Is psycholinguistics a twice-failed attempt at interdisciplinary science, as suggested by the contributors to this symposium? Blumenthal has drawn an intriguing account of two periods of particular interdisciplinary contact, and attributed the decline of each to imbalances in the relationship: at the turn of the century, he suggests, linguists turned to psychology for inspiration, whereas in the 1960s it was psychologists who turned to the new Chomskian linguistics. Reber has diagnosed the specific forms of imbalance for the more recent period, and takes these factors as more than sufficient cause to let each field go its own way without regret. McCauley agrees that the two "divorces" were inevitable, but also hints at the potential for a more stable relationship between the disciplines when each matures.

In this paper I argue that psycholinguistics, far from being a failure, is alive and well and playing a pioneering role as a model for interdisciplinary contact between psychology and various of the other arts and sciences. The argument has two parts. First, I will sketch a conceptualization of the structure of disciplines within which psychology and linguistics each have a clear place, but show a special form of adjacency that characterizes certain other pairs of disciplines as well. Second, I will describe how this special form of adjacency permits three types of interdisciplinary relations: boundary-maintaining, boundary-breaking, and boundary-bridging relations. Boundary-maintaining relations are those in which there is little contact; each discipline goes its own way working on its own tasks. Blumenthal provides a good recent example in his characterization of structuralist linguistics and behaviorist psychology in the mid-twentieth century. Occasionally, however, a position is developed within one discipline which extends across the traditional boundary with another discipline. Though inherently unstable, these episodes of boundary-breaking contact often play an important role by giving some needed redirection to the discipline whose territory has been encroached upon and by stimulating interest in interdisciplinary work. This is the kind of relationship that was focused upon by all three contributors to this symposium.
symposium, and was prominently featured in the fertile periods of excitement about psycholinguistics at the turn of the century, and again in the 1960s. However, the third type of relationship, boundary-bridging contact, also characterized the same two periods, and continues to flourish as the enduring legacy of the 1960s. Boundary-bridging is a quiet, work-a-day kind of interaction which garners less attention than boundary-breaking, but it is the only way of achieving the ongoing contact between psychology and linguistics that is needed if each field is to develop to its full potential. This less visible psycholinguistics plays a special role as a model which betokens opportunities and hazards, now that the boundary-bridging type of contact is being replicated in the relations between psychology and certain other disciplines as well. In making it more visible, I will define psychology, linguistics, and their relationship in a way that varies from Chomsky's own vision, but within which both the short-term and long-term effects of his revolution can be properly understood.

THE STRUCTURE OF DISCIPLINES

The Contrasting Missions of Psychology and Linguistics

One way to approach the structure of disciplines is to first consider the structure of the tasks that disciplines must divide among themselves. At a first order of approximation, it can be said that each discipline takes as its main mission the task of accounting for particular domain(s) of reality, for example, modelling the movement of planets or analyzing the form and meaning of sonnets (cf. Shapere, 1984). Psychology is the discipline which attempts to achieve a general account of the mental and behavioral functioning of individual organisms within their physical and social environment – particularly but not exclusively the contemporary, schooled, adult human. (Historically the pendulum swings between an emphasis on the mental versus the behavioral, but this has generated only different schools of thought, not different disciplines. For convenience I will often use the term “behavior” to refer to the more inclusive concept of mental/behavioral functioning.) Psychological research is directed towards the discovery of general principles of perception, learning, cognition, emotion, and so forth. These have usually been thought to operate across the broad variety of domains of behavior (e.g., language,