



**SERRC**  
Social Epistemology  
Review & Reply Collective

<http://social-epistemology.com>  
ISSN: 2471-9560

Reflections on Boundary Work on Social Epistemology

Hanna Kiri Gunn, University of California, Merced, [hgunn@ucmerced.edu](mailto:hgunn@ucmerced.edu)

---

Gunn, Hanna Kiri. 2020. "Reflections on Boundary Work on Social Epistemology." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 9 (8): 1-12. <https://wp.me/p1Bfg0-5fH>.

## Abstract

Philosophers generally enjoy a wide latitude when it comes to setting their own research questions, defining technical terms in their own idiosyncratic (-but-justified) ways, and picking and choosing what assumptions they will take on for theories or arguments. It's interesting, then, to reflect on the disputes about defining social epistemology as an area of research. It's particularly interesting because disputes about what social epistemology is about, how it should be conducted, and whose work "counts" are not easily settled by appealing to any intuitive property like having a central subject, method, or paradigm case. I argue that "boundary work"—the practice of establishing and defining research areas—is itself a social epistemic practice. I propose three reasons for engaging in boundary work, and consider opting out altogether. I reflect on what might be causing boundary disputes in social epistemology by proposing three ways of interpreting its metaphilosophical disputes. In the end, I make a case for a more inclusive understanding of social epistemology as an interdisciplinary research area. Consequently, I propose that the productive boundary work about social epistemology is found in working out the evidentiary relationships between the contributing disciplines.

## What is Boundary Work?

“Boundary work” refers to the practice of establishing and defining research areas, which in part involves locating research questions or topics within particular disciplines. As a consequence, boundary work also involves practices that put boundaries around ourselves as researchers of particular disciplines, subdisciplines, and thus as experts (or not!) on particular topics. Boundary work establishes the norms and the common ground between researchers, for example, by specifying some substantive commitments around topic, method, or theoretical framework. Boundary work can be self-directed, but it's also an interpersonal practice.

I'll flag at the outset that I don't think all boundary work in social epistemology is problematic, however, it's not clear to me exactly what our boundaries should be or how we ought to go about drawing them. It's unclear also when we should enforce boundaries. I'll take it to be true that boundary work isn't just an artifact of the institutional demands of the university (one might be concerned that we distinguish disciplines just to decide whose offices go in which building). Thus, I won't be arguing that boundary work is unnecessary, or always harmful or otherwise problematic. In fact, I'll propose three positive reasons for boundary work: one practical, one theoretical, and one social-epistemic.

What unites methods of boundary work is the end product of more-or-less well-defined research areas. For example, we recognise that “ethics” and “epistemology” are distinct areas of philosophical research owing to their difference in subject matter, though the methods

may be, broadly, the same. We recognise that formal epistemology and epistemology are distinct areas too, though they may share a subject (e.g., what it is rational to do when you disagree) but differ in their common methods for exploring the options available. Subject and method, then, are two ways to draw boundaries.

When we ask the question, “How many kinds of social epistemology are there”, or, “Is this an instance of social epistemology?”, we are asking boundary-work-style questions about the conditions that let us sort research topics, researchers, and disciplines. Providing answers to these questions is a socially significant act. It involves the practice of determining—in a fairly strong though not decisive sense—who gets to do what work, what it takes to be recognised as a purveyor of work in a particular area, and it involves the self-reflective work of locating oneself within the broader research community.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, there are corresponding consequences for the researchers who are sorted and organised by how we carve the relationships between these research areas. For instance, boundary work often determines who we are in conversation with about our topics of research. Thus, boundary work determines who we take ourselves to be accountable and answerable to, and whose work we need to listen to—we might say that boundary work has the power to create, modify, and disband intellectual communities.

## Two Kinds of Social Epistemology

At the outset of Finn Collin’s “Two Kinds of Social Epistemology” (2013), he describes the disagreement about defining social epistemology as being about the “proper philosophical approach to knowledge as a social phenomenon”. Two things are important here. First, Collin’s discussion is limited to *philosophical* research about knowledge as a social phenomenon. Second, the disagreement is characterised as one about *the proper approach* for philosophical inquiry in this area. I understand this to refer to at least to methods, but likely also includes decisions about the primary phenomenon for investigation.

Note that this theme—knowledge as a social phenomenon—can and is researched by non-philosophers as well. Plausibly, pedagogical research into learning and assessment is also about knowledge (acquisition) as a social phenomenon. Similarly, anthropology, sociology, social psychology, and library & information sciences all engage in research into knowledge as a social phenomenon—and this isn’t a complete list.

It’s not clear to me, then, that any particular *discipline* necessarily has a distinctive claim to work on this phenomenon. So far as boundary work goes, it’s going to be hard to claim that philosophers have special access to truths about knowledge as a social phenomenon. I take

---

<sup>1</sup> A helpful example of boundary work can be found in Luciano Floridi’s (2002) piece on library and information sciences. Floridi explores the relationships between the philosophy of information, library and information sciences, and social epistemology. The approach taken by Floridi is largely conceptual—he proceeds by considering the content of each discipline—and as such the interpersonal consequences do not arise in his discussion.

the same to be true of alternative definitions we might have for “social epistemology”, like, e.g., Sandy Goldberg’s proposal that it is “the systematic study of the epistemic significance of other minds” (2013). Much of what I have to say here doesn’t turn on picking a particular definition for social epistemology, so for simplicity I will use Collin’s broad description.

The sticking point in the debate about social epistemology as articulated by Collin is about who is getting philosophical inquiry into the phenomenon right. Collin divides the disagreement into two “kinds” or two “branches”. The first branch is represented by Steve Fuller’s “Critical Social Epistemology” (CSE), and the second Alvin Goldman’s “Analytic Social Epistemology” (ASE). Of course, and as Collin explains, this is a simplifying move for the purposes of his discussion. Collin explains that the choice of CSE and ASE is in part driven by the appearance of the relevant social epistemology journals, and—sincerely—fair enough.

Exactly when philosophical inquiries started into knowledge as a social phenomenon can be differently charted. One might, for example, pick Sandra Harding’s (1986), *The Science Question in Feminism*, alongside or instead of either Goldman’s, *Epistemology and Cognition* (1986), or Fuller’s later, *Social Epistemology* (1988). We could pick Lorraine Code’s, *Epistemic Responsibility* (1987), published in between them all. We might then have this same debate about ASE or CSE and a new acronym: FSE (“feminist social epistemology”). We could take yet another route: Charles Mills’ “Alternative Epistemologies” (1988) is a comprehensive critique of the individualistic nature of mainstream epistemology, including criticisms grounded in a neglect of race, gender, class, and biological reality. We might take Mills’ work to instead be part of the founding canon of social epistemology (and many of us do).

Why not take these routes? Collin makes no claims that would rule out any of these examples as being counted as social epistemology, and he makes no claims that the ASE/CSE contrast is the only one to be made. He acknowledges that both sides grant the legitimacy of many aspects of one another’s projects. There might be other areas we think should fall under “social epistemology”, including, e.g., contemporary virtue and vice epistemology, and political epistemology.

It’s not obvious that there is *one proper approach* for philosophical inquiry into knowledge as a social phenomenon to proceed. We wouldn’t make that demand of psychological research into, e.g., visual perception. We recognise a diversity of methods in psychology on visual perception. (We also recognise a diversity of other disciplines that apply legitimate alternative methods to research visual perception including philosophy of mind). We can happily note that some questions about visual perception will require particular methods to answer them, e.g., mouse tracking studies, transcranial magnetic stimulation, or questionnaires.

It’s fair to note that some questions do require particular methods to answer—any fine-grained question about visual perception is sufficient to show that. That being said, this wouldn’t characterise any of the disputes I’ve seen about social epistemology. In some cases we do have disputes about methodological choices (e.g., ASE’s rejection of CSE’s methods

and vice versa). In others we have disputes about what questions are worth asking or theorising about (e.g., CSE's or FSE's rejection of the idealised theorising of ASE's).

One thing we can confidently say is that all of the texts mentioned above are about knowledge as a social phenomenon. A second is that none of Goldman, Fuller, Harding, Mills, or Code relies exclusively on, e.g., conceptual analysis. If we want to make the case that (the philosophical study of) social epistemology is united by *method* and subject, we've got some careful arguments to make—and we'll need to be wary of the marginal cases. We'll also need to consider what we think should happen with the work we don't think counts. In the next section, I consider three positive reasons in defence of boundary work.

### **Three Positive Reasons for Boundary Work**

I present here one practical, one theoretical, and one social epistemic reason in support of boundary work, and I take on the assumption that boundary work is motivated by epistemically rational intentions. That we engage in boundary work for reasons of truth-seeking and knowledge production strikes me as an intuitive defence of the practice—i.e., we have a vested interest in making sure that research work is being done well and especially to the areas that we contribute.

The first positive reason is a practical one. Boundary work helps us to categorise and locate existing content knowledge and expertise. The labelling involved in boundary work is a way of sorting the expertise to hand and associating it with particular research questions or domains of inquiry. In this way, we can determine which methods and whose expertise is most likely to lead us to the truth for particular questions. Knowing “whose questions” or “whose subject” is an important product of boundary work by enabling practical guidance through the informational landscape for researchers and novices alike.

A second positive reason is a theoretical one. Boundary work is part of the labour done to untangle the evidentiary relationships between related but distinct lines of inquiry on the same topic. For instance, some questions in linguistics may only be really understood when we have a better understanding of the underlying neuroscience because of the way that the physical limitations of our brains might constrain the nature of our linguistic competence. The relevant boundary work here would require re-classifying the problem in question to be at least cross disciplinary, recognising that this research question “belongs” to multiple domains of research and the corresponding experts in those domains.

In other cases, careful attention to the questions being asked, or the theories being developed, can reveal that there *isn't* overlap where we had thought it existed. An example of this kind is Toby Napoletano's (2019) paper on truth conditional semantics. Napoletano argues that despite work on truth conditional semantics being done by both philosophers of language and linguists, the subject of their respective investigations is often distinct. Where much of the linguistic work on truth conditions contributes to theoretical models of the language faculty in the brain, the philosophical work on truth conditions often concerns either the semantic contents of idealised languages, or else is broadly sociolinguistic, seeking

to describe broad social patterns of language use. Thus, work by philosophers on truth conditions and semantics has ultimately little direct bearing on work by linguists on the language faculty despite their shared use of a truth-conditional framework.<sup>2</sup>

The third positive reason to engage in boundary work is that it helps us to distribute important social-epistemic goods. In particular, I have in mind the good of what I call “social-epistemic appraisal respect”.<sup>3</sup> This is a kind of care respect afforded to someone that is owed given their particular intellectual excellences, habits, and expertise. Affording social-epistemic appraisal respect requires sincerely working to understand the intellectual excellences of another person, and then showing them the appropriate respect given their unique set of intellectual skills.

Boundary work can help us to afford one another the social-epistemic appraisal respect that we deserve as an indirect result of the practical and theoretical reasons mentioned above. When we know who the experts are, we respect their knowledge and skills appropriately. When we display humility by passing on our projects to other researchers who we come to see are better equipped by their methods, for example, we similarly display this respect. Excellent boundary work requires excellent attention to the work and abilities of others, and thus it directly facilitates the affordance of social-epistemic appraisal respect.

Social epistemology, like all areas, is benefitted by this kind of excellent boundary work. One worries, though, that many appearances of boundary work deny social-epistemic respect to those who deserve it. It’s one thing to not be interested in a particular question about, e.g., testimonial knowledge; and it’s another to scoff at those who are so interested. It’s still another to think that all such inquiries into testimonial knowledge should be abandoned in favour of some other set of questions.

We all engage in boundary work by making evaluations about whose work we need to attend to in pursuing our own research projects—in professional and in personal life. Boundaries are reinforced by our research practices, altered through our theoretical claims in interdisciplinary projects, created when we establish new questions or disciplines, and enacted when we share or deny social-epistemic goods. Boundary work—whether intentional or accidental—happens all the time.

### **Viceful Boundary Work: Gate-keeping**

---

<sup>2</sup> A complication worth noting here is that, due to the overlap in technical apparatus, some philosophers do perfectly good linguistic work (and vice versa). Thank you to Toby Napoletano for discussion on this point.

<sup>3</sup> I’ll note that it’s exactly ideas like this one about a distinctive kind of epistemic respect owed to persons that are ripe for criticism like, “I don’t see how this is epistemology”. This is not the place for that defence, instead I’ll simply note that making this judgement counts as an act of boundary work. The fuller theory behind this proposal is an account of social epistemic respect including both appraisal and recognition forms, and ultimately grounded in an account of social-epistemic agency I have developed elsewhere.

In its worst incarnations, boundary work can manifest as intellectual *gate-keeping*. Gate-keeping is an exclusionary social practice. The typical dynamic involves some “in-group” members policing the membership of their group by putting in place unreasonable, arbitrary, or otherwise suspect constraints on potential members. Gate-keeping is a common subject of online memes—it’s even got its own subreddit, r/gatekeeping.

In the academic case, gate-keeping aims to limit membership in intellectual communities by appeal to similarly dubious constraints. In an academic context, boundary work—and gate-keeping—comes with the allocation of goods like intellectual authority. It also comes with the corresponding social or material goods that accrue with this authority such as grants, recognition, and book contracts. Gate-keeping is dangerous because of this connection with the distribution of intellectual goods.

Gate-keeping—proposed as a viceful form of boundary work—is often recognised as one of the tools that the privileged and powerful can wield to keep those social and material goods for their own intellectual communities. Intellectual gate-keeping doesn’t have to be tied up in identity in this way, but it is a commonly recognised form. As feminist philosophers and philosophers of race have long argued, our identities do factor into our judgements about what research is valuable, whose work is important, and can determine the very questions we end up asking.

Gate-keeping can manifest in academia via establishing largely arbitrary theoretical commitments or, alternatively, a canon, that must be accepted to engage in work in some area. (Or, at least, to be listened to or be taken seriously by others). It might require adopting methods or assumptions that are not well supported or are highly contentious. It might require allegiance to highly contentious ideas or assumptions. It might require deriding the work of particular other disciplines, sub-disciplines of philosophy, or particular historical figures.

If some instance of boundary work amounts to mere gate-keeping, then we ought to be sceptical of its products. When we decide to establish core commitments, texts, assumptions, or methods for our intellectual communities we ought to have good reasons to support them. As philosophers of social epistemology engaged in boundary work, we should be sensitive to both the philosophical and interpersonal consequences. We have a tendency to think about disputes about inquiry from a purely abstract perspective, and this causes us to overlook the ways in which our boundary work debates are shaping our intellectual communities.

### **What is Causing Boundary Work Disputes in Social Epistemology?**

It seems fair to say that boundary work about social epistemology is ongoing because there are disputes about the fundamental subject matter of the area, the corresponding permissible theoretical assumptions, and the most conducive methods for engaging in research in social epistemology.

To use Kristie Dotson’s (2019) language, we have disputes about the *metaphilosophical constraints* for social epistemology. Metaphilosophical constraints are the “assumptions, and/or commitments that direct investigative efforts ... by generating relevant schemes for inquiry” (70). When there are significant metaphilosophical differences, *metaphilosophical divergence* can result causing “conflict at the level of inquiry-shaping assumptions, constraints, aims, and/or commitments” (ibid). Boundary work occurs at both levels. Establishing metaphilosophical constraints is a kind of boundary work. Investigating the cause of metaphilosophical divergence is another, and it requires close analysis of the sort explained earlier.

It seems to me that this definition for metaphilosophical divergence is a pretty good description of some of the disputes about defining social epistemology. One might be tempted to say that there are just multiple, distinct research projects going on that are all using the name, “social epistemology”. However, as Collin (2013, 2019) has helpfully laid out, this is not the way that many engaged in these disputes view them. Instead they take themselves to be engaged in boundary work about defining *the* philosophical project of social epistemology. Thus, we need to understand the underlying cause of this metaphilosophical divergence.

Let us assume for the following exercise that the debate about defining social epistemology is in fact limited to just the Goldman and Fuller approaches (leaving out, e.g., projects in anthropology, library & information sciences, or behavioural psychology etc.). Here are three ways we might critically frame the cause of this metaphilosophical dispute:

1. **Muddled:** the ongoing debate about whether Goldman’s or Fuller’s lines of research is the true, best, or only social epistemology is misguided; they are two distinct, coherent, and productive projects that are not in conflict with one another and can co-exist either as two kinds of social epistemology or with only one designated as social epistemology;
2. **Evolving:** there is ongoing debate about the metaphilosophical commitments for social epistemology that are represented in the Goldman and Fuller approaches, but these will be settled and the final social epistemology will encompass some set of the present positions;
3. **Exclusive:** Goldman and Fuller present mutually exclusive approaches to social epistemic inquiry that are irreconcilable, and only one has the potential to in fact provide explanations of social epistemic phenomena—the other is a kind of pseudo-science.

If **Muddled** is the cause, then we essentially accept that there are many kinds of social epistemology and we explain away the disputes between CSE and ASE. According to **Muddled**, there is no substantive debate between CSE and ASE because they are in reality distinct projects that appear to be in conflict given their shared use of the label “social

epistemology”. These label disputes are significant—recall my earlier comments about the social epistemic and material goods that go along with the recognition of expertise. According to **Muddled**, it’s possible that both CSE and ASE are distinct, coherent projects in social epistemology but they are not in competition. The focus within each on different primary phenomena might be sufficient to make them both kinds of social epistemology, but not in any sense in competition or conflict with one another. (For example, both neuroscientists and behavioural psychologists are investigating the brain, but at very different “levels” of inquiry into it). We can also adopt more fine-grained labels like “CSE” and “ASE” to assist in de-Muddling the terrain.

One could still dispute the continuation of one or other project, but note I’ve stipulated for **Muddled** that both are coherent. An alternative **Muddled** is that both are coherent, productive projects but only one really counts as social epistemology—the other is some other project. I will return to this at the end in my positive proposal, however, insofar as both are about knowledge as a social phenomenon we’ll be left with some tricky questions about how we want to choose which project gets the label “social epistemology”.

**Muddled** is not widely (or at all) endorsed, but it may still need to be on the table. This option would require a fairly complex understanding of the different contributions of these respective projects, and something of a “live and let live” approach. Perhaps CSE and ASE are united in being interested in knowledge as a social phenomenon at some broad level, but they never cross paths on more fine-grained research questions so are not in conflict. Of course, that’s to set aside any objections that certain fine-grained questions or particular methods are simply bad methods—see **Exclusive**.

If **Evolving** is the cause, then we should invest in the debates between CSE and ASE, and as many other areas that are providing competing understandings of social epistemology. If social epistemology is **Evolving**, then we want to engage in some kind of (presumably, evidence-based) practice of picking and choosing from Goldman’s and Fuller’s theories, methods, and choice of questions. What we have to jettison on this view is the idea that we know what social epistemology is, how it should be conducted, or what the scope of theoretical possibilities is—the situation is evolving.

If **Exclusive** is the cause, then we also need to invest heavily in these debates between different approaches to social epistemology but for other reasons. An example of an **Exclusive** situation would be the debate between phrenologists and psychologists. It turns out that phrenology is just a bad approach to understanding human behaviours and personalities. If there was a debate about whether we ought to include phrenological theories in our explanations of cognition, we can confidently say “no”.

Goldman and Fuller make different assumptions, importantly, as Collin (2013) discusses, about realism and truth. On the face of it, then, their views are irreconcilable. However, **Exclusive** also requires the decisive judgement that there is nothing to be gained from some particular research and that those approaches should be abandoned.

How certain can any of us be in the outright rejection of one another's research? If we are uncertain, how ought we act in the face of this uncertainty? Collin (2019) presents a compelling picture of a growing divide in social epistemology driven by something like **Exclusive**. We were right to oust phrenology as humbuggery, but how confident are we to reject wholesale any particular project into knowledge as a social phenomenon?

There are epistemic risks, clearly, to abandoning paths of inquiry—we might miss out on truths. There are also important and significant costs for intellectual communities when **Exclusive** judgements are made. At an individual level, we potentially cause great harm to those who we exclude. At the level of community, we establish new norms and conventions that will constrain future work in that area.

### **Apostasy About Social Epistemology**

Dotson's piece on metaphilosophical constraints and divergence is about Anglo-analytic epistemology (AAE), but it's not aimed at specifying the project of AAE. Rather, Dotson presents her account of *apostasy* with respect to the metaphilosophical constraints of AAE. Dotson explains how the boundary work maintaining AAE has led her to *conceptual indifference* about AAE, or put differently, a disinterest in helping uphold the boundaries established in AAE and a lack of concern for membership in the AAE intellectual community that upholding the boundaries confers.

The target of Dotson's discussion of metaphilosophical constraints are those in place around the Anglo-analytic epistemology of testimony (AAET). Dotson explains how these constraints function to determine what questions and inquiries about testimony are both interesting and within the scope of AAET. She explains how constraints borne out of custom and tradition—rather than any theoretical necessity—are a kind of gate-keeping around AAET. As a response, Dotson presents the position of metaphilosophical apostasy, a refusal to operate under the (arbitrary) constraints around AAET. (See Dotson's piece for the nuances of her position).

Good boundary work doesn't result in apostasy. Good boundary work helps us practically to understand where the experts are. It enables us to understand the theoretical justifications for choices about methods and basic assumptions. Good boundary work ensures that we afford others social epistemic respect even when their work is not relevant for the inquiries that we are personally undertaking.

Those interested in defining social epistemology ought to consider the genesis of their personal metaphilosophical constraints, and in addition, whether it's reasonable to demand that others conform to the metaphilosophical constraints that they've adopted. Without compelling justification, forcing someone to adopt one's own metaphilosophical constraints risks a kind of badly paternalistic overreach. Without compelling justification, excluding and ignoring someone else's work because they adopt different metaphilosophical constraints risks denying them the social epistemic respect that they deserve.

Social epistemology is interesting as a field, in part, because many strands of social epistemic work have come into existence as kinds of apostasy about the existing constraints in, e.g., analytic epistemology. Part of what I am pushing us to reflect on further is how one ought to respond to finding oneself in an intellectual community gripped by metaphilosophical divergence.

What's the best way to respond to a diversity of methods when you're still uncertain about the cause of the dispute over method choice? If **Muddled** is the right verdict in any case of metaphilosophical divergence, then there's no harm to be had in a plurality of approaches to explaining some phenomenon. Certainly, gate-keeping that causes apostasy is not conducive to the kind of healthy intellectual community that enables us to collectively get to truth.

### **Social Epistemology is an Interdisciplinary Research Area**

Lorraine Code argues in *Epistemic Responsibility* that as participants in epistemic communities we are much like participants in society: we are not “merely participants”, we are at the same time “conservers and modifiers of practices” (1987, 193). Boundary work about social epistemology aims at conserving some practices, and modifying others, and it's largely progressing at this stage by adopting existing practices from other areas of research. That's not unreasonable. It's a kind of theoretical conservatism that most of us adopt. (I.e., we've had good success in analytic epistemology, so we have good reason to rely on that framework as we toggle the “social” levers in this new area).

Here's an alternative way to understand the field of social epistemology that aims at inclusion: social epistemology is an interdisciplinary research area. As an interdisciplinary research area, social epistemology is united by the theme of understanding knowledge as a social phenomenon. There are multiple disciplines, corresponding methods, and theoretical frameworks being explored in pursuit of explanations of knowledge as a social phenomenon. Some of these will be in close evidentiary relationships to one another, others will be fairly distantly related—though they are still united by their broad social epistemic theme.

My suggestion here comes from thinking about the field of cognitive science, an interdisciplinary research area united by the theme of understanding cognition. Cognitive science includes a broad range of fields: philosophy of mind, behavioural economics, social psychology, computer science, linguistics, anthropology etc. Contributors to the field work with a diverse array of methods. Their inquiries into cognition happen at multiple levels of analysis from the phenomenological to the neural. They pose different kinds of questions from one another, and ones that not all the constituent disciplines are able to answer.

If philosophers of social epistemology adopted the view that social epistemology is an interdisciplinary research area then they may be more open to the idea that CSE and ASE contribute differently to our full understanding of knowledge as a social phenomenon. It's probably not contentious to assert that a full explanation of how conspiracy theories go viral online requires an interdisciplinary effort. It's unclear, then, why we may be resistant to a

diversity of philosophical approaches—or perhaps, a diversity of social science and humanities approaches—in pursuit of this explanation.

Some questions will require us to take stock of all of the complexity of a unique person sitting in front of a particular kind of computer and choosing—or being nudged—to some website about COVID-19. Other questions will require us to abstract away from all those details and consider what—in the idealised case—we want members of our epistemic and political community to do when they’re deciding who to trust about global health crises. Difficult boundary work will need to take place to determine where these theories in fact overlap with one another, and thus are in competition as explanations of some specific aspect of understanding knowledge as a social phenomenon.

Interdisciplinarity fits best, I think, as a response to taking **Muddled** to be a good explanation of the underlying cause of metaphilosophical disputes about social epistemology. Given the nature of the work being done by those working in CSE and ASE, **Evolving** seems like a hard ask. The difficult boundary work we need to engage in, then, is thinking carefully about the evidentiary relationships between the various projects about knowledge as a social phenomenon. In some cases, they might pose constraints on one another’s theorising. In others, they will be fairly distinct projects into a broad phenomena. For those cases, if we are to object to someone else’s projects, we need to think carefully about the nature of our objections to them, and about any demand that they discontinue.

Boundary work can lead to multiple goods: practical, theoretical, and social epistemic. In pursuit of the practical and theoretical ends, we often fail to think about the consequences for the development and maintenance of intellectual community that follow from constraints that we place on ourselves and others. Without a sense of intellectual community—a joint commitment to some shared project of inquiry—we’re unlikely to settle disputes about whose work productively moves us to a full explanation of what we’re interested in, and we’re also unlikely to make sure that we listen sincerely and charitably to one another. It’s intuitive that that’s a problem from the perspective of truth—not listening isn’t going to enable one to catch new and interesting ideas; however, it’s also a distinctive kind of social epistemic problem from the perspective of what kind of respect we owe one another as epistemic agents.

I’ve proposed that we think carefully about the kinds of boundary work that are taking place, and warned against gate-keeping. I’ve also proposed that we adopt the perspective that social epistemology is an interdisciplinary research area for the reason that it is more likely to dispose us to engage in boundary work in ways that will support the affordance of social epistemic respect and lead to better inquiry.

## References

- Code, Lorraine. 1987. *Epistemic Responsibility*. New England: Brown University Press.
- Collin, Finn. 2019. “Two Kinds of Social Epistemology Revisited.” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 8 (12): 29-38.

- Collin, Finn. 2013. "Two Kinds of Social Epistemology." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (8): 79-104.p
- Dotson, Kristie. 2019. "Tales from an Apostate." *Philosophical Issues* 29 (1): 69-83.
- Floridi, Luciano. 2002. "On Defining Library and Information Science as Applied Philosophy Of Information." *Social Epistemology* 16 (1): 37-49.
- Fuller, Steve. 1988/2002. *Social Epistemology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goldman, Alvin. 1986. *Epistemology and Cognition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goldberg, Sandy. 2013. "'Analytic Social Epistemology' and the Epistemic Significance of Other Minds." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (8): 26-48.
- Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, Charles W. 1988. "Alternative Epistemologies." *Social Theory and Practice* 14 (3): 237-263.