racial groups. He demonstrates the existence of strong social boundaries against blacks, particularly in employment-based discrimination. Structural discrimination may be exacerbated by young blacks who choose not to take low-paying work to avoid the further stigmatization of having a “dirty” (i.e., subservient) job (Sansone 1999). Many less-educated blacks have turned to crime and other illicit sources of income in order to overcome such obstacles.

For the most part Blacks have been excluded from Brazilian politics as well. While the number of black office holders has risen in recent years, they remain a handful of the entire population of government officials (Fontaine 1985, Johnson 1998). While social movements such as the Frente Negra Brasileira had only modest success in their fight against racial discrimination, the Black Movement (MNU) has gained strength in recent years. The Black Movement has also achieved widespread international attention through both the United Nations and *La Alianza*, a network of the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Cardoso administration officially recognized Brazil’s race problem with new racial discrimination legislation that built upon the multicultural framework of the 1988 Constitution. It later established a National Black Consciousness Day and an Interministerial Working Group for the Valorization of the Black Population (GTI). Despite these considerable gains in the public affirmation of the seriousness of racial discrimination in public sphere, there is general consensus among scholars that the Black movement is still unable to mobilize the masses of blacks in Brazilian society. Many blacks continue to look at the rhetoric of the Black movement as an overly opportunistic “language of the losers” (Guimaraes 2001). Likewise, elites have accused the Black movement of “reverse racism” and academics have made conservative criticisms of the movement and specifically its importation of “Yankee Imperialism” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1999). Thus, although the existence of strong social boundaries is undeniable, they do not translate into a clear collective identity and a strong social mobilization for the affirmation of the rights of blacks, as has been the case for Catholics in Northern Ireland and for Palestinian citizens of Israel. This suggests that where Afro-

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<sup>22</sup>Without doubt, defining race-based populations in Brazil is inherently difficult. This is because the nature of race in Brazil is highly situational (Harris et al. 1993). If one considers “black” to mean anyone with mixed ancestry, however, than blacks constitute a majority of Brazilian society. In these terms, Brazil has the second highest black population in the world (next only to Nigeria) (Winant 1998). Classifications based on skin tone alone are also problematic in that they may not necessarily explain African ancestry; many dark skinned Brazilians are of indigenous origin (Telles 2004). Since we are interested in discrimination against the darkest segment of the Brazilian population, we choose the *preto* (black) and *pardo* (brown) categories adopted by the Brazilian census. Although this choice is far from perfect, we feel it best captures the segment of the dark-skinned population most likely to experience discrimination.

Brazilians are concerned, strong social boundaries coexist with somewhat more permeable symbolic boundaries.

The very ambiguity of racial classification in Brazil also suggests the relative permeability of symbolic ethno-racial boundaries, at least at the level of self-identification. While scholars do not agree on the racial characterization of Brazilian society,<sup>23</sup> they have identified hundreds of different words used by Brazilians to describe phenotype.<sup>24</sup> Most Brazilians generally use six different terms to refer to levels of blackness (Telles 2004: 82) and there is significant evidence that individuals choose different racial identities (or “levels” of blackness) depending on context, i.e., whether they are at work (Guimarães 1993), negotiating sexual relations (Sansone 1997), or engaged in expressive culture, such as dance (Sansone 1999), music (Carvalho 2000), religion (Prandi 2000, Burdick 1999) and Carnival celebrations (Risério 2000). The negotiability of racial identity for many Brazilians, who in the United States would be coded as “of color,” and its lack of stability across context, are other indications of the permeability of the symbolic dimension of ethno-racial boundaries.

A further indication of the porousness of racial boundaries is the centrality of Afro-Brazilian culture in Brazilian popular culture at large. The legacy of communities of escaped slaves, or *Quilombos*, remains an important reference point in music, dance, religion, cuisine, carnival and literature. In fact, some scholars have argued that the legacy of African traditions is perhaps strongest in Brazil of all countries with an African Diaspora (Covin 1996, Dzidzienyo 2000).<sup>25</sup> What is unique about the Brazilian case is that Black culture is widely accepted by non-blacks as well as blacks. However, each of the cultural spaces where black culture is central accentuate only those aspects which are non-violent and non-political, and particularly those which highlight the sensuality and agility of blacks.

At the same time, there is also evidence that an oppositional black culture is beginning to emerge. Black university students are more likely to criticize racism than they were in the early seventies (Turner 1985).<sup>26</sup> In addition, more explicit affirmations of *negritude* are becoming increasingly prominent among black youth, who are more likely to use the somewhat pejorative term ‘*negro*’ in lieu of the neutral ‘*preto*’ to describe their color (Sansone 1997). The concurrence of globalization, modernity, educational liberalization and rising unemployment have each caused youths to understand their blackness in ways that their parents did not. Hairstyles such as dreadlocks have helped people to affirm their Black identity, in addition to new ways of dancing and walking (Sansone

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<sup>23</sup>Some adopt a bipolar classification system while others use multiple categories. See Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999) for an extended criticism of U.S. academic hegemony in the Brazilian case. See also the responses of Telles (2003), Healey (2003), and Hanchard (2003).

<sup>24</sup>See also Bailey (2002) and Skidmore (1993).

<sup>25</sup>For instance, *Capoeira*, a martial art developed by slaves under the guise of dance has become one of the cultural spaces most dominated by blacks, and a source of national pride. Also, the *Candomblé* religion, which has roots in Western African religions, is widely practiced in Brazil by people of all colors (Prandi 2000). Black culture is especially prominent in the national “carnival” celebration, where Black identities receive extensive attention, if only for one day (Risério 2000).

<sup>26</sup>Nascimento and Nascimento (2001) have argued that the widespread acceptance of the terms *afro-brasileiro*, *degro*, and *afrodescendente* is a product of the recent success of the Black Movement.



1999). There is also evidence that young blacks have displayed renewed interest in the liberation theology of the Catholic Church (Burdick 1999).

In sum, ethno-racial boundaries in Brazil appear to be more permeable than those in Israel and Northern Ireland due to the existence of weaker symbolic boundaries, even if social boundaries remain strong. The ambiguity of racial distinctions weakens the collective identity of blacks and makes the in-group/out-group distinction more fluid for all. This could mean that Afro-Brazilians mobilize a smaller range of equalization strategies than their Catholic and Palestinian counterparts. It may also mean that they are more likely to use universalistic arguments to establish the commensurability of groups.

### *Québécois in Canada*

French Canadians represent 16 percent of the Canadian population. They are concentrated in Québec, a province which comprises roughly seven million inhabitants, of whom 80 percent report that French is their mother tongue.<sup>27</sup> Not unlike Ireland, the Canadian province of Québec has historically been a largely Catholic region conquered by the English. The French-speaking citizens of Canada have a shared history which dates back to the wars between British and French colonialists at the end of the eighteenth century. Although earlier in the twentieth century French speakers worked primarily in Québec's rural economy, the economy modernized from the 1950s on, which led to an urban exodus and a rapid increase in the level of education. By the mid-1990s the Québécois had established their leadership in the economic, political and intellectual realms in Québec and, to a lesser extent, in Canada. While economic disparities between Francophones and Anglophones persist, they have diminished considerably over the past forty years (Juteau 1999). Residential segregation persists, but it is mostly self-selected (Kaplan 1994).

Of all the cases described in this paper, the Québécois have been the most successful by far in de-stigmatizing their collective identity. This happened primarily through a nationalist and independentist movement that fought for the political independence of Québec. This movement affirmed the distinctive cultural identity of Québécois that emerged out of French, British, English Canadian and pan-American ways of "being in the world" (Handler 1988). It systematically resisted attempts by the federal government to reduce the people of Québec to one of many "ethnic" groups and to deny its status as one of the two founding nations of Canada (Juteau, McAndrew and Pietrantonio 1998). The widespread abandonment of the term "French Canadian" for the term "Québécois" among French speakers after the Quiet Revolution of the fifties and sixties was symptomatic of the transformation of their collective identity.<sup>28</sup> Although a referendum for the independence of Québec was easily defeated in 1980, it was only defeated by only 1 percent of the popular vote in 1995, and this, despite the support of a large majority of francophone Québécois.

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<sup>27</sup>2001 Canadian Census (available at <http://www.statcan.ca:80/english/Pgdb/demo26a.htm>)

<sup>28</sup>Younger residents of Quebec are more likely to define themselves as Québécois than their parents were (Elmer & Abramson 1997).

Unlike Israel and Northern Ireland, religion has not been the most salient basis for the exclusion of Québécois by the Anglophone majority during the past thirty years. Although many French speakers are also Catholic, the level of religious observance has declined very abruptly. It is their linguistic heritage and common culture and history, as opposed to religion, which serve as the main basis around which they construct a common identity. Both the Parti Québécois, the independentist party, and the Parti libéral, the federalist provincial party in Québec, have been actively involved in promoting policies that favor the defense of the French language and affirm its contributions to a unique Québécois culture and collective identity.<sup>29</sup>

Not unlike Catholics in Northern Ireland, the de-stigmatization of the Québécois identity has been achieved through the celebration of a distinctive cultural identity which justified claims to national self-determination. Although Handler (1988) traces the roots of “folk” culture in Québec to the working-class rural suburbs surrounding Montréal in Québec’s early history, he suggests that this folk culture came to be celebrated by elite urban Québécois who objectified and appropriated it as their own. While Gérard Bouchard (1999) and Jocelyn Letourneau (2000) have examined the distinctive dynamics of collective memory and collective identity in Québec, others have suggested that contemporary Québécois culture consists of simple variations on French and American cultures (a form of “américanité”) that do not warrant its distinction as an independent culture. Whatever its origins, the existence of a distinct Québécois culture is largely taken for granted, as it manifest itself across all fields in literature and in the visual and performing arts (e.g., Jones 2001), as well as in intellectual life (Fournier 2001).<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the case of Catholics in Northern Ireland, francophone Québécois culture and political rhetoric have been much more inclusive of members of other groups. Analyses of the rhetoric of the Parti Québécois indicate that use of terms such as “peuple” has been replaced by more ambiguous terms such as “communautés culturelles,” which reflect a desire for greater inclusion of Allophones (those whose native language is neither English nor French) and of Anglophones, among others (Bellerose and Beauchemin 2000)—perhaps to maximize chances of electoral success (Bloemraad 2001). Hence the case of the Québécois suggests that the ability to recognize minorities may be essential to overcoming stigmatization. The historic permeability of ethnic divisions in Québec may not only have resulted in the successful transformation of the Québécois identity but also the progressive incorporation of other stigmatized groups as well. Perhaps the de-stigmatization of Catholics in Northern Ireland and the Palestinian citizens of Is-

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<sup>29</sup>In 1977, the Parti Québécois succeeded in making French the official language of Québec. This provided momentum to the nascent separatist movement, and further established the Québécois claim of ethnic distinction. The further institutionalization of the French language helped French-speakers to overcome the stigmatization of their language as “backwards” and “dépassé” (Neathery-Castro & Rousseau 2002).

<sup>30</sup>It is interesting to note that the intellectual culture of Québec is a reflection of majority and minority politics. Whereas Francophone social scientists were originally very focused on social exclusion, they became increasingly less interested in ethnic relations after the Quiet Revolution. Meanwhile, Anglophone social scientists, now wary of becoming an intellectual minority, published more on ethnic studies than ever before. Since the mid-1980s, however, both Francophones and Anglophones have returned to the study of ethnic relations, albeit in the analysis of recent waves of non-European immigration (Juteau 1992).

rael would be facilitated through the cultural recognition of other minority groups such as the growing number of non-European refugees and immigrants in Northern Ireland, or the Arab Jews of Israel. The dynamics between various levels of ingroup/outgroup boundaries within a society could very well form an ecological system such that the weakening of one type of boundaries reinforces other types of boundaries. Although this broader issue is of interest to the present study, we cannot address it in full here.

The case of the Québécois indicates that weak social boundaries can go hand in hand with stronger symbolic boundaries revealed through the affirmation of collective identity and cultural distinctiveness. However, these changes may not have translated into strong ethno-racial boundaries to the extent that the cultural affirmation has been, to some extent, cosmopolitan in orientation, i.e., not exclusive of the value of other ethnocultures (Lamont 1997). More research will be needed in order to determine whether this is indeed the case. For now, we can only speculate that weak ethno-racial boundaries cause the salience and range of equalization strategies mobilized by stigmatized groups to be less than those of stigmatized groups facing strong social boundaries. They would also be most likely to use universalistic – as opposed to particularistic – evidence of equality, worth, or commensurability, as we elaborate below.

#### 4. Conclusion

Above we have attempted to show that the strength of ethno-racial boundaries varies across our cases from extremely strong (Palestinian citizens of Israel) to very weak (Québécois in Canada). We have also presented guiding hypotheses concerning the relationship between the permeability of ethno-racial boundaries and the range and salience of equalization strategies used by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups. Because so little is known about the equalization strategies of stigmatized groups, these hypotheses should be viewed as most preliminary. The relationship between equalization strategies and the strength of boundaries is likely to be much less linear than we propose here, and many unexpected directions for research will emerge as we learn more about how members of stigmatized groups think about the challenge of transforming their collective identity and negotiating new rules of interaction.

Our main hypothesis is that those who are most frequently confronted with discrimination and stereotypes are more likely to have developed a wider range of equalization strategies to combat the daily indignity of misrecognition. Indeed, past research shows that African-American workers mobilize a wider range of equalization strategies than white workers do to establish equality across classes because they face both class-based *and* race-based forms of discrimination (Lamont 2000). Extrapolating to a wider comparative context, this finding would suggest that the Palestinian citizens of Israel mobilize a wider range of equalization strategies than Québécois do, if only because the cost of being the member of a minority group is much greater for them than it is for their counterparts in Québec. More generally, we expect the strength (or permeability) of boundaries to have a direct impact on the range and salience of arguments that members of stigmatized groups use to establish equality with members of dominant majority groups: stronger boundaries lead to stronger (and more diverse) equalization strategies.

Another set of predictions concerns the types of arguments that will be most salient in understanding how members of stigmatized groups deal with the challenge of rebutting stereotypes. One might expect that the weaker and more permeable the boundary, the more stigmatized groups are able to conceive of similarities between “us” and “them,” and the more likely they are to establish equality based on universalistic criteria (such as “members of the human race” or “biological similarity”). This hypothesis may be supported by the case of the Québécois, who have adopted a more inclusive rhetoric toward members of “cultural communities” as they make progress toward affirming their own cultural distinctiveness and promoting a more inclusive multicultural society. Likewise, the equalization strategies of Afro-Brazilians appear to be less concerned with their distinctiveness than their similarity with the dominant group given the presence of weak symbolic ethno-racial boundaries and the centrality of black culture to Brazilian popular culture – and this, despite very strong social boundaries.

In contrast, the Israeli case suggests that strongly policed social boundaries are maintained in part by strong symbolic boundaries, i.e., by a strong polarization between “us” and “them” where a common matrix for commensuration between members of majority and stigmatized groups is not easily established at the discursive level. This may go hand in hand with the use of particularistic – as opposed to universalistic – criteria of group membership (e.g., criteria that privilege distinctive religious identity, as opposed to a common membership in the “human race”). Similarly, religious-based particularism in Northern Ireland remains extremely salient despite the creation of institutional mechanisms designed to foster social integration of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. In both cases, a renewed interest in the historic origins of collective identity has played an important role in the increased rigidification of in-group and out-group boundaries, as the stigmatized group attempts to empower itself through the affirmation of its own cultural distinctiveness. However, recent advances in the Northern Irish peace process suggest that Catholic collective identity may soon become less exclusive than its Palestinian counterpart, as the latter continues to be perceived as more of a zero-sum game than the former.

While this paper does not provide empirical answers to our guiding questions, it does define a terrain of inquiry within which to pursue them. For example, we have shown that the recognition literature has ignored the internal-external dialectic of collective identity, and suggested that the theoretical tools developed by cultural sociologists are perhaps best equipped to fill these gaps. Our study has also suggested that there are significant lacunae in anti-racist scholarship which could be filled through analysis of everyday equalization strategies. Although much has been written about our cases within the context of ethnic conflict, mobilization and political negotiation, little to no work has been done on the “everyday” equalization strategies of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, Catholics in Northern Ireland, blacks in Brazil or Québécois in Canada. We believe that paying attention to this level of social reality is crucial if we want to understand the basic social processes at work in the transformation of group boundaries.

This study has only begun to suggest that there is a profound connection between collective identity and the equalization strategies developed by members of stigmatized ethno-racial groups at the everyday level. In a future study we plan to document these strategies through life-history interviews with individuals from each of the

groups described above. Such interviews would allow us to identify the ways in which members of stigmatized groups have gone about rebutting racism and establishing equality in a range of professional and non-professional settings (e.g., Lamont and Fleming forthcoming). By analyzing how these individuals have created a common metric of comparison with which to provide evidence of equality to members of majority groups, we hope to elaborate the theoretical framework outlined above. We believe that comparative analysis of equalization processes will yield not only further information about the ways stigmatized ethno-racial groups react to discrimination, but also the structure of discrimination itself.

The extent to which societies are inclusive is an important dimension by which we can compare societies from a normative point of view. The criteria that define a successful society should include not only high life expectancy and low infant mortality, but also the extent to which group boundaries are permeable and policed. A more ambitious sociology of equality must examine in greater depth how various marginalized groups understand the differences and similarities between themselves and other groups. It must also consider what they view as essentially shared traits between themselves and other members of their group, what they view as unavoidable or malleable differences, how they understand their obligations, and what are the limits of their solidarity toward members of their “own kind” their race, their class, their nation, or the human race—in other words, who deserves to be helped or protected.

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