The purpose of this chapter is to rethink the concept of reflexivity within consumer research and to highlight the complexities and various levels of reflexive thought. In doing so, we were inspired by the work of Kristen Campbell, in particular her article, 'The promise of feminist reflexivities: developing Donna Haraway's project for feminist science studies', in which she expands on Haraway's ideas of diffraction and situated knowledge. We are indebted to her. Our title, 'Writing it up, writing it down', we owe to Clifford Geertz (1988).

The turn to reflexivity

Reflexivity is the act of turning backward, the act of mirroring the self. It is a human undertaking and, as the neurologist Ramachandran (2003) notes, our reflective self-consciousness – the possibility of contemplating the consequences of our actions – is what is special about us humans. While it is a theory about epistemology, in current anthropological contexts it is also viewed as an embodied activity, a process and method for conducting fieldwork and constructing ethnographies. Reflexivity allows for the revelation and contemplation of one's own biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, the researcher's place in the setting and the context of the social phenomenon being studied (Foley, 2002). It is a means for a critical and ethical consideration of the entire research process.

Reflexive thinking as a corrective mode to contemporary ethnographic writing was introduced more than a couple of decades ago. Foley (2002) identifies three streams within anthropology: first, auto-ethnography with its emphasis on a more intuitive and experiential type of knowledge which emphasizes metaphor, parody and irony over scientific discourse; second, sociological reflexivity as espoused by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). It does not reduce the self and subjectivity to mere effects of discourse as the poststructuralists do but recognizes the historical and disciplinary context that shapes thinking and requires a constant disciplined abductive (that is, a deductive and inductive way of knowing through ethno practices) process of theory development within and against the discursive traditions within the discipline. The third stream is intertextual reflexivity that focuses on rhetorical practices (Folay, 2002, pp. 477–8). We will take up some of these issues a little later in the text. Suffice it to say that initially an ethnography was a factual text followed by confessional accounts of fieldwork. Reflexivity in writing was proposed as a corrective to the omniscient authority of the author, to the power of the person who represented the exotic 'other' without addressing the effect of the observer on those being studied and their effect on the observer (Fabian, 1983; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Said, 1979). This led to a great deal of experimentation in creating texts. Van Maanen (1988) identifies the different styles of textualization available to ethnographers.
That we drive research projects with our values, histories and interests is central to the understanding of any interpretation in the social sciences, including consumer research (Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Thompson, 1997). Researchers create the text. As researchers we also assume that the research is an interaction between a historically produced text and a historically produced reader (Allen, 1995, p. 176). Hermeneutics affirms the position of the researcher in the hermeneutic circle. Within this tradition, the researcher and the researched move between a background of shared meaning and a finite foreground of experience within it (Gadamer, 1976).

 Reflexivity in writing is only one aspect of this process; reflexivity embraces all aspects of the research process. It is the turning back of an inquiry on to its own formative possibilities (Hopkinson and Hogg, 2005). Agar (1982) recognizes four major components of the reflexive process: the researcher, the informant, the text and the audience. Its roots are in critical theory, standpoint theory and textual deconstruction, as well as in anthropology, or more generally a sociology of knowledge, power and meaning. Three strands of reflexivity have been proposed: radical reflexivity, infrareflexivity and diffraction (initiated through a discussion on situated knowledge and standpoint theory). In consumer research, the work of Bristor and Fischer (1993), Costa (1994), Hirschman (1993) and Joy and Venkatesh (1994) are early attempts to broker these concepts into the field of consumer behavior.

The landmark event in the turn of consumer research to reflexivity was a 1986 study by a group of consumer researchers who criss-crossed the United States in a 27-foot recreation vehicle conducting qualitative studies with the express goal of revitalizing research into consumer behavior. (It was financed by a seed grant from the Marketing Science Institute.) As these early pioneers were moving physically from the west to the east coast, metaphorically they were moving away from existing definitions of consumer concepts in an attempt to enlarge the contexts and meanings associated with consumption. Russ Belk (1991, p. 11) summarizes the journey: ‘We have made a brave leap when we didn’t know how to jump and found that it brought us joy. Through this research and through each other we have encountered something of the fullness of life.’ The number of researchers with a similar interest has grown. A March 2005 article in the Journal of Consumer Research by Eric Arnould and Craig Thompson (‘Consumer culture theory’) summarizes their overall contributions over the last 20 years.

We believe the time has come to assess critically some of the assumptions inherent in the consumer research work reported by Arnould and Thompson and to do this by invoking reflexivity. In a 1991 article, Joy discussed some of the issues related to reflexivity in writing and textualization – an extension of the notion of ethical representation of the individuals studied. Thompson, Stern and Arnould (1998) take this one step further and suggest that critical pluralism can move beyond what is provided by a unified narrative voice. Both ethnographic understandings and feminist critiques can be mutually enriching. Gould’s (1991) article on introspection, and Wallendorf and Brucks’s (1993) response, tested epistemic boundaries and called for renewed reflection on the relationships between the knower and the known. More recently, Sherry and Schouten (2002) explored and celebrated the use of poetry as an alternate mode of representation. While rhetoric and discourse remain critical elements in the process of reflexivity, in this paper we embrace a broader definition of reflexivity, one that focuses on what Haraway (1997) calls ‘articulation’, a term we prefer to ‘representation’. Articulation connotes a certain level of indeterminacy, perhaps even a form of informality (much like the term ‘conversation’) rather than the finality connoted by ‘representation’. In Haraway’s words (1992, p. 318), ‘To articulate is to signify. It is to put things together, scary things, risky things, contingent things . . . we articulate, therefore we are.’ Earlier, Dorothy Smith (1987) had observed that the articulation of knowledge is both situated and reflexive, embodied and relational. We do realize, however, that journal articles and books continue in some sense the process of representation: stories of other places, other people, other times.

Knowledge is always partial, embodied, constructed and situated (Marcus, 1994). For Haraway, a situated knowledge reflects the ‘particular and specific embodiment’ of the knower (1991, p. 190). For Latour (1993, 1999), knowledge is also always partial, fictitious and embodied, but the latter two argue that neither bodies nor materialities can be taken as pre-given.

In studies in anthropology, the writing of field notes and field diaries has always been treated as an essential component of research. Not only is being in the field transformative (Agar, 1982) but, importantly, there is a difference between knowledge creation in the field and the final text that is the product of such knowledge. Fabian (1983) argues that there is a suppression of dialogical realities that leads to anthropological insights. In sociology, Gouldner (1970) (in his discussion of the sociology of sociology) and Bourdieu (2000) (in his critique of the institutions that produced him) have both drawn attention to the importance of epistemological reflexivity. We extend Agar’s (1982) four components (researcher, informants, text and readers) to include the research community within which the researcher is situated (Bourdieu, 2000), and the reader/audience (academics, activists who might also be researchers, and policy makers) (personal communication with Lisa Peñaloz, 2005). Depending on who is being addressed, different types of reflexivity are invoked.

Science is a sociocultural and textual construct; as soon as we recognize this, there are options for different definitions of reflexivity. As Campbell (2004) notes, the question is, while recognizing the constructed nature of knowledge, how can we imagine and implement new models of scientific practice?


There is agreement that some regulatory standards exist within any discipline; these standards collectively and individually affect all researchers and the knowledge they produce. The three are constructivist in nature. Practice of course creates its own context and this is where the three types differ.

In Lynch and Woolgar’s (1990) proposal for a radical reflexivity the problematization of meaning, value, knowledge and representation is clear. They espouse constructivist and relativist approaches to the creation of knowledge. Latour (1988) proposed a corrective to what he calls ‘naive belief in the creation of “truer texts”’ (p. 168) in his discussion of infrareflexivity. He argues that, although radical reflexivity recognizes the importance of the problem, it is too narrow and in the end too sterile (p. 175). Within feminist studies, there were also concerns over how we document the lives and activities of women, to
Radical reflexivity is a form of anti-colonial critique that has origins in the 1960s, as Rosaldo (1993) notes, probably inherited from the very beginning of fieldwork, as Ricoeur (1970) suggests. It has served to destabilize the ways in which anthropologists have described that exploitation and even betrayal are endemic to field work. It has even been described that fieldwork is not conducted in the unmediated world of the people studied, but rather in a way that makes profound contributions to the field (see Arnould and, Thompson, 2005). We begin by identifying three forms of reflexivity and then outline possible directions.

### Table 26.1: Similarities and differences between the three types of reflexivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexivity Objectives</th>
<th>Infrareflexivity</th>
<th>Diffraction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find a way to account better for the otherness of those being studied in order to understand one's own society</td>
<td>A material, semiotic and political practice that should help the researcher study her society in the same way she studies others</td>
<td>How we document the lives and activities of women, to understand from their standpoint, and to conceptualize them as an expression of historical and social contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a richer problematization of meaning, value, knowledge and representation</td>
<td>Infrareflexivity is a process of telling stories the way novelists and journalists do</td>
<td>Standpoint theory and postmodernist views enrich this form of reflexivity combined with realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist/relativistic view</td>
<td>Constructivist/relativistic view</td>
<td>Constructivist/relativistic view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All work is incomplete and requires a response from others positioned differently</td>
<td>Research should generate explanations that create unexpected differences</td>
<td>Certain social positions will produce more accurate descriptions of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on representations</td>
<td>Considers articulation over representation</td>
<td>Standpoint theory is a cognitive, psychological and political tool for constructing more adequate knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dualist view</td>
<td>Non-dualist view</td>
<td>Consider articulation over representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are different groups involved: researcher v. informant, local v. exotic culture</td>
<td>No separation of social sciences from the natural sciences. No separation of culture from nature</td>
<td>Importance of diffraction: articulation implies multiple readings. However, the emphasis is on interferences that would affect the creation of what is 'real'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork is inherently confrontational</td>
<td>Objects are quasi-objects (composed of both natural and cultural elements)</td>
<td>Interrelationality in all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher's biography affects the fieldwork</td>
<td>Both humans and non-humans play a role within networks</td>
<td>Dichotomies are tools of power and oppression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For others like Stoller (1997), the crisis in anthropology is not just one of representation, as Marcus and Fischer (1986) argue, but one of epistemology. He is sensitive to issues of understanding and representing the cultures that ethnographers are studying. Stoller critiques anthropologists for making profound contributions to the field (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005). He is sensitive to issues of understanding and representing the cultures that ethnographers are studying. Stoller argues that anthropologists are more likely to study local organizations of oppression. Laura Nader (1972, p. 286) describes this as a fascination with studying 'down, out and far', rather than 'up, near and in'.
Table 26.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the world (continued)</th>
<th>Radical reflexivity</th>
<th>Infra reflexivity</th>
<th>Diffraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macropolitical processes affect fieldwork, informants and audiences</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s self (gender, ethnicity, class) can greatly differ from that of those studied</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of writing</td>
<td>The text is ultimately what matters</td>
<td><em>Effort placed on writing better ‘fictions’</em></td>
<td><em>Gives voice to the subjugated and leverages emancipatory possibilities</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use depth, respect and poetic evocation to tell informants’ stories (i.e. to strengthen epistemology)</td>
<td><em>Including the author and identifying the method do not make the story more believable</em></td>
<td><em>Negotiation and argumentation are necessary mechanisms by which a collectivity accepts one or another story</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnographers write within a matrix of existing representations and incorporate critical power and insight into their ethnographies</td>
<td><em>Avoidance of meta-language (i.e. not to subsume information under new terms)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The right cut is one that will distinguish inarticulate from well articulated propositions</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Make research articulations relevant to other disciplines through interdisciplinary co-authorship</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Emphasis is placed on political action</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Feminist standpoint values accountability and commitment to ideals such as freedom and justice</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Feminist practices are splintered because of the multiplicity of definitions of gender and other factors (postmodern point of view)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Feminist researchers have to convince others that they provide a more accurate rendering of the world than other accounts</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Standpoint theory is probably one of the most controversial theories in feminist studies. I summarize below some of the issues raised by Harding (2004). Its origins can be traced to a period when women felt that they had been treated primarily as the object and not the subject of knowledge projects studied by others. Haraway uses the term ‘God trick’ to refer to the ways in which scientific studies spoke authoritatively about what was studied but from no particular social location or human perspective (1991). Public policy and disciplinary knowledge standpoint, theorists argue, were also advanced with little consideration of the interests of women. The outcomes of such inquiries marginalized not only women but men as well. The identifying features of this theory are (1) the goal to ‘study up’, i.e. using a bottom-up approach, (2) providing a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works located in material or political forms of oppression, (3) creating a nuanced understanding of oppressed groups, through data that are historically recorded, written and/or empirically gathered, and (4) focusing on the creation of group consciousness rather than on individual consciousness.

Harding’s argument is that standpoint theory (contentious as it is), does raise critical issues for a philosophy of knowledge production. The three considerations that she deems important are (1) epistemological issues (a rethinking of conceptual practices that shape what situations or conditions get identified as scientific problems and researched); standpoint theory questions the domain of scientific method and takes it back to the context of discovery; (2) the role of group consciousness in the production of knowledge (standpoint theorists propose the notion of a subject that is different from that constructed under liberal individualism or structuralist and poststructuralist alternatives to it); and (3) reasonable constructionism (to maneuver between excessive constructionism and therefore relativism).
argues that not only must ethnographers try to contribute to social theory, but they must also tell the story of a people with depth, respect and poetic evocation.

Wasserfall (1993) raises the ethical question, what happens when the anthropologist does not like or identify with the communities being studied? She was a Jewish woman studying the problems faced by Palestinian women. When the researcher finds herself in profound opposition to the beliefs and actions of her informants, what are the commitments of a feminist scholar to her informants?

Marcus (1994) identifies four levels of reflexivity in ethnographic writing. The first recognizes the inevitability of reflexivity in human action and exposes previous accounts to discussion and criticism. Although this did not challenge the existing research paradigm it produced an unsettled view in the field. Marcus's second type is positional reflexivity, which recognizes the inevitability of reflexivity in human action and exposes previous accounts to dis-evaluation. Some feminists espoused. Positioning assumes that all work is incomplete and requires a response from others positioned differently. He identifies a third type as experimental ethnography; ethnographers are keenly aware that they write within a matrix of existing representations and incorporate critical power and insight into their ethnographies. While he (inspired by feminist critiques) offers a critique of authority, he does not place much significance on political action. Feminist experiential reflexivity (also linked to positional reflexivity) is the fourth type. Feminist standpoint theory is an example of this, where the objective is not just to give voice to the subjugated but also to leverage emancipatory possibilities.

To summarize, Marcus and Fischer (1986), Marcus (1994) and Lynch and Woolgar (1990) all argue that, if we accept that scientific knowledge is a semiotic practice, then we need to recognize that our knowledge of science utilizes practices of representation and is therefore relative. Constitutive reflexivity (the interrogation of the practices that we use to deploy our accounts) is the key here and not just the self-reflection of the knower. There are two considerations: practices that we are engaged in and the ideology of representation that we share (Campbell, 2004). But we are still left with the question of what is 'radical' about the radical reflexivity espoused above.

Infrareflexivity and Latour's corrective in science and technology studies

Latour (1988) critiques the position of radical reflexivity because it proposes the creation of a 'truer text'. Nevertheless, Latour's (1987, 1993, 1999) general philosophical position on the nature of scientific research is also important in our argument. First, he argues against the separation of the social sciences from the natural sciences, and the study of the social as separate from the material aspects of the world we live in. He defines reflexivity as a material, semiotic and political practice. Although he pays less attention to the political aspects of such constitutive practices, what he suggests when he says that we should not close off the discussion by prematurely identifying naturalized objectified fact is profoundly political.

He argues that the radical reflexivists err on the side of emphasizing the process of knowing and not enough on the known. By inserting themselves in the text, they try to show how they are positioned within the account. In Latour's terms there is only text democracy, and not a hierarchy of texts in a semiotic sense.

He argues that metareflexivity, as evidenced in experimental ethnographies with their self-referencing system, is sterile and misleading. Worse yet, it is unbelievable. Instead, he suggests infrareflexivity, a process of simply telling a story pretty much as novelists and journalists do. This would necessarily mean a reduction in methodological detail and a greater focus on style. The aim is to write better stories (1988, p. 172). No privilege is asked for the account at hand. Reliance on the world and not the word is encouraged. Ultimately, since no quantity of words and literary devices will make our stories into non-stories, it is better to focus on writing better fictions. Latour argues that including the author in a text and identifying how the story was constructed do not make it any more believable.

Another element in the process of being infrareflexive is to avoid metalanguage. It is important not to subsume information under a new term; this defeats the purpose of providing the explanation. A final component of infrareflexivity is hybridization and making research articulations relevant for other disciplines. This can be achieved, he argues, among other strategies, through co-authorship with scientists from other disciplines. Latour, like Haraway, prefers the term 'articulation' to single overarching explanations that close off all possibility of further discussion. The advantage of articulation, he says, is that there is no end to it.

His view of science is non-dualistic and is outlined in what he calls 'actor-network theory'. In this theory, actors are entities that do things (1993, p. 241) and can include humans and non-human actants. The term 'network' is defined as a 'group of unspecified relationships among entities'. A network ties together two systems of alliances: people (everyone who is involved one way or the other with the artifact) and things (all the pieces that had to be brought together to connect people).

Nevertheless, while they are analytically distinct, one cannot be studied without the other. An actor cannot act without a network and vice versa. Thus the power of actors depends on their position within the network and the number of alliances that can be generated. Translating is what actant networks do. They are also known as translation networks (Callon, 1986, p. 90). Latour argues that nothing is by itself either knowable or unknowable, sayable or unsayable, near or far. Everything is translated (1988, p. 167).

This theory differs greatly from the theory that specifies a subject, an object and an intermediary (language that mediates between the two). Borgerson (2005) provides another stance on this topic, but through a critical examination of the work of Daniel Miller. Articulation in this sense is about being affected by differences. It is an ongoing process; one proceeds from less articulate to more articulate proposals, thereby generating explanations that create unexpected differences. The advantage, Latour argues, of such an enlargement of propositions is that it undercuts the premature closure of discussion. There is no sure ground for criticism, although the critique we offer may not be all that different from that of the conspiracy theorists, except that it is clothed in elevated language and causes such as discourse, knowledge/power and fields of force (Latour, 1993).

However, if we ask which fictions are more persuasive than others and how one arrives at such a judgment, there is no answer except by the use of the following criteria: a deflation of methodology, an improvement in style, providing accounts of the known rather than the knower, refusing macrotheories and metalanguage, and refusing disciplinary boundaries (Latour, 1988, p. 160). In his view, the right cut 'is not the one that will distinguish science from politics [read natural sciences versus the social sciences] but the one that will distinguish inarticulate from well articulated propositions' (1993, p. 8).

Feminist critical reflexivities and practice

The feminist epistemologies that we discuss here have generally developed from the perspectives of standpoint theory and postmodernism. Traditional standpoint theory
privileges knowledge that is unitary, whereas postmodernism undercuts this form of knowledge and emphasizes different standpoints based on the positions of various subalterns on the basis of color, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Anderson, 2004; Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Joy and Venkatesh, 1994). The problem with an undue emphasis on the decentering of the subject in postmodern theory is that feminist practice becomes splintered because of the multiplicity of definitions of gender and other factors. Feminists who see the value of both perspectives have negotiated their way by insisting on taking 'responsibility in one's construction of one's representations' as well as through the process of 'mobile imagination'—literally putting themselves in the shoes of another woman (Campbell, 2004). Haraway (1991, 1992, 1997) is conscious of the possibilities in such an approach. She identifies it in her work through two concepts: 'situated knowledge' and 'diffraction'. Campbell (2004, p. 165) asks, 'How can feminist scientific studies (FSS) recognize the social construction of knowledge claims while also insisting upon a feminist critical practice?'

Historically, feminist accounts have been seen as weak and unscientific, and hence have been discounted. Second, and perhaps more importantly, feminist studies must demonstrate why they provide a more accurate rendering of the world than other accounts (read 'sexist'). Insofar as the choice of narratives is based on the political act of persuasion, negotiation and argumentation are the necessary mechanisms by which a collectivity accepts one or another of these stories. Latour (2003a) agrees and acknowledges that 'we should undertake moral judgments in terms of strategies of negotiation and compromise that permit new arrangements and combinations of networks' (p. 45). He provides some insights into how this could be done in a half-joking (but perhaps deadly serious) way in one of his popular articles, 'Dialogue prepared for a volume in honor of Donna Haraway'. An excerpt follows.

The two protagonists ('He' refers to Latour, 'She' to Haraway) acknowledge that she is more interested in 'dialectics' and he is concerned about 'difference'. This passage conveys Latour's position with perhaps greater clarity despite the profound overlaps:

She: Except that without a critical stance this inquiry can go on indefinitely without modifying the initial positions an iota.
He: Except it ends up rendering the issue itself critical.
She: But you have deprived yourself of any critical edge.
He: Critical is also the name of a state, in case you forgot your physics. Make sure that issues reach criticality, would that not be a better slogan?
She: Do you by any chance claim to increase the temperature of an issue without yourself being in any way critical?
He: Do you by any chance believe that you increase the temperature by simply feeling indignation and sharing this indignation with your buddies? You are confusing the subjective definition of critique with its objective one. It is the object itself, the issue at stake that has to be rendered critical.
She: And that could be carried out in any emotional state? Including quiet indifference to the solution?
He: Not indifference no, rather, passionate interest for an uncertain and surprising solution, yes. And only that, but I am tempted to say that it's just the critically minded people, because they are so sure of who should win and who should lose and why, who actually cool down the issues to the point that they manage to decrease the temperature under them . . . they prefer to feel critical than to induce criticality. And you know what? It's because they leave out the little details.

Latour's (1993) solution has been what he calls 'the parliament of things'. Everything is provisional, although there might be a constitutional settlement. The issues he raises are what gets rights to representation and how do these things with rights arrange relations between themselves in order to live well together. Haraway is not too impressed with constitutional arrangements. Instead she worries that some things are endlessly produced and are real but others are not. How can one intervene through speech and action in the configurations of the real? For Haraway, what is real is also 'other' (for example, dogs are not furry children). They have their own partially different specificities and deserve respect. For her, then, natures (they are plural — there is no one reality out there) are partially connected to humans and they are only partially made together. To this extent the relation between humans and nature is linked. The other cannot be totally known. It is in relation to the Same and it needs to be accorded this respect.

Thus, despite Latour's lamentations about the desire of the critically minded to win, feminists are indeed concerned with who wins and who loses and why. In Campbell's words this includes asking, 'Which accounts have which resources with which to compete? Who is prevented from competing?' (2004, p. 178). These questions suggest that a politics of power (defined in pragmatic terms) is involved. The field is not neutral and the participants not equal. Haraway underscores the importance of interferences in the definitions of what is 'real'. What is missing from radical reflexive accounts and to a certain extent from infra-reflexive accounts is any acknowledgment of political practice. So now the question, very much like the one Woolgar asked in the 1980s, is 'Where do we go from here?'

Haraway (1997) provides a partial answer by introducing the concept of 'diffraction', a term she coined to reflect the articulation process; it implies a multiple reading. Nevertheless she does offer new directions through her concept. According to her, diffraction is composed of 'interference patterns, not reflecting images. This concept will produce effects of connection, embodiment and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere' (Haraway, 1992, p. 295). This model depends on a model not of representation but of articulation.

But to discover why this concept is a useful one we have to begin with her concept of 'situated knowledge'. Haraway (1991, 1997) has always espoused a non-dualist version of science and the world. She stresses interrelationality in all things and is very suspicious of binary categories and distinctions (including the distinctions between nature and culture and, by extension, between male and female), identifying them as tools of power and oppression. In this sense, her approach is close to Latour's. She argues that 'human societies do not exist except in so far as they are produced by and in mutual dialogue with the eco systems of which they are a part . . . No science should imagine that it observes the natural world unimpaired by cultural bias, because this implies too simplistic a distinction between the two' (1991, p. 187).

Situated knowledge combines insights and elements of both constructivism and feminism. It takes into account location, partial embodiment and partial perspective (1997, p. 191). Insofar as it allows recognition of how accounts are constructed it is deconstructive in orientation and intent. For Haraway, certain social positions will produce more accurate descriptions of the world. Her words are evocative of her beliefs: 'The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original: it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another' (ibid., p. 7). It is not identity that she is
That we drive research projects with our values, histories and interests is central to the understanding of any interpretation in the social sciences, including consumer research (Brisitor and Fischer, 1993; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Thompson, 1997). Researchers create the text. As researchers we also assume that the research is an interaction between a historically produced text and a historically produced reader (Allen, 1995, p. 176). Hermeneutics affirms the position of the researcher in the hermeneutic circle. Within this tradition, the researcher and the researched move between a background of shared meaning and a finite foreground of experience within it (Gadamer, 1976).

Reflexivity in writing is only one aspect of this process; reflexivity embraces all aspects of the research process. It is the turning back of an inquiry on to its own formative possibilities, and more generally a sociology of knowledge and meaning. Three strands of reflexivity have been proposed: radical reflexivity, infrareflexivity and diffraction (initiated through a discussion on situated knowledge and standpoint theory). In consumer research, the work of Brisitor and Fischer (1993), Costa (1994), Hirschman (1993) and Joy and Venkatesh (1994) are early attempts to break these concepts into the field of consumer behavior.

The landmark event in the turn of consumer research to reflexivity was a 1986 study by a group of consumer researchers who criss-crossed the United States in a 27-foot recreation vehicle conducting qualitative studies with the express goal of revitalizing research into consumer behavior. (It was financed by a seed grant from the Marketing Science Institute.) As these early pioneers were moving physically from the west to the east coast, metaphorically they were moving away from existing definitions of consumer concepts in an attempt to enlarge the contexts and meanings associated with consumption. Russ Belk (1991, p. 11) summarizes the journey: ‘We have made a brave leap when we didn’t know how to jump and found that it brought us joy. Through this research and through each other we have encountered something of the fullness of life.’ The number of researchers with a similar interest has grown. A March 2005 article in the Journal of Consumer Research by Eric Arnould and Craig Thompson (‘Consumer culture theory’) summarizes their overall contributions over the last 20 years.

We believe the time has come to assess critically some of the assumptions inherent in the consumer research work reported by Arnold and Thompson and to do this by invoking reflexivity. In a 1991 article, Joy discussed some of the issues related to reflexivity in writing and textualization — an extension of the notion of ethical representation of the individuals studied. Thompson, Stern and Arnould (1998) take this one step further and suggest that critical pluralism can move beyond what is provided by a unified narrative voice. Both ethnographic understandings and feminist critiques can be mutually enriching. Gould’s (1991) article on introspection, and Wallendorf and Brucks’s (1993) response, tested epistemic boundaries and called for renewed reflection on the relationships between the knower and the known. More recently, Sherry and Schouten (2002) explored and celebrated the use of poetry as an alternate mode of representation. While rhetoric and discourse remain critical elements in the process of reflexivity, in this paper we embrace a broader definition of reflexivity, one that focuses on what Haraway (1997) calls ‘articulation’, a term we prefer to ‘representation’. Articulation connotes a certain level of indeterminacy, perhaps even a form of informality (much like the term ‘conversation’) rather than the finality connoted by ‘representation’. In Haraway’s words (1992, p. 318), ‘To articulate is to signify. It is to put things together. Scary things, risky things, contingent things. . . we articulate, therefore we are.’ Earlier, Dorothy Smith (1987) had observed that the articulation of knowledge is both situated and reflexive, embodied and relational. We do realize, however, that journal articles and books continue in some sense the process of representation: stories of other places, other people, other times.

Knowledge is always partial, embodied, constructed and situated (Marcus, 1994). For Haraway, a situated knowledge reflects the ‘particular and specific embodiment’ of the knower (1991, p. 190). For Latour (1993, 1999), knowledge is also always partial, fictitious and embodied, but the latter two argue that neither bodies nor materialities can be taken as pre-given.

In studies in anthropology, the writing of field notes and field diaries has always been treated as an essential component of research. Not only is being in the field transformative (Agar, 1982) but, importantly, there is a difference between knowledge creation in the field and the final text that is the product of such knowledge. Fabian (1983) argues that there is a suppression of dialogical realities that leads to anthropological insights. In sociology and Gouldner (1970) (in his discussion of the sociology of sociology) and Bourdieu (2000) (in his critique of the institutions that produced him) have both drawn attention to the importance of epistemological reflexivity. We extend Agar’s (1982) four components (researcher, informants, text and readers) to include the research community within which the researcher is situated (Bourdieu, 2000), and the reader/audience (academics, activists who might also be researchers, and policy makers) (personal communication with Lisa Peñaloza, 2005). Depending on who is being addressed, different types of reflexivity are invoked.

Science is a sociocultural and textual construct; as soon as we recognize this, there are options for different definitions of reflexivity. As Campbell (2004) notes, the question is, while recognizing the constructed nature of knowledge, how can we imagine and implement new models of scientific practice?


There is agreement that some regulatory standards exist within any discipline; these standards collectively and individually affect all researchers and the knowledge they produce. The three are constructivist in nature. Practice of course creates its own context and this is where the three types differ.

In Lynch and Woolgar’s (1990) proposal for a radical reflexivity the problematization of meaning, value, knowledge and representation is clear. They espouse constructivist and relativist approaches to the creation of knowledge. Latour (1988) proposed a corrective to what he calls a naïve belief in the creation of ‘truer texts’ (p. 168) in his discussion of infrareflexivity. He argues that, although radical reflexivity recognizes the importance of the problem, it is too narrow and in the end too sterile (p. 175). Within feminist studies, there were also concerns over how we document the lives and activities of women, to
understand this from their standpoint and to conceptualize it as an expression of specific historical and social contexts.

We begin by identifying three forms of reflexivity and then outline possible directions. Table 26.1 outlines the similarities and differences between the three positions.

**Radical reflexivity in anthropology**

Part of the problem of the way we conceptualize reflexivity has its origins in the issues that have concerned ethnographers from the very beginning. Fieldwork, as Rosaldo (1993) notes, is probably inherently confrontational: it is the purposeful disruption of other people's lives, however much they permit one to enter it. Other anthropologists have argued that exploitation and even betrayal are endemic to fieldwork. It has even been described as a form of violence, albeit symbolic violence (Crapanzano, 1977). Agar (1982) argues that research is not conducted in the unmediated world of the people studied, but on the borders between the researcher and the researched. At the same time, this 'betweenness' is shaped by the researcher's biography and position. The 'self' should not be identified as merely analogous to the researcher but must take into consideration other aspects such as gender, ethnicity and class that are not shared with those being studied. Agar's insights into the reflexive process are more complete. He identifies the four components as the researcher, the informant, the text and the audience. But, as noted earlier, the research community and its various audiences must be included in that list.

In the early 1970s, at the time when reflexivity became a central concern of anthropology, Ricoeur's idea (1970, p. 530) that 'the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts' (exemplified also in the writings of Geertz, 1973) had become well accepted. This led to a focus on the writing rather than on the substance of these texts. This conflation of style with substance led Marcus and Cushman (1982) to note that 'the way of saying' is not only the 'what of saying', it is all there is. In retrospect, the lowly field studies that have been rejected for publication because they 'have little to say that advances the march of theory' are as important as the grand or meso theories that have been identified as making profound contributions to the field (see Arnould and, Thompson, 2005).

Reflexivity surfaced in anthropology in a number of ways; we identify a few that are typical. First, anthropological discourse has historically sought to study the 'exotic other' as a way to study the self (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Said, 1979). It has served to denaturalize the reality of local rather than central institutions, thereby frustrating the original critique. Dove (1999) argues that anthropologists are more likely to study local organizations of resistance than central organizations of oppression. Laura Nader (1972, p. 286) describes this as a fascination with writing down, out and far', rather than 'up, near and in'.

Michalowski (1996), who studied Cuban communities, considers how anxieties became part of reflexive routines in the field and served to shape his interpretations. He argues that reflexivity is not to be confined to the standpoint embedded in the field worker's biography but also to address the ways in which macropolitical processes enter into the biographies of field workers, their informants and their audiences and influence the interactions between them.

For others like Stoller (1997) the crisis in anthropology is not just one of representation, as Marcus and Fischer (1986) argue, but one of epistemology. He is sensitive to issues of understanding and representing the cultures that ethnographers are studying. Stoller
Table 26.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the world (continued)</th>
<th>Radical reflexivity</th>
<th>Infraflexivity</th>
<th>Diffraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork, informants and audiences</td>
<td>*Macropolitical processes affect</td>
<td>Effort placed on writing better ‘fictions’</td>
<td>*Gives voice to the subjugated and leverages emancipatory possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Researcher’s self (gender, ethnicity, class) can greatly differ from that of those studied</td>
<td>*Including the author and identifying the method do not make the story more believable</td>
<td>*Avoidance of meta-language (i.e. not to subsume information under new terms)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*The text is ultimately what matters</td>
<td>*The right cut is one that will distinguish inarticulate from well articulated propositions</td>
<td>*The assumption is that ontic relationality is inherently political</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Use depth, respect and poetic evocation to tell informants’ stories (i.e. to strengthen epistemology)</td>
<td>*Make research articulations relevant to other disciplines through interdisciplinary co-authorship</td>
<td>*Feminist standpoint values accountability and commitment to ideals such as freedom and justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ethnographers write within a matrix of existing representations and incorporate critical power and insight into their ethnographies</td>
<td>*Ethnographer is often neutral in the causes and issues of the locals</td>
<td>*Emphasis is placed on political action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Effort placed on writing better ‘fictions’</td>
<td>*Arguments for politically involved writing but not for direct political action</td>
<td>*Feminist practices are splintered because of the multiplicity of definitions of gender and other factors (postmodern point of view)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Including the author and identifying the method do not make the story more believable</td>
<td>*The assumption is that ontic relationality is inherently political</td>
<td>*Feminist researchers have to convince others that they provide a more accurate rendering of the world than other accounts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Avoidance of meta-language (i.e. not to subsume information under new terms)</td>
<td>*The right cut is one that will distinguish inarticulate from well articulated propositions</td>
<td>*Negotiation and argumentation are necessary mechanisms by which a collectivity accepts one or another story</td>
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*Notes: Standpoint theory is probably one of the most controversial theories in feminist studies. I summarize below some of the issues raised by Harding (2004). Its origins can be traced to a period when women felt that they had been treated primarily as the object and not the subject of knowledge projects studied by others. Haraway uses the term 'God trick' to refer to the ways in which scientific studies spoke authoritatively about what was studied but from no particular social location or human perspective (1991). Public policy and disciplinary knowledge standpoint, theorists argue, were also advanced with little consideration of the interests of women. The outcomes of such inquiries marginalized not only women but men as well. The identifying features of this theory are (1) the goal to 'study up', i.e. using a bottom-up approach, (2) providing a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works located in material or political forms of oppression, (3) creating a nuanced understanding of oppressed groups, through data that are historically recorded, written and/or empirically gathered, and (4) focusing on the creation of group consciousness rather than on individual consciousness.

Harding’s argument is that standpoint theory (contentious as it is), does raise critical issues for a philosophy of knowledge production. The three considerations that she deems important are (1) epistemological issues (a rethinking of conceptual practices that shape what situations or conditions get identified as scientific problems and researched); standpoint theory questions the domain of scientific method and takes it back to the context of discovery; (2) the role of group consciousness in the production of knowledge (standpoint theorists propose the notion of a subject that is different from that constructed under liberal individualism or structuralist and poststructuralist alternatives to it); and (3) reasonable constructionism (to maneuver between excessive constructionism and therefore relativism).
argues that not only must ethnographers try to contribute to social theory, but they must also tell the story of a people with depth, respect and poetic evocation.

Wasserman (1993) raises the ethical question, what happens when the anthropologist does not like or identify with the communities being studied? She was a Jewish woman studying the problems faced by Palestinian women. When the researcher finds herself in profound opposition to the beliefs and actions of her informants, what are the commitments of a feminist scholar to her informants?

Marcus (1994) identifies four levels of reflexivity in ethnographic writing. The first recognizes the inevitability of reflexivity in human action and exposes previous accounts to discussion and criticism. Although this did not challenge the existing research paradigm it produced an unsettled view in the field. Marcus's second type is positional reflexivity, which some feminists espoused. Positioning assumes that all work is incomplete and requires a response from others positioned differently. He identifies a third type as experimental ethnography; ethnographers are keenly aware that they write within a matrix of existing representations and incorporate critical power and insight into their ethnographies. While he (inspired by feminist critiques) offers a critique of authority, he does not place much significance on political action. Feminist experiential reflexivity (also linked to positional reflexivity) is the fourth type. Feminist standpoint theory is an example of this, where the objective is not just to give voice to the subjugated but also to leverage emancipatory possibilities.

To summarize, Marcus and Fischer (1986), Marcus (1994) and Lynch and Woolgar (1990) all argue that if we accept that scientific knowledge is a semiotic practice, then we need to recognize that our knowledge of science utilizes practices of representation and is therefore relative. Constitutive reflexivity (the interrogation of the practices that we use to deploy our accounts) is the key here and not just the self-reflection of the knower. There are two considerations: practices that we are engaged in and the ideology of representation that we share (Campbell, 2004). But we are still left with the question of what is 'radical' about the radical reflexivity espoused above.

**Infra reflexivity and Latour’s corrective in science and technology studies**

Latour (1988) critiques the position of radical reflexivity because it proposes the creation of a 'truer text’. Nevertheless, Latour’s (1987, 1993, 1999) general philosophical position on the nature of scientific research is also important in our argument. First, he argues against the separation of the social sciences from the natural sciences, and the study of the social as separate from the material aspects of the world we live in. He defines reflexivity as a material, semiotic and political practice. Although he pays less attention to the political aspects of such constitutive practices, what he suggests when he says that we should not close off the discussion by prematurely identifying naturalized objectified fact is profoundly political.

He argues that the radical reflexivists err on the side of emphasizing the process of knowing and not enough on the known. By inserting themselves in the text, they try to show how they are positioned within the account. In Latour’s terms there is only text democracy, and not a hierarchy of texts in a semiotic sense.

He argues that metareflexivity, as evidenced in experimental ethnographies with their self-referencing system, is sterile and misleading. Worse yet, it is unbelievable. Instead, he suggests infra reflexivity, a process of simply telling a story pretty much as novelists and journalists do. This would necessarily mean a reduction in methodological detail and a greater focus on style. The aim is to write better stories (1988, p. 172). No privilege is asked for the account at hand. Reliance on the world and not the text is encouraged. Ultimately, since no quantity of words and literary devices will make our stories into non-stories, it is better to focus on writing better fictions. Latour argues that including the author in a text and identifying how the story was constructed do not make it any more believable.

Another element in the process of being infrareflexive is to avoid metalinguistic language. It is important not to subsume information under a new term; this defeats the purpose of providing the explanation. A final component of infrareflexivity is hybridization and making research articulations relevant for other disciplines. This can be achieved, he argues, among other strategies, through co-authorship with scientists from other disciplines. Latour, like Haraway, prefers the term ‘articulation’ to single overarching explanations that close off all possibility of further discussion. The advantage of articulation, he says, is that there is no end to it.

His view of science is non-dualistic and is outlined in what he calls ‘actor-network theory’. In this theory, actors are entities that do things (1993, p. 241) and can include humans and non-human acts. The term ‘network’ is defined as a ‘group of unspecified relationships among entities’. A network ties together two systems of alliances: people (everyone who is involved in one way or the other with the artifact) and things (all the pieces that had to be brought together to connect people).

Nevertheless, while they are analytically distinct, one cannot be studied without the other. An actor cannot act without a network and vice versa. Thus the power of actors depends on their position within the network and the number of alliances that can be generated. Translating is what actant networks do (they are also known as translation networks (Callon, 1986, p. 90). Latour argues that nothing is by itself either knowable or unknowable, sayable or unsayable, near or far. Everything is translated (1988, p. 167).

This theory differs greatly from the theory that specifies a subject, an object and an intermediary (language that mediates between the two). Borgerson (2005) provides another stance on this topic, but through a critical examination of the work of Daniel Miller. Articulation in this sense is about being affected by differences. It is an ongoing process; one proceeds from less articulate to more articulate proposals, thereby generating explanations that create unexpected differences. The advantage, Latour argues, of such an enlargement of propositions is that it undermines the premature closure of discussion. There is no sure ground for criticism, although the critique we offer may not be all that different from that of the conspiracy theorists, except that it is clothed in elevated language and causes such as discourse, knowledge/power and fields of force (Latour, 1993).

However, if we ask which fictions are more persuasive than others and how one arrives at such a judgment, there is no answer except by the use of the following criteria: a definition of methodology, an improvement in style, providing accounts of the known rather than the knower, refusing macrotheories and metalinguistic, and refusing disciplinary boundaries (Latour, 1988, p. 160). In his view, the right cut 'is not the one that will distinguish science from politics [read natural sciences versus the social sciences] but the one that will distinguish inarticulate from well articulated propositions' (1993, p. 8).

**Feminist critical reflexivities and practice**

The feminist epistemologies that we discuss here have generally developed from the perspectives of standpoint theory and postmodernism. Traditional standpoint theory
privileges knowledge that is unitary, whereas postmodernism undercuts this form of knowledge and emphasizes different standpoints based on the positions of various subalterns on the basis of color, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Anderson, 2004; Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Joy and Venkatesh, 1994). The problem with an undue emphasis on the decentering of the subject in postmodern theory is that feminist practice becomes splintered because of the multiplicity of definitions of gender and other factors. Feminists who see the value of both perspectives have negotiated their way by insisting on taking ‘responsibility in one’s construction of one’s representations’ as well as through the process of ‘mobile imagination’—literally putting themselves in the shoes of another woman (Campbell, 2004). Haraway (1991, 1992, 1997) is conscious of the possibilities in such an approach. She identifies it in her work through two concepts: ‘situated knowledge’ and ‘diffraction’. Campbell (2004, p. 163) asks, ‘How can feminist scientific studies (FSS) recognize the social construction of knowledge claims while also insisting upon a feminist critical practice?’

Historically, feminist accounts have been seen as weak and unscientific, and hence have been discounted. Second, and perhaps more importantly, feminist studies must demonstrate why they provide a more accurate rendering of the world than other accounts (read ‘sexist’). Insofar as the choice of narratives is based on the political act of persuasion, negotiation and argumentation are the necessary mechanisms by which a collectivity accepts one or another of these stories. Latour (2003a) agrees and acknowledges that ‘we should undertake moral judgments in terms of strategies of negotiation and compromise that permit new arrangements and combinations of networks’ (p. 45). He provides some insights into how this could be done in a half-joking (but perhaps deadly serious) way in one of his popular articles, ‘Dialogue prepared for a volume in honor of Donna Haraway’. An excerpt follows.

The two protagonists (He refers to Latour, ‘She’ to Haraway) acknowledge that she is more interested in ‘dialectics’ and he is concerned about ‘difference’. This passage conveys Latour’s position with perhaps greater clarity despite the profound overlaps:

*She*: Except that without a critical stance this inquiry can go on indefinitely without modifying the initial positions an iota.

*He*: Except if it ends up rendering the issue itself critical.

*She*: But you have deprived yourself of any critical edge.

*He*: Critical is also the name of a state, in case you forgot your physics. Make sure that issues reach criticality, would that not be a better slogan?

*She*: Do you by any chance claim to increase the temperature of an issue without yourself being in any way critical?

*He*: Do you by any chance believe that you increase the temperature by simply feeling indignation and sharing this indignation with your buddies? You are confusing the subjective definition of critique with its objective one. It is the object itself, the issue at stake that has to be rendered critical.

*She*: And that could be carried out in any emotional state? Including quiet indifference to the solution.

*He*: Not indifference no, rather, passionate interest for an uncertain and surprising solution, yes. And only that, but I am tempted to say that it’s just the critically minded people, because they are so sure of who should win and who should lose and why, who actually cool down the issues to the point that they manage to decrease the temperature under them... they prefer to feel critical than to induce criticality. And you know what? It’s because they leave out the little details.

Latour’s (1993) solution has been what he calls ‘the parliament of things’. Everything is provisional, although there might be a constitutional settlement. The issues he raises are what gets rights to representation and how do these things with rights arrange relations between themselves in order to live well together. Haraway is not too impressed with constitutional arrangements. Instead she worries that some things are endlessly produced and are real but others are not. How can one intervene through speech and action in the configurations of the real? For Haraway, what is real is also ‘other’ (for example, dogs are not furry children). They have their own partially different specificities and these deserve respect. For her, then, natures (they are plural – there is no one reality out there) are partially connected to humans and they are only partially made together. To this extent the relation between humans and nature is linked. The other cannot be totally known. It is in relation to the Same and it needs to be accorded this respect.

Thus, despite Latour’s laments about the desire of the critically minded to win, feminists are indeed concerned with who wins and who loses and why. In Campbell’s words this includes asking, ‘Which accounts have which resources with which to compete? Who is prevented from competing?’ (2004, p. 178). These questions suggest that a politics of power (defined in pragmatic terms) is involved. The field is not neutral and the participants not equal. Haraway underscores the importance of interferences in the definitions of what is ‘real’. What is missing from radical reflexive accounts and to a certain extent from intra-reflexive accounts is any acknowledgment of political practice. So now the question, very much like the one Woolgar asked in the 1980s, is ‘Where do we go from here?’

Haraway (1997) provides a partial answer by introducing the concept of ‘diffraction’, a term she coined to reflect the articulation process; it implies a multiple reading. Nevertheless she does offer new directions through her concept. According to her, diffraction is composed of ‘interference patterns, not reflecting images. This concept will produce effects of connection, embodiment and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere’ (Haraway, 1992, p. 295). This model depends on a model not of representation but of articulation.

But to discover why this concept is a useful one we have to begin with her concept of ‘situated knowledge’. Haraway (1991, 1997) has always espoused a non-dualistic version of science and the world. She stresses interrelationality in all things and is very suspicious of binary categories and distinctions (including the distinctions between nature and culture and, by extension, between male and female), identifying them as tools of power and oppression. In this sense, her approach is close to Latour’s. She argues that ‘human societies do not exist except in so far as they are produced by and in mutual dialogue with the eco systems of which they are a part... No science should imagine that it observes the natural world unimpaired by cultural bias, because this implies too simplistic a distinction between the two’ (1991, p. 187).

Situated knowledge combines insights and elements of both constructivism and feminism. It takes into account location, partial embodiment and partial perspective (1991, p. 191). Insofar as it allows recognition of how accounts are constructed it is deconstructive in orientation and intent. For Haraway, certain social positions will produce more accurate descriptions of the world. Her words are evocative of her beliefs: ‘The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another’ (ibid., p. 7). It is not identity that she is
But Haraway’s position, says Campbell (2004), is not without flaws. For instance, she does not make the distinction between the standpoint of a feminist scholar and that of any other woman in a society. Feminists have a political orientation that may or may not be shared by other women. Although feminism’s critical knowledge may be different from women’s subjugated knowledge, Haraway does not seem to distinguish between the two. Second, while she acknowledges the multiple axes of oppression, she does not adequately theorize them except to imply that oppression is an effect of concrete social structure. She does not offer an account of the sociality that produces subject positions other than a general description of white capitalist patriarchy (ibid., p. 176). A third problem is the tension between constructivism and empiricism. Either practices construct knowledge (constructivism), in which case there is no possibility of critical knowledge, or they do not, in which case there is a possibility of critical knowledge (feminism) (ibid., p. 177). Haraway seems to vacillate between the constructivist nature of all knowledge while at the same time positing feminist standpoint theory claims as accurate descriptions of reality and thereby not relativist. Woolgar (1988, p. 98) calls this ‘ontological gerrymandering’.

Therefore ‘knowing becomes a way of engaging with the world, and to understand it we must study the patterns created by interactions’ (Haraway, quoted in Campbell, 2004, p. 174). Diffraction engages with the different possible patterns that interactions with others create. This interference pattern makes it possible to shift existing meanings.

Haraway (1997, p. 198) describes diffraction as an oppositional practice in which we learn to rethink our political aims from the analytical and imaginative standpoint of those existing in different networks to those of domination. She argues that a standpoint is a cognitive, psychological and political tool for more adequate knowledge. In feminist standpoint theory there is accountability and a commitment to ideals such as freedom and justice (p. 199). However, she falls short of describing how such practices should occur, although she encourages other women to participate in the imagination of the future of feminist practice.

Campbell takes on the challenge to continue Haraway’s line of emancipatory thought. She recognizes three elements in the new feminist studies: the type of analytic knowledge produced is not unitary but dependent on ethnicity, class and gender; putting oneself in the shoes of other women requires imaginative knowledge; and finally, such knowledge is based on the political commitments of the feminist knower (p. 176).

She further suggests that FSS produce regulatory standards to govern their practices. This means asking hard questions. What material resources are necessary and available? Who has access to them? Who is excluded? Next, women should reconsider the networks through which feminist knowledge is constructed. If actor network theory (reworked by Haraway) is appropriate, then questions about who are the actors and which acts are central become important. Because of the possibility of falling into a deconstructive mode, such processes must be guided by the explicit feminist political goals of freedom and justice.

Although neither Haraway nor Campbell specifies who is left out and who is included in this process, we suggest that responsibility and accountability must translate into a commitment to negotiate from the position of difference: gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and class.

Where do we go from here?
The purpose of this chapter has been to present three types of reflexivities and to demonstrate the complexities of reflexive thinking. We suggest that radical reflexivity is primarily centered on a reliance on rhetorical devices that yield ‘truer’ texts. We agree with Latour, however, that it is better to accept that some fictions are better than others. But which are the better stories? What criteria can we use to make such decisions without closing off the lines of discussion prematurely, as Latour contends? For him, what is ‘other’ in one kind of constitutional settlement might have rights to being taken into consideration the next time around. This is an ongoing and endless process; any premature closure might be antithetical to the goals of freedom and truth. Haraway’s concept of situated knowledge and diffraction promises a new stance on this subject because of its emphasis on political practice and pragmatism, absent from the proposals offered by Latour. Both recognize the political practices involved, but the feminist position insists on responsibility, accountability and commitment to principles of freedom and justice in the definition of the real.

Although we do not explicitly outline an agenda for reflexivity in marketing and consumer research, we highlight a few directions. First, if, as Latour says, we should be concerned about hybridization in our research endeavors, an interdisciplinary approach would lead to the writing of much better stories. To accomplish this requires an emphasis on style, rhetoric and detail. Poetry, fiction, films and journalistic writing are some of the possibilities. Examples have already appeared in the Journal of Consumer Research and Consumption, Markets and Culture.

In line with Haraway’s argument, we suggest that situated knowledge requires a deeper understanding of consumers, their contexts, their networks of interactions and their different points of view. Holt (1995) uses the umbrella term of ‘consumer practices’. We argue that it is in these practices that consumer knowledge is situated. Pragmatism is also a concern raised by feminists. Perhaps we should begin to focus on issues that may help consumers live better and more satisfying lives. Casting light on their needs, fears, desires, dreams and even rights through the telling of their stories might help achieve this goal, particularly if we widen the audience for our writing to include consumers themselves as well as our academic colleagues. Peñaloza’s (2001) study of ranchers tries to do just this, working with communities with the goal of writing public policy implications.

We end by articulating some of the issues raised by Sandra Harding (2004) on the value of feminist standpoint theory to a philosophy of science. Standpoint theory has been the most vexing feminist theory when it comes to a postpositivist philosophy of science or even to science studies. Situated knowledge and positionality in the creation of knowledge seems to have touched a raw nerve and has managed to keep the discussion of how science is constructed very much alive in all disciplines, not just feminist ones. As long as the discussion continues and the issues at stake are on the table, the process is precisely what Latour has called for – no premature foreclosure of issues.
Here is Hardings's (2004, p. 32) summary of the value of the critique of discovery in science espoused by standpoint theory: 'It focuses not on the choice of individual rational thinkers as does mainstream philosophy of science constrained by its epistemological lenses, but on the collective consciousness of an age that selects interesting hypotheses for us outside the range, beyond the horizon, of the kinds of critical thought that disciplinary conceptual frameworks easily generate.' It is in this context that Campbell's questions, such as what resources are deployed? and who has access to them?, become central to feminist practice.

Standpoint theory has tried to avoid the excessive constructivists and the attendant relativism of postpositivist science. For Haraway (1991, p. 187), this necessitates the recognition of scientific activities as historically constructed. She notes, 'The problem for feminists is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own accounts of a real world.' This thinking, which posits a world 'where truth and power do not issue from the same social locations' (Harding, 2004, p. 34), requires new ways of doing scientific research.

It is here that we can begin to design and implement relevant and purposeful consumer research – writing it up and writing it down as we go.

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